Bound Together

by PsychoDolphin

Summary

When Makoto comes down with a strange "illness," he is shocked to discover that he is actually an Alpha, a rare condition that separates him from his normal friends and family. He is offered a place at the Estate, a home where Alphas and Omegas live together can support and connect with each other. All seems well and good until he meets a strange blue-eyed Omega, and Makoto's world is turned on its head.

Update:
Finished as of 1/20/2018. Thank you all for your amazing support!

Notes

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Just a quick warning, things will get a little darker here later on in the story. The first few chapters will be pretty lighthearted, mainly introducing everyone and setting things up, but it's not gonna be all sunshine and roses starting around chapter 7. I'll update tags with each chapter, and I'll post a quick note at the beginning of a chapter that may contain sensitive topics.

I really just wanted to take one of my favorite pairings and use them to rip apart one of my favorite AUs, all while sprinkling in a few of my personal headcannons and guilty pleasures, though I've tried to restrain myself and keep those as few and far between as possible.

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Makoto frowned as he and his parents waited in the hospital room that had been Makoto’s home for the last five days, the air in the room tense as everyone waited for the doctor to come in. Makoto kept his gaze fixed in his lap, twiddling his fingers, unable to meet the eyes that he could feel fixed on him. He hadn’t been able to meet his parents gaze ever since whatever the strange, painful haze that had filled his mind for the past week had faded. He remembered the pain, the aching, and the need for- well, he hadn’t been entirely sure what he had needed. But what he did know was just how embarrassed he had been when parents had shown up at home, heard his pained cries, and rushed into the room to see him furiously stroking his-

Makoto flushed, unable to bring himself to think any more about what had happened. Makoto just wished that the doctor would hurry up and tell him what was wrong so he could put the entire humiliating event behind him.

It would have been bad enough if it had been a one-time deal, but after his parents had left the room, Makoto spent the rest of the night struggling to control himself. When three hours had gone by and his hard-on was still… well, hard, it had been decided that a trip to the doctor was necessary.

His parents had bundled him into the car, both looking rather embarrassed but mostly concerned, and had driven him to the hospital quickly. The nurses quickly assumed that he had taken some sort of drug, throwing around words like aphrodisiac and stimulants. Makoto denied that quickly, telling the nurses how he had been walking home from school with friends when a sudden flash of warmth washed over him. The nurses clearly hadn’t believed him and did a drug test, as well as a blood test.

An hour later, a confused nurse came back in, demanding another urine and blood test, stating that something strange had happened with the previous tests. Another hour, and the nurse returned again, claiming that the doctor required “A sample of the other liquids you’re producing.”
After hearing her say those words, Makoto feverishly hoped she meant a spit swab.

Which she had. However, once the cotton swab was placed safely in a container, she pulled out another clear container, handed it over, and told him to come to the door when he was done. And ten embarrassing minutes later, the nurse emerged from his room with the container half full of a milky substance.

Half an hour later, the doctor came in frowning, discussing how Makoto would need to be under observation for a few days, but assure his parents that Makoto was healthy in every conceivable way.

Within the hour, Makoto was in a secluded ward with two nurses assigned to stay near the room at all times, checking on him every few hours, providing him with food, water, and medication that dulled the fiery heat and pain Makoto felt roaring through his body.

Finally, the pain and the neediness had vanished from his body and, after stepping out so the nurses could clear the room, being checked over by the doctor, and being given an IV of fluid to keep him hydrated, his parents had been called to talk about his situation.

That had been earlier that morning, almost three hours ago. Which Makoto found rather odd considering the doctor had always checked on him regularly the last couple of days.

Finally, a knock on the door made all the heads in the room turn, and the doctor stepped in. He was a tall man, with dark eyes and tousled black hair lined with streaks of gray. The shadows accentuating his eyes were dark, hiding the light dash of freckles that peppered across his nose on both sides.

“Mr. and Mrs. Tachibana,” his voice was sweetly tenor, cheerful, deeply contrasting the exhaustion on his face. “I’m sorry about the delay. I just had to be absolutely sure about what is going on with your son. I know this has been a very strange few days for you, and I’m sorry about how little information we’ve been able to give you up to this point.

“Is it bad, doctor?” Makoto’s mother said, her voice seeming calm, but Makoto found he could detect a slight tremor in her tone.

“Not bad, per say. As I said before, there is nothing physically wrong with your son. Actually, there is nothing wrong at all. It’s just—“ the doctor hung his head, shaking it slightly. “This is something I didn’t ever really think would happen.” He let out a tired chuckle, then finally met the eyes staring at him. He cleared his throat and continued. “Ok, I’m going to be straight with you. I wasn’t aware this kind of thing could happen until Makoto came in a few days ago. What’s going on with him is a bit of an urban legend in the medical community.” The doctor took a deep breath, then glanced at his patient’s parents. “Have you ever heard of the A/B/O Dynamic?”

“ABO?” Makoto questioned, confused. “Like blood types and personalities and stuff like that?” His class had discussed that a few weeks ago when the teacher had been a little obsessed with it. He remembered laughing with his friends and doing research on it for fun before the teacher had moved on to a new obsession.

The doctor laughed, but shook his head. “No, I’m afraid not. If it was something like that…” he chuckled again, a weary sound. “No, in this case, A/B/O stands for Alpha, Beta, and Omega.”

The terms rang in Makoto’s head, strange yet slightly familiar.

“Alpha? As in like a wolf pack or something?” His father asked, his voice tight with disbelief. Many people compared Makoto to a dog, with his cheerful and eager demeanor, but it still seemed odd to have a doctor tell him that he was actually like a dog.
The doctor frowned. “It’s a little more difficult than that, but I guess that’s pretty close. At least the Alpha bit is.”

“So, you’re telling me my son has some sort of connection to wolves?” His father wasn’t even attempting to conceal the reproach in his voice, and Makoto couldn’t help but agree. The thought was ridiculous.

“Not really it’s just–” The Doctor sighed and shook his head. “Really, I’m not the one who should be explaining this. I barely understand this myself.”

“Then why don’t you get someone who-” His father’s voice was raising, angry, when a knock at the door silenced them.

The doctor seemed to breathe a sigh of relief and he stood and opened the door. Turning to address the room, he said, “Everyone, I’d like you to meet Dr. Amakata Miho, a doctor who specializes in what Makoto is going through.” Makoto watched as a slender short woman, about a foot shorter than his own 6 feet, stepped through the door.

Unlike the other doctor, who was dressed in a traditional white lab coat and scrubs, Dr. Amakata wore jeans and a darker blue dress shirt covered by a light green cardigan. It was a pretty ensemble, if a little shocking to see in a hospital environment. Right above her shoulders swung brown waves of hair, all looking slightly disheveled yet perfectly arranged to frame her oval face. Warm, brown eyes sparkled happily, and her pretty mouth was pulled up in a gentle smile. She was very pretty, and Makoto thought he should feel flustered about being in the same room as someone so pretty the way he was when he talked to a pretty girl in his class. But instead of nervous, his body seemed to tense up, almost as though there was some sort of danger that he wasn’t aware of.

“You’re Makoto, right?” she smiled at him and walked over, holding her hand out to him. In a dazed movement, Makoto took her hand and shook it. Her grip was firm, and she gave him a reassuring nod.

Then she turned to his parents and smiled a winning smile at them. “You must be Mr. and Mrs. Tachibana? I’m so sorry for all the trouble these last few days. It’s almost impossible to catch this sort of things before it happens, so I understand that this must have been a stressful time for you.”

“It was quite stressful, yes.” Makoto saw his father meet the woman’s eye, saw the way he relaxed around her. Something about the woman just gave off a calming aura, as though she had everything under control. Which was why Makoto just couldn’t understand why he couldn’t get himself to relax. Something about the woman’s presence put him on edge, and he didn’t like it.

“I remember. I was around Makoto’s age when the same thing happened to me. Well, sort of… But anyways, I’m here to explain everything and answer all of your questions, as well as provide a few options for Makoto. However, I’m afraid we need to do this a little differently than we would when dealing with any other condition. I’m going to need to speak to you two and Makoto separately, so I can explain everything properly, and I’d like to start with Makoto, if that’s all right.” Amakata smiled sweetly and reached into the bag hanging at her side, drawing out a stack of papers. “If you don’t mind, I need you to step out with Doctor Iori for a few moments while I talk to Makoto. These papers will explain what is going on and will explain Makoto’s condition in depth. Any questions you have about the Medical terms, Doctor Iori will answer.” She smiled kindly, holding out the papers to Iori. He stayed on the bed and watched as his parents and Doctor Iori, who frowned at Amakata in confusion, left the room. Once all three were out, Amakata shut the door and leaned her head against it, taking a deep breath, when she turned, she smiled at Makoto.
“Sorry about that. I guess you’re feeling a little tense right now.” She smiled bashfully and perched delicately on the chair the other doctor had vacated. “Usually we would send an Omega to handle this situation, but with you just coming out of your rut, it seemed like a bad idea to mix your high hormone levels with that of an Omega, even a mated one.” She sighed, slouching back against the chair. “At least, that’s what Goro told me. His talk about hormones and genetic compatibility go right over my head. Said that if you were coming out of rut, the scent of an omega would cause problems, and that a non-threatening Alpha would be best.” She gasped, apparently lost in her own train of thought. “And he sent me! Oh, that asshole! I’m threatening! I’m just as threatening as any other Alpha!”

The words flew around Makoto’s mind in a blur. Alpha. Omega. Scent. Hormones. All words he knew, yet in this room, coming from Amakata’s mouth, everything seemed odd, displaced.

Dr. Amakata seemed to notice his fuddled confusion, and she stopped talking. She glanced at him curiously then asked, “Iori didn’t make it very far explaining anything to you, did he?”

Makoto chuckled and shook his head. “He didn’t really get a chance to explain anything. He was just as confused as me.”

Amakata gave a halfhearted chuckle. “And I just sent him out to answer your parent’s questions. I might as well had a labradoodle explain everything.” She sighed, then sat back. “Ok, well, let’s start with the basics. There are three kinds of people. The most numerous and common are Beta’s. They are - for a lack of a better word- the normal people. Your parents, siblings, schoolmates, everyday people on the street. All Betas, people who lack the abilities and qualities of Omegas and Alphas. Then you have Alphas, like me,” She smiled reassuringly and pointed herself. “And you. Alphas tend to have a higher sex drive than most people, can be slightly more aggressive, very protective over things and people they attach to, especially if it’s an Omega. Omegas are like the softer other half of Alphas. Softer, yet strong in ways Alphas tend to be weaker. Omegas are caretakers, protectors, usually make strong connections with people easier than Alphas.”

She paused, letting the information sink for Makoto. He thought about it for a moment. “So Alphas and Omegas kinda work like two parts of a whole or… something?” he asked, knowing it sounded awkward. But Dr. Amakata didn’t seem to think so. She grinned happily pleased that Makoto seemed to be picking it up so quickly.

“Pretty close! We don’t know exactly why we have Alphas and Omegas. The closest we’ve come to figuring it out is that it seems to be Nature’s fall back plan: if Humanity were to be decimated, there would be a few select people who are genetically more capable of reestablishing the population. You see, Omegas have a few periods each year where they are most fertile. During these times, if they mate with an alpha, it’s almost guaranteed that the Omega will get pregnant. Unless it’s a Male Omega and a Female Alpha. Of course, female Alpha’s are pretty rare, so that doesn’t matter as much. And of course, there are ways around pregnancy. Contraceptives and the like.”

“But if guys can be Omegas too, and there are so few girl Alphas, do guy Omegas still get pregnant if they do it with a guy? How would that work?” Makoto couldn’t help being curious. The idea of him being able to get a guy pregnant seemed ludicrous to say the least. Not that he was all that interested in guys, or really anyone, in that way, but the thought just sort of prodded at him, and he had to ask.

Amakata smiled and reached into the bag at her side again. She paused to pull a book from the bag and hand it to Makoto. “Yes, male Omegas can get pregnant. Basically, before they go into heat, their body adjusts itself to create a womb on the chance that they get pregnant. It’s a long and difficult explanation with a lot of complicated hormonal science, so if you want to know more, read
this. You don’t really have to worry too much about that unless you mate with a male Omega, but it can be interesting to learn about all this stuff. Alpha’s are a little different than Omega’s in that they go into rut, but usually only once when they present as Alpha’s or when their mate goes into heat and sets it off, and sometimes if the sexual tension is high, but there’s no release, then Alpha’s can go into rut once or twice a year or so. The book covers that too.”

Makoto took the book and flipped through it nervously. There were plenty of diagrams to go along with the long, arduous explanations, so maybe it wouldn’t be as bad as it looked.

Maybe.

“So, now that we’ve got the basics out of the way, I’d like to offer you something. You see, as an Alpha, you could be in a very stable place financially for the rest of your life. My colleges and I will be covering this hospital stay, since it allowed us to meet you and explain what was happening. If you’d like, we can set you up with a supplier who can get you anything you might need as an Alpha in a Beta world: Contraceptives made specifically for Omegas, even though it’s not very likely you’ll be near any, rut suppressants and other such things. You could continue with your life how you’ve planned it. Finish high school, go to college. Anything you had planned. You would have to hide the fact that you’re an Alpha, though. Revealing it could cause… problems. However,” she met his eyes sternly, and Makoto noticed a strange, authoritative look in her eye. “Your ruts may get worse as time goes on without finding an Omega mate. Your body will still go into rut once a year even if it’s not set off an Omega, and being with a Beta during your rut could hurt both you and the Beta; Omega bodies are specifically designed to adjust to an Alpha’s Knot, and the Knot will hurt anyone else if you’re not careful.”

Well, that just sounds pleasant, Makoto thought snarkily to himself, but he stayed quiet and Amakata continued to speak.

“However, if you’d like, there is another option. The place where I work to study and protect Alphas and Omegas acts as a sort of group home for Alphas and Omegas. It’s a safe place for them to live and get the help they need, as well as meet potential mates. Alphas and Omegas are rare in the world, and there are only a handful in each generation, but we tend to find that setting up these homes helps Alphas and Omegas find suitable mates. By moving into the home, you’ll have all the help you need, plenty of company with people who are going through similar situations. We will pay for your college if you choose to go, and you will be allotted weekly stipends of a decent amount of money on top of any job you may have. The only thing that is asked of you is that you allow my colleges and I, most of which are Alphas or Omegas ourselves, to study and do research, sometimes involving you in test and experiments. If there is ever something you don’t feel comfortable with, you don’t have to participate. It’s more of a request than a demand.”

Makoto was in a daze. That was a lot of benefits for just participating in a few studies. Surely that couldn’t be everything. “That’s it? Really?”

Dr. Amakata nodded enthusiastically. “Our main goal is to protect Alphas and Omegas and keep them safe. Learning about ourselves is a priority, yes, but we would never put it above your safety or comfort.”

He frowned. This all sounded so good… yet so unrealistic.

Amakata seemed to realize where his thoughts were headed and reached into her bag again, this time pulling out a stack of papers. “This is a contract that you would have to sign before you could live on the estate. You can read it over, have a lawyer check it out if necessary. We only want to help you, Makoto.”
He nodded, taking the papers and glancing through them. There was a lot of information, but he could read through it. It seemed like too good an opportunity to pass up without consideration. After all, there was free college…

He glanced up as Amakata stood, grabbing her bag from the floor. “Well, better go and talk to your parents, try and convince them that you’re not dying.” She sighed, eyes falling closed with tiredness, before the warm orbs snapped open and glanced and looked at Makoto meaningfully. “Anything in particular you want me to tell them or to leave out?”

“How do you usually explain this to parents?”

“I usually dumb it down a bit, try to keep the sex and reproductions stuff out of it. No parent wants to hear about heats or ruts or stuff like that. They just want to know their child is safe and healthy.”

Makoto nodded, turning his gaze to the papers he held in his hand. “Go with that then. I’ll think about this estate offer.”

Amakata smiled kindly. “I get that it’s a big decision. If you need anything, just give the number on the back a call. It’s my personal number, and I always answer.”

Makoto thanked her and watched as she left the room, before letting his eyes drop to the papers again. Sighing, he leaned back in his plain white hospital bed, flipped the first page over on the contract, and began to read.

Chapter End Notes

Ok, I'll try and put any personal notes I have about a chapter here, and mainly leave the top notes for any warnings about the chapters, but I already did all my ranting for this chapter. This one was just kind of a set up to prepare for everything else, but we'll jump right in with meeting everyone else in the next chapter. Let me know what you think, Ok? I've got a majority of it written, but if there's something you really want to see, or if you're curious about something I've written, or if you notice some sort of gaping error in what I've written, please let me know, and I'll see what I can do. This poor chapter has been rewritten no less than ten times since I started this fic, so it really wouldn't surprise me if I've screwed something up.

The next chapter will be titled "Goodbyes and Hellos!"
Makoto gapped in amazement at the car before him. Though the word car was a bit of a stretch. A car was what he had seen some of the wealthier people in the small village of Iwatobi drive, or what he and one of his friends at school had drooled over in a magazine Makoto had found at a convenient store, dreaming of one day owning one and not having to take a bus everywhere. Small compact vehicles made for families, or sweet sports cars that he saw on television. Those were cars.

Instead, what was parked in front of the alley that lead to Makoto’s home was a long, sleek, onyx black limousine. Makoto was sure there wasn’t another one of these, or anything half as nice as this, within a hundred miles of Iwatobi. And, unfortunately, it seemed the entire village had realized that, as many people were peering out windows, some poking their heads out the door, and a few children flocked towards the extravagant vehicle.

“Whoa!” came a voice from beside him, and Makoto glanced down to see his little sister standing at his side, her eyes wide as saucers as she stared in awe and just a little anger at the car that had come to take her older brother away from the family home.

Rapid footsteps came from behind him and he turned as his brother ran ahead of his parents, his father carrying a slightly smaller black suitcase identical to the one Makoto carried. His Father gave his oldest a tight, reassuring smile and placed the bag beside Makoto. “I think that’s the last of it.”

Makoto nodded and smiled back at his father, trying to give off the air that he was sure about his decision, that he was ok with leaving his home of almost eighteen years, leaving the familiar sight of the ocean each morning, the people he had grown up with, leaving his family.

Apparently, he wasn’t very convincing, because his mother stepped forward and gripped the sleeve of Makoto’s nice shirt he had decided to wear that day.

“Makoto, you don’t have to leave if you don’t want!” her voice was bordering on pleading. “If you’re doing this because of the money for college, you don’t have to worry. We can get you through school!”

Makoto smiled gently and placed a hand on his mother’s arm. “No, mom, it’s not for the money, even though that is a bonus. After all, you guys still have to put Ran and Ren through school too.”
“I don’t wanna go to school. I wanna be a sailor.” Ren muttered mutinously. The words sent a flash of fear through Makoto, but he pushed it aside. There would be time to worry about that later. Instead, he just continued as though he hadn’t heard Ren.

“I just really think that this is what’s best for me. I can be around people with the same… condition and figure out how to adjust to…this.” He made an awkward, all-encompassing gesture towards himself with his free hand. “Besides, I’d be leaving soon anyways to start college. So I’ll take a little time off, figure out what’s going on with me, then go to school with everything paid for.” He gave his mother a sad smile when she gripped his sleeve tighter.

“I just thought I would have a little time to get used to the idea of you leaving.” She murmured, squeezing her fist again before letting loose and taking a step back, pressing her arm gently against her husband’s, as though drawing support through the contact. The picture sent a twinge of worry that he had been trying to repress though Makoto. Would that be him in a few weeks or months with a random stranger? An Omega? The thought sent the butterflies in his stomach fluttering worriedly.

Drawing him for his mild panic attack was the thud of a door he hadn’t noticed was open when shut firmly, and he turned to see a balding man in a black suit closing the trunk of the limo. Glancing down, Makoto noticed that his bags were gone. No turning back now.

Climbing out of the limo was Dr. Amakata, her brown wavy hair pulled up and away from her face, except for two shorter strands that framed her pretty brown eyes nicely. She smiled at the twins, the turned her kind eyes on Makoto. “Ready? I don’t want to rush you.”

Makoto nodded and turned back to his family. He crouched down and held his arms out, and the twins rushed into his arms.

“Do you really have to go, Makoto?” Ran’s voice trembled slightly as she clutched at her older brother, as though trying to keep him home through pure strength and willpower. Ren stayed quiet, but Makoto could feel the odd hitching of his breath. He held Ren closer, knowing how much the boy hated crying in public, so he kept him close until Ren pulled away, his face composed. Ran pulled away as well, and Makoto reached out to place a hand on each of their heads.

“Hey now, you guys can come visit me when you want to, and I’ll come home to visit too. It’ll be ok.” Ruffling Ran’s hair and giving Ren a warm smile, Makoto straightened up and looked towards his father.

The man nodded, frowning not at Makoto, but at Amakata. “We will go visit Makoto in two weeks.”

Amakata met his eyes carefully, and Makoto repressed a shiver when she spoke, her voice, though pleasant and sweet and very, very persuasive. He couldn’t help but wonder if her people skills and charm were perks of being an Alpha or just a personal trait. If it was a perk, it seemed that particular gift had skipped over him, leaving him awkward and befuddled most of the time. “If that’s what you wish. Or, if you’d like, Makoto could come home in two weeks for a visit. We have a family weekend in few weeks where all the families of the guests of the estate are invited for a bit of a get-together party.”

Makoto’s father’s eyes narrowed, but Makoto could see the wheels turning in his father’s mind as he thought it through.

“That does sound reasonable, dear.” His mother spoke up, her eyes clear and focused. “Then we can meet all the people he’ll be around.”

His Father glanced down at his wife and nodded slowly. “Either way, we’ll see him in two weeks,”
he smiled towards the twins, their sad expressions seemed to fade quickly at the idea.

Makoto nodded, and Amakata smiled proudly, clearly pleased at her accomplishment. “Well, I suppose it’s time to leave. Ready Makoto?” she walked towards the car, opened the door and slid in. Makoto moved towards the car, paused, and turned back to wave at his family.

His father had a hand on Ren’s shoulder, and the boy was watching with clear eyes as Makoto walked away. Ran had a hand gripped on the hem of her mother’s shirt, and both their eyes were misty and bright with unshed tears.

“Bye. Love you. I’ll see you soon!” he plastered what he hoped wasn’t too fake a smile on his face, then climbed into the limo.

A three-hour car ride inland later, Makoto finds himself speechless as he stares at his surroundings, at what would be his home for the next few months. He realized that he should have known what he was in for when Amakata had started throwing the word Estate around or, if nothing else, when the limo had pulled up to an iron rod fence that had stretched as far as the eye could see to his left and right, then driven through ten minutes of tall, beautiful trees. But climbing out of the limo, he realizes that nothing could have prepared him for this.

The space the mansion was on seemed to be the length of a football field and easily stretched three stories, four if you counted the two taller spires that he had no doubt contained a study or a bedroom of some sort. The house was white, almost blindly so, a set of stone stairs leading up to the front doors guarded on both sides by two columns the same shade of the house. The doors were a dark red-brown wood; each door had a window of stained glass, a red flower colored on the door by the glass design.

Outside the house itself, the rest of the grounds were equally beautiful. Outside the large circle drive that pulled up by the stairs then wound back toward the iron gate, with one small branch leading along the side of the house and out of site, was some of the darkest green grass Makoto had ever seen. It had recently been trimmed if the few brown blades of grass buried beneath the green were to be believed, and in the center of the drive was a small fountain surrounded by a flurry of brightly colored flowers. In the distance, Makoto was sure he could see what appeared to be the top of a greenhouse peaking over dark green hedges that seemed to line around a part of the grounds; Makoto was willing to bet there was an expansive garden behind that hedge.

“Wow,” he mumbled, stepping aside as Amakata stepped out.

“Nice place, huh?” she laughed.

“You could say that,” he replied. “But it would be the understatement of the century.”

She chuckled. “It’s a bit grand, but it has plenty of room for everyone who lives here.” She began to walk forward, and Makoto quickly caught up, one of his strides matching three of hers.

“You’ll meet everyone at dinner tonight. I think you’ll get along with most—” she paused at the top of the stairs and gave Makoto an appraising look. “Actually,” she mumbled. “you might even get along with him.”

Makoto was a second away from asking about “him,” but before he could say a word, the beautiful
wooden doors rushed open, and Amakata and Makoto found themselves facing a man, taller than the brown-haired Alpha, yet still a good few inches shorter than Makoto. His attire was considerably more casual than Amakata’s own cream sundress and pastel green cardigan, dressed instead in a colorful tank and shorts. His hair was in disarray, blond on top with the sides buzzed down short, and his brown eyes held a sort of dismayed craze.

“Miho. Thank god your back. I can’t take it. He won’t get out of the bathtub.”

Amakata sighed. “Is it over-flowing again?”

“No,”

“Then don’t worry. He’ll get out eventually. We only need to worry if he starts turning blue from the cold again.”

“But you said you wanted everyone downstairs to meet the new guy, and he says he doesn’t want to.”

The brown-haired Alpha sighed, then glanced up at Makoto, eyes quizzing. “Makoto, how are you with kids? Do your siblings listen to you?”

Makoto nodded, confused. Kids? How old did people usually present? Was he seriously expected to form some kind attachment strange attachment to a kid? The thought made him a little nauseous.

These thoughts were banished as Amakata grinned at him and said, “Then it looks like you can help us. He’s not a kid, but he’s about as obstinate as one”

“Miho, you’re kidding, right? This kid just found out he’s an Alpha, and he doesn’t look like he’s got much of a backbone.” Makoto couldn’t help the wince at those words. It was true, for the most part, but it still kind of hurt. “Now you’re going to pit him against one of the most intimidating Omega’s I’ve ever met? This boy will get torn to bits!”

“He’s not that bad, Gorou.”

The man, Gorou, threw up his hands in exasperation. “fine! Do what you want. But if he bites this kid’s head off, it on you, Amakata.”

Dr. Amakata huffed and pushed past Gorou through the door. “And when this works, you’d better be thanking me, Sasabe.” She paused and gave a sharp, “Come on Makoto”

Makoto jumped and moved forward quickly, giving the man by the door a sheepish smile as he passed.

Moving through the door, all Makoto could see was green. Two dark green houseplants were fixed on both sides of the front door, a fern on each side of another doorkframe that Makoto assumed led to the rest of the house, and several strands of Ivy were winding their way up a stairwell to his left. What he could see of the walls were a warm brown wood paneling, and on a stand next to the stairs held the only bright color in the hallway, a large bright sunflower. Makoto let his gaze follow Amakata up the stairs and followed her, glancing at the balcony above them.

“Sorry,” Dr. Amakata sighed quietly, getting Makoto’s attention as he stepped up his pace in order to hear her better. “He never fails to get me riled up.”

“Is he another doctor?”
She nodded. “I study the emotional and mental sides of Alphas and Omegas. He studies the physical: Hormones, Chromosomes, DNA, those sorts of things. If you want to know anything, he’s the one to ask.” There was a note of tension, and something from the book Amakata had let him clicked in his mind. Something about how Alphas could get along fine and co-exist peacefully, but in high tension situations like a workplace, it could cause aggression to rise.

“I guess it must be difficult, working like that with another Alpha.” He stated conversationally.

Amakata froze at the top of the steps and turned, glancing down at Makoto, confused. “Gorou’s not an Alpha. He’s an Omega. My Omega.”

The words took a second to sink in; a proud, slightly possessive tone to her voice. *Omega. My Omega.*

Makoto flushed in embarrassment and looked down towards his feet. “Sorry,” he mumbled, “I guess- I just- He didn’t really seem like how you or the book described Omegas.”

Amakata chuckled and turned back to the balcony, walking to the left of the stairs. “It’s fine. You’ll learn how to tell Alphas and Omegas apart soon enough. Eventually, you’ll be able to tell them apart the moment you see them.”

Makoto followed her onto the balcony to the left, a long, brightly lit hallway of paneled wood stretching out before him, all the doors on either side of the hallway shut tightly.

“And as for the book, and what I told you for that matter, what you need to remember is that what you got was an overall definition; a stereotype if you will. What it doesn’t take into account is that Alphas and Omegas are, first and foremost, human. Each one is different, just like anyone else. Not all Alphas are Overprotective or hot-headed. One of the Alphas here can be downright sullen unless his Omega is around, and another boy is as straight-faced, no-nonsense as he can get, though he has his occasional bursts of high-strung moments. And it’s a good thing too, because with an Omega like Nagisa, he needs all the Composure he can get. And you,” she glanced over her shoulder at Makoto, coming to a stop in front of a door. Makoto saw a small, golden name tag on the door with the name Nanase inscribed on it. “Are nothing like either of them.

“Omegas are the same. Some are hot-headed like Gorou, some are uncontrollable rays of sunshine, and others,” she glanced at the door in front of them and sighed. “some act like the only emotion they feel is apathy.”

Amakata opened the door marked Nanase let the door swing open, and stepped inside, her figure clouding as she made her way in the dark room. After a moment to steel himself, Makoto followed her into the blackness.

Makoto blinked, letting his eyes adjust to the darkness. Light was streaming from a crack in the door on the right and it, along with the light from the hallway, made it easier to see. The room was quite clean. The dresser to the left of the hallway door was shut, and all that seemed to be on top was what appeared to be a wallet and a small picture frame, the picture to dark to see. He could see the covers on the bed were thrown back, a gesture that reminded Makoto of the way his younger brother would toss the blankets aside in the morning when he woke up, grumbling to when asked about his bed that it made no sense to make the bed when he would only mess it up that night. Makoto smiled fondly and decided that whoever Nanase was, he doubted he was a morning person. Next the bed was a nightstand, and Makoto could see the outline of stacks of books.

Amakata’s darkened form made its way from Makoto’s side to the door leaking light to the right, and threw the door open, calling “Haruka! I’m coming in!”
Makoto was suddenly reminded of what Gorou had shouted at the woman when they had arrived. He won’t get out of the bathtub.

“Dr. Amakata, should we really be-“

“It’s fine.” She tossed over her shoulder. “He’s not naked. Come it. He’ll be more comfortable meeting you when he’s in the water.”

There was a splash, and Makoto watched as Amakata sighed irritably. “Haruka, do not hide underwater. I would just like you to say hello. If you do, you don’t have to come to supper, and I’ll have some fish sent up.”

Makoto took a deep breath to steady his nerves, then stepped forward into the bathroom beside Amakata.

The bathroom was quite a bit like his own shared family bathroom at home: a simple, beige room, well lit, the only difference was the large bathtub that overtook the room. Inside the bathroom, Makoto could see a figure inside the filled tub, and what looked to be silky black hair.

“Haruka, please.” Amakata’s voice was stressed now, if a little resigned, and the body beneath the water stilled, then before sitting up as with a splash. dark hair and a slender pale body rose out of the water. Makoto found himself admiring the boy as he shook his head, trying to clear water from his face and ears.

He was, without a doubt, beautiful. Anyone could see the strange beauty of Haruka, the way his inky black hair complemented his pale pallor perfectly, his eyes, mouth, and nose set delicately on his beautiful face. Makoto couldn’t help but compare him to a work of art.

The Haruka opened his eyes and met Makoto’s gaze.

Eyes. Eyes so blue, so perfect…

Makoto was reminded of his home, of Iwatobi, of the dark, lonely ocean he often looked out over from his home, and of fear. He feared the way the dark water would swallow him, swallow anything, even a boat, without a care in the world; dragging anything that was careless enough to venture into it into the dark, inky depths below. Makoto couldn’t help but feel like he was drowning anytime looked out at the ocean, almost as though the water would rise and overtake him, dragging him into the water.

It was a similar feeling, looking into Haruka’s eyes. Gleaming like the sun on water, yet simultaneously dark and unfathomable. The only difference was that looking into Haruka’s eyes was that he wanted to plunge forward, to dive headfirst and drown happily in the dark blue of his eyes. It felt like a sucker punch to his body, and he found almost gasping for breath as he looked in Haruka’s eyes.

Haruka’s face was smooth, unreadable. A perfect statue, guarding whatever he was feeling, but as the blue eyes that had taken him so off guard stared into his own green eyes, Makoto felt a blush rise to his face, feeling as though Haruka was just as taken aback by Makoto as Makoto was by him.

“Makoto?”

The sound of his name made his heart jump, and he turned towards the sound, bewildered at the fact that he was disappointed the call had come from Amakata.

“Oh, Sorry!” he chuckled nervously, rubbing the back of his head softly. “I was just kinda out of it
for a second.”

Amakata’s brow furrowed in confusion and worry as she asked, “Are you ok?”

“Y-yeah! I’m fine!” the words came out a little faster than he meant them to, sounding rushed and completely fake to his own ears. Which was ridiculous, because he was fine.

Wasn’t he?

The doctor watched him carefully, then turned to the boy in the bathtub. “Haruka, I just wanted to introduce you to Makoto. He’ll be staying with us for a while.”

Makoto turned back, eyes locking with the blue ones he was sure hadn’t looked away from him since the boy had risen from the water. There was a strange look in Haruka’s eyes, a gleam that Makoto couldn’t place, no matter how much he wanted to. He found himself desperately wishing he could tell what was going on in the dark-haired boy’s head.

Makoto took a step forward. “Hello, Haruka. Nice to meet you.” The words sounded awkward to his own ears, a rush of embarrassment flooding him. The embarrassment got worse when, on the fly, he held out a hand to shake the boy’s hand.

This is ridiculous! A tiny voice in the back of his mind reared up. He’s in the bathtub! You can’t just expect him to shake hands with you.

Makoto flushed. “Uh, sorry. I-“ But he didn’t have the chance to retract his hand, or even finish his apology, when Haruka raised a hand from the water and gripped Makoto’s tightly.

The moment their hands touched, a flash of heat rushed through him, so sharp it was almost painful. Haruka seemed to feel it as well, and both boys jerked their hands away, Makoto making a noise of surprise, Haruka silent, though his eyes were wide.

Makoto glanced down at his hand, expecting there to be a mark. The heat had felt so real, as though he had touched a hot stove. However, his skin was clear and unmarked.

“Are you ok?” Amakata’s voice was sharp, nervous and a little shocked.

“Fine. Probably just static shock or something.” Makoto heard himself reassuring Amakata, but he was still trying to convince himself that was all it had been. It hadn’t felt at all like a static.

There was a small splash, and Makoto glanced up from his hand to meet the startlingly blue eyes. Makoto couldn’t help but wonder if he would ever be able to look at those eyes without his heart skipping a small beat. Those eyes were just so strange.

Haruka held his gaze purposefully, and Makoto could almost read the emotion lying just beneath the surface. It was almost- possessive? Claiming? Trusting?

They held each other’s gaze for what felt like an eternity, yet Makoto was sure that he could have looked into Haruka’s eyes for much longer when the boy, very slowly and deliberately, let his eyes fall shut, then opened them again. The motion reminded him of the stray cats he had more or less adopted on the streets and allies of Iwatobi. They would often do the same thing, blinking slowly once Makoto had finally endured enough scratches and nibbling bites to earn their trust.

“Well, since we’ve said hello, we’ll leave you be, Haruka,” Amakata’s voice was disappointed, as though she had hoped to gain something from this visit to the boy’s bathroom. “Come on Makoto. Everyone else is waiting in the dining room. Nagisa has been asking about you since the first time I
went to see you. So has Gou for that matter. I’ve told them about you and even shown pictures, and everyone is very keen to meet you.”

Makoto was about to turn and follow Amakata out the door, but before he could, something in Haruka’s eyes kept him glued to the spot. The blue eyes sharpened, and while there was no measurable change to his face, Makoto got the sense the Haruka didn’t want him to leave. So he paused for just a moment before returning to the tub.

Holding out a hand to Haruka, Makoto gave him a warm smile. “I really wish you would join us for dinner, Haruka. It would be nice to get to know you all!”

Haruka sank down into the water until it covered his mouth, debating whether to actually leave the tub. Finally, he raised his head enough to mumble, “Haru.”

Makoto smiled, reaching out further until his hand was directly over the water. “Ok. Come on Haru. Come eat dinner with us.”

Something about Haru’s eyes seemed to light up, but there was still no noticeable change to his face, and he said nothing. Finally, he reached out and took the hand, letting Makoto pull him up. Makoto did his best not to get distracted by Haru’s body, the way the water rushing over the slender frame and welled up at the line where a pair of black swimming jammers with purple accents covered his lower half, and released Haru’s hand once he was standing.

“We’ll wait for you, ok?” he assured, a dark corner of his mind deciding quickly that there was nothing Haru could wear that would make him more attractive than he was at that moment.

Haru said nothing, reaching down to pull the plug, and Makoto turned away, only to face Amakata, who was staring in shock at Makoto.

She pulled him quickly from the room, flipping on the light in Haru’s bedroom as she pushed Makoto into the hall and closed the door. Then she rounded on him.

Amakata’s face was lit up with pure, unadulterated joy. “He let you touch him. He willingly touched you. Usually the only one who can get away with getting a hand on him without getting a nasty look is Nagisa, and that’s only because it does no good with Nagisa.”

Makoto shrugged, but felt a bit of pride well up in him, glad that despite the fact that he didn’t seem to be a very good Alpha, at least he could get one person to trust him.

“And you got him to leave the tub. I gave up trying to do that years ago. He just never wants to leave. And he spoke to you! Right after meeting you! It took me hours to get a word out of him when he first came here!” Amakata’s voice was rising in pitch as she got more and more excited. Finally, she settled and leaned against the wall, grinning at Makoto. “I knew it. I knew you’d be good for him.”

The door opened, and Haru stepped out. Makoto tried to stop from staring, he really did, but it was difficult. Haru’s blue hoodie was baggy and he had a pair of black shorts, and despite the fact that Makoto had recently decided that Haru dressed in a swimsuit was as attractive as the boy could be, there was something about the way the hoodie was just a few shades darker than his eyes, matching the blue orbs and his hair perfectly, that made him ridiculously attractive to Makoto.

Makoto shook the thoughts away and smiled at Haru kindly. “Ready?”

Haru met Makoto’s smile with wide eyes before glancing down, seeming reluctant to look too much at Makoto. That idea disappointed Makoto, but he let it go as he leaned away from the wall he was
leaning against and turned his smile to Amakata. “Lead the way.”

She watched them carefully, a small grin pulling at her lips, then turned away, walking back down the hallway, the two boys following behind her.

Chapter End Notes

guys, you are all the best. Seriously. Only three thousand words in that first chapter, and it already has 30 kudos and almost 300 hundred views. Also thank you all for the comments as well! I'll try my best to respond to them, but I'm a really awkward turtle most of the time, so I never know what to say to express how awesome you guys are! I've been ready to post this chapter since Tuesday, and it's been killing me that I actually set a date for me to upload each chapter. I just get so excited and nervous about posting the chapters that I really don't want to wait a week. But if I want to make sure each chapter is finished before it goes up, I don't really have a choice. that said, I've almost finished another chapter, so I guess the time isn't going to waste. Anyways, not much to say about this chapter, since it's still a bunch of set up, but I hoped you enjoyed Haru's introduction. Next weeks chapter won't be nearly as long ( I think it's around a thousand words unless I rework it before next Saturday), But it should still be interesting, cause it's actually in Haru's point of view. It's going to be called Warm. Well, that's about it. Let me know what you think, or if you have any questions or anything. Thank you all so much!!!
Alive

Chapter Summary

A quick look into Haru's mind

Chapter Notes

Just a quick chapter. This chapter starts to show some of the darker sides of the Alpha/Omega world.
this will be the first chapter where I'll give a little warning as to what's to come. I'll preface it before I spoil anything, so those of you who don't want the warning for what's to come don't have anything spoiled for you.

WARNING
A few spoilers for anyone sensitive to certain subjects:

Haru discusses his family abandoning him. It's just a brief mention, but there will be more to come on the subject in later chapters.

For the life of him, Haru didn’t know why he was here.

As he walked down the hallway, a little voice in the back of his mind was screaming at him: Why had he left the bathtub, where he felt safest? What had made him leave the room that kept him closest to the water and follow Amakata and the tall Alpha? This was not him. He would never leave the bathtub to spend time or, God forbid, converse, with people.

Haru knew he’s was not a very good Omega. He’s too headstrong to be the “Perfect” Omega, though most of the doctors at the estate claimed that, physically, he fit the part perfectly. But none of the regular Omega qualities had ever appealed to him. He had seen the way Nagisa clung to Rei, the way Rin and Sousuke supported each other, the way both Omegas slowly fell head over heels for the Alpha’s they had chosen, and had told himself he didn’t need it, and he definitely didn’t want it. All he wanted was to be free.

Then Amakata had brought this Alpha into his bathroom.

Haru noticed the unfamiliar scent of a new Alpha the moment he had heard his bedroom door open. Amakata’s scent was a familiar one, the one Alpha he had always been ok with being in his room. Probably because she never tried to teach him how to be a “Proper” Omega. But then another smell had filtered in after her, the scent of an unmated Alpha, young, newly presented, no doubt. Haru had been set to give him the brush off and ensure he didn’t have to deal with another disturbance.

And then he looked in those eyes.

They were the opposite of his own. He had been told over and over again that it was like he wore a
Makoto’s eyes were everything but unexpressive. From the moment Haru glanced at them, the first thing he noticed was that Makoto looked vibrantly alive. Emerald eyes shined brightly, excitedly, but a little confused, an emotion Haru felt echoed in himself as he wondered why he was even bothering to meet the boy’s eyes. Every emotion could be seen through those eyes, the excited confusion at their meeting, hope when Makoto had asked him to come eat with him at dinner. And now, as Haru walked beside him, Makoto glanced his way and smiled reassuringly, happiness making his eyes sparkle in a way Haru could have sworn was impossible. The joy radiating from him was completely overwhelming to Haru and forced his eyes away, knowing that if he held that gaze for much longer, he wouldn’t be able to push back the blush.

This made no sense. Absolutely no sense. This wasn’t the way connections between an Alpha and Omega worked. It wasn’t love at first sight, and yet the moment Haru had seen Makoto, he knew there was nowhere else he wanted to be. In none of the stories that he had (unwillingly) heard from Nagisa and Rin had he heard anything about touching and feeling instantly connected. Rei had simply had a crush on Nagisa for ages for the blond boy had caught on, and Rin and Sousuke had butted heads and argued for almost a year before they had realized how they felt. Nothing of what Haru had been told explained how when his and Makoto’s hands touched, there had been a shock that had vibrated him to the very core of his being, and how, when he had met Makoto’s eyes, he had seen the same earth-shattering look in his eyes that Haru had felt. Nothing explained why, the moment he had felt that shock, one word echoed through his mind when he glanced back at the tall, emerald-eyed Alpha: Mine.

Of course, that was ridiculous. After all, this wasn’t some heart-wrenching romantic movie or a shoujo manga. Haru had just met this man. Yet every cell in his body screamed out that Makoto was Important, that some part of him belonged to this Alpha, and this Alpha belonged to him.

So when Amakata had oh so casually mentioned that she and Makoto would be having dinner with everyone, and that Gou, sweet, yet completely unattached Omega Gou, was looking forward to meeting Makoto, some quiet, dormant part of himself roared to life, Screaming out that Makoto belonged to him.

Whatever the Puppy-dog like Alpha had awoken in Haru, it scared him. This possessiveness was not him. Haru did not need or want an Alpha. In fact, he still didn’t need or want an Alpha. All he wanted, what he needed so badly he felt he wouldn’t be able to breathe without, was Makoto. Just Makoto.

Looking away from Makoto did little to lessen the feeling of the presence of the man beside him. He could still feel his eyes on him, and the feeling sent his heart beating faster. He heard Makoto let out a small chuckle at his reaction, and the small sound rang like a bell throughout Haru. His breathing became quicker, shallower, and only lightened when he felt Makoto’s gaze move from him.

The moment the taller boy’s eyes moved forwards, Haru found himself trailing slightly behind, allowing himself to admire Makoto. After all, he had been so taken in by those eyes he hadn’t had the chance to notice much else than his height and beautiful face.

Makoto was huge, almost ridiculously so. Haru figured that at least three of him could fit inside Makoto’s shirt without stretching it. Something about the size of the Alpha made him feel small, delicate next to the overwhelming power that was Makoto… what was his last name? Just another fact that made the emotions Haru felt towards the Alpha even more insane: he didn’t even know anything about this boy.

Deciding to ask at the next opportunity, Haru took just a moment to watch Makoto watch, to notice
the power in each stride, power that seemed slightly loose and uncoordinated. Every once in a while, one of his huge feet would catch on the tiling, on a step on the way downstairs. He would fumble for a split second before regaining his balance, yet Haru couldn’t help but wonder how long it would take before he couldn’t catch himself. He guessed it would be a while before that happened, most likely when his mind was distracted and he wasn’t focusing on staying upright.

Haru’s thoughts were interrupted when they finally made it to the dining room. Amakata paused and turned to the boys and smiled. “I think Haruka and I will go in first, Makoto. Maybe we can get everyone-“ Haru took the pause after that word to mean that when she said everyone, she was really talking about Nagisa. “Settled down. They tend to get a little, er, excited about new people.”

Yep, definitely Nagisa.

Makoto nodded, his green eyes shimmering with curiosity, and the look was so adorable Haru nearly groan out loud. Surely no Alpha was meant to be this cute.

Amakata smiled gently. “Give us a couple minutes, then come on in.” she turned her smile to Haru, who was seriously considering just waiting with Makoto, but those dreams were dashed when she said, “Come along Haruka. It’s not fair if you spend more time with him than anyone else when he just got here.”

Haru sighed and followed her inside, bracing himself.

The moment he was in the door, there was an excited squeak, and a blond ball of energy flew to his side, instantly latching onto his arm and bouncing excitedly.

“Haru-chan! Your gonna eat with us!?”

“Nagisa, calm down. Your acting as though he’s never eaten with us before.” Haru managed to glance over the head of the bouncing Nagisa to see Rei making his way over. Haru was by no means close to Nagisa’s Alpha, but anyone pulling the Omega off him was ok in his books, and that seemed to be Rei’s number one job most of the time. Rei was the only one who could restrain Nagisa most of the time, though he rarely did. Nagisa had Rei completely wrapped around his finger.

At the touch of his boyfriend, Nagisa pulled away from Haru, beaming.

“Ok, ok, everyone settle down,” Amakata shoed them all to the table; Haru found his seat next to an empty chair where Natsuya had sat before he had left the estate with Nao after getting married (one of the few couples who chose a traditional marriage over the common practice of the bonding ceremony. Not that there was much of a difference between the two, if he was being honest.) This had been Haru’s seat since he had arrived, before any of the others, at a young age of thirteen. It had been an oddity, presenting at such a young age. As if he wasn’t enough of an oddity already.

Haru had been here for almost six years. The anniversary of his arrival would be in just a few weeks, on his birthday. And as the door opened and Makoto nosed his way in, Haru couldn’t help but think of all the other anniversaries his birthday marked: six years since he had come to the estate. Six years since the estate had begun housing Alphas and Omegas. Six years of watching other teens find mates and leave this house to start their lives.

Six years since his parents had abandoned him.
07/19 note- Ok. wow. note to self, do NOT attempt to edit when you're too sick to think straight. didn't change much, just edited a few things that i noticed while reading back over it today. I can't believe I published this chapter while it had a repeated paragraph in it :( Anyways, i just wanted to bring up something that I read in one of the comments (sorry I haven't been replying to those btw. Your comments usually just leave me so speechless that I can't really think of how to reply. but if you have any questions, I'll definitely answer those). Makoto and Haru are going to get along really well, especially once they figure out the whole "static shock" thing that happened in the last chapter, but there's not going to be anything huge until late in the story. One issue I tend to have with some Soulmate/Truemate tropes in ABO is that they always seem to jump straight from stranger to lovers as soon as they realize they supposed to be together, and the actual getting to know each other part sometimes seems to get kinda lost. So this is my attempt to try something a little different. Well, that was something I meant to mention on Saturday, but I didn't remember. Anyways, Thank you all for your comments, and I'll have the next chapter up on the 22nd!!

07/15 note- Ok, guys, I'm not gonna lie, I've been pretty sick for the last few days, so I haven't really been in the right mind to edit as well as I usually would. So I might come back in and edit it once I can think a little clearer. Sorry this chapter isn't quite as long as the others. I just had a few plot points that I really wanted to introduce before we continued on with the story. The next chapter will be called "More Hellos", and it will be a little longer. We'll get a more thorough introduction to the others. until then, thank you for reading! let me know what you think!
More Hellos

Chapter Summary

Time to meet Everyone else!!!!!!

Chapter Notes

Implied underage drinking.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Makoto peeked inside the large room carefully, muttering a quiet “Pardon me,” as he entered, and flushed when he found seven pairs of eyes fixed on him. In fact, the only person in the room who wasn’t looking at him was Haru. He was staring down at his plate, his eyes dark and reflective, maybe a little sad. Makoto wondered if he just really didn’t like being around people very much. He felt a strange mixture of emotions rile within himself: disgust with himself that he hadn’t noticed just how uncomfortable Haru was, and yet happiness at the idea that despite his blatant aversion to people, he had still come to dinner when Makoto had asked.

“Everyone, this is Tachibana Makoto.” Amakata smiled at him, reclaiming his attention. “Makoto, this is Rin, and his sister Gou,” she pointed at two red-headed teens opposite the table from Haru. The girl pouted in irritation, and Amakata laughed. “Sorry. Rin and Kou.” She smiled at the Red haired girl. “Better?”

The girl, Kou, nodded, the momentary irritation passed. “Yeah, better.” She waved at Makoto, and he noticed Haru stiffen, though he still didn’t look up.

The boy next to Kou had grinned, his sharp teeth reminding Makoto of a shark. Then a hulking mass of dark hair and turquoise eyes leaned in, wrapping a protective arm around Rin, whose face began to tinge with pink. He pushed the dark haired boy away. “Sousuke, don’t be a frickin’ caveman.”

Sousuke chuckled, but his gaze was sharp as he looked at Makoto. “Not a caveman, Rin. Just letting him know where the line is.”

Makoto took a step back towards the door behind him and raised his hand, trying to show that the message was well-received. Apparently it worked, because Sousuke smirked and settled back into his chair, arms still slung across the back of Rin’s chair, the redheaded boy, contrary to his earlier embarrassment, not making any attempts to move it.

“Sousuke, don’t be rude.” Amakata scolded, the furrowing of her eyebrows making her forehead crease, before sighing and giving a reassuring smile to Makoto. He smiled back, the hair on the back of his neck still standing in shock. He glanced back at Sousuke and Rin and noticed how Rin, who was whispering to his sister, placed a hand on what Makoto thought was Sousuke’s leg, and Sousuke seemed to settle at his Omega’s touch.
So that’s the bond that’s so special, he thought, suddenly longing for that connection. It looked so right, and he barely knew anything about this new world. He glanced towards Haru and felt something light up when he saw the cerulean blue eyes peeking at him, though Haru made no other effort to pretend he was really paying attention.

A short blond boy stood then, his chair screeching as it slid out from under him and would have fallen, if not for the boy next to him, a noticeably taller boy with indigo hair, red glasses, and violet-blue eyes, caught it just as it started tipping. He straightened the chair, then straightened his glasses.

“I’m Nagisa Hazuki!” the blond proclaimed, easily capturing the room’s attention. He grinned cheekily and reached for the arm of the boy next to him, trying to pull him to a standing position, but almost tipping him out of his chair to the floor. “And this is my Alpha Rei-chan! He’s mine, so he’s off limits. Ama-chan says you’re an Alpha too, but that’s not saying much. You Alphas are a crazy bunch.”

“Nagisa!” Rei chided, his face going so red it was almost purple, his stern and embarrassed eyes on his Omega.

“What? It’s true!” Nagisa shrugged. “Remember Nao-chan and Natsu-chan We all thought Natsuya was gonna go for Gou-chan-“

“My Name is Kou!” the redheaded girl stated irritably, but Nagisa plowed on.

“-But then we caught him getting plowed b-“ a firm hand clamped down on Nagisa’s mouth, and Rei sighed in relief.

“Nagisa, not at the table,” Amakata looked bemused, as though the boys’ antics were her primary entertainment, then looked back at Makoto. “And you’ve already met Haruka and Gorouu, so I believe that’s everyone!”

“Nagisa could have sworn he saw a smirk on Haru’s face, but his head turned away too fast to really get a look.

“We had to fetch him down for dinner,” Amakata explained carefully. “Makoto take a seat wherever you like. Gorou’s late, so he can sit wherever’s left.” She muttered the last part, looking at the door behind Makoto.

Makoto looked around, surveying his options. There was an empty seat next to Haru, and he really, really wanted to sit there, and the only other option was in between Gou- no, Kou, he chided himself- and Nagisa, and while Nagisa seemed friendly, if a little exuberant, the look in the girl’s eyes was downright predatory as she let her dark red eyes trace his figure.

So next to Haru it was.

He took a seat, smiling at Haru, whose eyes widened in shock to find Makoto sitting next to him, then turned to look the other way, eyes looking at the table.
“So you got him out of the bath, Mako-chan? Isn’t Haru-chan’s body so pretty? I think all the time he spends in the water somehow makes him prettier, which is weird since water dries you out. Better be careful, Gou-chan-“

“It’s Ko-“

“Mako-chan may have already picked his Omega.” The blond teased gently, winking at Makoto, who felt his cheeks heat up immensely and had to look away.

“If he does, it’s fine. It’s not like I want a mate, anyway. Though he does look very... toned.” Her tone was just as predatory as her gaze, and Makoto blushed even harder.

“Gou, calm down, you’ll give him nightmares. Jesus, sometimes you even scare me.” Rin grinned toothily at his sister and reached out to ruffle her hair neatly tied in a ponytail, making her complain.

“So, Makoto, Amakata hasn’t told us very much about you, other than you’re an Alpha. Where are you from?” Rei sounded exactly like a father questioning the boy her daughter brought home, straightening his glasses and cutting into the steak in front of him.

So Makoto, cheeks still pink with the attention he was getting, told them all about Iwatobi, about his friends at school, his siblings, what he wanted to do with his future, everyone at the table listening to him politely, and occasionally throwing out a question or two.

When he talked about his family, everyone seemed to pay close attention, and Makoto wondered how long they had all been away from their homes. It all seemed very familiar to Makoto as he spoke to his new housemates, images of the elementary school he had been in, the parks he had played at, his family waving as he left that morning playing on repeat in his mind, and he felt a sudden longing rush through him.

Once he had said all there was to say, everyone at the table broke off into smaller conversations: Sousuke, Rin and Gou huddled together, while Nagisa was talking animatedly to Haru- or rather, at Haru, as the dark haired boy made no real effort in the conversation (not that any effort was really needed), while he and Rei sat there, Makoto making interjections whenever Nagisa stopped talking long enough for him to get a word in, Rei helping to guide the conversation in a safe path, though Nagisa always pulled it towards the more risqué topics.

Finally, after what felt like ages, Amakata stood. Throughout dinner, she had been making concerned glances towards the door, most likely waiting on her Omega to show up.

“I should go see if Gorou’s going to be long. Then I think I’ll retire for the night. Don’t stay up too late.” She warned as she closed the door behind her.

Gou stood up next. “I almost forgot, I need to talk to her about the ceremony. There are a few details we need to iron out.”

“Ceremony?” Makoto asked.

“Yeah, for Sousuke and Rin. They’re getting bonded around Christmas, so we don’t have long to plan the ceremony,” She paused at the door, and glanced back at Rei. “The food was delicious, by the way, Rei! Thanks!” And with that, Gou rushed out of the room, calling Amakata’s name.

Makoto paused to look down at his plate, which was now mostly emptied of the Steak and vegetables that had been piled on his plate. Gou was right, it had been fantastic. He wondered if Rei was the one who did all the cooking. If so, he had a feeling he wouldn’t miss his mother’s cooking as much as he had thought he would. This was almost as good!
The door closed with a heavy thud, and all was silent as they listened to the sound of Gou’s footsteps fading. Once they were gone, Nagisa stood quickly. “Finally!” Nagisa chirped, and a sudden wave of dread washed over Makoto. The blond ran to the door closest to him, more of an arched opening than a door, on the other side of the room from where Amakata and Gou had left. They heard some clanking from the other room, and Nagisa returned with a clear crystal bottle with amber liquid inside. “Now that all the sticks in the mud are gone, let’s get the ball rolling. Who wants shots?”

Chapter End Notes

Yay! new chapter is up, and I’m feeling better! Not much substance in this chapter, just the start of a few jokes that should pay off later on, and a small bit of information that will come up again in a few chapters time.

Something I just thought I should mention, for the sake of my underage drinking warning at the top, but I’ve kinda messed with everyone’s ages in this for plot reasons. Haru is eighteen, Makoto, Rin, and Sousuke are seventeen, and Nagisa, Rei, and Gou are sixteen. So the only real age I messed with was Haru’s, because he needed to be older than everyone else in order for the timeline to fit.

Anyways, I know there hasn’t been much between just Makoto and Haru in these last two chapters, but from now on there’s gonna be a lot more, Starting with next week’s chapter "Moonlit Garden", where Makoto and Haru will have their first actual conversation, and Makoto will fall down a lot.

Alright, I’m off to finish today’s episode of Show of the Weekend. Have a good Weekend everyone!!! :)
Makoto closed the dining room door, leaning against it with a quiet sigh. Behind him, four members of the household- Nagisa Rei, Rin, and Sousuke- were still inside. After Amakata and Gou had left, and Nagisa had gotten the bottle of alcohol, the two Omegas had started drinking immediately, while their Alphas had taken some convincing. Sousuke had completely refused, stating that Rin always needed supervision when he drank so he didn’t do something stupid, while Rei was finally convinced to drink by some shameless flirting by Nagisa. The blond had offered Makoto some, but he had quickly turned it down. Even out of his home and away from the watchful eyes of his siblings, years of habit and warnings from his mother about how he needed to be a good role model for Ran and Ren echoed in his head.

Haru had slipped out not long after the drinking began, seeming rather uncomfortable with how loud and touchy Nagisa was being- not that Makoto thought he wasn’t usually very touchy. In fact, he was sure that Nagisa’s personal space issues were only made worse by the alcohol.

Makoto could practically feel tension vibrating off Haru as he left the room, and a sense of helplessness rose within Makoto. He wanted to take Haru’s hand and pull him away from the loud room, to take him somewhere where Haru would feel safe…

But that was ridiculous. He barely knew Haru, didn’t have any claim on him that gave him the right to feel so protective of him. Why did those distant blue eyes make him so nervous? When he had stood and left the room, why did it feel as if a piece of Makoto was pulling away, trying to follow him?

What was it about Nanase Haruka that had him so worked up?

Makoto shook his head and pulled away from the door. He needed to get outside for a little bit, clear his head. Back home, if he ever felt like this, he would just step out and walk down to the beach, always keeping a distance from the water, but letting the ocean air surround him, clearing his mind. But there was no beach nearby, only clear open spaces and, if a drunk Rin was to be trusted, a garden out back.

“Garden it is, then,” Makoto mumbled to himself, shoving his hands in his pockets as he walked off down the long hallway. He decided to take this opportunity to explore the hallway, knocking on every door he found. Amakata had told him all of the bedrooms were on the upper floor, so he felt
safe trying every door he found. Quite a few were locked, and one had a sign with “authorized personnel only” in bold beside it. Makoto didn’t even try that door.

Every once in a while, however, a door would open, and Makoto would glance inside. One room he found looked to be a large study, with books covering three of the walls, while another wall had a bunch of computers lined up along it. Another room was dark, and Makoto had to walk in a bit to make out the large indoor pool in the middle of the room. Excitement welled up inside him as he pushed further inside, trying to find a light. He had swam constantly as a kid, and pools always felt safer than the ocean. More contained, less unpredictable. But upon failing to find a light, he peered into the darkness, the light of the hallway revealing shadowed a dry pool bed and shadowed cracks. Glancing around, Makoto found the rest of the room in a similar state of abandonment. Cobwebs covered the corners, and dust stirred as he moved around made his nose twitch. Something about the room felt completely off, so, with an eerie shiver, Makoto exited the room, pulling the door shut behind him.

Finally, Makoto came a set of ornate white double doors, the frosted glass set in the frames revealing a dark sky and muted artificial light. Makoto hurried out the door.

The air was cool around him, but in a different way than the cool night air of his home. The air of Iwatobi tended to be brisk and sharp at night, a cool breeze rising off the ocean, and everything tended to feel a little wet from the constant humidity. But here, far from the ocean, the night air was warm and felt nice on Makoto’s cool skin.

Glancing around, he was pleased to notice that not only was he in the garden Rin had described, but also that it was even more beautiful than Rin’s slurred speech had painted it.

The sky was dark above him, a blackness that matched the blackness of the night sky at home, and the longer he stared into the sky, the more tiny bright stars began to reveal themselves. This was one of his favorite things, the way some of the prettiest stars were the ones that you had to stare intently at, and the frustrating way that these quieter stars faded back into the darkness the moment he looked away. After a minute or so, however, his neck began to ache in complaint, and he glanced back down.

The garden itself was a beautiful dark green, hedges leading him down a cobblestone pathway to a larger space that was brightly lit with large, globed lampposts spread equally along the edge of a circular path that branched out in four directions, including the path Makoto was on. In the center of the circle was a large fountain made of a pale stone. Makoto thought it might be limestone, but he wasn’t sure. He had never really paid attention when his class had studied geology a few years back.

The rest of the courtyard was divided into four parts by the stone paths, each section was grassy, Bordered by lilies and rose bushes. Ivy wound through the hedges surrounds, and white, yellow, and red roses bloomed from the hedge. In one of the grassy sections, Makoto watched the light from the lamp shimmer across a small pond, lilies and cattails planted around the pond swaying in the shadowed.

Looking around, Makoto decided that the garden was very much like the fairytales he had read to Ran as bedtime stories when she was younger, and he half expected fairies to start fluttering around with tickling laughter, or small woodland creatures to walk out and nibble on the grass.

Then a dark figure moved out from behind the fountain.

Makoto screeched in terror, stepping backward and tripping over his own feet. He twisted as he fell and threw his arms out to catch himself, just barely stopping his head from hitting the ground as his arms slid along the ground. Oh God this was it. Something was out here, going to kill him, oh god.
He thought of his family, how, at least they had last seen him with a smile on his face. But he hadn’t even gotten a chance to really talk to Haru. Well, every life had its regrets. He could hear footsteps padding closer and he shut his eyes and opened his mouth, ready to scream or beg for his life. Maybe the monster could be reasoned with, maybe-

“Makoto,” the voice was soft, lulling Makoto’s frenzied mind to a calm, and though he had never heard the voice this clearly, he knew exactly who it belonged to. His quickening heartbeat was enough to tell him that, or maybe that was just adrenaline running through him.

Makoto glanced up into the deep blue eyes of Haruka. He was still in the hoodie and shorts from dinner and yet in the dark, the outfit looked completely different, reflecting his wide, shocked eyes in a new light. Before they had been dark, as dark as the pond water nearby. Now his eyes sparkled brightly, taking Makoto’s breath away. He looked peaceful here, nothing like the uncomfortable boy Makoto had seen leaving the dining room earlier. “Are you ok?”

Makoto shook his head in an attempt to clear his mind of Haru’s bewitching eyes, before realizing what the movement might make Haru think. “I’m fine! Just Fine!” he blurted out. Actually, his arm hurt quite a bit, but there was no reason to bother Haru with that.

Haru watched him carefully, dark eyes shining in the light, before holding out a hand to Makoto. Makoto took it, wincing as his scrapped arm stretched as Haru helped pull him up.

Once he was standing he said thanks and went to pull his hand away, making note of how soft Haru’s hand was. But as soft and fragile as it looked, Haru’s grip was firm and kept Makoto’s hand still.

Makoto prayed the darkness would hide his blush, and chuckled nervously. “Haru?”

The dark haired boy twisted Makoto’s arm gently using the hand not holding Makoto’s to feel up his arm gently, carefully. The path his fingers made left a tingling trail along Makoto’s arm, and he felt his face flush.

Then Haru’s fingers met the scrapped and painful skin near his elbow, and Makoto yelped in pain. “Liar,” Haru mumbled, lightening his touch as he examined the bloody scrape. After a minute, he released Makoto’s hand and started walking away with, “I’ll be back,” tossed over his shoulder in a quiet, monotonous tone.

So Makoto stood still, watching as Haru walked back towards the house and disappeared inside.

Makoto rocked back on his heels and took a deep breath, trying to steady his heart. There was no way he was still worked up over the fall. His pounding heart, the ridiculously cheesy grin plastered on his face; this was all Haru, and that fact made his heat spin. He had never reacted this strongly to anyone, not the prettiest girl in his class nor any of his friends he had grown up with (not that the latter surprised him, since as far as he’d know, he’d been straight; obviously his attraction to Haru changed that, but he decided rather quickly he didn’t care. Guy, girl, or in between, all he could think of was Haru, and that was enough for him at the moment.) No one else made him feel this giddy from just their voice; no one else’s gaze had ever sent his palms sweating.

It occurred to him that this could possibly be an Alpha thing. Maybe it was a natural reaction to being around an Omega? Somehow, he couldn’t believe that was the truth, but decided there was no possible way to just ignore the idea. It was definitely something to ask Amakata next time he got the chance.
“Makoto?” his heart leapt at the voice, loving the sweet, though uninflected tone, and he glanced up.

Haru was standing a few feet away, frozen mid-step, his eyes cautious, careful, like he was trying to approach a frightened wild animal.

Makoto could barely contained his laughter. “I’m fine, Haru. Really.” He reassured, and Haru, realizing Makoto wasn’t going to get scared again, walked towards him, a small first aid box in his hands. He didn’t reply, just sat down on the side of the fountain and glared until Makoto sat down with a chuckle. Haru worked fast, opening the box and going for a wipe covered with what smelled like rubbing alcohol, carefully beginning to clean Makoto’s wound.

They sat in silence for a few moments, Haru cleaning Makoto’s arm, while Makoto sat still, noticing the way Haru’s hands were soft when his fingers brushed the uninjured and sensitive skin around the scrape.

“I’m sorry,” Haru murmured beside him, his eyes never leaving his work. “I didn’t mean to scare you.”

“No Haru! Its fine!” the words spilled from Makoto’s mouth as he hurried to assure the smaller boy. He could practically feel the distress radiating from Haru, and worked fast to dispel it. “This happens all the time, I promise. Well, not the falling down thing, except I do still fall down quite a bit. But I meant the getting scared thing. My siblings call me a scaredy-cat all the time, and so do my friends. And they’re right,” he laughed trying to make light of the situation. “I’m a coward. Ran and Ren love to scare me any chance the get. Not that they mean anything by it.” He realized he was rambling and clamped his jaw down, turning his gaze downward where he met Haru’s, finding the beautiful blue eyes sadder than anything he’d ever seen.

“Sounds like you really love them, your siblings?”

“Yeah, they’re the greatest. Have you got any siblings, Haru?”

The ravenette glanced down and away, shaking his head. He hesitated for a moment before asking, “What about your parent?”

“What about them?”

“What are they like?”

“Mom and Dad are great,” Makoto began conversationally. He had been worried his constant chatter might annoy Haru, but since he was asking questions, maybe he didn’t mind it. “Best Parents I could ask for. Dad’s a bit absent-minded sometimes, but he’s there when I need him. And Mom can be a little overbearing, but it’s just her way of reminding me she worries about me.”

Haru set the wipe aside finally and took a large square bandage from the first aid kit. “So how did they handle the Alpha thing?”

Makoto tried to catch a glimpse of Haru, trying to get a read into what the quiet boy was feeling, but Haru wouldn’t meet his eyes. “Well, they were a little confused. Probably still are. But I think they’re ok with it. They didn’t want me to leave this morning if that’s anything.” He chuckled, feeling a small pang in his chest as he thought of his family waving as he drove away that morning. “I miss them already.”

Haru said nothing, smoothing the bandage on Makoto’s arm, the coolness of his fingers seeping through the stretchy fabric and cotton.
“What about you Haru? Do you see your family often?”

Haru nodded. “Once a month. I have to go to Tokyo to see them.”

Makoto frowned at his tone. For someone who had been here so long, Haru didn’t sound excited about seeing his family. Something about the way Haru’s fingers pressed slightly harder into the bandage made him think that his family was a topic Haru didn’t really like talking about. So with a quick “That’s cool,” he dropped the subject, and silence settled between them. Haru’s fingers became more gentle after a moment, and it felt less like he was making sure the bandage was on and more like he was just lightly stroking his arm. The motion seemed almost absentminded, but Makoto couldn’t bring himself to mention it and risk Haru pulling his arm away. So he glanced at Haru, keeping quiet, watching the excited way Haru’s eyes followed the water shooting up out of the fountain and flowed into the pool below, noticing the longing twinkling in the stunning blue.

“You really like the water, don’t you Haru?”

Haru’s eyes met Makoto’s, shock echoing in their depths, before he glanced away back towards the water. Makoto chuckled quietly.

“Guess that was a stupid question. Do you swim a lot?”

Haru refused to meet his eyes, but his voice was soft and sad as he replied. “No. I swam a lot when I was a kid, but when I moved here and they shut down the pool, the only time I can swim is on our group trips to the beach.”

“Did you ever try going to the nearby towns and looking for an indoor pool you could swim at?”

Haru’s back went ridged, and his eyes focused. Makoto could practically see the gears turning his head. He bit his lip, doing his best to keep himself from laughing aloud at Haru. However, nothing could stop him from teasing the boy. “You hadn’t thought of that, had you?”

Haru turned and glared at Makoto, reminding him of a cat more than ever. Albeit, a very irked and ill-tempered cat, compared to the trusting kitten he had reminded Makoto of before, but still, a cat nonetheless. He had to stop himself from reaching out to stroke Haru’s head to calm him the way Makoto would have with any number of the stray cats in Iwatobi, as every cell in his body was begging him to do just that. Haru’s hair looked so soft.

Pushing that thought away, Makoto smiled at the irritated boy next to him. “How about tomorrow, we go to some of the nearby towns and look for an indoor pool? Amakata said we can come and go as we please, so it might be fun.” A rather insistent part of his mind noted just how much this idea sounded like a date, but Makoto did his best to ignore the thought. Haru didn’t seem interested in that kind of thing, so no way was he going to push his luck by mentioning the “date” idea. Just spending time and getting to know him would be enough.

Haru’s eyes went wide, and Makoto swore a hint of a smile pulled up his lips, but watched in dismay as the brilliant gleam faded promptly and his gaze dropped.

“I head to Tokyo tomorrow. I’ll be gone for the next few days,” he mumbled.

Oh. Makoto cursed his luck before saying aloud “Well, that’s ok. It’s important to see your parents. I can do some looking around and see if I can find one nearby while you’re gone. That way we won’t waste our time in towns without pools.”

Haru’s eye lit up again, and this time the smile that played across his lips was obvious. His smile seemed to surprise himself just as much as it surprised Makoto, and the pale boy looked down,
embarrassed, only to glance up through impossibly long, dark lashes.

“It’s a date.”

Makoto felt blood rush to his cheeks and his heart did summersaults at the word. *Date.*

He was suddenly aware that Haru’s hand had never left his arm, and the cool touch over the bandage was suddenly very warm. His eyes stayed locked on Haru’s, and he watched as pink began to tinge the pale pallor of the smaller boy.

“A date,” he breathed, his eyes flickering from Haru’s captivating ones to the pink curve of his lips, the sharp edge of his jaw, the line and hallow of his throat…

Something warm and fuzzy and definitely not Haru rubbed up against Makoto’s leg, and He screeched, losing his balance and falling backwards into the cold water of the fountain.

Water flowed over his head, streaming into his mouth, and he popped out of the water, spluttering and choking, trying to keep the liquid from flooding down his throat. Once he coughed up the water, he whipped his face clear of the water and pushed his drooping hair out of his face.

Haru’s eyes were wide, and Makoto watched as a million emotions shone in his eyes: worry, humor, and little smugness, panic, and something else. A burning emotion that Makoto couldn’t place but still sent his cheeks burning under the gaze.

“You ok?” Haru’s sweet, quiet voice betrayed none of the emotions in his eyes.

“Yeah, I’m fine.” Makoto said through a string of weak coughs. “What was-” but the question was answered before it could be asked as a small tuff of midnight black fur pounced onto the ledge of the fountain and blinked its bright green eyes slowly at Makoto, looking more pleased and vindicated than any kitten ever should. Makoto just eyed the kitten in shock, realizing just how engrossed in Haru he had been to have not noticed this adorable ball of fur.

Movement caught his eye, and he glanced away from the cat to see Haru holding out his hand. Makoto smiled and pulled himself up and out of the water, shaking his head to clear the water dripping into his eyes. “Thanks, Haru”

Things were quiet for what felt like an eternity, Haru still holding Makoto’s hand, eyes locked neither willing to break their gaze, and Makoto’s heartbeat picked back up, beating hard, fast, and heavy in his chest.

Finally, however, Haru dropped both his hand and his gaze.

“Have to leave early tomorrow,”

“Oh,” Makoto almost smacked himself. Of course, Haru needed his rest. His parents would be excited to see him, so it wouldn’t do if Haru was tired. “Well, It is getting late. We should probably go to bed.”

He stepped out of the fountain, feeling the breeze send a chill across is body.

Haru nodded, seeming reluctant to speak. “G’night” he mumbled, turning away, but he only made it a few steps towards the house before glancing back. “Don’t forget about our date,”

His eyes caught in the bright light from the lamp, the blue making Makoto’s breath catching in his throat. God, how could someone be so ridiculously beautiful?
Haru turned back towards the house and his eyes off Makoto, his words finally began to sink in.

Our date.

Makoto’s face lit up with a bright, happy grin. It felt like someone set had set off fireworks in his chest, and he wanted to jump for joy, do backflips. Instead, his smile widened, and he raised a hand in farewell. “Night, Haru-chan!”

Haru froze, and Makoto watched as he shook his head.

“Drop the –chan.” Haru’s voice echoed back as he walked inside, and Makoto couldn’t help but laugh in relief. He sat down on the side of the fountain again, and the black kitten sidled up to him, ignoring the water dropping from his clothes. Makoto chuckled and reached to pet his head.

“You’re a little devil, aren’t you?” He mused his mind wandering to thought of a boy with hair as black as the kitten and eyes as blue as the sea.

Chapter End Notes

Because, of course, it is absolutely impossible to have a MakoHaru fic with out Haru's "drop the -chan" line.

Ok, so first off, a little over five weeks in, and this story has almost completely overtaken the number of hits my two other stories have gotten in four months. You guys are the best, seriously.

Now for a little bad news. It's gonna be a rough week for me, and I'll be moving next Saturday, so the next chapter may be a few days late. I promise it will be up no later than that Monday though, so please bear with me. however, every other chapter will be up on time, I promise!

As always, let me know what you think!!!! Have a good week everyone!! ^_^
Irritated

Chapter Summary

The boys begin to show some strange symptoms after Haru leaves for Tokyo, and Amakata may have the answer.

Chapter Notes

Guys, I have to apologize again for this chapter being so late. But hopefully, this chapter is worth the wait.

no warnings this time.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Makoto tossed and turned in his bed, tension frying his nerves as he struggled for sleep. He had been like this all day, so on edge and irritable that he had just stayed in his room, not wanting to be around anyone, in case he lost his temper.

Makoto groaned, flopping from his side onto his back. This wasn’t like him. He never got moody, never felt like one wrong comment could set him off. Hell, His friends usually teased him for his Buda-like patience, usually calling him names like Saint Makoto or Mamakoto for his ability to put up with their daily crap with a kind smile, maybe a rolling of the eyes as he worked to clean up whatever mess they had made.

Now he didn’t feel like a saint. Makoto felt like punching something.

Hard.

Two days had passed since he and Haru had said goodnight in the garden. He had fallen asleep quickly that night, dreaming of a midnight black sky and a beautiful ocean, a sight that normally would have been classified as a nightmare, but for once was calming. He rose the next morning, refreshed and eager to see Haru at breakfast. After all, he wouldn’t leave before eating, right?

But when Makoto arrived at the dining room, Rin informed him that Haru had left around dawn, as he usually did on these monthly trips.

He had been disappointed, but pushed the feeling away, deciding to spend the day looking online for a nearby gym with an indoor pool.

Unfortunately, after hours of searching, Makoto came to the realization that the nearest pool they could have access to was three hours away in his hometown of Iwatobi, but even that one was closing down from lack of funding.

Finally, after six hours in the library staring at a map and a computer, that he finally found a small community pool almost an hour south of west of them. He was about to call and ask about how
much it would cost to swim for a day when Nagisa burst into the room and pulled him away from his
search, complaining that they would never become friends if he locked himself away.

So the rest of the afternoon passed in the company of Nagisa, Rei, Kou (who was quickly becoming
Gou to Makoto since no one except the girl herself called her that), Rin, and Sousuke. By the time he
returned to bed, Makoto felt tense and uneasy, but was sure the feeling would fade after a good
night’s sleep.

However, sleep did not find Makoto as easily as it had the night before, and when he finally rose
from bed after only a few hours of restless sleep, he felt cranky. Every unwanted sound edged at his
nerves, and by noon his head was pounding and his stomach churning.

Amakata came in to check on him when he didn’t show for breakfast. She knocked, and Makoto
waited for her to push her way in the way his parents and sibling often did at home. There, knocking
was a courtesy, but only to let you know that there was someone on the other side of the door. In the
Tachibana household, privacy was a luxury, and there were practically no secrets.

But when she didn’t enter, Makoto scrambled his way out of bed, mumbling slightly at the way the
light thump, thump, thump of Amakatas hand against the door made his head ache, and opened the
door. Amakata’s was smiling, her white sundress waving around her ankles.

“Nagisa wanted to come up, but I figured if you weren’t well, that might make things worse.”

Mumbling his thanks, Makoto walked away from the door and leaned against his four poster bed,
rubbing his temples gently, eyes falling shut.

“So you're sick too, huh?” Her voice lured his eyes open, and Makoto couldn’t help but worry that
he had brought some sort of illness to the Estate.

“Too?”

She nodded, her brown eyes watching him carefully. “I just got a call from Haruka’s father.
Apparently, Haruka got sick last night and has been slowly getting worse. His father thinks it’s just a
cold, but Haruka is returning tonight anyway” Something about her voice sounded irritated and tight,
but Makoto barely paid attention to that.

First came the only positivity he had felt all day. Haru would be back. The one thought quieted the
pain in his head for just a moment, then the pain got worse as he the rest of Amakata’s words sunk
in. Then the panic hit. Haru was sick. Sick enough that he couldn’t stay with his family. He
wondered if Haru would be returning to the estate on his own or if someone would the
accompanying him. After all, if he was sick, it wasn’t the best idea to send him home alone.

Amakata recalled his attention, and Makoto got the feeling she had been trying to get his attention for
at least a minute as she frowned and told him to rest, and that she would have some food brought up
in a little while so he could get something in his stomach. Makoto thanked her, mind still fretting over
Haru.

He spent the rest of the afternoon pacing and panicking. Every once in a while, he would lay down
and try to rest, but eventually, he just got too keyed up to stay in bed. Around six in the evening,
something in him begged him to leave his room, to go outside, or even just roam the halls. Anything
to get out of this damn room. But Makoto chose to grab his headphones and try to go to sleep,
knowing that, with everyone still awake, leaving his room was just a recipe for disaster.

But that had been six hours ago. Six hours he had spent tossing and turning, checking his phone, day
dreaming, but no sleep. Makoto groaned and rolled out of bed, finally deciding to give in the burning urge to leave his room. It was after midnight, so surely it would be safe to do so by now.

He opened his door slowly and peeked out into the corridor. The lights in the hall were dim, making the warm tan wallpaper darker and comforting and just bright enough for him to see. He stepped outside the door, making sure to shut it behind him, and began walking.

He wandered for an hour or so, stopping to look at a painting hanging on the wall or examine a potted plant out of complete desperation not to go back to his room.

And then he found the door.

To be fair, Makoto was sure that his subconscious had been pushing him towards this room for the last hour, a pulling sensation in his chest dragging him slowly to the room he really, really shouldn’t go to. After all, it was well after midnight, Haru was sick, and when he had moved in, Amakata had been very clear that Alphas and Omegas were absolutely not allowed to be in bedrooms together.

Makoto turned away from the door marked Nanase, deciding to return to his room, maybe visit Haru in the morning to check on him, when a pained cry pierced the night.

Makoto all but broke down the door, a quiet “Haru?” leaving his mouth as he let his eyes focus in the darkness of Haru’s room. The bed creaked and Makoto listened as he heard a soft, rattling sigh, then a small whine as though Haru was in pain.

Makoto moved slowly, unsure if Haru was sleeping. He gripped the bed post and slipped to the side of the bed where he could see a mound that he assumed was where Haru was curled up and sank to his knees.

“M’koto?” the voice was quiet, weak, and feeble, and Makoto felt a pang of terror slice through him at the sound. His hand fumbled on the bedside table before finally managing to turn on the lamp sitting there.

Haru was pale, paler than his usual milky pallor. It was as though all the heat had been stolen from his body, his cheeks a chalky white, his weakly fluttering eyelids looking thin, the blue veins clearly visible even in the weak light of the lamp. Then his eyes slowly opened and he looked at Makoto, whose heart sank at the sight.

He still recalled the brilliant blue of Haru’s eyes from a few days ago, the shining way they had eyed the fountain water. Now those eyes were dull and unfocused, as though he didn’t have the energy to look at Makoto. That didn’t stop him from reaching for Makoto, his arms moving sluggishly and hands trembling as they reached out.

Makoto couldn’t stand it, watching as Haru’s arms moved weakly towards him, and he took one of his hands gently into his own.

It was ice cold.

“Haru, you’re freezing!”

The boy in the bed made a whimpering noise and shifted closer to him. “You’re so warm, Mako,”

“Haru, I-“ he started, pausing as Haru shifted again, trying to pull Makoto closer. “Haru, I should get Amakata. You look terrible.”

“Thanks for the compliment,” Obviously as he woke, Haru seemed to feel better, his dry humor and
just the smallest amount of color returning to him, and Makoto couldn’t help the quiet chuckle that forced its way out of him.

“Haru-

“Don’t leave” Haru’s tone shifted, suddenly sounding desperate, and the hand that could barely move just a moment ago suddenly tightened like a vise, nails digging into Makoto’s palm. “Don’t leave me, please!”

That please pushed away any reservation Makoto had about staying with the boy, and he released Haru’s hand carefully. Haru whined, but Makoto hushed him gently, clambering up and walking around to the other side of the bed. He crawled into the empty space that Haru wasn’t occupying of the full-sized bed and gently pulled some of the blankets up around him. The bed was a little tight, but once he was settled in, Haru immediately rolled over and wiggled closer and pressed against Makoto, his fingers clutching at the shirt Makoto had decided to keep on. Makoto hesitated for a moment before wrapping his arms around the Haru, feeling the smaller body slowly begin to warm next to him.

Makoto lay there for what felt like a lifetime, listening to Haru’s breathing and heartbeat as both steadied, one arm holding Haru close while the other hand brushed Haru’s hair gently, stroking the soft dark locks. As he lay there, he felt the anxiety and tension that had been coursing through him for last twenty-four hours melt away, almost as though Haru was dispelling it as Makoto held him close. Comfort washed over him, and Makoto pressed his lips against Haru’s raven hair, whose easy breathing was interrupted every once in a while by gentle snores and deep sighs, and Makoto suddenly wished, as sleep began to take him, that time would stop, just so he could stay like this with Haru forever.

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Makoto wasn’t sure exactly how long he had been asleep, but he knew it was far from the forever he had wanted when he had curled up in bed beside Haru. In fact, it seemed like only a few hours before a sudden light awoke him. He groaned and blinked, rubbing his eyes, before opening them fully and staring into the angry face of Amakata Miho.

“ ‘Mkata?” he murmured, and her already angry face became furious. Suddenly, faster than his groggy mind could focus on, a firm hand gripped his wrist and pulled, rolling him off the bed and sending him crashing to the floor, his head slamming on the soft carpet. He let out a yelp of pain and moved to clutch his head. What the hell?

“What the hell, Makoto!” Amakata echoed his thoughts as she hissed angrily at him. “Have you gone completely insane? Did I just not explain the rules well enough? Because I could have sworn I told you that Alphas are absolutely NOT allowed to sleep with Omegas! That aside, did I not tell you Haru was sick? I thought you would have a least a little common decency to-“

“Amakata?” a quiet voice silenced the angry woman, and both she and Makoto looked in its direction of the sleepy boy sitting up in bed. Makoto watched as the top of Haru’s head (all he could see from his winning seat on the floor) turned, looking intently for something, and judging from the tension radiating from the bed, it was probably him. He raised the hand not clutching his head.

“I’m here, Haru.”

He closed his eyes, wincing against the throbbing in the back of his head, and when he pried them open again, he found himself face to face with Haru’s cerulean eyes, the sleepy orbs clearer and more focused than they had been when Makoto had first entered the room. He looked amused,
silently wondering why Makoto was on the floor.

“I’m fine, Haru,” he reassured, giving Haru a quick smile, which was carefully returned.

“Haruka?” Amakata’s voice made Haru jump. Despite her name being the only thing Haru had said aloud since awakening, it seemed that Haru had completely forgotten her presence in the room. The thought came as a bit of a relief to Makoto, since he had forgotten as well. Haru seemed to be able to control Makoto’s attention with very little effort. “How are you feeling?”

“Fine.” Haru sat up, keeping his eyes on Amakata, though it flickered back to Makoto every few seconds.

Amakata frowned, staring at Haru. “You looked like you were on death’s door,” she murmured, eyes flickering to Makoto. “You were sick yesterday too, right?”

Makoto nodded, trying to not notice the way Haru’s eyes widened in concern. Once this was taken care of, he would have to reassure Haru that it had been nothing. He felt fine now, so obviously, it had to of been nothing.

Amakata’s frown deepened. She mumbled something about a story, then asked aloud “When did you both start feeling better?”

“When Makoto came to stay with me.” There was no embarrassment in Haru’s voice, despite obviously knowing the rules about Alphas and Omegas. His gaze was challenging, daring Amakata to tell him that sharing a bed with Makoto had been wrong. Makoto agreed with him, and was slightly jealous of Haru’s conviction of… whatever this was between them.

Amakata’s lips pressed together, her face paled and she backed away slowly. She began mumbling to herself again, the words “story” and “never thought it was possible” all Makoto can make out as he hauled himself off the floor and moved to sit on the bed. Haru scoots, giving him room, but kept close. Makoto wondered if Haru felt the same weird pull in his chest that he felt. It was similar to the pull that had led him to this room in the first place, though where that had felt like a taught, razor-edged chord in his chest, it now felt like a rope simply keeping him close to Haru.

Amakata froze mid-step, turning to face the boys. “You both need to come with me, now.” And without another word, she spun on her heel and charged out the door. Makoto leaped to his feet and, after helping Haru up, followed after her. The trio made their way through the hallway, Amakata leading, Makoto lagging behind to make sure Haru was ok. Despite having been sick, he kept up fairly well, though his balance was a little off, and he almost fell to the ground a few times. However, it wasn’t until they were heading downstairs that Haru collapsed, his legs aching after so much exercise so soon after his illness resided. Makoto was at his side in a flash, murmuring gently as he helped Haru to his feet. Makoto took Haru’s hand in his own and encouraged him to lean on Makoto when he needed to, which Haru did as they continued after Amakata, who was watching them at the bottom of the stair, her brows knit together, eyes unreadable in the dim lit of the stairwell.

A few minutes later and they came across the door that Makoto remembered from his first night at the estate. Besides, it was a sign that read “Authorized Personel Only” in bold black letters, and Amakata was fumbling with a set of keys the pocket of her bathrobe. Makoto glanced back to ask Haru what was beyond the door but paused to see Haru’s eyes glazed and facing further down the hallway, glancing at another door a few feet away. His eyes sparkled with longing and pain, a look achingly familiar to the way he had looked at the fountain that first night…

Oh! The pool! Haru loved the water, he must be wishing he could use the pool. Makoto couldn’t help but wonder why the pool was drained if Haru usually swam in it. Maybe it was under repair?
“Damn key, I don’t know why he’s so picky about this being locked. It’s not like anyone else will come down here,” Amakata was muttering to herself again as she fought with the key to unlock the door until, finally, a clicking sound signaled the release of the lock. “Finally,” she huffed, and she threw the door open, throwing a “Come on,” over her shoulder as she hurried down the dark stairs.

Makoto gulped as he looked into the darkness where Amakata disappeared. Seriously, wasn’t there a light they could flip on? Hell, even one of those creepy bulb-hanging-from-a-string basement lights that were so often in the terrifying horror movies his friends used to force on him would have been a blessing compared to the complete darkness.

“It’s fine,” Haru said quietly, squeezing Makoto’s hand. “It’s just the way to Sasabe’s Lab. Nothing to worry about.”

Haru’s quiet words settled Makoto quickly, and he squeezed Haru’s hand back, before taking a deep breath and slowly making his way down the stairs, trying to pull Haru closer to him so that if the boy fell it wouldn’t be far.

The pitch black of the stairwell was cold, and Makoto shivered. Only the soft, delicate hand in his own larger one kept him moving forward until, finally, a light appeared at the bottom of the steps, showing the boys Amakata’s silhouette as she left the chilly hall, and they picked up their pace slightly to follow.

At the bottom of the stairs, Makoto was disappointed to find it was no warmer. He supposed that they were underground at this point, so it made sense, but he still wished for a little heat.

The room was a flash of silver appliances, whitish-beige walls, and black counter tops. Silver instruments of science were strewn everywhere, and behind a brown desk, the only color in the room, Gorou Sasabe was sleeping, his head resting on one of the many piles of paper on his desk.

Amakata frowned at her mate and strode over to the desk, slamming her palms down on the paper covered wood. “Gorou! Wake up!”

The blond man jumped awake, the papers around him falling to the ground with a woosh and thump as some flew through the air and others hit the ground. One paper was stuck to his face drool as his straightened. He made a noise of disgust as he glanced sideways at it and quickly tossed it aside, raising a hand to rub his face. He glanced up at Amakata, eyes bleary with sleep.

“Miho… crap,” he groaned. “I slept through supper again, huh? I’m so-“

“Gorou, it’s three in the morning. You more than slept through.” The woman sighed, and despite everything, he swore he could hear a slight tone of amusement at her mate. However, it must have been very slight, because it was gone the moment she spoke again. “Actually, we may have a… problem, I guess.” She glanced behind her towards Makoto and Haru.

Gorou followed her gaze, his eyes widening and face going red when he noticed how close the two were standing together. It went purple when he saw their linked hands. Sasabe jumped to his feet and all but vaulted over his desk, sending papers flying and he rushed at Makoto. Makoto gulped and tried to pull Haru behind him, trying to keep the Omega safe, but Sasabe yanked him away, snarling “Did you bond with this Omega?” His eyes were livid and he pushed Makoto back.

Something inside Makoto snapped when Sasabe pulled Haru out of his grip, and his vision went red. Suddenly, he couldn’t focus. All that mattered was that Haru wasn’t next to him. Haru was in danger, he could be hurt. He had to protect-
“That’s enough!” Amakata roared, and Makoto felt reason return to him. He realized in shock that a low rumbling noise was emanating from his chest, noticed Haru’s Panicked eyes wide with fear and worry. He tried to stop the growling, taking deep breaths, but it was still too hard. He could barely focus.

“Gorou, let go of Haruka. Release him now.” The air around Makoto was tense, and he kept his eyes fixed on Sasabe, watching as the Omega glanced at his Mate before slowly releasing his grip on Haru, though his eyes were still angry. The moment his hand released Haru, the boy rushed to Makoto’s side, carefully placing a hand on Makoto’s arm.

“I’m here. I’m fine,” he murmured gently, almost cooing. The touch and his voice settled Makoto quickly, and he suddenly felt tired and scared, unsure what had just happened.

“Use your nose. Does it smell like I’ve been bonded?” Haru voice was flat and cold, razor-sharp anger coloring his words. “Don’t be stupid.”

Sasabe glared at Haru, but the Omega did even glance his way, keeping his calming eyes locked on Makoto’s as the Alpha fought for control of his emotions.

Finally, Sasabe sighed and looked at Amakata, confused. “But if he hasn’t been bonded, then what’s the deal? Why are they—” he gestured towards the two boys, Haru still not letting Makoto go. Makoto finally felt calm enough to wonder what the hell had just happened.

Amakata glanced at the boys before reaching over and pulling Sasabe aside, whispering to him urgently. As the older couple talked, Makoto took a moment to glance Haru over, noticing the gentle shivers that seemed to be rolling through him. “Are you ok?” he asked, reaching to place a hand on each of Haru’s arms. He was hit with the sudden desire to pull Haru close, to keep him locked in an embrace, but he held back.

“I’m fine,” he murmured quietly. “Just haven’t had that much practice at calming ticked off Alphas.”

Makoto flushed. “Sorry, I don’t know what came over me. I’ve never been an angry person, so—“

“You’re an Alpha, I’m an Omega. You thought I was in danger, and your instincts kicked in. It’s completely natural. It’s fine.”

Makoto was about to ask if Haru was sure he was ok when Sasabe spoke loudly, groaning into his hand as he leaned against his desk. “Miho, I’ve entertained a lot of your theories over the years, but this is insane. We’re talking about fairy tales, stories! Passed down by word, no scientific backing at all!”

“Gorou you didn’t see them yesterday! I thought Haruka was going to die, and it set in so quickly. And the way they both recovered… Gorou, I’m telling you, this could be it!”

Sasabe sighed and collapsed into his chair, leaning down to pick up the many papers that had fallen to the ground. “Miho, I’ve entertained a lot of your theories over the years, but this is insane. We’re talking about fairy tales, stories! Passed down by word, no scientific backing at all!”

“Yes! Stories! Children’s stories, Miho! That’s not a lot to go on. Especially since the stories don’t
include complete genetic make-up results for the people in the stories!"

“Umm,” Makoto, couldn’t stand it any longer and interrupted, finding the sharp eyes of both Amakata and Sasabe piece him. Beside him, Haru gripped his hand encouragingly. He didn’t like being talked about like he wasn’t there any more than Makoto did. “Could you maybe explain what going on?”

Sasabe opened his mouth to speak, but Amakata, looking firm but excited, exclaimed over him. “I think you two might be a little different from the Alphas and Omegas.”

Haru stiffened at the word different, his grip growing tighter on Makoto’s hand, and the taller boy asked, “Different?”

“Yes,” Amakata nodded. “I think you two are Truemates!”

Chapter End Notes

ok, so cliffhangers suck, I know. At least there’s less time to wait for the next chapter. next chapter is where things are going to get kinda dark, so just be prepared.

now just a little note on the Haru and Makoto’s "Illness". I’ve read a lot of Truemate/soulmate fiction over the years, and the way they get sick when they're apart, but get better when they're together is something I borrowed from Tiffany King's Saving Angels series. It's a series I've always loved and thought had some really good ideas about soulmates. If I'm being completely honest, her story was the first soulmate story I ever read, so she inspired a lot of the Truemate aspects of this story.

on another note, How many of you are excited about the Free! movie coming out in October? It's killing me that the movies aren't usually streamed over here until about six months after they air in Japan, (or at least, that's as soon as I could find a streamed version of the Starting Days movie). But Makoto and Haru just looked so adorable looking for apartments in the trailer that I will happily wait until I get to see them. ^_^ Hopefully, the other two movies start streaming soon.

anyways, as always, I would love to hear what you guys think! The next chapter will be on time, and it's going to be called Danger. I'll see you all on everyone Saturday, and thank you again for reading!!!!
Danger

Chapter Summary

The Truemate tests begin, but something unexpected happens...

Chapter Notes

Guess who got impatient and really wanted to update the story.
That's right. This girl!
So, thanks to my impatience, you guys get the chapter a few hours early. Hope you like it!

WARNING!!!!

OK, so this chapter, we've got panic attacks, blackouts, a hurt Amakata, and an extremely upset Makoto. If any of this bothers you, proceed with caution!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I think you two are Truemates,” The words hung in the silence of the room. Amakata looked about to burst with excitement, Sasabe looked a little exasperated, Haru’s face was carefully composed, and Makoto…

“I’m sorry, what are Truemates?”

Amakata seemed to light up at the question, while Sasabe groaned beside her. “It’s an old story,” he cut in before his Alpha could speak, earning him a sharp look that he matched with indifference. “Basically, it’s like soulmates.”

“Soulmates?” Makoto repeated, slightly confused. His father had always claimed he was convinced that his wife was his soulmate, and she had often chuckled at his cheesiness and replied that he was hers, but was it something that could actually exist? Two people who were literally made for each other. He honestly had always hoped to find a love like his parents, but soulmates just sounded a little too much like a fairy tale to be real.

“It’s not soulmates, Gorou! I swear, you can be so blasé sometimes!”

“That’s because I’m relying on facts, not stories you tell to small children.”

The Alpha growled slightly in irritation before turning back to the boys. “It’s actually much stronger than soulmates. It’s less two people who are just really in love or faithful. It goes deeper than that. Truemates actually need each other to survive. The stories say that separated Truemates are so detached for the better parts of themselves that Omegas grow too weak to move, their physical state deteriorating, while Alphas lose their emotional stability and rationality. But when they're together,
everything about regular mates is amplified for Truemates. They’re more connected, able to read each other better. It’s less the whole ‘two people, one soul’ idea and more like two people who compliment and balance each other so perfectly that, once they meet, it’s almost impossible for them to be apart. Legends say that long ago, when there were towns filled with populations Alphas and Omegas, the town leaders were often Truemates, because they understood the bond between mates so well and could help lead their town. Of course, when Alpha and Omega populations began to decline, the appearances of Truemate couples began to decline until they became just a legend.”

Amakata took a deep breath, having barely breathed while she had been speaking. But as she paused, her eyes lit up as she thought. “In fact, we have had a sudden influx in the minority presentations, so maybe that’s why we suddenly found a Truemate pairing!”

The woman continued to speak, her words running together as she spoke rapidly, and a smell began to fill the air, one that made Makoto wrinkle his nose in distaste. It was a thick, heady smell, almost like a really strong cologne, and something about the smell had him tensing up again. Haru, on the other hand, seemed to be sagging by his side and when Makoto glanced over at him, his eyes seemed hazy. Sasabe sighed, looking a little dizzy himself, and walked up behind his mate, carefully placing a hand over her mouth as she continued to babble, silencing her. “Miho, I want you to take a deep breath and stop for a second, ok? Haruka looks like he’s about to pass out with all the pheromones you’re giving off.”

Amakata nodded slowly, and her shoulders moved as she breathed through her nose. As she breathed carefully, the smell in the air began to slowly fade, leaving just a trace of it, and Haru became more alert, but moved closer to Makoto’s side. Makoto remembered the term pheromones from the book Amakata had given him. It had said that Alpha’s and Omegas often gave off the strong smells when excited or scared, but had said nothing about how completely horrible they smelled, though judging from the hazy, calm looks of Sasabe and Haru, he was the only one who found the smell bad. He couldn’t help but wonder why he had never noticed the smell this strong before. Maybe it had something to do with still being relatively new to being an Alpha?

Once the smell had dissipated enough for everyone to be comfortable again, Sasabe released his grip over his mate’s mouth and collapsed back into his seat. “Ok, so if you’re serious about this Truemate stuff, how do you want to proceed?”

Amakata hovered closer to the desk as they talked, suddenly forgetting about the two boys in the room. Makoto took the chance to turn to Haru. “Are you ok?”

Haru nodded. “Fine. Her scent was just really strong…”

Makoto felt a twinge in his stomach at the way Haru said this. There was a floaty sound to his voice, and maybe a bit of longing. He was sure that it was just the effect of an Alpha’s scent on the Omega, but that didn’t mean he liked it.

“Can I ask… did it smell good to you? It smelled terrible to me.”

Haru paused in thought. “Not good, not really. Hers gives me a headache, but still, makes me loopy. It’s kind of… I don’t know… heady, I guess. Most Alpha’s smell that way to me.”

“Oh,” this helped a little, the ridiculous jealousy fading. Damn, this was awful. He didn’t like being jealous. Haru wasn’t even his boyfriend- or Omega or whatever- yet. He had no right to be jealous. And yet… “So I guess I smell that way too, huh?”

Haru shook his head. “You smell nice. A bit like Lemons, but sweeter. And you smell warm.”

Makoto flushed at this. Part of him, a much more confident part of him, wanted to tell Haru that he
smelled amazing, a sweet smell that was absolutely tantalizing. But the words just wouldn’t leave his mouth. He couldn’t say it. It was just too-

“Do I smell good to you?”

Makoto inhaled quickly in shock, and the sudden rush of air, plus the sudden warmth he was feeling from the red-hot blush permeating his face, and in an oh so wonderful twist of fate, Makoto found himself choking on air, and possibly his own saliva, much to the Omega’s surprise.

A bottle of water was handed to him, and he took it gratefully, twisting the lid off and taking a few slow sips to try and stop himself from coughing anymore. once his breathing settled, he found himself staring into three pairs of confused eyes.

“What the hell was that?” Sasabe asked, befuddled.

Makoto was sure that the heat in the underground lab had to have been turned up, because the heat he was feeling couldn’t have possibly just been from the tomato-like blush covering his face.

“Nothing, just- I… nothing,” his head hung, completely embarrassed.

“Sorry,” Haru muttered, and Makoto watched in horror as he took a slow step away, as though worried he had upset Makoto.

“No!” he reassured quickly. “I just wasn’t expecting- I mean I’m just- you smell good!”

Oh. Oh god. He had not said that. But a quick glance around at the two adults’ expressions of bemusement- well, Amakata looked bemused; Sasabe looked rather exasperated- confirmed that he had. Makoto groaned and reached up to rub a hand over his face. He could swear he heard Haru laughing quietly, but when he pulled his hand away, there was just a small smile playing on those soft looking lips.

“Well, if you two are done flirting already,” Sasabe rolled his eyes at the sharp look Amakata sent his way. “Come on. Do you want to figure out this Truemate crap, or do you want to watch them awkwardly flirt until morning?”

Amakata pouted, but nodded anyway and moved to perch on the desk so she could talk to the boys.

“We’re going to run some tests on you guys. The process may take a couple of days so we can try to get down to the root of what’s going on, and you guys won’t be able to leave the lab until then. It’s going to suck, but this could be a huge, monumental discovery about what exactly we are. Makoto, you can decide if you don’t want to participate, of course. We told you from the beginning that if it makes you uncomfortable, then we wouldn’t do anything.”

“What kinds of test?” Haru asked quickly.

“Nothing you haven’t done before, Haruka. Bloodwork, DNA samples, some psychological exams. Nothing too drastic. It will take a few days to cover the basics of everything, and it will be trickier because we don’t have any baseline data for Makoto, which means trying to get access to the records from his stay at the hospital a few weeks back. It will be draining, but the outcome will be worth it.”

Makoto watched as Haru chewed his lip, his blue eyes flickering to watch Makoto, then nodded. “Don’t push him too far, Amakata. Make sure he can back out if he needs too.”

Was that Haru saying he was ok with doing the tests? Well, if Haru was ok with it… “Ok, let’s do it.”
Amakata’s smile was blinding, and she began to rush around, gathering clipboards and papers all while talking a mile a minute. “We’ll have to keep you in separate examination rooms, and one of us will always have to be with each of you. Sasabe, maybe you could get the bloodwork for them while I set up everything else? I think I left those books somewhere…” still mumbling, she hurried up the stairs and out of sight. A few seconds later, the door upstairs slammed shut.

Haru and Makoto looked at each other for a minute, before glancing at Sasabe. The man was staring open mouthed at the stairway, a look of disbelief in his eyes, before finally just shaking his head. “She gets too damn ahead of herself. Sometimes I swear she forgets she’s supposed to be at least a little professional about this.” He sighs and motions for the boys to follow him to a few beds pressed against the side of the wall. They sat down, and Sasabe began to pull our vials and needles, the latter of which Makoto eyed nervously.

“About how many samples of blood are you going to need?”

“Not sure. I figured I’d stop at three if Miho doesn’t show up before that.”

“Uh-huh. And how long do you think she’ll take?”

“Dunno. You can ask her when she comes back.”

“Comes back?”

“Yeah, she’ll be here in a minute. She forgot her coffee,” he gave a vague gesture to the desk they had been standing around, where a disposable coffee cup that Amakata must have gotten while he and Haru were talking.

“Oh, ok.”

Haru was watching him, finally standing up and moving to sit on Makoto’s bed. “You ok?”

Makoto nodded, eyes staying fixed on the needles that Sasabe was preparing. Haru said nothing back, but instead carefully took Makoto’s hand in his own.

“Alright, let’s get started,” Sasabe grabbed the first prepared syringe and a small swab of rubbing alcohol. He approached Makoto and took the arm that Haru wasn’t pressed against. Makoto took a deep breath as the cool swab was pressed against the skin of his arm, and squeezed Haru’s hand as the needle neared his skin.

BANG

Both Makoto and Haru jump at the noise, Sasabe pulling the needle away just before Makoto’s movement plunged the needle into his arm. The sound of feet hurried down the stairs and Amakata appeared in a rush. “Sorry! Forgot my coffee!”

Makoto couldn’t help but chuckle at this, and he could feel Haru shaking with silent laughter beside him.

The blood work hadn’t been as bad as Makoto had thought it would be. Sasabe had moved quickly, swiftly filling the sample bottles and moving on to Haru. Makoto had winced at the first needle, until Haru began to ask him about his life back home, suddenly incredibly interested in anything Makoto had to say. By the time Sasabe was done, he was in the middle of a long anecdote about how Ran
had once punched a bully in the nose after school one day after he had tried to beat up Ren. While he
was completely proud of her for standing up for Ren, he had chided her carefully, telling her that
there were other ways of handling situations like that. Despite his lecture, he might have failed to
mention the event to their parents, and the bully came back the next day to apologize to them both. It
was about this time that Amakata appeared and ushered Makoto away into a small closed off room,
telling Sasabe to take Haru into the room next door when he was done getting the blood samples.

Makoto now sat on a small chair, across from him another chair hold Amakata, who was flipping
through papers on her clipboard. He took a moment to glance around the room. Everything was
different shades of white and grey, giving the room a bright, clinical look. Behind him, a white bed
was against the wall that separated his room and the one Haru was probably in. in the corner, a plain
white door was propped open to reveal the shadowed shapes of a bathroom. Apparently, he would
spend most of the next few days in here.

“Alright Makoto, it looks like we’re all set. I just want to start out with some basic questions. These
are nothing too horrible, just standard questions that we usually ask all new residents after about a
week here. It’s just to give us a bit of a baseline, something to go off of with the rest of our tests.
Usually, we ask these not long after people show up here, then we ask some similar questions once
they’ve found someone compatible for the first time, but as you and Haru are a special case, we had
to make some adjustments.”

“The first time? You mean Alpha’s and Omega’s don’t always stay together?”

“No not always. That’s been the case with a few of the people here. I told you, we’re human first.
Sometimes Alphas and Omegas find each other attractive, but that’s all that’s there. Other times they
stay together for a while, but things just don’t work out. Obviously we make stronger ties than Beta’s
when it comes to romantic partners, but it’s all just as chancy as any regular relationship your used to
seeing, at least until they bond.” She shuffled a few papers around, then looked up and smile at him.
“Alright, you ready? If there’s anything you don’t feel comfortable answering, you don’t have too,
but the more you can tell me, the better results we’ll get.”

Makoto nodded.

The questions were rather easy. They sort of reminded him of the online personality tests that Ran
had been interested in for a time, like “What does your favorite color say about you?” or “What’s
your hidden super power?” Amakata nodded along and took notes as he answered her questions.
What’s your favorite memory as a child? Were you closer to your mother or your father? Then she
asked a question he hadn’t really wanted to think about: Do you have any major fears?

Makoto swallowed, then plunged into his list: Spiders, needles, monsters, the dark, blood, his family
being in trouble, his family being disappointed in him, heights… the ocean... and drowning.
Amakata obviously wasn’t expecting a list quite that long, as she looked up in surprise, the hand
taking notes stalling after the third item on his list. But the final two left her staring in shock.

“The ocean? Your scared of the Ocean?”

Makoto nodded.

“But you lived near it!”

“Yeah.”

“Are you… scared of water?”
“Not really, not anymore. Pools are ok. I like to swim, but I’m only really comfortable with the backstroke. As long as my face stays above water, I’m usually pretty good.”

Amakata looked at him in utter disbelief. “This is nuts,” she muttered.

Makoto shifted in his seat, Amakata’s stare making him uncomfortable. “Um, was that all the questions?”

“Wha- oh, um no not quite.” And the barrage continued. What kind of people are you attracted to usually? What’s the most important trait in a future partner? How big of a family do you think you want?

Finally, Amakata set the clipboard aside. “Alright, that’s it for those. Let’s see,” she reached into the bag next to her and pulled out a headset, a large set of headphones with a microphone wrapped around the front. She pushed a large button on the side of it and slipped it on, then reached for her phone. She clicked away on it for a moment, before adjusting the mic and saying “Sound good?”

There was a pause. “Awesome. Ready to start?” Again silence. “Ok, well, hurry up. We’re good to go over here!”

Amakata flipped the mic down and smiled kindly at Makoto. “Ok, this next bit should be pretty easy on you. Haru is going to be shown videos and images that should bring out a strong emotional response. We just want you to focus on your own reactions and tell us if you feel any different, ok?”

“What kind of emotional response? You’re not gonna hurt him, right? He’ll be able to back out if he gets too uncomfortable, right?”

There was a pause, Amakata seemingly distracted by the phone in front of her. “We won’t hurt him. Haru knows what to expect.”

Makoto frowned. So they wouldn’t purposefully hurt him, but was Amakata ignoring that second question? “/but-“

“We’re ready?” The mic was back up and Amakata wasn’t paying attention to him. “Good then let’s begin.”

She looked up at Makoto. “Ok, I need you to stay quiet for a little bit. Just let me know if you feel anything, ok?”

For a long while there was nothing, and Makoto began to feel rather awkward. Maybe there nothing special about him and Haru. Maybe there nothing special about him and Haru. Maybe this was all a big coincidence.

After a few minutes, however, Makoto couldn’t deny that he was feeling rather calm, despite the idea that maybe he and Haru weren’t connected the way Amakata seemed to think they were being a rather stressful one. Instead of being tight and bundled with nerves, Makoto felt completely relaxed.

“Makoto? How are you feeling?”

“Fine. Really calm, I guess. It feels a little odd, though.”

Amakata nodded, then spoke into her headset. “Confirmed. Next.”

After a moment, Makoto was feeling nervous again, though it wasn’t as bad as before. The calm from before was still there, just less noticeable. It really did feel weird. He had the strangest sensation of something like a chord pulling tight away from his heart, and could almost feel the emotions through the invisible chord. He tried to explain the feeling to Amakata, who just looked at him
meaningfully.

A few minutes later, there was nothing, just Makoto alone with his own emotions. The tight feeling in his chest faded.

“Anything?”

Makoto shook his head. “No, I feel fine. I jus- AHG!” Sharp pain ripped through his heart, his hand reaching to clutch at it over his shirt, fingers tightening in the cotton. The pain hurt, but there was something else there. It was a feeling he was well acquainted with. He felt it every morning back in Iwatobi as he walked past the Ocean. Of course that feeling was nothing compared to the pure, unadulterated terror rushing through him now. This was bad. Haru was in trouble, he had to get to him, he had to-

Distantly, he was aware of Amakata calling his name. At some point, he had moved from the chair and was making his way to the door, trying to get to Haru’s side, but the short Alpha had a grip on his arm, holding him back. “Makoto, he’s fine, he’s ok!”

A low growl welled up inside him, and he felt his chest rumble as the sound made its way out. He couldn’t think straight, couldn’t think. The smell of Alpha was around him, foreign and strange, restricting, and the sweet clean smell. Haru. He had to get to the Omega, needed to make sure he was ok, that he was safe. This Alpha was putting his Omega at risk.

Danger.

Haru tried to control his breathing, the screen in front of him blank, finally. But it wasn’t working. He couldn’t calm down. Haru glanced at Sasabe, suddenly concerned. Was something wrong with Makoto?

“Sasabe?”

The Man wasn’t looking at him, instead was gripping his headset. “Miho? Is everything ok? Miho?” he had a grip on the headphones, but with a low grumble, he ripped them off his head and pushed the speakerphone. “Miho?”

“-koto! It’s ok! He’s fi-“ Things went silent then suddenly, her voice was back. “Shit. Oh Shit. Gorou! Get him over here now!”

There was a loud noise over the phone, but Sasabe wasn’t paying attention anymore, he tossed the phone aside and threw the door open, calling his Alpha’s name as he went. Haru was on his heels. Sasabe went the door directly next to the room they had exited and opened the door, his face going pale as he looked in. “Shit.”

Haru pushed up behind him and gasped. Makoto looked barely recognizable. There was no reason in those green eyes, just darkness and panic. It was like looking at a wild animal caught in a trap. But what was worse was the way he had a tight grip on Amakata’s arm, the skin around it red and angry, and the angry red welt on her cheek.

Common sense told him to stay back, to let the older pair take care of bringing Makoto back to reason, but there was something in his chest pulling him closer to Makoto. He needed to calm him. Keep the Alpha safe, calm him down. So he pushed past Sasabe, who hissed at him to stay back, and took a careful step closer.

“Makoto?” his voice seemed to effect on the Alpha, the tenseness in his shoulders loosening slightly.
He kept his eyes fixed on Makoto’s dark ones, waiting for reason to return, but said over his shoulder, “We may only get one shot at this. Wait for a sec, and at the first chance you get, take Amakata and both of you leave for a bit.”

“Haruka, that’s insane!” Haru tried not to shown his panic when Sasabe’s sharp words put Makoto back on edge.

“Shut up,” He said in a calm, steady voice. “You’re making it worse. Just trust me.” He took another slow step forward, and raised a hand slowly. Everything about this seemed ridiculously familiar, the slow careful movements, the anger, the fear. It was all too familiar. But slowly, carefully… maybe things wouldn’t get that bad this time. He moved his hand, never once letting his eyes move from Makoto’s. “Makoto, it’s me. I’m ok.” He placed the hand gently over the one gripping Amakata’s arm, pleased to find him less tense than before. Good. “Come back to me, Makoto. Everything’s fine. No one’s hurting me. I’m fine. You kept me safe. Take a deep breath, ok?” the words felt clumsy over his tongue, but he had to get them out. Makoto needed reassurance. Haru watched as the darkness faded from the brilliant emerald eyes, his brow softening, the anger fading away, leaving confusion and vulnerability. Good, it was working. A small, stupid part of his mind told him he would have to thank Ai after this for telling Haru how he had calmed down that rampant Alpha all those years ago.

Slowly, Haru raise his other hand and placed it a little further down Makoto’s arm, letting it drift slowly down until he was at Makoto’s wrist. “Let go, Makoto. It’s fine, she’s not hurting me. Let go, Mako.” He kept his voice firm but calm, and the haziness of Makoto’s mind led him to follow Haru’s order. His hand loosened, and Haru quickly moved to put himself between the two Alphas. He heard a scuffle behind him, and he guessed that Sasabe had listened to him. Good.

“Makoto,” Haru murmured, taking a step closer and letting go of Makoto’s wrist, moving to grip the shoulder opposite of where his other hand was on the taller boys arm. With every touch, Makoto seemed to calm slightly, and to Haru’s relief, reason slowly returned to those eyes.

“Haru?”

“Yes, I’m here. Deep breaths, Makoto.” Haru slowly led the Alpha back to the couch nearby. As soon as Makoto was sitting, one of those strong, muscular arms of his wrapped protectively around Haru’s waist loosely, careful not to hurt the Omega.

They stood there quietly for a while, Makoto’s breathing slowly and calming, while Haru felt the ache in his chest lessen with each passing second.

“Makoto, do you remember what happened?”

The sandy-haired head was pressed against Haru’s stomach as he nodded. “Sort of. You were scared. It felt like a hot Iron in my chest. You were terrified- and then you were here. You were by my side, and you’re ok.” There was deep, shuddering breath. “God, is this what being an Alpha does to you? There’s something I can’t remember. I was angry. Horribly angry… did I hurt anyone? Oh God, where’s Amakata? She was here!”

“Shhh. She’s fine. Sasabe got her out. You’re ok.”

“Did I hurt her? I can’t remember. I can’t remember…” Makoto was trembling, and Haru raised a hand to card through his hair gently.

“Makoto, your new at this. You’ll learn to control this. This is new for everyone, so just keep calm.”
Behind them, the door creaked open and he felt Makoto flinch at the sound. Haru glanced back to see Sasabe and Amakata peering in. “Can we come in?”

Haru nodded, still stroking Makoto’s hair gently as he flinched at Amakata’s voice again. Amakata walked in as though nothing had happened, her cool assurance back in spades, while Sasabe followed behind cautiously.

“Makoto?” Amakata moved carefully, spoke quietly, despite how collected she seemed. Haru noticed how the red welt on her cheek had brightened slightly. Had Makoto done that? “Are you ok now?”

Makoto went still and raised his head slightly, peering around Haru to look at her. His eyes widened in shock as he took in her disheveled appearance. His eyes locked on the mark on her face.

“Oh god, I hit you, didn’t I? I hurt you…” he was shaking again, and Haru felt terror pull at his chest. Not his own terror, but Makoto’s. Terror and hatred and disgust seemed to boil between like acid, everything originating from Makoto.

“Hit me? What are yo- oh!” her hand raised to her cheek and she shook her head. “No Makoto, you just got a really good grip on my arm. I tried to block your path to Haruka-“

“A stupid move; you know better,” Sasabe grumbled, eyes fixed worriedly on his mate.

“-and you pushed me aside. I fell and hit the counter over there.” She gestured behind her to the counter near the door. “And you’re right, Gorou, it was a stupid move. We knew that if Haru got upset or scared, it would trigger something in you, but we weren’t prepared for just how strong your reaction would be. That doesn’t even compare to how regular bonded Mates react when one is in danger.”

“I told you that was a bad idea. Usually you don’t try that one with brand new Alphas! You know how they react!” Sasabe chided, but he had slowly moved to hover closer to his Alpha, hand hovering near the one dangling at Amakata’s side.

“So that’s how new Alpha’s react?” Makoto’s curiosity was getting the best of him, and while he was still clinging to Haru, and Haru could still feel the self-hatred and disgust waring in him, his desire for knowledge had him a little calmer.

“Sort of. Most of the time, if a young Alpha has a strong attachment to an Omega and sees the Omega in danger, they kind of react on instinct. As they get older, they learn to control themselves a little better. But almost every time, the Alpha has to see the Omega in danger. I was curious if you two would have a better sense of when the other was in trouble. And obviously, whatever connection you two share made the reaction a lot stronger, because what you did was... well, it wasn’t quite right. Makoto, can you tell me what happened?”

Makoto nodded, sitting up a little straighter. He released his hold on Haru’s waist, but Haru moved to sit next to him on the couch and took Makoto’s hand in his own. Makoto smiled at the contact, and Haru felt the war of emotions in his chest die down just a little bit.

“I don’t remember a lot. I was sitting down, and I was fine, and then in felt like someone had stabbed me in the heart. I could tell Haru was scared. He was absolutely terrified, and I needed to get to him. And then I remember Haru in front of me, telling me to come back, and you were gone.”

Amakata’s eyes lit up. “And that’s it? Everything else was blank? Can you tell me exactly how Haru was feeling? How extreme was his fear? And how could you tell? Could you tell that the threat had
been removed, and that’s why you came back to your senses? Or was it the fact that Haru was next to you? Do you remember Sasabe coming into the room? What about-“

“Amakata!” Haru snapped, feeling the stress return to Makoto, both in the way his chest tightened and the way Makoto’s eyes widened in Panic and he started leaning towards Haru. “That’s enough.”

She went silent, an abashed look on her face. “Right. Sorry. It’s just… Alpha’s don’t black out like this. Not even Bonded Alphas react like that, and that’s when the bond between an Alpha and Omega is strongest. If you’re reacting this way now, what would happen if…” She broke off again, noticing Haru’s glare in her direction. “Oh, right. Sorry, Makoto. We can talk about that when you’ve calmed down completely.”

Makoto took a deep breath and nodded, though the stress didn’t fade. “Makoto, it’s fine. The important thing is that no one was seriously injured. We’ll figure out the rest later.” Haru watched as Makoto glanced back at Amakata, and Haru cursed his words. Damn his parents for not making him talk to people more often as a child. of course, if they had, he probably would have only hated them more.

“Makoto, I’m fine. Don’t worry. Now, Gorou and I are going to step out for a moment. Now that we know what kind of control Makoto has, we need to rework a few things so nothing gets out of hand.” She turned and walked out of the room, Sasabe on her heels.

Once they were gone, Makoto sighed and leaned against Haru. They stayed quiet, the only sound Makoto’s breathing as Haru rubbed his arm gently.

“If this is what being an Alpha does to you, I’m not sure I want it,” he mumbled quietly, his voice dejected. Haru didn’t like that tone. The shimmering happy light had left his eyes, replaced with a tired, dull look. It didn’t suit him at all.

“You’ll get better. It just takes time. And Amakata will take your reactions into account to make sure you don’t have to go through that again.”

He felt Makoto breathe deeply, the deep sigh as worn and tired as the look in his eyes. “But what about you?”

“Huh?”

“They won’t show you whatever it was that scared you like that again, right?”

Haru felt his stomach clench. “Probably not,” he lied.

Makoto tensed, and Haru watched as the taller boy pulled away to look at Haru. “You’re not a very good liar, Haru-chan.”

Haru flushed, dropping his gaze. “Drop the -chan, stupid.” He glanced up through his lashes to a small smile playing on the Alpha’s lips.

“Seriously though, don’t think you have to do the tests just because they tell you too! We have the right to refuse. If you get too upset, just tell them you can’t do it!” he paused, blushing a little. “Aside from freaking out, when I realized you were scared, I was scared too. I thought something was hurting you, and I don’t want that. I want you to be safe and happy, ok?”

Haru felt his heart skip a beat. Holy crap, how could he be so cute? He gently squeezed Makoto’s hand in his, and Makoto smiled at him.
They remained like that for a while, Makoto relaxing into Haru’s side, Haru letting his thumb run along Makoto’s as he kept their hands linked. They didn’t speak, instead just resting against each other, taking in the silence, until finally, Haru felt Makoto lean against him, head resting on his shoulder, snoring lightly. Haru smiled and reached his hand up to brush the hair out of Makoto’s eyes, before carefully shifting them so that they leaned against the wall, before resting his head on Makoto’s and quickly drifting off himself.

There was a loud bang as the door opened and Haru and Makoto sprang awake. Amakata came rushing into the room, Sasabe on her heels, a strange scent filling the room as they came, and Haru blinked rapidly, trying to adjust to the bright white light of the room that contrasted greatly with the darkness of unconsciousness. Beside him, Makoto rubbed his eyes and yawned.

“Sorry, boys but no time for sleep now. We need to get started.” Amakata turned to set some papers on the counter behind her, and then turned to talk to Sasabe in a hushed whisper. Haru examined them for a moment, noticing the way she was flushed, the way her clothes seemed a bit wrinkled and messy, and the smug satisfaction radiating from Sasabe. Had they fallen asleep too?

And then the strange scent that had been slowly permeating the room registered in his sleep-idled mind and he groaned loudly. “And you called us out on a little flirting? Please tell me you didn’t have sex on the bed where I have to sleep?”

Makoto looked at him, confused, but Haru saw the moment the smell hit him, and watched as Makoto wrinkled his nose in distaste. “What is that?” He questioned, but Amakata went red and refused to look at them, but Sasabe just smirked, not quite meeting Haru’s gaze either.

Damn it.

Chapter End Notes

I got a lot of really supportive comments after the last chapter, so thank you all for being so patient with the late update. Hopefully, this chapter lives up to what your expectations.

In the meantime, This week alone, I’ve managed to finish two more chapters, which means I have up to chapter 11 finished and ready to publish (after a lot of editing), as well as a few later chapters done as well. Which is great, because with classes beginning soon, I’m going to be super busy.

Well, that’s all I’ve got to say this week. So thank you all for reading, and as always I’d love to hear what you think!!! I hope you all have a Fantastic Week!! ^_^
Chapter Summary

After three days of testing, Makoto and Haru take time to rest and get to know each other a little better.

Chapter Notes

No warnings, so let the show begin!!

The test lasted three days. Three days of needles taking blood samples, sitting through emotional turmoil, feeling not only their own emotions, but each other’s as well. Both boys were exhausted by the time Amakata rushed them out of the basement lab, telling them to go get some rest as a sleep-deprived Sasabe grumbled over pages of notes and results. As Haru and Makoto stood in the main hall, they took in the sudden change of colors, blinking at the dark red wallpaper of the hallway, the greens of the plants, and the paintings that decorated the walls.

Upstairs, there was a crash, and they listened to the excited, indistinct voice of Nagisa, and a less-than-impressed Rei chastising him. Makoto frowned tiredly. He had spent three days practically alone, only ever seeing Amakata and Sasabe when they were doing their tests. Occasionally he would see Haru, just long enough to keep them from getting sick again. But for the most part, Amakata had kept them separated. However, while he was starved for human contact, he didn’t feel ready to be around Nagisa’s bright and sunshiny nature. It was just too much.

Haru, apparently, felt the same. He took Makoto’s hand and pulled him into a room just a few feet away. He threw the door open and pulled Makoto inside. As the door shut behind them, Makoto flipped on the light and glanced around. It was a small study, the room separated by two double-sided bookshelves, stuffed so full of books that some were pushed out, and others stacked on top. On one side of the shelves, a couple of desks and computers were pressed against the wall. On the other side, there were two chairs and a loveseat.

Makoto jumped when Haru pressed a hand to his upper arm. His deep blue eyes were tired as he pulled Makoto to the loveseat. Haru collapsed into the couch, and Makoto settled beside him.

They stayed quiet for a few moments, letting everything from the past few days sink in. Finally, Haru was the one to break the silence, his voice low and tired, “So… we’re Truemates…”

Makoto wasn’t sure how to respond. Sasabe had been muttering about fairy tales for a majority of their time in the lab, but Amakata seemed to get more and more excited every time Makoto had reacted to a rise in stress from Haru, or she had scared Makoto then listened to what Sasabe was saying through their phone. Every test, every lab result, every time Makoto so much as breathed in Haru’s direction; it all seemed to confirm Amakata’s belief that he and Haru were some kind of Alpha and Omega Soulmates.
“Yeah, I guess so,” He finally said.

Haru sighed deeply, and moved to lean against him. Makoto flushed, but a smile played across his lips. He settled against Haru, letting the boy’s cooler body slowly push the weariness from him, and Haru began to relax as well. Their hands slowly crept towards each other and linked together in a way that seemed as natural as breathing, even though it was the first time they had done this.

“So, what now?” Haru asked, eyes drifting shut. “If we really are Truemates, then what do we do?”

“Well, even if we are Truemates, do we even… feel that way about each other?” Makoto flushed, embarrassed. “I mean, I feel really protective of you, and I like you, I think. Honestly, I’ve never really had feelings for anyone before, but… I feel really strongly about you. But I don’t know how you feel…”

“The same,” Haru mumbled. “I like it when you’re close, and when you're smiling, it makes me feel stupidly happy.” He paused, taking a deep breath, before continuing so quietly that it was barely audible to Makoto. “I just never expected this.”

“The Truemate stuff?”

There was another pause. “Yeah.”

Makoto frowned. He got the feeling that Haru was hiding something; a tugging in his chest telling him that there was something Haru wasn’t telling him, but he decided not to push it. They were both too exhausted to argue, and he really didn’t want Haru to be upset in the first place.

“But…” Makoto glanced down to see Haru’s eyes open, worrying his bottom lip between his teeth. “What if we don’t actually feel like this? What if these feeling are just a part of being Truemates? Just manufactured emotions?”

Makoto thought about that for a moment. He thought about how drawn to Haru he had been in the bathroom when they had met, the way that he felt entranced at the sight of those startling eyes looking up at him. Even now, gazing at the way Haru’s dark lashes brushed his cheek when he blinked, the unsure glimmer in his eyes as he contemplated his own emotions, the slender curve to his lip, the smooth movement of his shoulders as he breathed… even the smallest things about Haru were beautiful, but that was just the outside. How much did he actually know about Haru?

“Maybe… maybe you’re right. I mean, we don’t know a lot about each other.”

He felt Haru stiffen beside him, and Makoto chest tightened with a mix of Haru’s worry, and his own. He wanted to tell Haru that this idea couldn’t possibly be true, that their feelings were their own, but he couldn’t. He couldn’t bring himself to say something that might not be true; he couldn’t hurt Haru with false hope. But still -

“But we could learn about each other,” Makoto offered. “Nothing says we have to do anything about this Truemate stuff yet. Hell, Amakata could still be wrong. We can take our time and find out more about each other.” He froze as a somewhat stupid idea popped into his head. “Here!” He jumped up, already dedicated to the plan forming in his mind, even if it was stupid. The worry he felt from Haru just seemed to be growing by the second, and he had to do something to fix it.

Haru gasped when Makoto moved, and put an arm out to keep himself upright, scowling at Makoto, who wasn’t paying attention. Instead, Makoto fumbled through a desk, hunting for a piece of paper and some pens. He returned to the loveseat and sat down and tearing the paper into strips as Haru moved to prop himself against the other arm on the couch, watching the pile of paper grow between
them. “What are you doing?”

Makoto kept quiet, tearing the final bits of paper into strips and grinning down at his work. “There!” he grabbed the pens and handed one to Haru. “Here! We can write down a couple of questions, then put them in a pile. Then we can take turns picking a question, and we both have to answer!”

Haru stared at him incredulously. “That seems a little silly… but okay.” He took the pen and grabbed a few strips of paper, and set to work. The nagging worry in Makoto’s chest began to ebb, so with a smile, Makoto grabbed a piece of paper and set to work himself.

Ten minutes later, the strips of paper were all used up, folded, and placed in a plie between them, pens discarded on the floor.

“Alright, I’ll go first.” Makoto reached out and grabbed the paper at the top of the pile and unfolded it. The handwriting was sleek and smooth, carefully printed, and incredibly different from his own messy scrawl. “What’s your favorite color?” He raised an eyebrow at Haru, who shrugged.

“I’m not creative.”

Makoto chuckled and set the paper aside. “My favorite color is probably light blue, kind of like the sky. I love looking at the sky.”

Haru nodded, eyes thoughtful whilst the rest of his face remained neutral. “Mine’s blue, like the ocean.”

Makoto laughed. “I thought it would be something like that.”

Haru said nothing, instead reaching out and grabbing another paper. He opened it and stared at it in confusion for a moment. “Your handwriting is kind of sloppy.”

Makoto groaned. “Sorry. I tried to write clearly. I can read it, if you want.”

“No it’s fine, I just didn’t expect it. You seem like someone whose handwriting would be really neat.” He stared at it for a moment longer before reading, “What’s your hidden talent?” Haru thought for a moment, eyes still focused on the paper. “I can draw pretty well, I guess.”

“Really? That’s so cool! My little sister can draw really well too, but Ren and I are terrible.”

“I bet you both draw fine.”

“Not really. I had to take an art class in high school, and after a few weeks I brought home a drawing. My parents spent hours complimenting the farmhouse and how well I had drawn the animals. They thought they were sheep.”

“They weren’t sheep?”

“No, it wasn’t even a farm. It was my house, with my family standing outside.”

Haru’s eyes widened, and his hand went up to his mouth to try and muffle his laughter. Makoto groaned good-naturedly, but he was thrilled a little inside. The sound of Haru’s laughter filled him with unexplainable joy. He vowed to try and make Haru laugh more often.

When the laughter died off, they both relaxed into the couch, sitting in silence until Haru asked, “So, what’s your secret talent?”

“Oh! Um… I don’t think I have one.”
Haru scowled at him. “We’re both supposed to answer the question,” he reminded him.

“Yeah, but I’m just not really talented at anything.”

“I think you’re really good with people.” Haru offered up. “You know how to make them feel better without really trying.”

“I do?”

Haru gestured to the pile of paper between them. “You’re doing it now. You could tell I was worried, so you tried to help. And since you came here, everyone seems a little happier.”

“Really?”

Haru smiled. “A secret talent, but probably one of the best.”

“Oh! Um, th-thank you,” Makoto’s face felt like it was on fire. He hadn’t thought he was doing anything special. He could only tell Haru was worried because of the bond thing, and he didn’t think he had done anything special for the others. But if Haru thought something had changed because of him… well he wasn’t going to argue. Instead, he grabbed another paper and opened it. One of his own questions this time. “What was something in school that interested you?”

Haru’s smile faded. “I’ve haven’t been to school for a while now, at least since I came here.”

“Really? How long have you been here?” Makoto asked.

“That’s not the question on the paper.”

“Haru!” he complained, and Haru chuckled.

“Fine. Six years. I presented when I was thirteen.”

“Oh! So is that when you’re supposed to present? Did I present late?”

“No,” Haru shook his head, leaning back against the arm again. “You presented about the time most people do, between ages fifteen to eighteen. I just presented earlier than most.”

“Oh. So, you were homeschooled after you came here?”

“Yeah. They try to keep young Alphas and Omegas on the estates as much as possible. For our own safety.” There was a bit of a biting edge to the words, but Makoto decided not to ask about it, due to the look on Haru’s face.

“I see. Well, what did you like when you were in school then? Or when you were tutored.”

Haru shrugged. “I guess sports. I was always really good at most things, or at least that’s what people told me, but I didn’t really care. School never really interested me much.”

“Yeah I bet they’re right. I feel like you would do good at just about anything, Haru! But,” Makoto said, shifting in his seat as his tailbone began to ache. The loveseats were pretty, a few shades brighter than the dark red wall behind it, with a beautiful wooden frame, but they obviously weren’t really meant to be sat in for long periods of time. “Being good at something and enjoying it isn’t the same thing! I’m not the best at literature, but I enjoy it. And I’m good at English, but I really hate grammar and stuff. So if you didn’t like school, what do you enjoy?”

The answer was so instantaneous that Makoto was sure Haru hadn’t even considered anything else,
“Swimming”

Makoto gave a chuckle. “Can I ask why?”

Haru froze, then frowned and stared at his feet, and Makoto wondered if anyone had ever asked Haru why he liked the water so much. He felt a strange sort of twisting feeling coming from Haru, as though he was uneasy, but he struggled to pinpoint another emotion. Something felt like a thousand needles all prodding his heart at different times, just seconds apart from each other, never hard enough to pierce, but enough to make him ache.

“When I’m in the water, I feel alive and safe. When I was little, my parents could be a little strict, I guess, so the water was a place where I felt free from them. Water doesn’t push me, doesn’t expect anything from me, and as long as I respect it, it will carry me.”

Haru spoke with a quiet longing in his voice and it painted a vivid picture in Makoto’s mind. He could see it, almost as if he was there; a young Haru floating in the water, hidden away from the world, in the one place that could carry him away from his worries.

“I think, one day, I would like to swim with you,” Makoto murmured. Then he froze, looking up at the boy in shock. “Oh! We were supposed to go look at the public pools!”


“You forgot?” Makoto teased. “Weren’t you the one telling me not to forget?”

“But you did!”

“I didn’t! I had a couple of places picked out for us to look at. I checked all around, and there’s one town about an hour away that is probably our best bet to find a pool.”

This time Haru was the one who looked shocked. “You looked into it that much?”

“Of course!” Makoto was confused. Haru was speaking as though he had a hard time believing Makoto would actually take his desire to swim seriously. “When do you want to go take a look?”

Haru chewed his lip again. “Maybe… the day after tomorrow?”

“Yeah, sound good Haru!” Makoto smiled, pleased at the way Haru’s eyes lit up at the idea of getting to swim.

He snapped quickly to attention when Haru muttered a quiet “Mako”, a blush painting his cheeks, and Makoto realized that he had been staring rather intently at the boy.

“Oh, sorry,” he blushed, but Haru just gave him a smile and reached for another paper, and they continued the game until all the questions were gone.

Chapter End Notes

I’m not going to lie, this chapter and the next chapter were the hardest to write. I think it took a total of eight weeks to do those two chapters.

So I have a couple of announcements. First off, thank you so much to my Beta reader
sarahsharpiemarker! With her help, hopefully, I'll stop making stupid mistakes like having repeating paragraph lol.

Secondly, a little news about the Story chapters to come. So originally, this story was going to be around 25 chapters long, split into two parts: the Truemate arc and the Bubblegum Bitch arc (can you guess who's going to be introduced in that part?). I have all but three chapters written for the first part, but I only have a little bit done for the second part, and with school starting up next week, I'm a little worried that I will fall behind. Of course, it's still a while before I really need to worry about that. But, as of now, I'm thinking that once we reach chapter 18 (the end of the first part) this fic will probably go on hiatus for a few weeks until I can get things caught up. But, like I said, we still have ten weeks before this really becomes an issue, so I may get things figured out to where the fic will stay active. I'm going to try my best to do so!

Anyways, that's all for now. Let me know what you think, and thank you all so much for reading!!!
Swim

Chapter Summary

Makoto and Haru go on their first date

Chapter Notes

Finally, time to introduce a character I've been neglecting for eight chapters now. Well, two characters really...

WARNING!!!

ok, so in this chapter, there is a mention of some pretty bad violence. we don't see it, but Haru discusses what happened when an Alpha lost control of his temper, and some much-loved characters got caught the crossfire.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So, where are you two going to go? The first date is important, you know!” Rin said as he lounged casually on Makoto’s bed, a sucker in his hand. Sousuke leaned against the bed beside him, scrolling through his phone. “Some people say it sets the mood for the whole relationship!”

If he was being honest, Makoto didn’t really know what the couple was doing in his room. He hadn’t invited them, or even asked for advice on his date with Haru. All he knew was that one minute he had been alone in his room fussing with his hair – which, as usual, was refusing to cooperate with him – and the next, Rin and Sousuke were barging in and making themselves at home. According to Rin, Rei and Nagisa were helping Haru get ready.

Sousuke glanced at his boyfriend, eyebrows raised in interest. “Really? People say that? What people?”

“Me. I’m people.” Rin said, pointing to himself.

“You’re a person. People implies more than one, preferably a large group. You’re just one loser.”

“Shut it, jackass!” Rin pouted, and then laughed, aiming an elbow at Sousuke’s side. He managed to hit him, but the large Alpha didn’t even flinch. “Besides, even if I’m the only one who says it, it’s been true of every first date I’ve been on.”

Makoto watched through the mirror where he was still fidgeting with his hair as Sousuke frowned. “On our first date, didn’t I spill a milkshake on you? And you spent an entire hour crying over a dent we got in one of the cars.”

“I didn’t cry!” Rin hissed irritably.
“Oh, that’s right. It was just raining. Except, you know, only on your face, despite the sunny day. I completely forgot.” Sousuke’s voice dripped with sarcasm. Rin stuck his tongue out at him childishly. Makoto, who was mostly allowing their argument to be background noise, gave up on his hair and began searching for his swimsuit. He dug through his drawers in a rush, glancing quickly at the digital clock on his nightstand. “But aside from that, how exactly did that in any way define our relationship now?”

“Easy. You seem cool and collected, but you’re actually a total dweeb, and I might have a tendency to get emotional, but we’re both comfortable enough around each other to like those qualities in each other.” Rin said confidently.

Makoto was still digging through his drawer, but a sudden charged silence made him spare a glance at the couple. The eyes they were making at each other made Makoto think that the only thing keeping them from kissing right then and there was Makoto’s presence.

“Rin…” Sousuke said, a gentle smile on his face.

Rin coughed, belatedly embarrassed about his candid statement, “That said, our first date was a bit of a disaster. Ai had you beat there. At least he remembered that I like chocolate ice cream a lot more than vanilla.”

The tension faded, and Makoto heard Sousuke give a low chuckle, “Yes, and you two refuse to let me forget it.”

“We’d known each other for almost a year before we went out. Ai only knew me for a month. It seems like a simple thing to remember.”

“Well maybe you don’t remember, but we spent the first year we knew each other arguing more than anything else. It was a little hard to find out what kind of ice cream you liked when you spent the whole year calling me a dickhead anytime I got too close to you.” Sousuke grumbled. “And for the record, I bought you a whole gallon of chocolate ice cream the next time we went to the city to make up for it.”

“Hmm, fair point. I guess.” Rin conceded with a shrug. “The ice cream was good.”

Makoto let out a triumphant noise as he unearthed his swimming gear: one pair of casual yellow swim shorts with light blue trim along the seams and another more professional pair of legskins, long and black with green accents running down the legs. He remembered how excited his siblings had been when they had presented them to him, Ran commenting excitedly about how the color matched his eyes.

“Oh, you have a pair of those too? Haru’s got like ten of them.” Rin spoke up, finally looking away from his mate to glance at Makoto. “I actually don’t think he ever takes them off.”

“When I first met him, he was wearing them in the bath,” Makoto’s heart fluttered a little bit at the memory of the instant connection he had felt with Haru that day. He bit his lip, glancing between the two different swimsuits. “Which do you think would be better? We’re just going to an indoor pool a few towns over; is that too casual to wear the legskins?”

“Nah, Haru will love it.” Rin leaned back further on the bed, propping himself up on his elbows. “So, were you a big swimmer in high school or something?”

“No, nothing like that,” Makoto chuckled. “I was going to join the school club, but by the time my parents had bought me the suit and goggles and stuff, the club had been disbanded. I ended up
joining basketball instead. I did it for my parents mostly. I really liked swimming as a kid, but… I’m actually terrified of the water.” Makoto admitted. “Mainly the ocean.”

Makoto heard a disbelieving splutter behind him, and he turned to see Rin and Sousuke staring in shock at him. “You scared of the ocean? Really?”

Makoto nodded, frowning. “Why are you looking at me like that? Amakata looked the same way when she found out.”

“Well, I mean, it’s not really that big a deal, I guess, but…” Rin cast a glance at Sousuke, who remained silent, returning his gaze to his phone. “It’s just kind of… weird. You two are some sort of magical soulmates, and yet you’re scared of the one thing he loves more than anything else.”

“Water?”

Rin nodded. “Yeah, and definitely the ocean. You should see him on our summer trips to the beach. I swear the guy is part fish or something.”

Makoto nodded, glancing down at the suits in his hands again, before tossing the shorts aside, and throwing the jammers into a bag with a couple of towels. He took a quick inventory to make sure he had everything he would need and then zipped it up, stepping back with a smile. Everything was ready.

“All good?” Rin hopped up from the bed and grinned at Makoto. “Ok, let me go –” But he was cut off by a knock at the door. “Must be them,” he mumbled, and moved to open the door. Nagisa, Rei, and, of course, Haru were on the other side. One glance at him and Makoto was speechless.

Haru looked amazing. He was wearing red jeans that accentuated his long, lean legs, a nicely fitted black button up, and a light blue scarf that made his eyes stand out, looking brighter and more aware than ever. The sleeves of his shirt had been rolled up to the elbow and it looked amazing. Makoto had heard many of the girls back home talk about that – how rolled sleeves somehow made a boy ten time more attractive. He had been sure that it was just a taste thing, something that a few people found attractive, but with Haru standing in front of him, fidgeting with the sleeves, Makoto found he had to agree. Maybe it was the way it accentuated his slender but muscled forearms? Honestly, Makoto had no clue why, but he knew he really liked it.

“Something wrong?” Haru glanced down at himself, his usually expressionless face frowning slightly, and Makoto felt something like worry pull from his and Haru’s bond.

“No, um, of course not. You just… you look great! Amazing, really!” Makoto tripped over the words, trying desperately to make it clear that nothing was wrong with Haru’s attire, just with Makoto’s brain’s ability to function around Haru and rolled sleeves, apparently. God, it was like he got more attractive every day.

“He’s wearing his swimsuit under his pants!” Nagisa groaned out, leaning dramatically against Rei, who just smiled at his boyfriend’s antics. “He just kept saying it would save time.”

Haru gave the smaller boy a sidelong glance, “It will.”

“Yes, but you can’t just wear your swimsuit everywhere, Haru-chan! It not sanitary!”

“I wear a different one every day.”

“But they’re skin tight. You can’t be in skin tight clothing all the time!”
Haru was about to respond, when Rin stood from his spot on the bed and stepped forward. “Okay, okay, that’s enough. I’m sure these two idiots would like to get on with their day.” Rin stretched, hands folded as he raised his hand upward, before stuff them in his pocket and walking out of the room. However, just before he passed Haru, he paused and looked Haru over carefully. “You good?” he finally asked.

Haru gave him a hard look, and nodded, and Makoto suddenly felt a strange pressure on the bond that connected them. It felt weird and unnatural, like someone was holding a pillow down on it and smothering anything that might be coming through on Haru’s end. Makoto wondered if this was intentional, if Haru was somehow shutting down his emotions in order to keep some feelings private. That would make sense, he supposed. Haru seemed like a rather private person, so suddenly having all his emotions bared to someone else had to be difficult. He wondered if he should ask Haru about it, to try a figure out if he should be doing that too and give Haru a little more privacy, but decided against it. It was probably best to let Haru work things out, and not bring it up. Surely Haru would mention if something was bothering him.

Rin looked at Haru for a moment longer before nodding and leaving the room. Nagisa, Rei, and Sousuke followed, leaving Haru and Makoto alone. For a second, all Makoto could do was look at Haru, notice the carefully blank look on his face, and wonder if he should say something. Finally, he asked, “Are you sure you’re feeling up to this Haru?”

Haru blinked, the carefully neutral expression to reveal a more puzzled one. “What?”

“You just seem a little off today. It’s been a rough couple of days, so I understand if you want to wait.”

Haru just stared at him incredulously, before shaking his head. “I’m fine. Let’s go.”

Makoto paused for just a beat, before a smile lit up his face. “Okay!”

There was no denying it. The first few minutes of the car ride were awkward. So very, very awkward. They sat in silence, Makoto at the wheel, Haru staring blankly out the window. Makoto swore he could feel something akin to nervousness from the bond, but to be fair, it could have quite honestly have been his own nerves. He still wasn’t good enough at reading the bond between them to tell for sure.

“Um,” Makoto glanced up as Haru spoke. He voice was carefully neutral, but Makoto felt the nervousness increase. Or maybe it was Haru? “So, have you been getting along ok?”

Haru looked away again, and Makoto was positive there was a bit of a flush to his face. “Sorry, that didn’t come out right. I meant, have you been figuring out the whole Alpha and Omega thing? I forgot with all the excitement that you’ve only known about all of this for about a week, and then all the Truemate stuff happened, and with Amakata and Sasabe so busy, I wasn’t sure if you had any questions about anything…” he trailed off, but finally turned his head back towards Makoto, though Haru’s eyes still would meet his, preferring to stare at the stereo instead.

Makoto had a hundred questions about Alphas and Omegas. The book Amakata had given him hadn’t actually been very clear on anything, preferring either hazy overviews or lengthy explanations filled with medical terms over explaining things a clear way for him to understand. So of course, he had questions.
But the moment Haru made the offer to answer them, any questions he had flew out of his mind, and there was nothing in their place.

“Uh, I can’t really think of anything…” Makoto mumbled, watching as Haru’s blank expression seemed to drop a little, and he suddenly looked disappointed. Makoto wracked his brain, desperate for some question to ask, when he recalled the person Sousuke and Rin had been discussing earlier that morning. “Actually, Rin and Sousuke were talking about someone named Ai? They acted as though it was someone they knew really well, but I haven’t met anyone with that name. Is it someone who left the estate recently?”

The carefully blank look was back, but Makoto felt the same smothered feeling from their bond as he had that morning as Haru finally met his gaze. “Ai?”

“Yeah, Sousuke and Rin were talking about their first date, and someone named Ai came up. You know them?”

Haru didn’t speak for a moment, and he seemed to be searching Makoto’s face, looking for something. Whether he found it or not, Makoto didn’t know, but the guarded look fell, and Haru sighed.

“Nitori Aichihiro. He was an Omega who lived here almost three years ago. He and Rin were together for about two months before he had to leave.”

“Had to leave? Why? Did something happen?”

Haru seemed to hesitate for a moment, and Makoto almost told him to forget it, before he nodded. “Yeah, it wasn’t… good.”

“I’m sorry, I don’t mean to be nosy…”

“No, it’s fine.” Haru was staring ahead at the road. “Rin doesn’t talk about it much, but he usually forgets everyone doesn’t already know.

“Before Rin showed up, it was just me, Ai, and another Alpha named Yoshino. Yoshino was interested in Ai, but Ai never showed any interest in him, so he just didn’t really mention it after a while. Ai was here for about two months before Rin arrived, and once he moved in, you never saw one without the other. They started dating about a month after Rin moved. They never really told anyone, but it was kind of obvious.” Haru paused, chewing on his lip, and there was a sudden pull at Makoto’s chest from Haru, as though he was reluctant to continue.

“Two months later, Yoshino walked in on them doing… something. I’m honestly not sure what they were doing. But apparently, he never realized that they were together. Since they were two Omegas, it never crossed his mind. But he… didn’t take it well.” Haru took a deep breath before continuing.

“We thought he was over Ai, but he was angry. Really angry. He... attacked Rin, and said some horrible things. I was passing by when Ai was trying to talk him down, the way I did for you the other day. And it almost worked. But then Yoshino noticed me…”

Haru went quiet. Makoto honestly wasn’t sure he wanted to hear any more. But still…

“Ai jumped in the way, so I didn’t get hurt. But he ended up with a broken leg and a couple of broken ribs, and Rin got his arm broken before Sasabe managed to get Yoshino away from them. Ai and Rin were sent to the hospital. Rin came back that night, but Ai was there for about two weeks.”

Haru didn’t answer for a moment, and Makoto struggled to keep his hands from jerking the steering wheel of the car when he felt the smothering sensation cover their bond again. He was really beginning to hate that feeling. It felt like something huge was missing whenever Haru did it. But he just had to be patient. He could handle this.

“The committee in charge of our estate decided it was too dangerous to let Ai or Yoshino stay, so Yoshino was sent to an estate in the United States, and Ai was sent to one in Australia. Rin was devastated. They didn’t even get a chance to say goodbye to each other.”

Makoto couldn’t speak; he didn’t know what to say. He couldn’t think of anything as awful as being forced to move away from someone you cared about, and couldn’t think of any words that would be able to describe how he felt. So instead, he asked, “So how did they get back in contact?”

The pressure coming from Haru faded, and Makoto was relieved to feel a sort of warmth from his companion. “About a year ago, after Rin and Sousuke had been dating for a while, Sousuke must have realized just how important Ai was to Rin. I don’t think Rin ever truly got over how he felt for Ai, and Sousuke seemed to realize that. So, he made a few calls, enlisted Amakata’s help, and was finally able to contact Ai. They exchanged a few letters and phone calls, then finally managed to set things up so that Rin and Ai could talk online without anyone finding out. They use some sort of video call or something.”

Haru shrugged. “Rin was happier than I’d ever seen him. He and Sousuke spent about six hours talking to Ai that first day. They found out that he’d found a mate in Australia, and that he was relatively happy, but he had missed Rin too. Apparently, his Alpha had been trying to get ahold of Rin, but Sousuke beat him to the punch.” Haru chuckled. “Since then, they’ve all become really close. Sousuke adores Ai, and Ai’s mate, Momo, practically worships Sousuke and Rin. I think they plan to live together once they both bond. So, I guess they’re going to get their happy ending.” He chuckled lightly again. “At least, they will if Rin and Sousuke can survive Gou planning their ceremony.”

Makoto laughed as well, but there was another question on his mind. “When I first arrived, Nagisa mentioned two Alphas who were together. And then there is Rin and Ai. Is that … unusual? For two Alphas or two Omegas to be together?”

“Um, yeah, kind of.” Haru seemed reluctant to look at him again, instead focusing outside the car. Makoto focused on the road as they entered a small village. If he remembered the directions correctly, it would be another thirty minutes before they made it to the next town over, where the indoor pool was. “It’s the expectation for Alphas and Omegas to find a partner of the opposite secondary gender, mainly because the doctors who study us don’t see any point in a relationship between two Alphas or two Omegas. Amakata told you what she believes, right? That supposedly, we’re humanity’s back up plan? Well, two Alphas can’t reproduce and neither can two Omegas. Well… two female Alphas or two male Omegas can possibly have children, but… it’s pretty rare.”

“Really? Why?” Makoto glanced at him out of the corner of his eye.

“Well, male Omegas are only fertile to carry children while they’re in heat, and male Omega sperm isn’t the most potent stuff. And it’s difficult for female Alphas to carry a child. Their bodies aren’t made for it so they often can’t conceive, or if they do, they have a high chance of miscarriage.”

“I see…” Makoto hummed, but something felt off. “Why do the doctors have any say in who someone ends up with?”

“You know all those bonuses that Amakata told you about before you moved in? Or the stuff that was in the contract you signed? The free college, the extra money, the discount on the medicine for
ruts and heats? Well, a few of the doctors that study us are also on the council that runs the estate and bestows all of those benefits… and they’ve been known to withhold those benefits if you don’t line up with exactly what they expect from you.”

“And same - what did you call it? Secondary gender?” Makoto glanced at Haru, who nodded shortly. “Ok, so same secondary gendered couples are not what they expect?”

Haru nodded.

“That’s… kind of messed up!” Makoto fumed. “I looked at the prices of the medicines, and they’re almost impossible to afford without some sort of support! And why should these doctors get a say in who falls in love with who? It’s none of their business! Besides, if they’re after information, surely something can be learned from the same gendered couples as well! Plus, I thought these experiments were voluntary!”

“They are,” Haru sighed. “And you receive the bonuses promised while living at the estate. But once you leave, there is about a hundred sheets of paperwork to fill out in order to keep the bonuses.”

Makoto gnawed on the inside of his cheek, trying to keep is anger in check. There was no need to bug Haru with his anger, not when he thought he could feel a little irritation seeping through their bond already.

Apparently Haru felt his anger anyway though, and Makoto jumped when he felt Haru’s slight hand press against his arm. The touch soothed the feelings flowing through him, and while he was still irritated, there was just something about that touch that made things a little easier to control.

They stayed quiet, Haru hand soothing him with small circles on his arm, and Makoto wondered silently if the touch helped Haru too.

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Makoto stared up in shock at the building before them, too shocked to form words. The large building, easily big enough to hold a decent sized pool, a sign read Shiraki Public Pool. The name was correct, the only public pool available within an hour from the estate. Makoto had been thrilled when the when he had discovered it, pleased that they wouldn’t need to travel far to have their date somewhere special to Haru. However, the sign underneath that one read “Closed for Remodeling” and was not something that had been published on the website. He couldn’t bring himself to look at Haru; the disappointment and longing welling at the boy was just too much.

“I’m sorry Haru,” He sighed, casting his gaze down to his feet. “Their website said nothing about being closed.” He bit his lip hard, thinking. “I think there was another pool maybe another hour away… oh. But that one was south of the estate. Damn.” He sighed again, and shook his head. “I’m sorry,”

“It’s fine.”

“But it’s not! I –”

“HEY!” both boys looked up to see a tall, red headed girl running towards them. She was dressed rather casually, fiddling with the buttons on her purple polo shirt as she jogged their way. When she finally reached them, Makoto was shocked to see that her expression was anything but friendly.

“Can’t you guys read? We’re closed. The remodeling hasn’t started yet, but there’s nothing but the
pool and some empty lockers in there right now, so if you were planning on breaking in, there nothing to steal!"

“Steal?” Makoto spluttered, taken aback by the harsh words and glare that were directed towards him. The girl barely seemed to acknowledge Haru. Haru’s lips pressed into a firm line, and he was glaring rather heatedly at the girl, who met his gaze coolly with her own chocolate brown eyes. “We weren’t – I mean, I’d never –”

“We came to swim,” Haru stated coldly, cutting Makoto’s stutters off. “Your website didn’t say you were closed.”

“Oh yeah? Well, I – oh wait.” The harsh tone dropped quickly as the girl processed Haru’s words, and a confused look replaced the defensive set of her face. “It didn’t? But my boss said she took care of that… or did she tell me to do that? Crap, I can’t remember.” She was mumbling to herself, brow furrowed as she tried to remember. Makoto watched Haru settle back, his icy cold gaze settling to cool inference, yet the emotions pulling at their bond seem more stressed and upset than indifferent.

_He must be really upset about not getting a chance to swim_, Makoto thought to himself, glancing at the pool, before being struck with an idea. It wasn’t one he really liked, per say, but maybe, if he played his cards right…

“Look,” he said, reaching out a hand and gently touching the girls elbow. The girl looked up, and let herself be led away from Haru, who stared blankly at them as they walked away. “I’m sorry if we alarmed you,” Makoto murmured. “We just drove about an hour to get her. My friend loves to swim, but he hasn’t had a place to in ages, and your pool was the closest. You said that the remodeling hadn’t started yet, right?”

The girl’s expression tightened slightly, like she was expecting him to blackmail her to get into the pool. Which was ridiculous. Absolutely insane. He was above blackmail.

Bribery, on the other hand…

“If you’d like, I have some money in the car,” he offered gently. “I could pay you to just let us in for a little bit. We won’t take long, I just really think that this will make him happy.”

The girl perked up at the mention of money, and she glanced at her watch. “Well, I was supposed to come in early to get things set up, and my boss won’t get here for about an hour… but she’ll kick my ass if she finds you…” the girl chewed her bottom lip, thinking carefully, before sighing and nodding. “Fine, you two have an hour. Consider it a sort of apology for you two having to come all the way out here… and for me accusing you.”

Makoto grinned, “Thank you!” He turned back towards Haru, but was stopped by a hand on his shoulder.

“That doesn’t mean I don’t want the money.”

He sighed. “It’s in the car. Just a moment.”

Makoto gave the girl the money, and once the front door was unlocked, she walked in with Makoto and Haru on her heels.

“Look, I’ll hang out here. My boss will be here soon, so you don’t have long. I’ll try and run interference to keep my boss off you. After all, it’s my ass on the line if she finds you.”
“I know,” Makoto nodded. “Thank you for this, again.”

The girl waved her hand. “Go, go. Get your money’s worth.”

Haru, who had been slowly edging his way towards the doorway that led to the pool, paused and looked up at Makoto, brow furrowed. “Money?”

“We will.” Makoto nodded, trying not to meet the eyes that he could feel boring into him. “Come on, Haru. We won’t have long.” He hurried off down the hallway, the smell of chlorine filling the air.

“Did you have to pay her to get us in here?”

“It wasn’t much,” Makoto assured. “Don’t worry about it.”

“But I –” Haru began, but his sentence was cut short when they passed through another door, and caught sight of the room that opened up before them.

The pool wasn’t huge by any means; the abandoned pool at the estate was longer by several feet easily, but judging by the look in Haru’s eyes and the pure joy that Makoto could feel vibrating from him, the size didn’t matter.

“It’s a pretty nice place isn’t Haru?” Makoto smiled, glancing out at the water. He couldn’t help feeling a little excited; maybe a good swim was exactly what he needed as well. He waited for Haru’s response, but there was nothing, “Haru? What do you– HARU!” He turned his head, only to see that Haru was sprinting towards the water, pants piled next to Makoto’s feet, shirt currently being ripped off his torso. The shirt and his scarf went flying into the air, and there was a splash, sending water droplets everywhere as he dove immediately into the water.

Makoto said nothing as his jaw dropped at the speed. He’d never seen anything like it, and he doubted he ever would again; Haru had been fully dressed, by his side, and then less than ten seconds later he was in the pool. How the hell…

Makoto shook his head and jogged over to the poolside. His eyes scanned the water, searching for the inky black hair or pale skin, but the waves caused by Haru’s disturbance of the water made it hard to focus. It wasn’t until Haru resurfaced at the other end of the pool mere moments later that Makoto could tell anything at all. He watched in amazement and Haru paused, treading water for a moment, before sinking back onto his back to float back across the pool. Rin had been absolutely correct. Even from this distance, Makoto could see the pure bliss and peace on Haru face as he floated across the surface. There was no doubt in his mind that this was the place where Haru belonged, lost in the waves that Makoto feared. He couldn’t help but chuckle.

The noise seemed to get Haru’s attention, and the boy straightened in the water, fixing his sparkling blue eyes on Makoto. “Aren’t you getting in?”

Makoto tried to give him a carefree smile, but he was sure that it came off a little more tense than he liked. “I will in a minute, Haru. I’m not quite as prepared as you were,” he grabbed his bag that, at some point, had fallen at his feet, and turned to walk off towards the changing room.

He returned moments later, dressed in only his legskins, to find Haru doing laps the pool. He paused to watches as Haru’s arms cut through the water with a swiftness that just seemed too practiced for a casual swimmer. Haru obviously loved the water, so why the hell had anyone shut down the pool at the estate?

Sighing, and making a mental note to talk to Amakata once they got back, he dropped his bag on the ground and made his way over to the pool. He sat down on the edge and let his feet slowly sink
beneath the wave, taking a deep breath as the smell of chlorine surrounded him. Haru didn’t seem to notice him, so he just slipped into the water, gasping as the cool water hit him. He took a deep breath, and pushed forward, keeping his head above the water as he set off in what might generously be called a half-assed front crawl.

Once he made it to the edge of the pool, he straightened up, and looked around to see Haru watching him.

“I know, I suck. I haven’t swum in a while.”

Haru shook his head. “Just… it’s not your stroke. You just seemed a little stilted.”

Makoto laughed. “Yeah, I was never very comfortable with the crawl. I tend to swim backstroke.”

Haru nodded. “I only swim free. Makes me feel closer to the water.”

Makoto watched Haru take off, treading water as the other boy dove beneath the surface again, pushing through the water at an incredible speed, easily clearing the length of the pool in seconds. After a moment, Makoto settled back and kicked off against the wall, settling onto his back. It had been a few months since he had last swam, but the motion came easily to him, and he lost himself in the sound of the water splashing around his ears and across his face. He did one lap, before going back to his starting position, where Haru was waiting for him.

“You’re good,” he stated, and Makoto shook his head in an attempt to clear the water from his ears.

“Thanks, Haru, but I think you’re a lot better. You’re so fast. It’s kind of hard to believe you haven’t swum in a while.” Makoto frowned then, his thoughts from earlier rising again. “By the way, why haven’t you been swimming lately? There’s that huge pool at the estate, why was it shut down?”

Haru seemed to freeze for a moment, staring in shock at Makoto, before glancing away, chewing on his lip. “Not enough interest to keep it up.”

“Seriously? I mean, even if you were the only one to use it, I feel as though you have enough interest for ten people.”

Haru just shook his head. “I was the only one who used it regularly, and the director said it had to be shut down.”

“The director?”

“He’s the leader of the hospital board who runs the estate, and is the director of the Alpha and Omega program.” Haru’s voice sounded almost monotonous as he glanced towards the far end of the pool. “He’s the one who gets the final say in most matters.”

Makoto opened his mouth to respond, hoping for more information about this director, but went silent at the sound of a thud coming from the lobby, followed by the sound of rapid foot sets rushing towards them. The boys glanced up towards the door to see the girl from earlier huffing as she sprinted into the pool area.

“My boss is here! You guys have to leave, now!” she panted.

“I thought she wouldn’t be here for another hour??” Makoto exclaimed as he clambered out of the pool, a little irritated that he hadn’t had the chance to see Haru swim very much.

“Yeah, that’s what I thought too, but I guess we were wrong. And she’s going to hang me out to dry
if you two are here. So, you have to move it!” she ran over to Makoto, grabbing his bag and Haru’s clothes that were still strewn across the pool deck, stuffing those and something else in the bag before tossing it. “Here. Sorry you couldn’t stay longer. Money’s back in the bag.”

“But you don’t have to – ” he protested, watching as Haru pulled himself out of the pool reluctantly, but the girl shook her head and shoved the bag at him.

“Naw, I promised you guys an hour, and I couldn’t deliver. But give us a call in about a month. We should be open by then. I’ll give you guys a free pass once we are.”

“Thank you!” Makoto gave her a smile, which she returned reluctantly before freezing when they heard the slamming of a door from where she had come from.

“Hiroko! I thought I told you to have the doors open when we showed up!”

The girl let out a quiet shriek and sprinted towards the doorway, leaning around the corner to grab the door and slam it shut. “Hurry!” she hissed. “The emergency exit. She’ll kill me if she finds you.”

Makoto nodded and grabbed his bag and, still dripping, he and Haru jogged out of the emergency exit. Makoto was a little worried that opening the door would start and alarm, but it was silent as they made their way out the door and the breeze hit his wet skin, sending a shiver down his spine. He glanced around at the alley they found themselves in, noticing another small alleyway a few feet away. Grabbing Haru’s hand, Makoto ran over around the corner, down the alley a little way, until they were hidden from the emergency exit. They stayed quiet, pressed against the wall, listening until they heard the squeak of a door.

“Hiroko, do you honestly expect to believe that you went swimming, got everything wet in here, and ran out here to make all these footprints as well? But now, somehow, you’re almost completely dry?”

There was the sound of some faraway murmuring, what Makoto assumed was Hiroko responding, and the first voice laughed lightly. “You’re a clever girl, Hiroko, but not the best liar. But whatever, I can’t find them, so…” the voice trailed off as the woman continued speaking, the squeak of the door closing cutting off her words. Once the alley was silent once again, both boys remained still against the wall for just a moment. And then Makoto laughed. He doubled over laughing, the bag dropping from his hands as he did, and heard Haru’s quiet chuckles by his side. When his laughter stopped, Makoto straightened up and leaned his head back against the wall again, a smile on his face.

“I hope we didn’t get her into too much trouble.” He wondered aloud.

“I’m sure she’s fine.” Haru muttered.

“Yeah,” he turned his head and smiled widely at Haru. “I bet she is. But I’m sorry you didn’t get a chance to swim very much, Haru.”

“It’s fine.”

“But that was the whole point of this trip, so you could swim, and you barely got any time in there at all.”

Haru looked at Makoto. “It was fine. Besides, you’re here, so it makes it ok.”

Makoto’s breath caught at those words, and he watched Haru carefully, feeling his heartbeat pick up (it could have been Haru’s, he was still having a hard time telling). Though Haru’s cheeks were slightly pink, Haru kept his gaze steady and firm as he looked at Makoto.
“Haru…” He started, but he couldn’t think of anything to say; with those eyes on him, all he wanted to do was reach out and touch him, hold him, feel that soft skin under his fingertips. Really, any kind of contact would work; he just really, really needed to be close…

But he leaned back, clearing his throat as he grabbed the bag again and began to dig through it. “Well, we should get dressed, then maybe we can get some food? Or go look at some shops in the area?”

Haru looked a little disappointed, but nodded, reaching for his clothes.

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Makoto was smiling as they drove the car back to the estate. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Haru staring out the window. The drive back had been quiet, neither of them saying much, but there was something about this silence that didn’t feel heavy or awkward the way it had on the way to the pool. Occasionally, Makoto would point out a funny sign on the side of the road, or Haru would ask a question, but otherwise, they rested in the silence, simply taking comfort in each other’s presence.

Makoto didn’t have a lot of experience with dates, but if he were to take a guess, he thought this one had gone pretty well, considering. Once they had finished dressing, they strolled out of the alley. Makoto tossed their bag into the car as they passed and they walked down the street side by side, glancing into shop windows. Haru mostly stayed quiet, but Makoto felt his own heart skip a beat as the boy stayed close by his side, and every time their arms brushed.

They only entered only one store, a small grocery shop by Haru’s request. The moment they entered the store, Haru immediately made his way to the meat counter, requesting some sort of fish. Haru had said the name as he requested it, but Makoto couldn’t remember what fish it was. Had he said Tuna? Pacific Saury? He couldn’t remember. Makoto waited while Haru paid for it, and a couple of popsicles he grabbed from the freezer. They glanced in a few more shops, chatting quietly, before returning to the car.

Makoto smiled as he thought back over the day. Sure, it would have been nice to swim a little more, but all in all, the day had been nice.

They pulled the car up to the front of the house, and climbed out. Makoto grabbed the bag out of the backseat and Haru’s bag of fish, handing it to him.

“By the way, why did you buy this?”

Haru chewed his lips glancing down at the bag, then back to the house. “Amakata’s hasn’t had anything to do all day…”

“So, you think she’ll cook the fish for you?”

Haru looked at him, scandalized. “You haven’t had her cooking yet?”

“Um,” Makoto thought back over his first few days at the estate. The first day, Amakata had been with him, and supper had already been prepared. The next two days, neither she or Sasabe had been at dinner. Then everything with the Truemate stuff had come up, so she had been wrapped up in that, so… “No, I guess not.”

“Lucky.”

“Is she bad?” Makoto opened the door and stepped into the foyer, holding the door open for Haru.
Haru opened his mouth to say something, but was cut off when Nagisa threw open the door to the dining room and moved quickly upstairs. Makoto watched in confusion as he made his way upstairs without even greeting them, then glanced back at the dining room as Amakata poked her head out.

“Nagisa, I’ll send some food up for you later in case you get hungry.” They heard Nagisa make a noise, one that almost sounded like a groan, but that was quickly forgotten when Amakata caught sight of them. “Haruka! Makoto! You’re just in time for dinner!”

Haru stiffened beside him, a reaction that was enough to make Makoto want to pass on supper, but Amakata didn’t even give them a chance. She emerged completely from the dining room and grabbed their wrists, marching them into the dining room.

Makoto remembered, when he was a child, how he and his parents would visit his grandparents. He remembered thinking that the smell of the house was terrible, a mix of must and burnt food. It had been a smell that stayed with him throughout his life, and for the longest time, he was sure he would never smell anything quite as awful.

The smell that met his nose as he entered the dining room behind Amakata easily destroyed that assumption, however, and as he sat down in his seat, he noticed the carefully polite look on everyone’s faces. Everyone was here, except Nagisa, who had apparently been the only one to escape. Even Sasabe was sitting carefully beside the seat Amakata was occupying.

“Ok! Everyone dig in!” she beamed.

Makoto picked up his spoon and used it to poke at the contents of the bowl in front of him. It was a strange pink color, resembled soap, and was definitely the culprit of the terrible spell. He scooped up a spoon full, and stared at the brown lump of… hamburger? Pork, maybe? Whatever it was, it was floating in the pink soup. He looked up and glanced around. Rin was carefully pretending to scoop soup into his mouth and, when Amakata, who seemed to be enjoying the soup, wasn’t paying attention, was carefully pouring small amounts into Sousuke’s bowl, who was nibbling on a piece of bread, ignoring what Rin was doing. Rei was just staring at the food in front of him, barely able to keep the look of disgust off his face.

“So, what do you all think? The cabbage really helps you taste the meat, huh?” Amakata smiled at the other Alphas and Omegas. Makoto smiled, completely confused. Cabbage? And what meat was this?

“Needs more salt,” Haru offered up.

“Yes, but it’s… a very creative meal, dear. You’re improving every day!” Sasabe nodded, flashing his mate a weak smile.

“That’s actually true,” Haru murmured to Makoto, too quietly for anyone else to hear. Makoto had to press his lips together to keep from laughing. “When I first came here, the food was inedible. Thank God for Rei cooking most of the time.”

So, Rei had been the one cooking before. As Makoto took a sip of the soup, carefully tried not to gag (it even tasted like soap!), and prayed that Rei would do most of the cooking from now on.

Chapter End Notes
Finally!!! I finally got to bring my baby Nitori into the story! I'm so happy!!!! I just love him so much!!!

Anyways, to kind of justify why I've written the Samezuka team the way I have... before I watched season two and they introduced Sousuke, I absolutely, 100% shipped Nitori and Rin. and then Sousuke came around, and I was 100% for that ship, but I never really got over how cute Rin and Nitori were, and then with the way that Sousuke acts around Momo and Nitori was just so tender and caring... it seemed positively impossible to split them up. I just couldn't do it. so yes, in this story, Nitori, Momo, Rin, and Sousuke are in a polyamorous relationship and are all blissfully happy. and when we get to Rin and Sousuke's bonding ceremony, they will make an appearance. but we're a ways off from that.

Anyways, that's it for this week. Once again, thank you to my awesome Beta Reader, sarahsharpiemarker, who did a fantastic job with editing this chapter. And I'll see you all next week with chapter 10: Chairman.
The Chairman

Chapter Summary

The pressure is on, and Haru has to make a decision.

Chapter Notes

It's labor day weekend and I'm in class. -_-

WARNING!!!!!!

Ok so i'm not really sure what to warn about really, cause this entire Chapte is full of sensitive subjects. so if the subjects of abuse, unfair treatment, and prejudice aren't something you're willing to read about, you probably don't want to read this chapter. Nothing graphic or anything yet, but it's still not pleasant.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Haruka!”

Haru’s hand froze in midair, a piece of toast between the plate and his mouth as he looked up from his food. He sighed and set the toast down, wondering idly why the adults in this house refused to call him just Haru. It was shorter and easier.

His name was called again, muffled by the closed door separating who he guessed was Amakata from everyone in the dining room. A few others looked up from their breakfast, namely Makoto, who had a forkful of scrambled eggs just an inch from his mouth when he paused to listen. Rin and Sousuke’s attention was caught as well; the redhead setting his book aside as Amakata threw the door open, gasping out Haru’s name again.

She was gasping as if she had run all the way from the office. Her hair was frizzed and messy, falling over her face, and her clothes were wrinkled, as though she had slept in them. She took a few more gasping breaths before finally looking up to meet Haru’s eyes. Her pretty brown eyes were wide and panicked, and Haru could smell the pure terror and dread radiating from the Alpha. The scent quickly spread across the room, setting all the everyone, even those who had barely been paying attention, on edge.

Haru swallowed, cursing his luck. Just when everything had been going so well, he thought irritably as he stood and turned towards Amakata. He was about to excuse himself from the table when he felt the sharp spike of panic in his chest, and he turned back to notice the worried green eyes watching him.
“Everything ok?” Makoto’s voice was quiet, concerned, and a little confused, and Haru once again cursed his luck. He quickly tried to push away his emotions, attempting to keep them from Makoto. He wished that he could answer honestly.

“Yeah, it’s fine,” he mumbled instead, trying to give Makoto a small smile to calm him. Makoto returned it timidly, but Haru could feel his worried eyes on his back as he turned to follow Amakata into the hall.

The moment the doors to the dining room were shut behind them, he rounded on her. “You just had to make a big deal out of this, didn’t you?” he scowled at her, Makoto’s anxious expression seared into his mind.

“Haruka, he’s –”

“Coming. Yeah, I figured as much.” Haru took a deep breath, trying to calm himself. Getting pissed off at Amakata wasn’t going to help anything. “How long do we have?”

“He’ll be here Friday.”

Shit. That was too soon. “We can’t let Makoto meet him. Not yet.”

“Haruka, I know how you feel, but maybe it would be better to just tell him. We have two days. Surely that’s enough time for you to explain things, and maybe soften the blow a little? Besides, maybe the Chairman won’t be as bad this time!”

Haru just stared at her. “Amakata, when is he ever ‘not that bad’?”

“Fair point,” She sighed and leaned back against the wall. “But Haruka, we can’t keep this from him forever. He’s going to find out about everything eventually.”

“I know. And I’m not saying we’re going to keep him in the dark forever... but think about it. The way he is now, if he found out how bad we have it, it would crush him. You didn’t see him right after the incident in the lab. When he thought he might have hurt you…” Haru shuddered at the image of Makoto’s dead, exhausted eyes and voice, so devoid of emotion, replaying in his mind.

“Amakata, it was like the life had been drained from him. If he figures out how we’re treated by the people who are supposed to protect us, it would shatter him.”

“And what happens,” a low voice interrupts, and Haru turns to see Rin behind him, hands stuffed in the pockets of his pants. Haru didn’t know when he had joined them in the hallway. “When he realizes what you’ve been keeping from him, Haru? What happens when he learns that we’re all pretty much trapped here unless we bond, that most of us have been abandoned and forgotten by our families?” Rin’s sharp eyes narrowed, and Haru couldn’t help but flinch back from his accusing gaze. “When he finds out that you’re a freaking whipping boy, just trying to keep the rest of us safe?” Rin sighed, letting himself fall back against the wall. “How do you think he’ll feel when he learns that you’ve been suffering just to keep him safe? You think the fact that everyone hates us is going to shatter him? Judging by the way he looks at you, finding out that you’re in trouble and you don’t trust him enough to rely on him, to tell him what’s going on… that is going to be the thing that kills him.”

Haru hissed under his breath, his face heating up in anger. “I do trust him!”

“Then rely on him a little!” Rin shot back, struggling to keep his voice down so the people in the dining room didn’t hear them. “You two may be Truemates or whatever, but I don’t think you understand what it means to be in a relationship at all. It means you rely on each other, you trust each
other, and you support each other where your own strength fails!” Rin scowled angrily. “Right now, you’re acting like a spoiled little kid, not someone who truly cares for Makoto. He’s supposed to be your other half! You want to keep him happy? Fine, but don’t lie to him just because you’re afraid that he can’t deal with the truth.”

“Well I’m sorry not everyone can be as perfect and in sync as you and Sousuke,” Haru was fully aware he was being petty, but anger and defensiveness coursed through him. Rin made a lot of excellent points, and if he was being completely honest, Haru felt guilty about not telling Makoto the truth. It was selfish, and he knew it. But still…

“Just a little longer,” he whispered. “Please, I - I just can’t stand to see him in pain, to feel him in pain.” Haru grasped at his chest, the fabric of his shirt bunching between his fingers. “Not if I can do something to fix it. Just let me protect him a little longer.”

There was silence in the hallway as Rin and Amakata stared at him, Rin gaze steady as he met Haru’s silent pleas. Then he sighed. “I don’t like it. It’s only going to hurt more later.”

“Please, Rin.”

The taller boy groaned, and his hand went up to rub the back of his neck. “Fine, fine. God, it might actually be worse seeing you sad. If you’re sure about this,” Haru wasn’t sure, but he nodded anyway. He was in too deep in to back down now. “Then I’ll support you, at least for now. So, what are you going to do about the chairman?”

“I was wondering,” Haru turned back to Amakata, whose eyes were wide as she watched the two Omegas argue. “Makoto’s supposed to visit his family soon, right?”

“Yes. His father called the other day, wondering when he was coming home.”

“Well, why not this weekend? He can leave tomorrow.”

“Ok, but that still raises another problem. You two can’t be apart. I doubt that you two getting sick from the distance is going to be a one-time deal. Until we can figure out how to stabilize you both while you’re away from each other, it’s not a good idea for you two to be apart.”

Haru froze. “I have to go with him.” He cast a panicked look at Rin, who shrugged, though he looked a little unsettled.

“It would have to happen one day. You can’t protect us all forever, Haru.”

“Rin’s right, Haruka.” Amakata stepped away from the wall, and moved to place a hand on Haru’s shoulder, but paused, thinking better, and let her hand drop. She had always done her best to respect the fact that Haru never really liked to be touched by people. “We’re all appreciative, of course. Thanks to you, everyone else here has lived relatively safe and happy lives. But we can’t expect you to come to our rescue every time.”

“But If I’m not here, he’ll –”

“We’ll explain that Makoto’s family had an emergency and requested his presence at home, and that for both your sakes, you had to accompany him. Legally, you’ll have to go with him, simply so you both can stay healthy,” Amakata offered.

Unlike Amakata, Rin came over and threw his arm around Haru’s shoulder, trying to reassure him. “It won’t be like it was with Ai. Everything will be fine.” The confidence in his voice sounded fake, but Haru appreciated the effort.
“If you’re sure… just avoid him as much as possible. Keep Nagisa and Rei away from him. Gou too. If you guys have anything you want to keep private, hide it in the library. If I’m not here to distract him, he may come down hard on you guys.”

“We know, Haru.”

“Stay close to your mates, and don’t forget to show that the pool is still drained, make a point of showing him. Rin, you can’t mention Ai at all. You can’t let him know you guys are still in contact.”

“I know.”

“He likes brandy in the evenings, and it doesn’t take much for it to make him tired. If you can get him to drink enough, you can have a calm night, and he’ll be relaxed when he leaves the next day –”

“Haru, we get it! We haven’t watched you cater to his every whim for the last few years for nothing. We know what do to,” Rin groaned.

“Why don’t you go tell Makoto about you guys going to Iwatobi?” Amakata offered. “He’ll be excited.”

Haru took a breath, wondering if he had forgotten anything. He really wanted to do as Amakata said and go to Makoto, to watch the way he lit up when he found out about their plans. “But –”

“For the love of God Haru, go!” Rin removed his arm and pushed the shorter Omega towards the dining room. Haru glanced back at them, expression filled with concern, before taking a deep breath and opening the door, guilty excitement pooling in his gut.

Chapter End Notes

Like i said, i’m in class right now, trying to get this posted before i’m stuck here for three hours, then driving for another three, so i don’t have a lot to say. I hope you enjoyed the chapter, Thank you once again to my wonderful Beta reader, and let me know what you think! I’m always happy to hear from you guys!!!!
Reunion

Chapter Summary

Makoto takes Haru home to Iwatobi for the weekend.

Chapter Notes

The chapter is a few hours early, because I am an impatient soul. Sarahsharpiemaker betaed this chapter, and honestly deserves a freaking medal for the work she's put into it. No warnings this time, guys. All I have to ask is for you to keep this in mind as you read: I'm sorry. I'm really freaking sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Big Brother’s Home!” Ran cried out as she threw the door open and hurtled into Makoto’s chest, her twin right on her tail. They crashed into him and even though the two children had knocked the air out of him, he quickly wrapped his arms around them, pulling them close. God, he’d missed these two.

“Welcome home, Makoto,” he heard Ren mutter, his small arms holding him tight.

Home… the word felt familiar, but Makoto also couldn’t help but think that the word had also changed since he was last there. He found that standing with his siblings in his arms and Haru by his side, home felt a little warmer, a little more complete.

Ran pulled away and turned to look at Haru, who was standing silently, watching the siblings reunite. “Are you Haruka?”

Haru’s eyes widened in shock, and Makoto flushed, realizing that his siblings had probably heard everything he had told his parents about Haru. True, he had never mentioned just how strongly he felt about Haru, but he didn’t think he had been particularly subtle about it either.

His mom had always said that he was an open book, that he wore his heart on his sleeve. He had a feeling his parents had probably realized something was going on when he had spent at least ten minutes on the phone describing Haru to them perfectly from memory. He was pretty sure he had spent at least two of those minutes listing off all of the little mannerisms Haru had that he found absolutely endearing, like the way he chewed his bottom lip when he found something amusing but was trying not to laugh aloud, or how when he got bored, he would trace invisible patterns with his fingers along any surface he was near, or the how when he hadn’t gotten a chance to soak in the tub one morning before Makoto had gone to pick him up for breakfast, something he did any chance he got, Haru had spent the whole of breakfast ignoring the food, settling instead for staring at the water glass in front of him, fingers tracing the condensation that gathered on the outside of the glass.

Makoto had a feeling those weren’t things one would usually to notice about people they were just friends with. He also had a feeling that people didn’t usually the fall asleep every night with images
of their friends playing over and over in their minds. Makoto always thought of Haru before bed, hoping that by doing so, the adorably perfect person would be the only thing he dreamed about.

Willing himself not to daydream about Haru when the boy was right in front of him, Makoto watched Haru eye Ran carefully, nodded slowly to her question.

Ran stared Haru down, her large turquoise eyes fixed sharply, before smiling and rushing to hug him. Haru stiffened, but didn’t push her away, instead glancing at Makoto with a look of shock and a little bit of panic.

Sensing his discomfort, she pulled away and grinned mischievously, “I see why you like him, brother. He’s pretty.”

Both Haru and Makoto flushed. “Ran, don’t embarrass him!” Makoto whined, as Ren chuckled quietly.

Ran just shrugged, and glanced at Haru. “If you couldn’t tell, he likes you a lot.”

“Ran!” Makoto felt hot, and he couldn’t bring himself to look at Haru. Sure, Haru probably knew how he felt, but still, Makoto hadn’t been able to actually express his feelings since that day in the library almost a week ago. He didn’t want Haru to hear it from Ran before he could explain his feelings himself.

But perfect, amazing Haru just smiled lightly and said, “I know. I like him too.”

Makoto was sure his heart had stopped, as he gaped stupidly at Haru. Haru just met his stare calmly with that little smile playing on his lips, and Makoto felt warmth through their bond.

“I figured as much. You won’t stop looking at him.” The girl shrugged and turned, throwing the door open again and called “Mom! Dad! Big Brother’s here!”

Makoto’s mother appeared in the doorway in an instant. “Finally! We’ve missed you so much, Makoto.” She hurried over to pull her oldest into an embrace, and Makoto melted out of his embarrassment into her hug. There was nothing quite like a hug from his mother, especially when it had been so long. However, the hug was over quickly as she turned her attention to Haru.

“And you must be Haruka. It’s so nice to finally meet you. You’re all Makoto ever talks about!”

“Somehow, I figured as much,” Haru murmured, and Makoto stared at his feet, feeling his blood rush in his veins. Maybe his family hated him. That seemed to be the only excuse he could think of for them trying so hard to embarrass him.

“Oh, but you must be so uncomfortable out here in the heat. Come in, please!” She ushered them inside and down the hall, into the living room, where Makoto’s father sat, setting aside the book he had been reading. Makoto gave his dad a quick hug, and then Haru and Makoto settled on the loveseat across from his father as the twins jumped around them, talking quickly about school and their friends, one interrupting the other anytime a detail was omitted. Haru looked more overwhelmed with each passing moment, shifting carefully towards Makoto whenever the twins encroached in his space just a little too much.

Finally, Makoto’s mother ushered them out of the room, saying “We need to speak to Makoto and Haruka for a little bit.” The twins groaned, but went, if reluctantly. Once they were upstairs, his mother returned and sat next to her husband, across from Makoto and Haru.

His father sat up and leaned forward, eyes focused on them. “All right boys,” He started. “What’s
Now Makoto was sure everyone had gotten together and conspired to see who could kill him with embarrassment. He really hadn’t wanted to have this conversation yet, not when they themselves were still trying to figure it all out. How was he supposed to explain to his parents that he’d discovered his soulmate in the three weeks since he’d left home and that those three weeks still felt like a dream to him? How was he supposed to explain the almost magical connection they shared when Makoto wasn’t sure exactly what it was to begin with?

But his parents fixed their steady, warm eyes on them both, and he felt Haru shift slightly closer to him. Makoto felt nervousness buzzing between them, and Makoto knew he needed to say something.

“Well, um,” he sighed, grasping for words. “Ok, so you remember how Dr. Amakata told you that Alphas and Omegas tend to pair together as mates?” His parents nodded, neither face readable. “Well, there’s another kind of mate or pairing that’s a lot rarer called a Truemate. It’s kind of like… a soul mate, I guess.” He could practically hear Amakata hissing in disapproval at the word in his head, but maybe the simpler explanation was better than trying to explain the differences. “Truemates have a really strong connection and they kind of need each other to survive. It’s pretty weird, but if Truemates get separated, the Alpha loses control of their emotions and Omegas get… really sick.” He glanced down at Haru, the Omega’s pale face from a week ago haunting his memory, and he shuddered. “It’s a new thing,” he continued, looking back at his parents. “Haru and I are the first Truemates in recorded history, according to Dr. Amakata.”

Makoto took a breath to continue, but Haru cut him off. “Wait a second.” He whispered. “Let them process.”

Makoto stopped and nodded, glancing at his parents, the feeling Haru’s nervousness intensifying his own. He could feel Haru’s aching in his chest, and his own tumbling in his stomach.

His parents were quiet for a long moment before, finally, his father spoke up.

“Ok, I’m not going to pretend I understood everything you just said. I’m still learning about this Alpha and Omega stuff, and it’s slow going. That book Dr. Amakata gave us is… pretty much useless.” He grumbled, casting a heated glare toward the coffee table where the book was lying. His wife smiled and rubbed his back gently. “While I try to figure this out, there are two things I have to confirm. First, are you doing okay? Are you happy?”

Makoto nodded confidently, glancing at Haru with a smile. He felt his heartbeat pick up slightly when Haru looked back, almost as though he was asking the same question. “Are you happy?”

Makoto nodded confidently, glancing at Haru with a smile. He felt his heartbeat pick up slightly when Haru looked back, almost as though he was asking the same question. “Are you happy?”

The questioning look made him want to pull Haru closer and tell him just how happy he made Makoto. He wasn’t sure if he could put it into words. Maybe a song and dance? A full-on musical production? A message carved on the moon might do it.

“All right, good,” his father’s voice brought him back to reality, but he still couldn’t look away from Haru. “Second, is Haruka very important to you? Is he here to stay, at least for a while?”

“Yes, he’s very important to me,” Makoto said. Makoto expected to feel his face warm with embarrassment, but looking at Haru, watching his expression change as Makoto said the words and noticing the way his cheeks flushed under Makoto’s gaze, he just didn’t feel embarrassed. Suddenly, it felt stupid to be embarrassed. He adored Haru, and Haru knew it, his family knew it, everyone in the Estate knew it. So why should he deny it? Makoto felt his breath catch as he looked at Haru, watching the way his long dark lashes brushed his cheeks when he blinked, the way his eyes seemed to glow as he looked at him. Makoto felt the warmth from Haru increase, and it was incredible. It left
him almost high off the feeling of being safe and warm and simply by Haru’s side.

Haru opened his mouth and said, “I’ll be around.” Makoto felt his heart skip a beat. Oh god. This time his cheeks did heat up. How was it that he could suddenly declare exactly how he felt for Haru, but the second Haru said something similar, his face lit up like a Christmas tree? Being around Haru, close to Haru, it was going to kill him. This boy would be the absolute death of him.

Makoto only turned away from Haru at the sound of his father clearing his throat, and his mother’s laughter. He blushed, meeting his family’s fond gaze.

“Huh, I was beginning to wonder if you would ever look at someone like that,” his father chuckled.

“I know! That was the same look you used to give my cooking when you were younger!” His mother teased.

Makoto felt his cheeks blaze again. “You guys don’t mean that.”

“No, we don’t, but that doesn’t mean that we’re not going to tease you about it. What else is family for? Plus, it’s not like you were ever in a serious relationship before.” The teasing grin slipped way and Haru found himself faced with what seemed to be an uncharacteristically stern look from Makoto’s father. “That being said, you need to understand what this means, Makoto. You were never in a relationship before this, so you might not really understand just how seriously you need to take this, especially if you two already have this connection between you. You need to understand that if you do something wrong, and if you hurt Haru, we’ll love you no matter what, but we won’t support you hurting him.” His mother nodded seriously. “And the same goes for Haruka, of course. I’m sure your parents feel the same.”

Haru stiffened slightly by his side but nodded, and Makoto nodded as well. “I would never hurt Haru on purpose. I just want him to be happy.” He offered a smile in Haru’s direction, but faltered when he felt the warmth coming from Haru turn to something dark and acidic. The feeling was confusing, like fear but not quite… But before Makoto could pinpoint the emotion, everything from the bond was smothered, leaving Makoto reeling, and a little frustrated. Haru seemed to do that more and more often. Makoto had felt the same feeling the other day when Amakata had called Haru out into the hallway to talk, right before Haru had suggested they visit Makoto’s parents. But he still didn’t say anything. If Haru had something he wasn’t comfortable sharing, then he would wait. Makoto hoped that one day, Haru would trust him enough to let him feel everything. He just had to be patient.

Makoto’s father, oblivious to the Makoto’s worries, simply nodded. “Well, you two have our blessing, of course. As long as you’re both happy.”

Makoto nodded. “Yeah, I am. And as long as Haru is too…” He paused staring down at Haru, praying that the omega couldn’t read his worries. Evidently not, as Haru smiled, their bond still smothered, but his eyes never leaving Makoto’s, and nodded. Makoto smiled.

“They’ll be here.”

“Big brother! Haru! Hurry up!” Ran squealed as she and her brother sprinted ahead of Makoto and Haru. The twins hadn’t been on the beach for more than a minute before their shoes were tossed aside and they were sprinting towards the ocean.

“We’re coming!” He hollered to them, smiling as he watched them run. It reminded him of the summer vacations of his childhood, bringing Ran and Ren to the ocean to build sandcastles and play in the waves. Makoto had been accompanying them the ocean since he had been in middle school.
Both the twins had learned to swim at an early age, and Makoto was very thankful that they rarely actually swam in the ocean, preferring to play in the shoreline. It made Makoto feel better when they stayed close to him. He had always stayed away from the water, choosing to sit in the sand.

“You brought your swimsuit, right Haru?” Makoto asked, but the question wasn’t needed; Haru was already tossing his clothes aside, his jammers hidden underneath his clothes, and he too was sprinting towards the ocean to dive beneath the waves. Makoto laughed and started setting out the towels he had brought, seating himself on one of them. He watched as the twins danced in the waves, squealing anytime the cold water went a little higher than they were expecting. With the twins accounted for, he turned his attention to Haru, finally able to spend some time appreciating Haru’s graceful movement through the water. It was breathtaking to watch, the way Haru cut through the water, and the way he moved with such ease and grace. He remembered how, as a child, he would watch his goldfish swim, and how calming it was. Watching Haru gave him similar feeling.

He spent most of his time watching Haru, making sure to glance away every now and then to check that his siblings were safe. They were slowing going further out into the water, pointing and staring at Haru as he swam, then arguing with each other and going further out. They were only waist deep in the water, so they were fine.

Finally, Haru emerged from the water to join Makoto, shaking his head to get rid of some of the watering dripping into his eyes. Makoto gave him a smile and held out a towel for him to dry off. Haru took it and plopped down beside Makoto on the towel.

“Having fun?” Haru glanced at him, the look in his eyes answering Makoto’s question without words. Even outside of the water, Haru’s eyes were shining with excitement that made Makoto laughed. “Well, good. I’m glad you’re having a good time.”

Haru smiled and glanced out towards the ocean. “I like this place,” he said quietly, watching the waves lap at the shore. But then he glanced back at Makoto, brows pulled together in a frown. “Why weren’t you in the water?”

“Oh, um, well,” Makoto chewed on the inside of his cheek, suddenly unsure. His mind fogged up as he stared out into the deep water, and he tried to fight away the shudder that crawled up his spine. Sure, it wasn’t that big of a deal that he feared the ocean. Haru probably wouldn’t think any less of him, but it was definitely unusual for someone who lived around the ocean his entire life to be scared of it, and he honestly wasn’t sure if he was ready to explain why. Rin and Sousuke’s words echoed in his head about how weird it was that he feared what Haru loved most. It felt strange to tell Haru that he was afraid of the only thing that seemed to make Haru excited. “I -"

A high-pitched scream cut him off, and he and Haru jumped to their feet. Ran was standing in the water, farther out than Makoto realized, looking desperately around her. She screamed again, but this time, it was a word. A name that made Makoto’s blood run cold.

“REN!”

Chapter End Notes

I know, I know. I'm an asshole for leaving it like that. I hated myself even as I wrote it. I told myself, when I sat down to write this story, that I would absolutely NOT have any episode 6 moments in my story. But then, I don't know, i just sat down to write, and at first, it was just a normal, typical drowning scene, and then it just developed and
changed until It was Ren out there in the water.
Basically, I'm an asshole who cries like a baby when she hurts her favorite characters.
There's really no excuse for it, just know that I am really really sorry for leaving it this way.
As always, I'd love to hear what you guys think, even if it is just some people who are pissed about the cliffhanger or me putting Ren in danger.
Thank you all for reading, and I'll see you all again next week!
Ocean

Chapter Summary

Makoto attempts to rescue his brother, with mixed results.

Chapter Notes

I'm still sorry, guys. I'm really freaking sorry.

WARNING!!!!

The beginning of this chapter features Makoto almost drowning.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Ren!”

Makoto didn’t even realize he had started running until he was at Ran’s side, the girl’s eyes wide and scared, tears welling in them.

“The current… I told him not to,” but Makoto was already moving, pushing past the waves and throwing himself into the deeper water. In the distance, he could see the brown hair of his brother as the boy was pulled along with the current, struggling to break away.

“Ren!” Makoto screamed as loud as he could, hoping the water that was splashing up in his face wouldn’t prevent the boy from hearing him. “Swim to your right! Parallel to the shore!”

But he didn’t seem to hear, still struggling against the current, desperately trying to swim back to land.

With a deep breath, Makoto, who had been trying to avoid the rip current before, dove towards it, swimming with the current in an attempt reach Ren faster.

He could hear yelling behind him, a pulling sensation in his chest, but he put it out of his mind, focusing only on saving his brother. The distance finally began to close and Makoto could see his sibling more clearly.

Ren was panicking, coughing as water and waves splashed in his face. He locked eyes with Makoto and Makoto could see his name formed in his mouth, his eyes begging for help. Makoto began to panic even more when he looked behind Ren. In the distance, he saw the waves building slowly. They were going to be massive.

He pushed forward, slicing through the water, until he reached Ren’s side. The boy grabbed for his brother, but the current and the waves prevented him from holding on for more than a few seconds. “Mako - ”
“Swim this way,” Makoto gasped, arms and legs aching. He pushed the pain aside though, knowing that he had to press on through it. He had only just reached Ren, he still had to get him out, before the larger waves hit. “Parallel to the beach. Don’t stop until you can’t feel the current.”

Ren nodded, and started swimming. The waves were getting bigger, but the boy fought them, diving under the waves when he was unable stay above. Makoto followed a few feet behind, his body crying out to stop, his muscles burning as he fought through the waves. Now that he had reached Ren, he was starting to fully comprehend what was happening. He was out in the water, the open water, and the shore was too far away for comfort. He could barely see the two figures in the distance. His head was swimming, and god his legs hurt.

“Makoto, I’m out!” Ren exclaimed the turned to look at his brother. “I’m Ok.”

Makoto paused, treading water and pointing. “Swim back to the beach. Go slow, but keep an eye out for the waves. We’re too close to the break. I’ll be right behind you.”

“But you’re – ” the boy froze, staring just beyond Makoto in shock. “Wave!” he shouted, and dove beneath the water.

Makoto didn’t even have time to look. Suddenly water was everywhere; filling his mouth and nose, the salt burning his eyes. It was a terrible feeling, perhaps the worst he had ever known. He wanted to choke, but it just burned, more water flowing inside him. It hurt. It hurt so badly. His chest ached, lungs begging for oxygen, as water filled them instead of air.

His vision whited out, then went dark.

When he started to come to, the first thing he noticed was sound. There was a noise; someone was shouting and it felt too close and too far away at once. Then there was burning in his throat and chest, and suddenly he felt like he was puking, coughing and hacking as he fought for breath. Something beneath him hurt and was prickling hotly at his skin, but there was something else too, something cool, pressing along his back.

Finally, his lungs cleared, and he gasped for air, his chest aching as air began flowing through them. He collapsed onto his back; when had he been moved onto his side? When had he left the water? There was something else, something he couldn’t quite pin it down. Everything was just too fuzzy.

He pried his eyes open, the sun glaring in his eyes, making him wince in pain.

“Makoto?” The sun disappeared in an instant, something blocking it out. All Makoto could see were eyes, shimmering blue eyes.

“Haruka,” he rasped, chest seizing up again as he coughed, tuning his head to the side so he didn’t cough on Haru. Once his lungs cleared out a little more, he shifted, moving his arm slowly in an attempt to push himself into a sitting position. Haru helped him sit up, his brows pulled together in worry. Makoto was sure that if his chest wasn’t in so much pain already, he would be able to feel that worry burning its way through his entire being.

“You shouldn’t move too much. Ran went to go get help.” Haruka

Ran… and Ren. Images of Ren fighting the current came back to him and he sat up quickly, looking around him.

“Ren!” Makoto choked out. “Where’s Ren?”
“I’m here!” His brother appeared from behind Haru and flung himself into Makoto’s arms, his tiny body shaking as he clutched at his brother. “I’m sorry, Makoto! I thought I could handle it, and you got hurt. I’m so sorry!”

Makoto held his brother close, pressing his lips to the top of his head. He was okay. He was safe. In the distance, he heard his sister shouting, his parents’ voices mixed with hers as they made their way over to them, but Makoto just kept his hold on his brother, with Haru’s hand on his shoulder. Everything was okay.

“Mom, I’m fine. Seriously!” Makoto pleaded as his mother bustled around his room, gathering blankets to tuck around him, and fluffing his pillows, propping them up until he was practically sitting straight up.

“The doctor said to keep you warm, Makoto, and that is exactly what I plan to do. Now hush up and rest up! I’m going to go make some soup.” With one final look around the room, more than likely to see if there were any blankets left that she could pile on her son, his mother exited the room, leaving him alone.

Makoto sighed and leaned back against the fluffy pillows, groaning as the muscles in his chest stretched out.

Nearly drowning, it turned out, was worse than any of his many, many, nightmares could have predicted. In nightmares, the pain and terror usually ended rather quickly. But not this. His chest burned, his throat ached, and he was simultaneously extremely exhausted and too keyed up to sleep. There was also the pulling at his chest. He wondered where Haru was, if he was okay. Makoto hadn’t had a chance to see him since the doctor had arrived to look after Makoto over an hour ago.

He leaned his head back completely, closing his eyes, wishing Haru was by his side. After all, Haru would be able to tell him what had happened at the beach, something that everyone else seemed to be keeping from him. He wished he could remember, but when he thought back, the last clear memory he had was of running towards the water. After that, everything was a blurred rush of blue and salt and pain.

Three quick raps on the door snapped him out of his mind, and he opened his eyes, glaring at the door. “I’m still okay, Mom, really. Go rest for a little bit.”

The door creaked open, and Haru popped his head in. “What about me? Or are you not wanting any company?”

“Haru!” Makoto smiled and sat up a little more, no longer leaning against the pillows. “I was just thinking about you!”

“Only good things, I hope,” Haru made his way inside, shutting the door, before walking over to the bed. He collapsed on the floor beside it, back leaned up against the side of the bed.

“Of course. I was just thinking about how much I wished you were here.”

Haru didn’t respond, instead focusing on picking pieces of fuzz off his socks.

Things remained quiet for a while, but the air felt heavy. Makoto could feel the push and pull of Haru’s emotions, different ones taking center stage before melting back into the mass of feelings that were coursing through the bond. Some Makoto thought he could identify: anger and joy, for instance, but then there were two feelings that he just couldn’t place. One felt weightless, and a little warm, almost as though he was happy, but not quite as nice. The other slipped in and out between
the others, vanishing before Makoto could get a grasp on it.

“So,” Makoto glanced down at Haru, who was still staring at feet, “you’re afraid of the water.” It wasn’t really a question, just a statement of fact. Makoto flinched slightly at the words. Haru’s voice was monotonous, betraying no emotion, but Makoto could still feel the swell of emotions coming from the bond.

Makoto stayed silent for a moment. “Not… all water, not really. Just… just the ocean,” he admitted.

“And still, you dove into the water, and without even thinking.” Haru’s voice shook this time, and Makoto didn’t need the bond to understand him. Haru was pissed.

“Haru, I - ”

“You’re an idiot, you know that? You could have died out there. You almost did…” The last part was almost a whisper, and he finally turned towards Makoto, only to glare. It was a look that made Makoto’s blood turn cold. He opened his mouth to speak, but Haru cut him off, obviously not done with what he had to say. “You grew up near the ocean. How the hell did you not know that you never supposed to save someone stuck in a current like that. You could have gotten you both killed!” He made a disgruntled noise, turning back around. “Of course, Ren wasn’t much better. By the time Ran and I got out there, he was trying to dive under the water to find you. Ran had to drag him away while I tried to found you.”

“He did what?” Makoto gasped. “But he knows better- “

“So, should you!” Haru hissed. “You should have waited a moment until we could find a safe way to get to him. As long as he stayed calm, and we could see him, we could have found a safer way to save him that wouldn’t have put you both in more danger!”

Quiet fell across the room, and Makoto just stared at his hands in his lap, unsure how to respond. He could still feel Haru’s anger, but he finally was able to grasp ahold of that emotion that had danced away from him earlier; now it was all he could feel from Haru, the icy cold tendrils of fear slicing through them as they both remembered the terrifying incident.

“Haru, I’m sorry. I just… I saw Ren out there and he was panicking and I didn’t think. I couldn’t think. Which was stupid, I know, but… he’s my little brother. I had to help him.”

Haru didn’t respond, instead curling himself tighter into a ball.

“Haru – ”

“Is… is that what it felt like?” His voice was quiet, almost like he was talking to himself. “When you could tell I was scared, and you lost control? Is that what it felt like? I couldn’t move and I couldn’t breath. If Ran hadn’t started screaming, I… I’m not sure I could have – ” Makoto watched in horror as Haru shivered, and he shoved the piles of blankets away, scrambling out of bed and onto the floor beside him. He carefully placed an arm around the boy and pulled gently until Haru was leaning against him, and rubbed his arm gently. He felt Haru take a deep breath, then say in a hushed tone, “You are not allowed to scare me like that anymore. Promise me.”

“All right, Haru-chan,” Makoto murmured, leaning over and pressing his lips on the top of Haru’s head. “I promise.”

“Ren, slow down. Mom said you shouldn’t be running around.” Ran chided as she chased her brother up the stairs.
“But I haven’t gotten to see Makoto since the doctor left! I wanna make sure he’s okay!”

“Mom said he was fine! She said we shouldn’t bother him!”

Ren shot her a dark glare. “It’s my fault he got hurt – ”

“No, it was an accident. It was no one’s fault.”

“But I just want to make sure he’s okay. If he’s sleeping, we won’t bother him!”

“You mean you won’t! I’m just here to keep you out of trouble.”

“Oh please, I know you’re worried about him too!”

“Yeah, I am. But bothering him isn’t going to make him feel better.” Ran huffed.

Ren shook his head as they made it to Makoto’s door. “Look, I’m not going to bother him. I’m going to take a look in, and if he’s asleep, I’ll leave him be.”

The boy tapped gently on the door. “Makoto?” He cracked the door open and peered inside, but only for a moment before he leaned back, giggling quietly.

“What? What is it?” Ran pestered, moving forward to nudge her brother away. Glancing inside, she couldn’t help but laugh too.

Makoto was asleep, but rather than being on the bed, he was sitting on the floor, drooping to the side as he snored quietly. Haru was beside him, curled up so that his head was resting in Makoto’s lap. The twins watched, still giggling, as Makoto shifted in his sleep, and draped one arm across Haru, keeping the smaller boy close, while the other hand, set in Haru’s hair, he brushed through the soft-looking strands gently.

“I think,” Ran murmured, “big brother is in good hands.” Ren just nodded in agreement.

“So, everything went okay?” Haru asked in a hushed tone on his phone, watching from a distance as Makoto said his goodbyes to his family.

“Yes, Haru, it was fine. He left this morning, and he was in a pretty happy mood I think.” Rin laughed, but it sounded a little strained. “But I don’t think he’s going to let it go that you weren’t here, Haru. He was mumbling about finding a way to fix you guys getting sick when you’re apart, so I have a feeling we’ll hear from him again soon.”

Haru groaned. He almost wished he could just take Makoto and run away.

“Haru,” Rin almost growled. “I can hear you thinking from here. You have to tell him, Haru. You have no choice now. You’re going to have to face the music and tell him everything. And I mean everything!”

“Rin,” he started, but when he glanced up to find the entire Tachibana clan staring at him. “Uh, Rin, I gotta go.”

“Haru, you – ”

“ ‘Bye, Rin” Haru ended the call quickly and walked over to Makoto. “You ready?”
“Yeah, I guess,” the boy turned back to his family. “So, you guys are coming to the family weekend in a few weeks, right?”

“Of course,” his mother gave him a watery smile. “You couldn’t keep us away.”

Final hugs were exchanged, and Haru surprised himself but not stiffening up when the twins ran up to him to hug him. He felt a little more accepting towards their embrace then he had when he arrived. They still pulled away quickly, Ran’s grin always wide and mischievous, while Ren’s smile was more of an adoring, almost worshipful look. The boy tugged at Haru’s sleeve, and Haru crouched down. Ren hesitated for a moment, before throwing his arms around Haru’s neck in a tight hug.

“Thank you for saving my big brother.” he murmured, voice shaking slightly. Haru said nothing, instead just nodding and rubbing Ren’s back until the boy pulled away.

Next, Makoto’s mother came up to him. Instead of hug, she instead reached up and gave his arm a gentle squeeze. “Take care of my boy, Haruka. I’ve never seen him this happy.”

Haru’s lips twitched up in a smile. “He’s made me just as happy.” He felt the bond heat up with happiness and embarrassment, and he knew Makoto had heard what he’d said.

With a final handshake for Makoto’s father, Haru crawled into the passenger seat of the car.

Makoto’s mother had said they would see him at the family weekend, but Haru wasn’t even sure when that was. Thinking back, He realized that he couldn’t remember the last time anyone’s family had actually showed up. It must have been at least two or three years ago, when Gou had presented. Rin and Gou’s mother had shown up, but only to beg Gou to return home and to yell at Rin. She hadn’t even been there thirty minutes before she left. Rather than a day to celebrate being close to their loved ones again, it had always just felt like a slap in the face. It was just another reminder that all they had was each other. But this year, Haru thought while watching his Truemate’s family, maybe it would be different. Maybe there were more people like the Tachibana’s, people who wouldn’t look at them like the scum of the earth.

He was jolted out of his thoughts as the car door thudded closed, and glanced over to see Makoto putting on his seatbelt in the driver’s seat. Haru followed suit.

They watched the family wave in the rearview mirror as the pulled away, and Haru thought for a moment he saw Ren rubbing at his face with one hand as the other was raised high.

“I’m going to miss them like crazy,” Makoto sighed. “I already miss them. But it’s just a few weeks. Then they’ll get to meet everyone.”

“When is the parents weekend?”

Makoto gave him a sideways look. “I thought you guys would know better than me! I mean, you guys probably don’t get to see your families at any other time, right? Well, you do, Haru, but I never hear Rin and Gou mention their parents, or…” Makoto stopped, thinking. “Actually, now that I think about it, no one’s ever mentioned their family.” He paused frowning, and Haru bristled. This was it, a neat and easy opening into the conversation. Just a few words, and the lying, the dancing around the subject; it could all be over.

But no, Haru thought. He couldn’t do that now. He just said goodbye to his family. How could he add more pain to that? It would hurt Makoto, when he found out about Rin’s mom, or Nagisa’s parents and Rei’s.

It was an excuse, and he knew it, but that didn’t stop him from brushing off Makoto’s comment with
a shrug, before staring at Makoto with what he hoped was a wondering expression, quickly clenching down on his emotions to try and keep Makoto from noticing.

Makoto looked a little pained for some reason but Haru just assumed he was already missing his family. “I think it’s the first weekend of July,” Makoto finally said.

“Oh,” Haru paused, trying to work out the days in his head. “Then that’s... the day after my birthday, I think.”

“Your birthday?”

“Yeah, I think it’s that Friday. June 30th.”

Makoto went quiet for a moment, and then asked, “Hey, what is today?”

“The 12th, I think? Maybe 11th.” Haru turned his attention to the window, watching as the small village of Iwatobi slowly thin out until he was staring at the countryside, feeling the buzz of excitement and joy he was used to feeling from Makoto lull him into a state of calm. Makoto was safe and happy, Rin and everyone else were okay, and the Chairman was gone for at least another few weeks. Everything was fi–

His thoughts stopped, mind freezing and heart lurching as the warm, buzzy feeling disappeared, and he tried not to let the gasp of air slip through his lips as what felt like a brick pressed at their bond. The pressure didn’t hurt, but it was uncomfortable, unnatural. He turned his head to examine Makoto, to make sure he was okay, and was shocked to see that Makoto looked like he was fine, like he didn’t even know that something was deeply wrong. Haru couldn’t feel anything but the tiniest wisps of his emotions. Then Haru took in the almost energized twinkle in his eye, the curve of his brow as it raised, almost as if in surprise, watched him chew at the inside of his cheek, and Haru realized what was happening.

Makoto was trying to suppress his emotions in an attempt to hide them from Haru. It was something Haru had been doing for weeks. God, did it feel like this for Makoto? Haru had never noticed anything different about the bond when he tried to keep a grip on his emotions. But, surely, Makoto would have said something if he had felt this? He would have told Haru if he noticed something uncomfortable about the bond... wouldn’t he?

_Maybe it isn’t Makoto_, a voice in the back of his head said, quiet and hissing. He hated that voice. _Maybe it’s you! You’re a freak in every other way. You can’t be a proper omega, a good son, and a decent friend. Why wouldn’t you be a terrible Truemate too?_

He tried not to listen to the voice. He really did.

If only the voice didn’t make so much sense.

Chapter End Notes

So this is about the point where I can say things are gonna get pretty heavy. There will be some (hopefully) funny moments, but things are just going to go from bad to worse pretty quickly. But it’s only for a few chapters, and then things are going to get
ridiculously cute (and possibly sexy) between Haru and Makoto, so just bear with me, ok?

In other news, have you guys watched the newest trailer for Free! Take Your Marks???
I watched it yesterday at work and did my best not to make a fool out of myself by
grinning like an idiot for the rest of the day. It didn't work. I'M SO FREAKING
READY TO WATCH THE MOVIES!!!!

Well, that's all for today, so as always, let me know what you guys think! Your
comments are the best part of my day when I get them! I'll see you all again next week!! :

:)
Chapter Summary

Makoto spends some time away from Haru, and Haru deals poorly with the separation.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Haru glared at the wall in front of him, moping as he waited for Makoto in the study. His Truemate hadn’t been at breakfast for the most part, much to Haru’s irritation. The only reason he went to breakfast, or really any meals for that matter, was to see Makoto. But when an hour passed, and Rei had announced that he was only making one more batch of pancakes, Makoto still hadn’t shown up. Haru was setting his plate aside and was about to go look for his Alpha when the boy burst in at the last few moments, holding a stack of papers.

“Amakata,” Makoto had panted, out of breath. “I go it all taken care o-” he shut up quickly as he had glanced around the room, realizing that Amakata was not there, but his eyes locked on Haru.

“Haru!” he’d exclaimed, giving his Truemate a happy grin, and Haru felt his chest radiate with warmth coming from him. Haru gave him a smile, but it faded slightly as he watched Makoto shove the papers in his hand behind his back, almost as though that would keep them out of Haru’s sight.

“Ah, Makoto,” Rei walked in from the kitchen then, a fresh stack of pancakes on the tray he was carrying. “How many pancakes do you want? I was done, but if you’re hungry, I can make more, so eat your fill.”

“Oh, uh, thanks, Rei,” Haru frowned as he felt the warmth fading from Makoto, replaced by a sort of jittery nervousness. “But I actually don’t really have time to eat today. I’ve got some things I need to work out with Amakata.”

“Oh, I see,” Rei frowned; Since he’d arrived, Makoto had quickly become a favorite of Rei’s, since the boy all but worshiped the food Rei brought him.

“Yeah, Sorry. Maybe tomorrow?”

“I think Ama-chan was planning on cooking tomorrow.” Nagisa piped up as he tried to steal a pancake off Rei’s tray.

Makoto had grimaced. “Ok, maybe not tomorrow either.”

Haru stayed quiet, but the nerves he could feel radiating from Makoto put him on edge. Maybe Makoto could tell, though, as he turned to give Haru a comfortable smile. “Hey, Haru, could you meet me in the study in about twenty minutes? Please?”

Haru had complied, which was why he was now just sitting on the couch in the study over forty minutes later. He didn’t mind the wait, but couldn’t help being a little worried. Was something wrong? Had Makoto found out about the chairman’s visit? What secret had slipped? Or maybe it he’d noticed something wrong with their bond? Haru still hadn’t managed to bring up the incident in the car. The pressure on the bond had faded not long after it had arrived, and while the buzzing
excitement was gone, the warmth of Makoto’s joy that seemed eternally present was still there. But what if Makoto had noticed, but hadn’t said anything. What if he had been waiting to see if Haru would notice, and had decided that since Haru hadn’t spoken up about the pressure, maybe he hadn’t felt it. What if he was leaving because of that, because Haru wasn’t good enough. What if-

The door creaked open, and Haru glanced up as Makoto made his way into the room with an easy, relaxed smile on his face. “Hey, Haru-chan!”

The smile eased his mind, but Haru still couldn’t smile. So, he said the next best thing, hoping Makoto would understand that he was okay. “Drop the chan.”

Makoto just laughed and collapsed in the seat next to him. “Okay, okay, sorry.” they settled into the quiet for a moment, and Haru felt Makoto’s nerves tingling their way through the bond again. What was going on?

“Haru, listen. I-uh I’ve had a few things come up, and I’m going to be pretty busy for the next few weeks.”

“Your family?”

“No! No, it’s nothing like that!” Makoto reassured. “Just- uh… some college stuff. Yeah, I’m trying to figure out some college stuff, so maybe I can go to a community college nearby, and it’s going to keep me busy for a few weeks. I just wanted to let you know!”

There was silence, and Haru just stared at him for a moment. “Makoto?”

“Yes?”

“Did you seriously expect me to believe that?”

Makoto just sighed, sagging back into the loveseat. “No, not really. But it was worth a shot.”

“Makoto, you don’t have to lie to me if you can’t spend all your time with me. Is there a reason you don’t want to tell me the truth?” Makoto nodded. “Then just tell me that. I won’t pry. But you never need to feel the need to lie to me.” the words felt like acid as he spoke them, but he desperately tried to keep the guilt from seeping over to Makoto, the word Hypocrite hissing in his mind from that little voice he had been trying to ignore for the last few days.

“Sorry Haru,” Makoto grinned sheepishly, ignorant of Haru’s worries. “I just didn’t want you to think that I was ignoring you on purpose or anything.”

“You’re allowed to have a life outside of me Makoto. No one ever said that you had to spend every second of the day with me.” As much as Haru wished he would.

“But I want to!” he said quickly, before blushing. “Well, not every second, maybe, but I want to be by your side as much as possible. I miss you when you’re not around.”

The words stuck Haru, and his chest ached in response. Somehow, it always seemed like Makoto knew exactly how he felt, yet was just so much better at saying it.

“But I’ll see you every day, I promise! But you just can’t ask me what I’m doing, okay?”

Haru nodded. This would be easy, he thought. After all, he had spent most of his days alone before Makoto had arrived. Returning to that lifestyle surely wouldn’t be that difficult.
Haru could not have been more wrong.

The first day, Haru spent his newly-found free time either in the bathtub or watching the clock, willing time to pass faster. But as the hours ticked by, until it had been almost twenty-four hours since he had last seen Makoto, Haru found feeling weaker, hands slowly growing clammy, and his body began to ache. It was just starting to be a problem when Makoto burst through the bedroom door and went straight to Haru’s side, quickly pulling him into a hug, murmuring apologies and rubbing his back until the aching sickness faded completely. They spent two hours in the TV room, watching an ocean documentary that Haru was fond of, until they both felt themselves settling down. Makoto had pulled him into a hug and promised that he wouldn’t go that long without checking in again, before pressing a kiss to Haru’s cheek, and jogging off down the hall, leaving Haru alone again, a hand pressed against the cheek where Makoto’s lips had touched.

Since then, Makoto had stopped by to check on him every couple of hours, though never for long, and he seemed to be enlisting the help of the others, mainly Nagisa and Rin, to keep Haru company after that first day, which Haru found he was actually grateful for. With Nagisa’s constant enthusiasm and Rin’s nagging, he found time passed a lot quicker than that first day. But now it had been a week and a half, and as good of distractions as Rin and Nagisa made, he was really wishing that Makoto would finish whatever was keeping him busy around the estate.

Haru started focusing on their bond more and more in Makoto’s absence, noting when Makoto seemed excited, or tired, searching for any more signs of the pressure returning, of Makoto maybe trying to shut him out, but everything was laid bare.

Makoto rarely turned up to meals anymore, so Haru made sure to force Rei, who seemed to be in on whatever Makoto was up to, to take some food to him at regular intervals.

“Dude, you could just text him if you’re this worried. I have a feeling he’d drop everything with a word from you.” Rin was perched on the countertop beside where Haru was working in the kitchen, snacking on one of the carrots Haru was peeling for Rei, who had started handing out tasks for them to do to help prepare for dinner while he took Makoto a couple of sandwiches.

“He’s busy, and I don’t want to bother him.” Haru peeled the carrots carefully, focusing all his energy into ridding the vegetable of its skin.

“Yeah, but you want to see him! And if you tell him you want to see him, and he drops everything, I get to see Sousuke.” Rin pouted. Sousuke had been helping Makoto with whatever he was up to over the past week. Rin had seemed fine with it at first, but as the week wore on, his complaints grew louder and more frequent.

“You know, Rin-chan, a lot of normal couples spend time away from each other before they get married. Like, they spend a week apart before they get married.” Nagisa said from his place by the stove, where Rei had placed him before he had run off with Makoto’s and Sousuke’s food. He stirred the pot slowly, but his eyes were on Rin, not noticing the way the clear broth was boiling slowly. Haru kept his eye on it. “Maybe you and Sou-chan can consider this a trial run to see if you guys want to do that for you bonding cere-.”

“Shh!!!” Rin hissed. “Don’t say that!!!”

“What?”

“Don’t say those words. She’ll hear you.”
“You mean Gou-chan?” Nagisa Laughed.

“You think I’m kidding, but it’s true. She just seems to appear out of nowhere anytime someone mentions the stupid ceremony.” He whispered the last word, then paused, as though listening to make sure that he couldn’t hear his little sister rushing down the hallway.

“I doubt that she comes every time.” Haru set the carrot aside, and reached to pick up another. He paused to try and focus on the emotions he could feel coming from Makoto when he felt a brief moment of warm joy. Makoto must have finally gotten his food.

“You think I’m kidding? Fine,” Rin cleared his throat and spoke clearly, voice heavily sarcastic. “Wow! I’m so excited for the Bonding Ceremony. I just can’t wait!”

The room was quiet the three Omega’s listened closely. No footsteps, no voices. Nothing.

“See,” Nagisa exclaimed, finally setting the spoon aside, not even bothering to pretend he was trying to cook. Haru reached over to turn the stove off. “Nothing happened. You’re just dramatic, Rin-chan!”

Rin opened his mouth then, but whatever he had been about to say was cut off abruptly by the shrill sound of Rin’s phone on the countertop. He reached for it, but the red phone was snatched up quickly by Nagisa, who took one glance at the screen and groaned, tossing it to its owner.

Rin gave them both a smug look and answered the call. “Yeah Gou?”

The boy listened for a moment then sighed. “In the kitchen. Sou’s not here though, so you’ll have to get him.” there was another pause. “Well, where do you think he is? Same place he’s been all week, buddied up with Makoto.” the way he said Makoto’s name made Haru grip his knife a little tighter in his hand. Makoto never did anything to deserve to have his name said with that much contempt. But on the other hand…

“Am I the only one who doesn’t know what Makoto’s doing?” he muttered, slicing the carrot a little deeper than he meant. Nagisa gave him an almost pitying look.

“Yeah, pretty much. He had to make sure none of us gave away the surprise. If it helps, I only know because I convinced Rei to tell me.”

It didn’t help. Sure, it was supposed to be a surprise for him, but couldn’t someone else have been clueless about everything with him? It just didn’t seem fair.

Nagisa patted him on the back. “Don’t worry about it, Haru-chan. Just trust me when I say it’s going to be worth the wait. And I hate waiting!” he laughed, turning back to the pot he was supposed to be manning. “Hey, it stopped boiling. Actually, I think it all turned off.” He looked up with horrified eyes. “Did I break it? Oh, god, if I messed this up, Rei’s going to lecture me for ages. Or he’ll be kicked out of the kitchen! And then Ama-chan will be the only one to cook for us.” he stared in horror at the soup in front of him. “What if she tries to cook meatloaf again? I barely survived the last time she made that.”

Haru winced, remembering how the meat had had everyone sick in bed for two days after Amakata had decided that castor oil and nutmeg would make as excellent seasonings for the meat. Honestly, where did she get her ideas?

Shaking off the horrid memory, Haru leaned over and flipped the stove back on. “Just pay attention this time.”
Nagisa nodded, the smile back on his face, and he took over his job again with renewed vigor, no doubt determined to keep his mate in the kitchen, and Amakata as far from it as possible. “Ya know, maybe I should learn how to cook a little too,” He chatted, Haru barely listening. “That way when we bond and move out, I can cook lunches for him! And when we have kids, I can cook for them too, so Rei doesn’t have to!” the blond smiled at the broth he was stirring, lost in his own little world. “We’ll be the best parents ever.”

It was only a few minutes later that the kitchen door slammed open, and Gou made her way in, pushing Sousuke ahead of her, clutching an almost unbelievable number of books and papers to her side. “Look, I get that you’re busy and all, but it’s June. You have six months until the ceremony. You two have to make some decisions!”

Rin sighed and hopped down from the countertop. “And we keep telling you, we’d be happy to just get it over with, no fuss, no muss.”

“Nope. that’s not happening.” with one final push, she ushered Sousuke towards Rin and went to straighten the papers slipping from her arms. “Besides, I have planned every bonding ceremony we’ve had on this property. There is no way I am missing out on planning my brother’s!”

Rin let out a whine and leaned forward to press his face into Sousuke’s chest, who pulled him closer, one hand going up to run his fingers through Rin’s tangled hair. He gave a quiet chuckle when Rin hummed happily at the movement. “Miss me?”

“In your dreams, maybe,” came Rin’s muffled reply, but he kept his face pressed against Sousuke and moved to wrap his arms tightly around the Alpha.

“You’re all he talks about,” Haru offered up, fighting off a smirk when he could feel Rin’s eyes glaring into his back. Instead, he focused on setting the carrots aside, deciding that he had peeled enough of them, and turned to the celery. Chop. Check on Makoto. Chop. Make sure he could still feel Makoto’s warmth through the bond. Everything was still warm and happy on Makoto’s end, though Haru thought he could feel something akin to nervousness at the edges of the warmth. Was something wrong?

“Gou, you’re gonna plan Rei-chan and mine’s bonding ceremony, right?” Nagisa’s voice wasn’t too loud, but it still made him jump enough as the voice pulled him back to the kitchen, away from Makoto’s emotions, and he winced as his grip slipped, slicing his palm along the edge of the knife. He bit his lip against the pain, and set the food aside, moving towards the sink to rinse away the blood welling from the cut. Rin caught his eye, and he took a step forward to help him, but Haru shook his head, noting how Sousuke glared when Rin moved away from him. Haru had never been sure what he had done to tick off Sousuke. Rin had told him that even he had never gotten a straight answer out of his mate.

Haru watched the blood run in the sink, waiting for the cut to clear for even a moment. It didn’t look very deep, but it hurt a lot, and the warm water didn’t feel the best on it. He grabbed a towel from the counter beside him and wrapped it around his hand, glancing around the kitchen to find a first aid kit.

“You okay, Haru-chan?” Nagisa turned away from the stove, this time remembering to turn it off before looking at Haru.

“Yeah, I’m fin-” the words cut off with a gasp, and he dropped the towel as the hand holding it went to his chest, to where he felt the bond burning in his chest.

And burning was the only way to describe it. It felt almost as though some sort of acid was eating its way through his heart, his soul, devouring him from the very center of his being. It was a feeling he
knew well, making his heart freeze in his chest. It was too much like when Makoto had drowned, the dark, cutting fear he had felt coming from Makoto. But this felt different and much, much worse. The fear of the ocean, Haru could work around. When Ran had screamed, he had managed to push it aside, to force himself to respond. This feeling though…

He could hear Nagisa, Rin, and Gou, their voices echoing around him, the panicked edge in their voices. Gou and Nagisa begged him to respond, but he couldn’t move. He couldn’t feel his hand, his feet; all that existed was the wound to the bond. Rin’s voice wasn’t very clear, but Haru thought he was shouting at Sousuke, telling him to stop doing something, maybe. He tried to focus on that, to bring himself out of this, but the pain just dragged him back into the recesses of his own mind, clawing at him.

The burn lasted what felt like an eternity, crushing him in a way he wasn’t used to. The burn was eating its way out words, enveloping him until all he knew was pain. There was nothing else…

Then, it faded. It wasn’t gone, not by a long shot, but he could think. That was a start. Haru forced his eyes open, struggling against what could be classified as a painful ache, like the day after doing too many laps in a pool, but not remotely as satisfying.

“Haru?” Rin’s voice was clearer this time, and Haru blinked into the light, trying to find his friend. He frowned as he gazed up at the ceiling. Was he on the floor? When had he fallen down? He couldn’t remember. He didn’t even remember how long he had been in pain.

Rin was by his side, hands gripping Haru’s arm tight, Gou and Nagisa standing behind him, eyes wide with fear. Shit, they hadn’t heard how bad things got when he was away from Makoto. Haru had told Rin about it, so no doubt Sousuke knew, but he hadn’t been able to bring himself to explain things to the younger ones; he didn’t want to burden them with the knowledge that being without Makoto could possibly kill him. But had that been what this was, another side effect of not being around Makoto as much as he usually was? If so, then the time they could be apart was getting shorter.

He could hear Sousuke muttering to himself, the words making no sense to Haru’s fuzzy mind. “Yeah, he’s conscious. Just keep it under control, okay?”

“Sou, get off the fucking phone!” Rin hissed. “Unless it’s Amakata on the other end, this really isn’t the best time.”

Sousuke’s voice was muddled and unintelligible, and Haru struggled to keep his eyes open as the pain began to fizzle back.

There was a crash, and suddenly Rin was gone and green eyes were the only thing he could focus on. He croaked out Makoto’s name, reaching for him, and the large, warm hands gripped him tightly.

“Haru,” Makoto murmured gently, and he moved to sit on the floor, lifting Haru until the boy was crushed in his arms. Haru found himself reaching back, clinging to the Alpha, desperately breathing the scent that made everything better: warmth and lemons and something dark and rich that left him reeling.

They stayed like that for several minutes, until the pain all but faded in Haru’s chest, and as his mind cleared, he realized exactly what had happened. He leaned up to press a hand to Makoto’s cheek, stroking it gently. “What scared you?”

Makoto gave a weak laugh. “You collapse on the floor, almost pass out, and you want to know what scared me?” he laughed again, the sound tired and drained. He pressed a hand to Haru’s chest.
“You’ve been so stressed all day.” he finally answered, voice cracking. “Actually, all week, but it was worse today. And then, I don’t know what happened. All I felt was a sharp pain from you. And when I never heard anything from anyone…” Makoto went silent, but he didn’t need to continue. Haru could feel it.

“You were scared… for me?”

“Haruka, I’m not sure if you understand, but something happening to you, and not being able to help you?” his eyes were gentle as he ran his thumb along Haru’s cheekbone. “Nothing could scare me more.”

His words filled Haru with a million emotions, all welling up and crushing him in an instant. He was lost in an ocean of fear and anxiety and affection, each emotion building until it crashed in a storm inside him, and he had to fight back tears.

“Oh, that’s fantastic, but what the fuck happened?” Rin’s voice made them look up, and Haru’s heart tugged at the sight tear tracks and red eyes. “Did you hurt your hand that badly or what?”

Haru shook his head, glancing at Nagisa, Gou, and to his surprise, Rei, who must have entered when Makoto did. With Makoto’s help, he sat up, reaching for the towel on the ground to wrap around his hand again, which was still bleeding profusely. “No, it wasn’t the hand. Not really. Makoto felt me get hurt, and he freaked out.”

“Freaked out doesn’t even begin to describe it,” Makoto muttered, but he stood and began to look around, no doubt for a first aid kit to tend to Haru’s hand.

“So, you almost passed out because… Mako-chan was scared?” Nagisa looked horrified. “You feel each other that strongly?”

Haru nodded, tightening the pressure on his hand. Makoto returned to his side, A bandage wrap in his hand. “We can probably clean it and wrap it here, but I’d prefer it if you’d talk to Amakata.”

Makoto took his hand gently, wiping away the blood carefully.

“Shall I contact Dr. Amakata?” Rei asked, and Makoto nodded.

“I don’t need it,” Haru tried to pull his hand away, but Makoto kept his grip firm.

“Even if your hand isn’t that bad, we still need to talk to her,” Makoto told him as Rei pulled out his phone, walking away to make the call. “I don’t like the idea of you feeling my emotions so strongly that it hurts you.”

“I don’t mind!” He argued, glaring at Makoto. “I want to feel it.”

Makoto’s eyes tightened, and for the first time since Haru had become fully conscious again, he felt a dark wave of sadness and possibly irritation coming from his Truemate. But Makoto just sighed. “I want to feel yours too, Haru, but if it hurts you, then we need to figure out a way to control this.”

He wasn’t saying something, the worry and pain welling up in the bond, and Haru started to call him out on it, until the emotions were cut off, the suffocating feeling of his most recent nightmares brought to life again. Makoto was cutting him off again.

“Stop that!” he snapped “Don’t shut me out!”

Makoto froze, shocked at the outburst. “But I-”
“I told you I don’t care. Feeling what you feel is the only thing keeping me sane when you’re not around! Don’t take that away!”

Makoto’s shocked expression faded, and suddenly he looked upset. “Why not? You’re always doing it to me!”

“I—what?”

“Constantly! You do it constantly! Anytime you feel something that’s not pleasant, you just shut me out. How can you ask me to let you hurt over my pain when you won’t let me do the same!” He gave a dry laugh, no humor in his voice as he continued. “I didn’t mean to say that. I know that there’s something you’re keeping from me, and I was going to wait until you felt comfortable enough to tell me. I’ll still wait, of course. But please, Haru,” he stared into Haru’s eyes, and Haru’s heart skipped as he saw the pain he heard in Makoto’s voice echoed in his eyes. “Please. Just don’t shut me out.”

The kitchen was silent, the other Alphas and Omegas staring at the two on the floor, but neither paid attention to their Audience. Haru grasped his arm, heart aching. He knew that he had been cutting Makoto off occasionally; he had been doing it since he realized that Makoto could feel everything he felt. But he hadn’t realized how often he had been doing it. He could only think of a handful of times where he purposefully pushed away his emotions to hide them, but thinking back, he realized he had probably done it a lot more than he originally thought, not on purpose, but instinct. It was just habit; to protect everyone else, he had to banish his own feelings so they didn’t weigh him down. Deal with the problem, put emotions aside to deal with at a later time that would never come. Five years of doing this, and now he didn’t even realize he was doing it. He thought back on the anxiety he had felt since leaving Iwatobi, when he had first felt Makoto shielding his emotions. Had Makoto been feeling that anxiety for weeks? When had Haru first cut off his emotions? He couldn’t even remember that now.

He opened his mouth to apologize, to beg for forgiveness. He would grovel at Makoto’s feet if that was what it took. But before he could do any of those, Rei cleared his throat.

“I understand that you two have problems you need to resolve, but Doctor Amakata will be here momentarily, so I suggest that you wait for the time being.”

Haru’s heart broke as Makoto looked away from him and stood, depriving him of his touch. He didn’t care about Amakata, or the other people in the room. He just needed to fix things with Makoto.

But, within just a few moments, the door to the kitchen swung open again, and Amakata and Sasabe were flying into the room. Amakata’s jaw dropped as she took in the scene before her: Haru sitting on the floor, Makoto standing above him, blood on their clothes, and the heartbroken and worried expressions of the people around them.

“What the hell happened here!”

Haru’s hand was bandaged an hour later, and he and Makoto were sitting in Amakata’s office on the second floor. Haru had no doubt that Rin and the others were hanging outside the door, ready to burst in at a moment’s notice. Amakata sat across the desk from them, her head resting in her hands.

“This is beyond anything I’d ever expected,” she groaned. “God, the paperwork. And I have so
many phone calls to make. The chairman is going to be furious.” Haru paled at these words, his insides twisting in fear. The idea of the chairman finding out about this was the worst thing that could happen, but it was inevitable.

Amakata tore her hands away from her face and began to dig through the papers stacked on her desk. Pulling a few loose from the stack, she passed them across the table. “We’re expected in Tokyo in a few days’ time, so we can test some medication and try and get a handle on the bond. Really, Goro and I are the only ones who need to go, but the chairman requested we all show up. He wants to meet Makoto.”

The warning in her voice was prominent, enough so that Makoto regarded her and Haru curiously. But Haru couldn’t pay attention to that yet. Focus on the problem, find a solution, and then he could figure out what to tell everyone else. That was the way he handled things. The way it had always worked.

But… could he do that? Makoto’s words echoed in his head, his pleas not to be cut off ringing as Haru tried to decide what to do.

“Is the chairman not a good thing? What’s he the chairman of?”

Amakata cast a wide-eyed, panicked stare at Haru, who spoke up quickly. “Remember that board I was telling you about? The group of people who run the Estate? The chairman is their leader. He makes our lives… a little difficult.” he finished lamely, trying his best not to make a big deal out of it.

“Oh, right.” Makoto frowned, and Haru did his best to try and gauge how much Makoto had worked out. Not much, if the confusion on his face and in their bond was anything to go by, but then he asked, “why does he want to meet me?”

“Because we’re Truemates,” Haru responded quickly. An easy, almost completely truthful answer. It was only a lie by omission. But Makoto seemed happy with it.

“Oh, guess that make sense. If we’re the first Truemates, then it makes sense that he would want to meet us.”

Amakata nodded, but she openly glared at Haru. He bit his lip nervously. She was going to hang him from the rafters for this one.

“Well, now that we have that figured out,” her glare didn’t soften as she stood. “Makoto, I would like to discuss your project with you. Since we’re leaving in a couple days, you might have trouble meeting your deadline, but I think I have a solution to that.”

“Oh, Great!” he gave her a wide smile, but his voice sounded a little tight and his eyes didn’t sparkle as they did usually. The sight made Haru want to break down. “Can I meet you down there to talk about it? I need to talk to Haru for a second.”

Amakata appraised them both before nodding slowly. “Please be quick.” she exited the room quickly, and as she opened the door, Haru heard a barrage of whispered pleas for information and a slightly louder, “Shut up you morons, they’ll hear us!” before the door closed behind her, leaving him and Makoto alone in the office.

The air was thick and heavy with silence, and Haru shifted in his seat under the pressure. In the kitchen, he had been ready to confess everything: his parents, the chairman, the estate. Every little white lie, the cover-ups, the constant facade needed to keep Makoto safe and happy. He had been willing to say everything. But now, even knowing that Makoto knew he had secrets, he couldn’t
“Haru, take a deep breath, please. You look like you’re going to pass out.”

Haru tried to follow the advice, but it was difficult. He closed his eyes for a moment, trying to focus on the rush of air entering his lungs. Once he felt the air lighten a little, he decided to start with the basics. “Makoto, I—”

“I’m sorry, Haru.” the words caught in Haru’s throat, and he stared, mouth agape, at the taller boy beside him. Makoto was staring at his feet, his fingers fidgeting in his lap. “I shouldn’t have gotten upset with you like I did in the kitchen. I told myself that I wouldn’t. That I wouldn’t ask about anything until you offered to tell me. I should have respected your privacy.”

“Makoto, no! You don’t need to apologize! You were right!” Haru tried to reassure him, but he was shaking his head before Haru could finish.

“That’s not the point. It doesn’t matter if I was right or if I was dead wrong. Springing that on you like that, saying what I did, it wasn’t right. Haru,” Makoto looked up and reached for Haru’s hand, slinking his long fingers through Haru’s and gripping his hand tight. “You’ve been hanging onto this stuff for a while, right?”

Haru couldn’t answer, couldn’t get the words to work right. So, he just nodded.

“Then it’s not going to be something I can force out of you. You’ll tell me when you need to, when you just can’t keep it inside anymore. not when I need it from you.” he rubbed his thumb along the side of Haru’s hand gently, before releasing it and standing. “I’ll go talk to Amakata. I’m probably going to be really busy for the next few days, but I think tonight we can hang out. Will you pick us out a movie?”

Without waiting for a response, he turned and walked towards the door, and Haru flinched at the sound of the door closing. He was screwed. There was no way he could fix this now.

The door opened again behind him, but Haru didn’t even turn. It wasn’t Makoto.

“You’re in some real pretty shit now, huh?”

Haru stared at the desk in front of him, eyes following the lines in the varnish, trying to find sense in the random patterns. Trying to stay focused. “Yeah, you could say that.”

The chair next to him squeaked as Rin pulled it out, plopping down in the seat sideways. Haru listened to him sigh, watching out of the corner of his eye as his friend rested his head on his arm along the back of the chair. “Haru, I really don’t know what you expected. I told you from the beginning that we weren’t going to be able to keep him this from him forever. You’re just lucky he’s got more patients than anyone else we know. He’s known you were keeping something from him since the beginning, yet he’s still sticking around you.”

“Rin, if you’re trying to make me feel better, you’re doing a terrible job.”

“I’m not.”

“Oh, good,” Haru rolled his eyes, and he couldn’t keep the bitterness from his voice. “For a moment, I almost pitied Sousuke having to deal with your terrible people skills.”

“Ha, like you’re a shining example of how to handle relationships.” Rin’s laugh was a tired one, and Haru found that for all his crappy people skills, he could relate to that sound. He was tired, had been
for too long. The chairman, the doctors, the families. The never-ending hope that lingered in the back of his head, that he knew each of them felt. That one day there would be a phone call or a letter, something with the voice of home that they all knew from their childhood. It was different for each of them. Haru knew that Nagisa longed for the voices of his sisters, giggling and playing with him like they had before he came here. Rin’s was his father, the only member of his family besides Gou he had ever cared about. Rei looked for the calls and letters too, but with fear rather than hope, and Haru thought that was the worst of them all. And Haru…

Haru longed for that sweet gentle voice of the woman who had pressed the key to the pool room into his hand, the whispered pleas for forgiveness from a woman who was just as scared as he had been, yet felt powerless to stop it.

Haru missed his mother, had missed her for almost six years. But it had never weighed on him like this. None of it had ever weighed on him like this. But now, with the lies to Makoto, to the younger members of the household, it just felt like too much. He just wanted it to be over. They all did.

Except Makoto. Makoto, who didn’t even know what was going on; who didn’t realize just what kind of hell he was in for when Haru wasn’t going to be able to protect him. And as much as Haru wished he could keep him safe forever, it seemed like a timer was ticking over their heads, counting down the last few moments of blissful happiness Makoto could have.

Rin’s voice echoed his own thoughts as the boy continued speaking. “Haru, Makoto’s going to find out everything in a few days. You can’t stop that.”

“I can try,” the words were supposed to be determined, but Haru thought he just sounded defeated.

“You can, but it won’t go well.”

“He won’t take it like the rest of us. He has a family who cares about him. He’s going to be upset with himself.”

“Himself? Wouldn’t it make more sense for him to be upset with you?”

Haru shook his head. “He’s not like that. He’s going to see everything he has, and then he’ll look at us, and it’s going to kill him. He’ll feel like he’s the one who’s done something wrong by coming from a family who actually gives a shit whether he’s happy.” Haru leaned back in his chair. “You know what I thought when I met them, Rin? I had thought that maybe they really would be different. Maybe there are others like them, who won’t hate us because we’re different.”

“Maybe there are others. Maybe Rei’s parents would have been that way. I almost wish they would find him, just to give him that closure. It would be great if we had two people with decent families.”

Haru nodded and finally tore his eyes away from the desk, looking at Rin. “They gave me hope, Rin. But Makoto’s not going to see that when he finds out. He’s just going to see as him rubbing it in our faces that his family still cares. That’s what’s going to mess him up. And I… I don’t know how to bring him out of that.” he whispered the last bit, his chest aching. He could see Makoto’s bright eyes in his mind, and everything in him told him to protect that light. But how?

Rein sat up in his chair, and he gave Haru an almost pitying look. “That’s something you have to work out with him, Haru. I know you think that I’m bragging about my relationship with Sousuke when I say this, but it’s something we had to learn too. Being mates- hell being in any kind of relationship- is work. You’re going to have to compromise and work together. You have to support each other. You can’t just bottle all this up and expect him to be okay with you shielding him all the time. You’re supposed to protect each other; you’re a team, and that’s how teams work.” Rin tried to
grin at Haru, but it looked almost pained. “I told you before that you couldn’t protect us all forever, Haru, and I meant it. It’s time to let go. You need to talk to Makoto, and you need to work things out with him. And once that’s done, we can all protect each other. It doesn’t need to fall on you.”

“But this is all my fau-”

“No!” Haru looked up as Rin’s voice rose. Rin was angrier than Haru had ever seen; the only thing that came close was three years ago, right after the incident with Ai, but this was still on an entirely different level. “Don’t you even say that, Haru. I’m not taking that shit anymore. You need to get it through your head: This. Is. Not. Your. Fault. It has never been your fault.” He laughed again, but instead of tired, it sounded more enraged than anything else, nothing more than a harsh rush of air leaving his throat. “God, you’re just like Rei. You both need to understand that there is nothing wrong with you! There is nothing wrong with being an Alpha or an Omega. It’s people like the chairman who are the wrong ones. We are not trash, we are not whores! We’re fucking people!” With a last angry shout, Rin collapsed back into his chair, and there was silence for a moment.

“Wish we could actually say that to the chairman.”

Haru nodded in agreement.” It would probably get us killed though,” Rin gave a sad laugh.

They were quiet for a moment, both staring straight ahead “I have to tell Makoto, don’t I?” It wasn’t really a question. He knew he had to. He just needed Rin to say it one more time. Once more, and he could do it.

“Yeah. Sorry,”

“No, you’re right,” Haru muttered, feeling his phone buzz in his pocket. He fished it out, saying, “I need to talk to him. I just needed a push in the right direction.” He glanced at the screen of his phone and groaned. “But I guess it won’t be tonight.”

Rin frowned and took the phone out of his hand, reading the message.

_Haru, I don’t think I’ll be able to do that movie after all. I’ve got a lot of stuff to do to get ready before we leave. I’ll find you to say goodnight though._

“He’s going to make this difficult on you, isn’t he?” Rin muttered, and Haru just groaned.

He had three days. Only three days before Makoto found out everything whether he wanted to or not, and Haru just prayed he could get the Alpha to listen to him before those three days were up.

Chapter End Notes

yeah, it only gets worse from here... god, I can't wait until it gets a little happier again, but we've got a while before that happens. Sorry.
Thanks so much to my beta, sarahsharpiemarker, who managed to put my fears about this chapter to rest, and did a wonderful job editing.
As always, I love hearing from you guys. Every single Kudo and comment turns me into a grinning fool for pretty much the entire day, so thank you for that. Next chapter is called Tokyo. Thank you all for reading!!!
Tokyo

Chapter Summary

The alphas and omegas travel to Tokyo, and the chairman finally make his appearance

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Makoto stared out the fifth story window, watching the busy Tokyo streets warily. He had never been to Tokyo, but when Amakata had mention they would be visiting the hospital here, Makoto had naively thought it would only be little different from some of the bigger cities he had been to. And in a way, it was. But Makoto had always been so busy during the visits to those other cities: busy with family, busy with friends, busy preparing for a basketball tournament. Plus, he had never stayed in a large city over night. So maybe he had just never noticed it in the smaller cities.

Tokyo seemed… drained. He was sure most people saw the city as alive and vibrant, but as he watched the people on the street, he saw them moving alongside each other, never stopping to talk, never more than individuals passing each other, with no thought as to who the people around them might be.

In Iwatobi, he couldn’t walk a few feet before running into someone he knew. People stopped on the street and called each other by name. That was what alive felt like to him. Here, everything just felt isolated.

He didn’t think he liked Tokyo all that much.

“Hey,” Makoto turned from the window at the voice, watching Sousuke enter the room with his suitcase in his hand. “You still avoiding Haru?”

Makoto made a face, but he couldn’t stop himself from focusing on the bond, even for just a moment. It ached horribly, but whether that was from the amount of time he had spent away from Haru, or from Haru’s own feelings, he couldn’t tell.

“I’ll take that as a yes.” Sousuke tossed his case onto the bed near the door, Makoto already having claimed the one by the window, and sat down next to it. He leaned back into a stretch, wincing when his muscles pulled. “You know, you really need to talk to him.”

“I can’t. He’s only feeling guilty because I pushed him about keeping things from me. I shouldn’t have done that.” Makoto replied quietly, turning away from the window.

“No, you did the right thing. He needs to tell you.”

Makoto groaned and flopped back on the bed. Yes, he had been keeping his distance from Haru. He had been making sure that he was never alone with the blue-eyed omega, despite that fact that his instincts told him to grab the boy and run away with him, hide him away from whatever was troubling him. But he couldn’t. Whatever Haru had to say, Makoto would wait until he was ready to say it himself, not because Makoto had pushed him into it. If he still felt like he needed to tell Makoto once they got back to the estate, then he would listen.
He tried expressing those thoughts to Sousuke, but apparently, the other Alpha didn’t see the sense in it the way Makoto did.

“I see why you two are so perfect for each other. You’re both too damn stubborn.” Sousuke pulled out his phone and smiled, no doubt reading a text from Rin. That thought was confirmed when he said, “Rin’s coming over right now. Says he can’t take the jackass anymore.”

Makoto wondered who Rin was talking about, but he didn’t have to wonder long as Rin burst into the room and collapsed in a chair, groaning. “I swear to god, this trip is going to be bad enough without dolphin dick over there pouting like someone killed his cat!” the red-head glared at Makoto, who flinched back. “If you don’t fix things with your stupid omega, I’m cutting off his hair while we sleep. Please, for the love of god, just talk to him!”

“I talked to him on the train!” Makoto tried to defend himself, but Rin didn’t let him finish.

“No, you just asked him if he was ok. And when he stared at you like a dying man, you smiled and said you were sure he would get the chance to swim while he was here. You,” Rin straightened up and jabbed a finger in Makoto’s direction, “are an ass. Just like him. You’re freaking perfect for each other.”

“I don’t even like him, and even I feel kind of bad for him,” Sousuke muttered.

Makoto started reaching for straws, anything to get him out of this conversation. He didn’t want to think of Haru hurting. It was just a few more days, and then they could work things out. He refused to be the reason that Haru felt he had to say something. “Why don’t you like Haru, Sousuke? Did something happen between you two or something?”

Rin’s eyes lit up, and he seemed to forget about his anger towards Makoto for a moment. “I’ve asked you the same thing! What’s the deal, Sou?”

It was Sousuke’s turn to look uncomfortable, and he shot Makoto a dirty look, who just smiled back innocently. “I told you, it’s nothing.”

“Bullshit! You act like he stabbed you or something most of the time. Even Makoto noticed it! You have to tell us!”

They both stared Sousuke down, the taller man finally crumpled under the weight of the curious stares. “Fine,” he leaned back on one arm again, the other hand going up to rub the back of his neck. He refused to meet Rin’s eye. “I guess… you could say that there was a time where I thought he broke my heart.”

There was silence. Complete and utter silence. Then-

“What the actual fuck, Sou!” Rin screeched, leaping to his feet. “Broke your heart? You’ve got to be kidding me. You had a thing for Haru?”

“No!” Sousuke looked like he was going to be sick for a moment. Makoto just sat on his bed, listless. Sousuke… liking Haru? That just didn’t make any sense.

“Well, what happened then? If you didn’t like him, then how the hell did he break your heart?”

“I said, I thought he did. It turned out that he just pissed my heart off, that’s all!”

“What the hell does that even mean?”
Makoto couldn’t take it anymore. With an apologetic glance towards his friend, who glared at him in a way that made Makoto feel like he would probably need to sleep with one eye open, he left Sousuke to fend off Rin’s outbursts, slipping out the door into the hallway of the hotel room. He sighed, leaning against the door. They would probably be at it for a while.

Makoto was just trying to decide where to spend the next few minutes until things calmed down in his room when the door across from his opened, and Haru poked his head out.

“Rin, are you finally done – ” the boy froze, obviously not expecting to see Makoto standing outside his door. “Oh.”

“Hey.” Oh god, this was awkward. The first time Makoto had been alone with Haru since he had abandoned him in Amakata’s office, and Makoto didn’t know what to say. So, he tried a lame, “How are you?” that made him want to cringe. They were better than this, closer than this. It felt wrong to tear back the weeks of getting close to each other and forcing himself back into the headspace of “I need to be careful around this boy.” Haru was stronger than that.

Except, he didn’t look strong now. He looked tired and worn in a way that hurt Makoto’s so deeply that he was moments away from scooping up the Omega and whisking him into bed, ready to cuddle him until all the bad feeling went away.

Haru wouldn’t meet his eyes as he stepped outside his room, but he muttered a quiet “I’m fine.”

Makoto bit back his scream of “No you’re not!” and tried to smile at his Truemate, but it felt tight. God, his chest ached, with Haru’s pain as well as his own.

“That’s good.” Silence followed, and they stood there, listening to the muffled shouting coming from behind Makoto.

“What got that started,” Haru asked, voice dead, and Makoto tried for a lighthearted laugh to ease the tension. It didn’t work.

“We asked Sousuke why he didn’t like you, and he said something about you breaking his heart.”

Haru’s eyes widened at this, and a small, but genuine smile pulled at his lips. The sight felt like the first ray of sunshine after months of rain, and Makoto drank it in. “Rin didn’t get it, I take it?”

“Get it? Uh, no, I guess not.” Not that Makoto got it, but whatever Sousuke was alluding to, Haru must have understood.

“I guess that makes sense. He’s probably forgotten all about it.” Haru shrugged, and the smile faded. Makoto could feel the pressure welling up inside him again. “Makoto, I – ”

“Haru, please,” he hated cutting off his Truemate, he really did, but he just couldn’t do this. “I’m sorry, okay? I know I’m being an ass, but I can’t do this right now. You only feel this way because I pushed you about your secrets, and that was wrong of me. I know you want to tell me everything, but I don’t want it to be because you think I’m angry you’re keeping stuff from me. If you still want to tell me when we go home, I’ll listen. But not now, okay? Please?”

“Makoto, no, you don’t get it, you need to know before – ”

“Haru, I’m fine, really.” He turned back towards his room, hand on the door. “Just tell me in a couple of days, all right?” He rushed inside, without giving Haru a chance to speak again.

The door shut behind him, and Makoto closed his eyes, wanting to curl up into a ball on the floor.
from the feelings pulling at his chest. Was this the right thing to do? Was it best to just ignore Haru until they made it home? If you had asked Makoto a couple of days ago, he would have said yes in a heartbeat. But now? Everything felt wrong: being with Haru, not being with Haru, needing to know the truth, wanting to wait until Haru felt comfortable. There were no good options anymore.

Makoto wondered for a moment what his parents would say, but he didn’t need to think long to realize what their advice would be. Sit down and talk about it. Nothing would get solved by ignoring the problem.

Maybe tomorrow then, after they were done at the hospital. It would give Makoto overnight to consider if it was a good idea to talk about it now, instead of waiting until they were back at the estate, and maybe Haru would calm down a little.

Makoto stepped away from the door, wrinkling his nose at a smell he hadn’t noticed before, a strong and heavy smell that made him want to gag, and wrenched his eyes open, only to snap them shut at the sight before him.

Rin was on Sousuke’s lap now, straddling him as they ground on each other. Makoto wanted to say they were kissing, but it was hard to apply that word to the tongue acrobatics going on in front of him. Holy hell, were tongues supposed to be that long? His face burned with embarrassment, which only grew when he heard Rin moan loudly, and Sousuke gave a low, guttural growl that had Makoto wanting to run for the hills.

It was going to be a rough night.

The next morning was cloudy as the alphas and omegas walked through the streets of Tokyo. Their hotel was near the hospital, so it was only a fifteen-minute walk through the city, pushing through crowds of people as they all tried to stay together. Sasabe and Amakata led the way, both dressed up rather professionally, and Gou followed behind them. Haru walked by Makoto’s side, not saying anything, but the anxiety rising in him was more than enough to keep Makoto on edge. Sousuke and Rin were behind them, and Makoto was sure he could feel their gazes on his and Haru’s backs. Makoto couldn’t bring himself to look at them, though. After last night, he felt he had seen more of his friends than he had wanted too. The mental images popped back into his head, and he couldn’t hold back a flinch at the image of Sousuke roughly palming Rin’s ass. That had been when he had screamed and begged them to stop, which they had, though it was unwilling.

Nagisa and Rei seemed to be the only ones not suffering from whatever pressure was weighing down on the rest of the group. Nagisa flitted from storefront to storefront, pointing out jewelry and trinkets that he found interesting, while Rei followed behind him, trying hard to keep up with his excitable omega.

“Rei-chan! Look at it!” Nagisa practically squealed, looking through a window with wide eyes.

“Nagisa, that is not an ‘it’. That is a baby. A human being. Not an ‘it’.”

“But I don’t know if it’s a boy or a girl! So, it’s an it!” Nagisa proclaimed loudly. Makoto wandered up to them, watching through the window as Nagisa pointed out the baby he had found adorable.

“Rei-chan, it’s so cute. When we bond, we need to have a hundred babies, ok?”

“Nagisa, that seems a little excessive.” Rei spluttered nervously, but Nagisa paid him no mind, preferring to lean up and warp his arms around his alpha’s neck, nuzzling his face into the crook of
his shoulder.

“Nonsense. You’ll make a great daddy, Rei!” He cooed gently, and Rei’s face reached tomato level of coloring.

The admittedly cute scene was interrupted by a loud huff, and the group turned to see a middle-aged woman glaring at them.

“Disgusting!” The Huffer scoffed. “Such antics in a public space. It’s appalling.”

Makoto felt Haru’s rage before his own emotions even caught up with the situation. He just started with surprise at Nagisa’s crushed expression, and didn’t even notice Haru move until he spoke. “You’re absolutely right. It is disgusting.”

Makoto’s head whipped around, and he stared in shock as his omega made his way until his was inches away from the woman’s face. “It’s disgusting that people like you have to barge in on conversations that you are obviously not a part of. We were all quite happy and not bothering anyone until you came along. So maybe you should just leave, before I deposit you in the dumpster in which you so clearly belong.”

The woman looked taken aback, and a little stunned, but Makoto couldn’t say he blamed her. Even radiating anger, Haru looked beautiful, like some sort of dark, avenging angel with severe blue eyes. He had to give the woman credit though. Where Makoto probably would have broken down under that stare, she held her ground, looking more outraged as the moment wore on.

“You work at a hospital? Horyo Hospital?” The woman froze again, and Makoto gave her a quick once over, noticing the powder blue scrubs she was dressed in, but there was no indication of what hospital she worked in. How Haru guessed that, he wasn’t sure.

The woman gave him a startled nod, and Haru straightened up, eyes cold and distant. Makoto felt anger and fear vibrating through their bond. “My name is Nanase Haruka. I trust you recognize the name.”

The woman was visibly startled at Haru’s name, and she mouthed his family name in horror. “Mr. Nanase, yes of course. I’m – I’m sorry. You have your mothers looks, so I didn’t… I’m so sorry, sir. I wasn’t aware – ”

“If you don’t want me to bring this up to my father, I suggest you walk away now, and tell no one what happened. Do I make myself clear?”

The woman just nodded and scuttled away, muttering, “yes, sir, of course,” as she went. They watched her push into the crowd and disappear from sight.

“Haru-chan, you should have done that,” Nagisa scolded. “If your father finds out that you – ”

“He won’t. And besides, it’s not like that the worst thing I’ve ever done.” Despite his words, Haru looked a little pale. “We should go. Amakata’s going to come back looking for us.” He walked off, leaving Makoto, Rei, and Nagisa trailing behind.

“Is Haru’s dad someone important then?” Makoto asked curiously. Nagisa looked a little sick, but Makoto assumed it was from the rude comments that woman had made.

“Yeah, he’s an important guy at the hospital we’re going to.”
“Oh, so he’ll probably be there today, right? Maybe we’ll get to meet him!” That would be amazing, Makoto thought to himself as he took off after Haru. Maybe Haru seeing his parents again would help relieve some of the pressure Haru was under.

Behind him, Nagisa and Rei shared a worried glance and raced off after their friends.

Horyo Hospital was enormous, but after spending five hours there, being shifted from room to room by the hospital staff, Makoto felt he had a decent handle of the layout of the place.

He and Haru went through test after test, blood samples and spit swabs. It was nowhere near as intensive as the tests Sasabe had put them through weeks before, but it was still rather draining.

As the day wore on, Haru got more and more pale, but when Makoto tried to bring it up to the doctors and nurses, his concerns were brushed away almost as though he hadn’t said anything. It made him miss the friendly faces Iwatobi General back home; there, the doctors and nurses always listened carefully to whatever you had to say, and they managed to put your fears at ease. It seemed that doctors in Tokyo lacked that easy bedside manner.

Or maybe it was just his and Haru’s doctors, as whenever they were being escorted to and from examination rooms, Makoto watched the other doctors chatting amicably with the other patients. It was rather confusing.

When the tests and examinations were finally complete, and Haru and Makoto rejoined their friends quickly. Amakata and Sasabe were somewhere in the hospital, with no signs of returning anytime soon.

“Amakata said that we should head back to the hotel when you guys were done,” Gou looked a bit pale, and she was leaning against her brother, who had a hand wrapped around her shoulders. Sousuke was standing protectively behind them. Makoto asked her if she was okay, but she waved away his concern with a weak smile. “I’m fine. The doctors here are just a bit rough. I like having my exams back at the estate.”

Rin pulled away for a moment and muttered into Haru’s ear. Haru listened, stiffening as he did, and Makoto could feel the anger radiating off him.

“We need to go,” he hissed, and he turned on his heel and began walking towards the door. Sousuke and the Matsuoka’s on his heels, with Rei, Nagisa, and Makoto bringing up the rear.

“Weird,” Makoto muttered as they walked towards the lobby of the hospital. Nagisa hummed curiously, and Makoto responded. “Well, Amakata said that the chairman wanted to meet me and Haru, but I don’t think we met him.”

Nagisa’s walk faltered a little, but the boy shrugged. “I don’t know what to tell you Mako-chan,” he replied, but his usually happy voice sounded strained. “I think that maybe you should talk to Haru-chan tonight.”

“Yeah, I think I will.” Makoto muttered. He starred down at his feet, thinking, but crashed into Sousuke’s back as everyone froze. “What? What happened?” He peered around the alpha.

In front of them, a man stood in a dark grey suit, flanked on either side by two hulking men. The man in the grey suit had blackish-brown hair that was slicked back, peppered with grey hairs. He was in his forties at most. There was something familiar about the way he carried himself, about the
slight angle of his jaw and the set of his body, but Makoto couldn’t quite place where he knew it from. He just watched, confused as the man stepped forward, his steely grey eyes fixed on Haru.

Nagisa gave a quiet cry next to him, and Makoto asked in a hushed voice, “Nagisa, who is that?”

Nagisa stared at him, eyes wide and fearful, but he whispered back, barely more than a breath.

“That the man who’s in charge of the estate. The chairman… and Haru’s father.”

Chapter End Notes

10/1: Ok guys, So I’m probably not going to have this chapter out on Thursday. I’ve got a bunch of family stuff going on this week, so I haven't had time to finish up the next chapter. But I will have it out Sunday night or Monday morning so please be patient with me!!! Thank you all so much!!

9/30: Time to introduce my most hated character! :) I honestly hate no characters more than Haru's parents, but I will spare you all my ridiculously long speech about how they are awful parents.

So, I've got some news. I'm actually headed to a wedding a few states away next Friday, and I won't be home until Sunday evening. So, I'm going to try my hardest to post the next chapter on Thursday, but there's a chance that I won't get it up until Sunday evening/ Monday morning. So just keep your eyes open for it, and if it's not up on Saturday, please be patient. I've been waiting for this wedding for ten years, so I'm going to be pretty busy with it.

As always, thank you so much to my Beta, Sarahsharpiemarker, for editing this chapter, especially because this one was a godawful mess before she got ahold of it. Let me know what you guys think, and Thank you all so much for reading!!
“Haruka, I see that your health has improved.”

Makoto frowned at the formal greeting, but he tried to shrug it off. Haru had said his parents were rather strict. Maybe they were the, ‘I’m your parent, not your friend,’ kind of people. The coldness of that idea irked him a little; as far as Makoto was concerned, Haru deserved all the adoration the world could give him. But Nanase was Haru’s father, so Makoto pressed his lips together, keeping his opinions to himself. He had only just met the man; he ought to give Haru’s father a chance.

“It is a pity that you weren’t there a few weeks ago. The rest of this… rabble isn’t quite as equipped to handle my needs as you are. And to take off without any warning,” Nanase glared at his son. “I don’t think I need to remind you that you are forbidden to leave the estate without my express permission. This ordeal is turning into quite a hassle, especially since those doctors at the estate can’t seem to keep you healthy. What nonsense, not being able to be away from someone for even a few days.” Nanase said flippantly. He gave Haru a quick look up and down and grimaced. “Not that you could get much worse than this. Are you sick again? I swear, what is the point of funding someplace to keep you healthy if the people there can’t even keep you healthy. A bunch of layabouts, I suppose.”

Makoto abandoned the idea of trying to keep his opinion neutral; Haru’s father was a massive prick. In what way could the members of the estate be considered layabouts? Everyone, from the groundskeepers to the maids were kind people, and Amakata and Sasabe were the most hardworking people he had ever met. Makoto wondered where this asshole got off calling them layabouts.

After the dispute this morning, Makoto expected a response out of Haru, and was prepared to step in to keep him from getting trouble. Haru had proved time and again that he was willing to protect his friends, and seemed even more willing to defend the bond between him and Makoto. Makoto waited for that rise of anger to come from Haru, or maybe for Haru to shut him out again.
It never came. Instead, Makoto felt something he wasn’t expecting, that he never would have expected from someone who was standing before his parents: fear. Haru was afraid. Rather than the sharp knife sensation that he usually felt when Haru was scared, he felt something else altogether. The emotions coming from Haru were trembling, weighing them both down until Makoto wanted to collapse under its weight. It was almost claustrophobic, and Makoto wanted to reach out, to pull Haru into his arms and help him fight it off. But he couldn’t, he couldn’t even move. He felt trapped, almost as though caught under a net. Was that what Haru felt too?

“Haruka, I expect to hear a response when I speak to you.” Makoto must have missed something, swimming in Haru’s fear, but when he glanced up, his heart sank at what he saw.

Haru had stepped forward, but the look in his eyes showed none of the emotions raging inside the boy. It showed nothing. Haru looked dead, his face a cool, empty mask. “Yes sir.”

What the hell?

“Speak up, boy!” Nanase snapped, and to Makoto’s horror, the mask broke for a moment as Haru flinched back.

He didn’t even realize he was moving until Makoto felt Nagisa’s hand on his arm. He wanted to push the Omega away, to go to Haru’s side. He needed to be near his Omega, to shield him from whatever his father was doing to him.

“Don’t, Makoto,” Nagisa whispered, “it will only make things worse.” Makoto gaped as he looked as his blonde friend, who just a few hours ago had been bouncing around happily, talking about bonding and children. Now, he looked small and scared, Rei keeping a firm hand on him, not to restrain, but to reassure himself that his Omega was by his side. They both looked terrified.

Makoto found himself looking around at the other Alphas and Omegas. Sousuke and Rin formed a wall in front of him, with Gou tucked safely behind them. Sousuke had a grip on the back of Rin’s shirt, almost as though he was holding the red-head back from launching himself between Haru and his father. He couldn’t see their faces, but their scents overwhelmed him, leaving him on edge and tense.

“Now,” Nanase continued, and his voice sounded almost disgusted with the people before him. It made Makoto sick. “Your caretaker mentioned something about you finding a breeding partner? Is this correct?”

Breeding partner. Makoto pulled against Nagisa’s grip, fighting to get to Haru’s side. Nagisa hissed at him to be still, but he couldn’t. This man was talking about Haru like he was nothing more than an animal.

Haru nodded, “yes, sir.” Haru’s was louder this time, but it sounded just as dead as the look in his eyes. Makoto gave another pull.

“Well, which one is it? I don’t suppose it would be the girl?” Nanase eyed Gou. The girl stiffened, taking a step back in fear as her wall took a step forward, ready to defend her.

Haru shook his head, but Makoto felt something else rise up amongst the fear vibrating between him and Haru: a fierce and overwhelming desire to protect. It wasn’t something Makoto had felt from his Truemate before, but he had seen it. He had seen it in the way he would spend time with Rin, in the way he put up with Nagisa’s antics, and in the way he had told Rin and Ai’s story (which Makoto was beginning to suspect was a little more complicated than what Haru had originally told him). But he had seen it most of all in the way Haru had closed himself off, trying to keep anyone else from
suffering under his father’s hand.

Trying to keep Makoto safe.

Makoto straightened up, trying to draw himself to his full height to look a little more confident. He pulled away from Nagisa completely, ignoring his friend’s hissed pleas for him to stop, and pushed forward to stand at Haru’s side.

“I’m Haru’s Truemate.” He tried his best to look Nanase square in the eyes, to show that he was ready to stand by Haru and support him. He could feel the panic emanating from his mate, and his eyes pleading with him to step back, but Makoto couldn’t do it. Haru had been keeping this from him to protect him, and he had remained blissfully ignorant. He tried to do what he thought was best by not letting Haru tell him what was on his mind, but he couldn’t remain in the dark anymore. He wasn’t sure what the right thing to do was and he was confused about a lot of things, but Haru was in pain and he needed him. Even though Makoto was sure he had no right to be the one to support Haru after being such an ass, he was, in a way, the only one who could.

Nanase just scoffed. “Of course you are. I cannot say I’m surprised. It is not like Haruka was ever a normal child. It comes as no shock that he would deviate from anything even remotely normal.”

Makoto felt Haru stiffen beside him, his hand gripping Makoto’s arm tightly, but common sense flew out the window in the face of the fear he could feel from Haru. “How dare you,” he growled. “How dare you talk about Haru like that?” The air went cold and still around him, and Haru froze at his side. He thought he could hear Nagisa, or maybe Gou, whispering behind him, but he didn’t pay attention, instead focusing on meeting Nanase’s eyes, trying to keep calm and collected even as his instincts screamed at him to move, to take Haru and hide him away. “He’s your son! I don’t care how strict you think you need to be, no child should ever hear that kind of stuff from their parents. Haru is amazing and wonderful and so selfless, and I don’t know how I so lucky, but I get to be his Truemate. He brilliant, and hearing someone who is supposed to care about him more than anything in the world say such horrible things about him is… is… inexcusable!”

Makoto finished his impassioned speech and silence fell around them, except for the sound of Makoto’s harsh breathing. Fear began to well up in the Alpha. God what had he even said? He couldn’t remember, his feeling for Haru and his anger at his treatment had just swelled up until the words were falling from his mouth, without him even understanding what he was saying. Had it made sense? He hoped so; it would be too embarrassing if the hundreds of thoughts swirling around in his head had all just tumbled out, half formed and confusing. He wasn’t even sure what he had hoped to accomplish with his words. At the very least, maybe it would give Haru a sense comfort, for him to understand that even with his father saying such horrible things, Makoto thought the world of him. Or maybe it would lead to an apology, for Nanase to realize the error in his way. Maybe even a tearful reconciliation between father and son.

Okay, that was probably wishful thinking. It was probably crazy to hope that his jumbled and improvised words would have any kind of impact on Haru’s father. What Makoto did not expect was for Nanase to look at him as though Makoto was an especially disgusting piece of hair in his food. He gave one of the hulking men beside him a sidelong glance, and the man stepped forward, his gaze menacing. Makoto tried not to shiver in fear.

The man walked forward until he was directly in Makoto’s face, and Makoto forced himself to maintain eye contact. He could do this. Sure, this guy had almost half a foot on him in height and easily outweighed him, but Makoto tried not to show how scared he was as he attempted to pull Haru behind him, his instinct screaming to protect his Omega.

That was the one thought that stayed with him as the man leaned back, and threw a solid punch.
straight into Makoto gut. He bent over, choking for air, only for another punch to come unexpectedly, slamming into the side of his head. Makoto fell to the ground, and he heard screams as he tried to focus past his blurry vision. He could see Haru, mouth open in a yell, and he could feel his terror and outrage. Haru tried to run for him, and Makoto tried to tell him to stay back, to beg the others to keep Haru safe. Somehow they got the message, and he saw Sousuke and Rin grab onto Haru, keeping him away from Makoto. That was the last thing he saw before his vision turned black.

Even in his semi-conscious state, he could feel the hits keep coming, to his stomach, his face, anywhere Nanase’s bodyguard could reach. Something wet and hot covered his face, and it tasted dark and metallic. The pain aching through his body made it hard to think and his ears ring. The hitting finally stopped Makoto prayed that it was over, or that he had finally fallen fully unconscious, but then there was a pressure on his throat, fingers tight around his airway. He tried to breathe by was left only gasping, unable to pull oxygen into his lungs. Panic roared through Makoto. He thought he was going to die… and then the pressure went away.

“That’s enough,” Nanase said. “We don’t want to kill him; trying to cover that up would be too vexing.” The hands around his throat disappeared, and Makoto tried to open his eyes. His vision was blurred, and the pain coursing through him made him want to close his eyes again and sink back into the blackness of his mind. He watched the solid figure of the guard walk away, and he heard Nanase speak up again. “Haruka, I understand that you are this man’s whore, but could you attempt to control him? I don’t need to deal with your kind making a mess of my hospital.”


“And not that I think any of you would ever forget this, but perhaps I should make myself clear. If it wasn’t for me, you all would have been locked up in an asylum, with pills shoved down your throats at regular intervals. I’m the one who kept you away from that fate, who lets you wander this world with the rest of us normal people. The only reason your kind wasn’t eradicated was because I took pity on you. Everything you have, every freedom, every miserable second you people walk this earth, is all because of me. So maybe you should remember that before you say something you regret.” There was a heavy silence, and Makoto tried not to groan as pain ached in his head. Everything was throbbing and he could barely make out what was being said anymore. He thought he saw Nanase say something else, and then he turned and walked away, his massive bodyguards on his tail.

There was a beat of silence as the chairman walked away, a moment of pure and unadulterated terror shared between the group, but as soon as he was out of sight, everyone started moving. Makoto could feel hands on him, hesitant as they tried to figure out how badly he was hurt. Someone tried to move him, and he thought he cried out, but the pain searing through his body distracted him from any noise he might have made.

Makoto fought to keep his eyes open, trying to make out shapes and colors, but it was too hard to fight. Every breath, every movement hurt. He heard someone scream his name, and then the last thing he saw before he finally slid into the sweet embrace of darkness was the blurry image of shimmering blue and jet black.

The first thing Makoto was aware of was that he was warm. Too warm, if he was being honest. He could feel the pressure of something, maybe blankets, weighing him down. But why blankets? Where was he? His mind tried to muddle through his last memories. He and Haru were arguing, and they had been at a hospital. There was something else, but he couldn’t quite reach it. It was
something hidden beneath the fuzziness of his sleep-idled brain.

The heat was beginning to be too much, so he tried to shift his weight, hoping to loosen the blankets around him, only to gasp out loud as his ribs pulled, sending pain all throughout his body, and everything that had been hidden in the corners of his mind came flooding back: Haru’s father, the body guard, Haru’s expression when his father had spoken to him.

“Haru,” he croaked, forcing his eyes open. The room was lit dully and he stared up at the white ceiling above him. Where was he? He had been moved to a bed at some point. But he didn’t think this was the hospital… was he in the hotel, maybe? How had he gotten here?

He groaned and tried to push himself into a sitting position, his ribs and head throbbing as he moved. He cast his gaze around the room and his eyes caught sight of Haru, who was moving slowly towards him.

They stared at each other for a moment, neither one breathing. Then Haru spoke, “I wasn’t sure if you were awake. You… you’ve said my name a few times, but you were still asleep.” There was a broken, dead sound in his voice, and despite all the pain that permeated his body, perhaps the worst pain was what he felt coming from Haru.

“Haru,” Makoto murmured, holding out a hand to the Omega. Haru stared at it fearfully, almost as though it was a snake that was waiting to strike. It shattered his heart. Finally, Haru reached out, slowly, and took Makoto’s hand, and Makoto pulled him close, until the boy was practically falling onto the bed and against Makoto’s chest. Haru gasped and tried to pull away gently, but Makoto held fast, holding Haru close against him.

“Stupid! I’m going to hurt you! You should be resting.”

“I don’t care. I just need to feel you for a second. Please, Haru,” His voice was rough, but he just held Haru close, burying his face into Haru’s shoulder, breathing in his scent. Haru didn’t to pull away anymore, instead adjusting until he was leaning into Makoto, but wasn’t putting any weight on him, still trying to keep from hurting him.

“I’m sorry, Haru. I’m so sorry,”

“You don’t have anything to be sorry about.” Haru muttered. “I’m the one who should be apologizing.”

Makoto shook his head and pulled away, trying to meet Haru’s eyes. It didn’t work; Haru stared down into his lap. “Haru, I’m the ass here. You tried to tell me, but I wouldn’t listen.”

“But I could have told you earlier, when you first came here. If I had just said something, if I hadn’t told everyone to keep quiet, you wouldn’t have gotten hurt.”

“Haru, that wasn’t you. That was your dad. You had nothing to do with me getting hurt.”

“But it was me!” Haru’s voice rose in panic. He finally looked up, and his dark blue eyes were swimming with unshed tears. The sight ripped into Makoto like a blade. “I didn’t tell you! I didn’t tell you how people feel about Alphas and Omegas. I didn’t tell you that most of us were kicked out of our homes. That our parents, our families, are disgusted by us.”

“Haru — ”

“And you thought everything was okay and I’m sorry. I’m so sorry,” he gasped, and the blade in Makoto’s heart twisted as he watched a tear roll down Haru’s cheek, the Omega shuddering in his
arms. He pulled Haru against his chest again, mummering everything and nothing in his ear, waiting patiently for Haru to stop shaking. As he rocked Haru against him, he felt his lungs and ribs ache from the pain, but hid the discomfort. He didn’t want Haru to see how hurt he was; he had to keep Haru from worrying anymore.

The shaking stopped a few minutes later, but Makoto kept rubbing Haru’s back, the boy’s face pressed against his shoulder. Finally, he spoke, “Haru, I get it. You were just trying to protect me. I would have tried to do the same for you. I can’t think of anything I wouldn’t give just to see you happy and safe.” Haru lifted his face slightly, and Makoto leaned forward to press his lips to the boy’s forehead, pouring as much warmth and comfort as he could into the motion. “Mistakes were made Haru, by both of us. But we can fix this. Tell me everything, anything you think I need to know, Haru. I’ll listen this time, I swear to you. We can fix this.”

Haru just stared at him for a moment, blue eyes searching green, before he nodded and leaned back to sit on the bed, keeping his hand linked with Makoto’s. He closed his eyes, and took a few settling breaths.

While he did this, Makoto took the time to look around the room. They were definitely at the hotel; covering him was the same dark red blanket with flower prints on it that he had slept on the night before, but something about the room’s layout was different. He looked around for his suitcase, or Sousuke’s. Instead, he saw a familiar black hoodie slung over the back of a chair. Haru’s hoodie, the one from the first night he had met Haru. There was another shirt, one that looked familiar, and he recognized it as his own orange and yellow t-shirt he had meant to wear to bed the night before, but when he had gone to get it, it had been missing. Makoto had thought that he had left it at the estate, so why did Haru have it?

But this thought was pushed aside as Haru finally opened his mouth and started to speak.

“I guess… it all started about 6 years ago, when I presented as an Omega. I was thirteen, which I guess was pretty young to present. Before I presented, Alphas and Omegas were kind of left to their own devices. Still looked down on, and there was no help for them, really, but if they stayed out of sight and out of the public eye, then they were ignored. Amakata told me that she and Sasabe tried to keep everyone connected, and apparently someone was doing it before them, but Alphas and Omegas weren’t really a community, more like a medical anomaly.

“A few years before I presented, my father was placed on the board for Alpha and Omega Affairs. The longer he stayed on the board, the more he changed. When I was little, he was strict but our home was always warm and happy. But the longer he stayed in that hospital, and the more power he earned, and the more he changed. Whenever he would come home, all he would talk about was how disgusting Alphas were, and how they were nothing more than animals who just needed a place to rut. They were an embarrassment to the human race, barely even human, and that female Alphas were abominations, even among the monsters,” Haru gave a weak laugh. “But that was always followed with, ‘better an animal than a whore,’ though.”

The word hung in the air between them, and Makoto took a deep breath, trying not to get outraged. But it was difficult, with the way Haru was shifting and squirming where he sat.

“‘Omegas are whores, worse than any prostitute. They’ll spread their legs for anything.’ Father drilled those thoughts into my mother and me. And when he became the chairman for the board, it got worse. And then, three months after he was promoted, I presented as an Omega.

“He screamed at me, told me I was trash, I was worthless. I was embarrassment to the family name, and I was lucky he didn’t throw me out on the street where I belonged, with all the other bitches in heat. Mom tried to step in and help me, but he told her to shut up and stay out of matters she didn’t
understand. And when she kept trying, he hit her.”

There was a low growling noise rumbling up from Makoto chest now, but he couldn’t stifle it. He was glad that he probably wouldn’t be able to move from bed without collapsing, because if he could move, he wasn’t sure what he would do. He knew he wanted to go hunt down Nanase, to shake him until the man saw sense. Maybe he would do something worse. But the growling quieted when Haru reached out and placed a hand on his, his thumb rubbing circles against Makoto’s trembling hands. Finally, when Makoto settled down, Haru continued speaking.

“He couldn’t throw me out, though. Too many of his co-workers knew about me. If Chairman Nanase’s son had disappeared, or worse, was found homeless on the streets, there would have been scandal. But he couldn’t have my ‘disease’ associated with the family name. So, he put forward to have a home created for Alphas and Omegas. A place where they could be kept watch over until they bonded, and where they could be kept away from normal people. The estate was built quickly, and as soon as it was habitable, I was moved in, and my father started telling people I was at a boarding school abroad.” he paused for a moment, taking a deep breath. “I think that’s the same excuse Rin and Gou’s mom is using too.

“Rin was about fifteen when he presented. His mom was disgusted, but she tried to hide it for Gou’s sake. It didn’t work. Rin stayed home for a about a year after he presented, because he didn’t want to leave Gou alone. But when she presented a year later… it was bad. Really bad. When Rin showed up on our doorstep, he was covered in bruises, and his arm was broken. A few days later, Gou showed up. She told us that her mother had wanted to cover up her being an Omega, telling people she was sick when she went through her heats. She told Gou that she didn’t have to be a monster like Rin was. Gou packed her stuff and left in the middle of the night.”

They both remained quiet. Makoto wondered if the others would be ok with Haru telling him their stories, or if it was something private. But when he asked, Haru shook his head. “They don’t like talking about it. I don’t know everything about everyone’s stories. Like Sousuke. I guess his family was okay with him being an Alpha, but they stopped contacting him once they found out he and Rin were together.”

Makoto couldn’t believe it. The idea that a parent could turn their back on their child just because they were a little different made no sense. He thought of his own family, of how open and warm and loving they had been towards him. Why couldn’t his friends have had that too? How was it right that he was the only one whose parents said they would love him no matter what, and stood by that promise? Guilt weighed down on him, and he wished that was the end of Haru’s stories. But it wasn’t.

“Nagisa was kicked out onto the streets. He was homeless for three months at the age of fifteen before Amakata found him. He was half dead, and he had been living off scraps out of trashcans or anything else he could scavenge. It took three months to get him healthy, but he didn’t really start to recover until Rei showed up.

“Rei left his family, all on his own. He was disgusted with himself, so he came here and told his parents and brother that he was sick, and was going to get some help so he could be cured. He spent weeks in the library, with Sasabe, trying to find a way to ignore the Alpha side of him. When he found out that there was no cure, he almost killed himself. Nagisa was the one to help pull him from the ashes, to show him that there was nothing wrong with him. He still claims to this day that Nagisa is the only reason he lived through those first few months. He’s better than he was a year and a half ago, but he still hasn’t contacted his family. I’m not sure he ever will. On some level, I think he still feels like there’s something wrong with him.”
Makoto wanted to cry. Everything in him wanted to weep for his friends. He could see it in his mind: a young Nagisa, curled up in doorstops, too small and sick to do anything. Rei, horror and despair in his eyes when he learned of his condition, when he learned he wasn’t normal.

Makoto should have seen it. He felt like he should have known something was wrong. He had had his suspicions, but nothing he had imagined was like what he was hearing; it was so much worse. And as Haru spoke, images of the past few weeks flew through his mind. Memories of conversations with everyone. He should have noticed how tense they all got when he had discussed his own family, when he had asked about theirs. They had always avoided his questions, or answered them vaguely. How had he not seen it?

But as he thought back, he remembered the one time he had gotten a straight answer. It had been a horrible story, but knowing what he knew now, there had to be more too it. So, against his better judgement, he asked, “What about Ai? The Omega Rin was with before Sousuke. What really happened to him?”

Haru’s breath caught, and his eyes shimmered. “It was my fault.” he whispered quietly. “Rin always tells me it wasn’t my fault, but it was. When the Alpha attacked me, and Ai jumped in the way, Rin tried to help, and they both ended up in the hospital. Rin came home that night, and Ai stayed overnight. Rin was devastated, and he begged me to take him to see Ai. I told him I couldn’t, that if I was caught, my father would probably do something to punish us all for me being outside the estate, but he threatened to leave on his own if I didn’t take him. So, I stole the address to the hospital off Amakata’s desk, stole some car keys, and I took Rin to the hospital. They didn’t want to let us in, but I used my father’s name to get us in. we were only there for an hour, but that was enough. Someone got in touch with my father, told him how wonderful it was that I had come all the way from Australia to visit my friend. The chairman was pissed. The moment Ai was released from the hospital, his stuff was packed and he was sent off to Australia.

“Rin was pissed, and he blamed me. We fought, and then he went a few months without speaking to me. I can’t say I blamed him. I should have been more careful. We started talking again around the time Sousuke, but he didn’t forgive me until I talked to Ai. I-I will never be able to repay Ai. I-I was the reason he had to leave Rin, yet he was still able to forgive me. It’s thanks to him I was able to calm you down when we first found out we were Truemates.”

“Haru… none of this is on you.” Makoto whispered. He wanted to reach out and hold him but he couldn’t bring himself to do it. Haru had been holding on all of this for so long. Who knew how much of this he had told anyone. Maybe Rin knew everything, and probably Sousuke too, but Makoto didn’t think Haru had let his friends shoulder much of his burden. But he was Haru’s Truemate; of anyone else, he should have been the one Haru could have relied on, yet he had ignored everything. Did he even have a right to comfort Haru now, when he had cause him so much pain?

“Since then, I’ve done everything I could to protect them. It’s all I can do to just keep them safe. The chairman takes everything out on me, and I serve his every whim. Any testing that needs to be done on Omegas, I do it; that why I come to Tokyo every month. If I’m experimented on, then everyone else is safe, for the most part. It’s not enough, but at least anyone who lives under the roof of the estate is safe. I don’t want my father’s hatred to cause anyone else pain,”

Makoto couldn’t think straight anymore. The pain in his ribs was slowly building, and his head throbbed. But worse than any of that was the aching of his heart. It killed Makoto, knowing that Haru had been so alone, but it only made him kinder. he had been suffering for so long, even while Makoto had been here, but despite their bond, despite everything Makoto had tried, he couldn’t help Haru. He couldn’t help anyone. He had his family, one that loved and care for him, but his friends
didn’t have that. He thought back on all the time he had spent talking about Ran and Ren, or complaining that his parents seemingly couldn’t go a day without calling him. How had that sounded to his friends? Had they been hurt, reminded of the fact that their families didn’t have that? How could he have not known?

He was drawn out of these thought by Haru’s voice, but the worries kept spinning around in his head as the Omega spoke.

“That’s everything I can think of. I… I haven’t told anyone all of that. Not Nagisa or Rin. I don’t even think Amakata knows everything. I’ve never been able to tell anyone, except you.”

Makoto just nodded. That should have provided him comfort, but it didn’t. Makoto just hated himself for not being there for Haru more. But Haru’s trust in him made him want to move past that, so that he could be there for Haru from now on. He took a deep breath. “Haru?”

“Yes?”

“Thank you. Thank you for telling me. For trusting me. It means more to me than I can every say.”

Haru didn’t respond, but his eyes were sad and tired. No doubt he could feel the emotions playing tug-of-war inside Makoto, and Makoto wished he didn’t have to. But he didn’t shut Haru out. Haru had been so open; it would be hypocritical for Makoto to not return that openness. He continued, “Haru, I need a little time to work through all of this. I know it sounds stupid – ”

“It doesn’t.”

Makoto smiled. “Thank you. But I think I need a little time alone. I need to get some stuff straight in my head, to process all this. I know I’ve put you through so much, and I should be there for you, especially now, but – ”

“You need to sort out yourself before you can be any help to others?” Haru finished, and Makoto’s heart picked up speed. How did he know him so well?

Makoto reached on and placed a hand on Haru’s cheek, which the boy pressed closer to, his eyes lowering as he drank in the warmth of Makoto’s hand. “You’re amazing, Haru. Never forget that, okay?” He brushed his thumb along Haru’s cheekbone, and he felt a gentle humming coming from the Omega, almost like a purr. “Just give me a few hours or so, and then, we’ll work on fixing us.”

Haru stilled against him, and the humming stopped. He opened his eyes to stare into Makoto’s. “I like the sound of that. Us. It’s sounds… right.” He gave a nod, then turned his face to press his lips against the palm of Makoto palm. The quick brush made Makoto nerves light up like fireworks, and the pain of his injuries faded for a moment. “Take all the time you need. I’ll wait as long as I need to.”

Makoto let out a shuddering gasp, breath he hadn’t known he had been holding rushing out of his lungs, and he pulled Haru against him again. He felt Haru’s arms wind around him, but it wasn’t painful. It felt right, completely perfect, but paper thin, as though Makoto would break the moment Haru left his side. But he needed to break. He needed to work through these insecurities, so that he could be better for Haru.

And sitting there, with Haru curled against him, he swore he would be. With every aching, pained fiber of his being, he would be better for Haru. Better for himself.
I'm really, really sorry for the late post, guys. The wedding was fun, but I felt really bad about being too busy to get this chapter up. I promise that the rest of the updates will be on time.

That being said, I've been so long to get this chapter up. It was one of the first ones I wrote, and this was actually the scene that inspired this entire fic. Well, this and the next chapter.

Also, I know i mentioned that i was considering taking a break from this story a few weeks ago, but I just wanted to put this out there that I have gone ahead and decided to take a break until after chapter 18, which will be posted October 28th. This break will last a little over a month, and I should be back to posting the last few chapters around the 9th of December. I hate having to be away for that long, I need to focus on my classes, and I want to get the final few chapters perfect so that they actually contribute to the story, and aren't just a way for me to keep it going.

Once this story goes on Hiatus, if would like to find out how things are going, or if there are any changes as far as the date when this story will start getting updates again, you can find that information on my tumblr: psycho-dolphi. I tend to ramble about a bunch of random things on there, but I talk about Bound Together quite a bit on there. But I'll post anything important on here too, so no worries!

Well, that's about everything. Thanks once again to my beta Sarahsarpiemarker. The next few chapters are going to be filled with cute fluff to counteract all the angst from the last few chapters, i promise. Let me know what you guys think, and I'll see you guys next Saturday :)


Recovery

Chapter Summary

After the events in Tokyo, Makoto and Haru have a heart-to-heart and take a trip.

Chapter Notes

I finally get to post one of my favorite chapters. I hope you all like it as much as I loved writing it.

No warnings this time. Just fluff, a little leftover angst, and flirting. so, so much flirting.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Makoto?”

Makoto glanced up from his desk, where he had been staring at his phone, relieved to see Haru at his door. The sight of the Omega had his heart leaping in his chest after being away from him for almost twenty-four hours.

After Haru had told him everything, Makoto had asked for a little time alone. Not for long, of course, since neither of them could handle that, but Makoto needed to take some time to recharge, even if it was just for a little bit. He had learned so many new things about all of his friends and it had been a total shock. He felt like he should have seen it coming. The way none of them mentioned their families, their silence a few weeks back when Makoto had mentioned going to see his, these were all clues that he had missed. He felt like a monumental jackass for not realizing just how badly his friends were suffering.

On the train back to the estate, Haru had sat quietly beside him, but despite knowing the cause of Haru’s discomfort, he found he couldn’t do anything to help him. Everything in his head was too jumbled, and he needed to straighten things out himself before he could comfort others, before he could reassure Haru. So, other than a quick smile that he felt probably only made the Omega more nervous, they spent the train ride back to the estate in silence.

That had been yesterday, and one sleepless night had helped him understand that there was nothing he could do. He couldn’t hunt down his friends’ families and force them to accept that their children. He needed to accept that he couldn’t control these things; he couldn’t take back what he had said to them about how accepting his family had been towards himself and Haru. All he could do now was try to be supportive of the other Alphas and Omegas, and try to be a little more sensitive about what he says in the future.

With that crushing guilt finally worked through, he turned his attention to worrying about Haru. The Omega had only been trying to protect him when he had kept his secret about the families of his friends at the estate. Haru had felt horrible about not telling Makoto everything from the beginning. What if, after Makoto had asked to be alone to deal with his guilt, he thought that Makoto had pushed him away out of anger for not telling him something so important? Had Makoto made it clear
that he had pushed Haru away so he could deal with his own shortcomings?

“Hey, Haru!” He smiled kindly. Haru’s eyes lit up excitedly, seeming relieved by Makoto’s lifted spirits. He walked over carefully to Makoto and took the hand the Alpha stretched out to him.

“Are you okay now?”

Makoto nodded, noting the way Haru’s appearance was disheveled: dark circles were painted under his eyes, and his skin seemed a little paler. His hair, usually rather calm and neat, looked as though it hadn’t been combed in a while. Looked like Haru hadn’t slept much either, and guilt chewed at his heart as he realized he was the reason. “I was about to come find you,”

“Mako – ” His name was cut off with a gasp when Makoto gripped his hand tighter and pulled, Haru tumbling into his lap, where Makoto caught him and wrapped his arms around the smaller boy, hugging him close.

“I’m sorry.”

Haru stayed quiet, curling a little closer into Makoto instead, trying to reassure him. Nothing to be sorry about.

“Yes, there is. I should have been more considerate towards you. But I need you to know that I’m not mad at you – ”

“You’re mad at yourself.”

Makoto loosened his arms a little, pressing his face into Haru’s hair, comforted by the familiar smell. Of course, Haru knew how he felt. The Omega could feel Makoto’s emotions just as well as he could himself.

Haru continued, “You shouldn’t be. No one was ever upset when you brought up your family. They’re happy that at least one of us has the family we all deserve. It gives them hope that maybe not everyone will reject them. Don’t hate yourself for giving them that hope.”

Makoto raised his head, staring at Haru in wonder, and Haru met his gaze, confused. “Did I say something weird?”

Makoto shook his head, grinning as he looked at the amazing human sitting on his lap. With just a few words, Haru had managed to put to rest any worries he had tried to shove away on his own. How could he be so amazing without even trying?

“You’re brilliant, and I’m a jerk, that’s all.” Haru flushed, mumbling embarrassedly at Makoto’s words. “Tell, you what. I think I owe you for being such a jerk these last few days – ”

“But you weren’t – ”

“ – So tell me what you want to do, and we’ll do it. Anything you want.”

Haru frowned, still displeased that Makoto was calling himself a jerk, or maybe embarrassed that Makoto had told him he was brilliant, but after a moment, Haru’s gaze became carefully guarded. He looked at Makoto, gaging something with his cautious eyes before saying “I want to go to the beach. The one in Iwatobi.”

This caught Makoto off guard, but he nodded. “Alright. Let me get some things together and tell Amakata where we’re going, and we’ll leave in an hour, okay?”
Haru nodded, hugging Makoto carefully.

Most of the car ride to Iwatobi was quiet, hushed words murmured occasionally, radio playing at a low volume in the background. It was different from the heavy silence that had been between them for the past week, more comfortable and calm than before, and they both took refuge in the quiet. About an hour outside Makoto’s home, a familiar song played, and Makoto found himself humming along without even realizing what he was doing. It wasn’t until he saw Haru staring at him, looking amused, that he caught himself, but when he flushed and went quiet, Haru chided him.

“Don’t stop. I was enjoying that.”

“Haru!” Makoto’s cheeks colored.

“Better than the person who usually sings it, at least.”

The blush brightened, but he began humming again under Haru’s commanding glare, and eventually, once he felt Haru’s eyes leave him, he actually began singing quietly. Makoto didn’t think he was a particularly good singer; he could carry a basic tune, but that was about it. Haru seemed to disagree, as he began encouraging Makoto to sing louder, and when the radio stopped playing music that he deemed acceptable, Haru fumbled around in the glove box to pull out a case of CD’s and began trying to find ones that Makoto was familiar with.

Haru ended up playing a rock CD, one that Makoto had listened to in high school and loved. His friends had insisted that Makoto sounded similar to the lead singer, but Makoto didn’t believe them. By the time they drove into the sleepy fishing village, Haru had Makoto singing loudly to his favorite songs. Both of the boys were laughing, Makoto loudly, while Haru chuckled and smiled, their shared happiness vibrating between them through the bond.

They parked near the beach, and the light mood faded quickly, both hesitating to exit the car. Makoto turned off the car, and the music cut off, leaving them in silence again. He couldn’t help but wonder why Haru had wanted to come here. The most obvious answer was that Haru wanted to swim, but that idea was tossed aside when Makoto realized that Haru wasn’t looking at the water, seeming content to study his hands that he had fixed firmly in his lap. He felt opposing emotions tearing at the bond between them, shifting and changing before Makoto could get a firm grasp on anything. So instead, he listened, waiting for Haru to speak.

“I don’t like it when you’re upset.” Haru finally murmured, lids drooping over his eyes as he struggled not to look at Makoto, who looked at him intently. “I don’t really get it. Usually, when I’m upset, I go to my bathroom and stay in the bath, or to the fountain outside. Water makes me feel better. But – ” he struggled, brows furrowing together and his hands began to worry together. “But then we were fighting, and then you got hurt, and then everything else that happened the other day, and… I just couldn’t do it. I couldn’t go to the water. It didn’t even interest me.”

Makoto’s heart constricted, pained to hear that Haru’s worry for him had caused him so much trouble. Haru shouldn’t be away from the water.

“I used to think that water made me better. That it was where I was at my best, my happiest. But it’s not.” Haru finally looked up, but not at Makoto. He stared out at the ocean, eyes carefully containing whatever emotion he was feeling. He felt Haru’s emotions get shoved away for a moment, but then Haru released it, letting Makoto feel everything he felt.

It was complex; a mix of terror and panic and joy and sadness, but it was there. The good, and the bad. It was everything Makoto wanted, to shoulder some of Haru’s burden, to understand what he
felt. “I didn’t want the water, not yesterday, not this morning. But the moment I saw you, it felt like the water was beckoning me again. That’s why I wanted to come here. I wanted to be near the water, but also near you, so this beach, where you grew up… it was the only place I wanted to be. It’s water, but it’s a part of you, and I need that part.” The last bit was quiet, almost as though it wasn’t meant for Makoto to hear, but a spur of the moment realization for Haru. Nonetheless, the words settled Makoto, and he couldn’t help staring in wonder at Haru. The dark-haired boy met his eyes, chewing at his bottom lip as he met Makoto’s adoring gaze. “Don’t look at me like that, idiot.”

Makoto said nothing, simply reaching out to grip Haru’s hand. He couldn’t say he understood everything Haru said, but at the same time, what Haru said about the Iwatobi beach being important, because it was a part of Makoto, was something he found he did understand. The ocean scared him, but the water was such an integral part of Haru that Makoto knew he couldn’t be separated from it. He didn’t want to be. With Haru sitting beside him, the fear that gripped him lessened just a little, and the sound of the waves crashing onto the shore didn’t fill him with dread. It was all just a reminder of Haru, the ebb and flow of the tide syncing with the pulse of Haru’s heart.

If Haru was by his side, he could do anything and overcome any fear. Haru was essential to overcoming his fears. Haru was essential to him in general. Makoto stared at Haru, hoping the Omega could feel and understand that Makoto felt the same as he did. When Haru’s eyes widened, and his jaw dropped slightly, Makoto knew he understood.

“Come on, Haru-chan,” he smiled, lifting Haru’s hand to press it gently against his lips, the motion so natural, it was almost like breathing. The feel of Haru’s skin beneath his lips left him breathless, and even as the motion comforted him, Makoto felt lightning shoot up his spine. “Let’s go to the ocean.”

Haru nodded.

They spent the next few hours wandering, Makoto only letting go of Haru’s hand to occasionally pick up a seashell to show him. They only went about a half a mile or so down the beach, watching the figures of children playing in the sand. It was too cold to actually go into the water, the dark grey clouds above them keeping the sun from heating the water, but waves crashed on the beach, and they could hear the distant squeals of the children running away from the water as the tide raced in. Makoto wondered idly if those children could be his younger siblings. The thought made him frown with loneliness and confusion. He missed his family, but he couldn’t face them, not yet. He wasn’t sure he could look his family in the eye without feeling guilty.

Eventually, the water’s call was too much for Haru, and they slowly gravitated towards the water’s edge. The smell of the water rose with the brisk breeze, a briny smell that could be a little overpowering. But Haru seemed to revel in it, closing his eyes to breath in deeply. He looked so calm and natural here, the ocean beckoning to him, and Makoto was struck with the image of a Haru with a scaly tail like a fish, swimming through the water as though that was all he was made to do. The thought made him laugh, and Haru glanced at him, questions in his eyes.

“I was just thinking Haru. I bet, in a past life, you were a mermaid. You love water, and you’re beautiful enough to be one.”

Haru’s eyes widened, and Makoto was willing to bet that he was too busy thinking about being a mermaid that he hadn’t heard the second half of the comment, an idea that was a bit of a relief to Makoto; he hadn’t meant to mention how beautiful Haru was. Even if it was true, with the raven black locks, fair skin, and slender, slightly muscled build, he had a feeling Haru wouldn’t appreciate being called pretty. If nothing else, it would probably embarrass him.

Then his eyes caught Makoto’s, the and the taller boy felt his heart stutter. “You would be one too.”
“Haru, I’m nowhere near the swimmer you are, I’d be a terrible mermaid.”

“I wouldn’t want to be one if you weren’t there, so you would have to be one. And your beautiful enough that you would fit the role too.”

So he had heard that comment. Despite what he had thought earlier, Makoto was the embarrassed one, turning red.

“But you’re right, I don’t think you’d be a very good mermaid, looks aside.” He thought for a moment, then said, “I bet you were a fireman.”

Makoto shook his head; “I’m not brave enough for that.”

“You stood up to my father, even though you were told not to. You’re braver than you think.”

God, Haru was going to kill him with these compliments. “What about you then?”

“Maybe a chef?”

“You cook?” Makoto said, surprised.

Haru nodded, his face carefully composed. “I’m okay. I can make sure we don’t starve.”

“We?”

“Well, your siblings told me you can’t cook, so I bet I cooked the meals.”

“But you think we were together?”

“Of course.” Haru turned away, kicking off his shoes and letting the water run over his feet. “We had to find each other, I’m sure.”

Makoto smiled and kicked off his own shoes, walking over to hold Haru’s hand again. “How do you think we met, this chef Haru and firefighter Makoto?”

Haru shrugged. “Doesn’t matter how we met. As long as we’re together.”

Makoto squeezed his hand. “I guess you’re right.”

Eventually, Haru settled down and they backed up, just out of reach of the water, sitting down. Makoto sat first, leaning back a little to stretch his back out, and when he straightened, Haru was sitting next to him.

They chatted a little more, throwing out ideas of different lives they might have had, where they were in life, how they found each other, even figuring out how their friends fit into these plans. They decided Rin and Sousuke would have been cops; Rei was a doctor maybe, or a scientist, really anything that could put that big brain of his to use. Nagisa was harder, since the blond ball of energy was so keyed up about so many things, it was impossible to decide what he might do with his life. After a while, though, they went quiet, and Haru’s head eventually began to rest on Makoto’s shoulder, their hands slowly finding each other and entangling once more. Makoto turned his head to press a kiss to the top of Haru’s head, breathing in his scent: warm and calm, sweet and lemony. The scent comforted Makoto, and he reveled in the peace between them. They watched the waves slowly come in, the sun setting peeking out from behind the clouds long enough to light up the water, before sinking slowly beneath the horizon. The grey sky darkened, small holes in the clouds displaying a few bright stars painted in the darkening blue sky hidden beneath. “Hey, Haru?”
“Hmm?”

“What if there was a life we had always been together? Always by each other’s sides our whole lives? What if we had grown up together, been best friends, and then realized how we felt about each other?”

They stayed quiet for a moment, watching the waves gently lap at the shore, listening to the gulls cawing above them. Haru kept quiet, obviously thinking the idea through with just as much seriousness as the idea that at one point he was a chef and Makoto was a firefighter.

“Makoto?”

“Yeah, Haru?”

“If,” the smaller boy paused, seeming to try and get his thoughts straight. “If we had grown up together, I would have wanted to do it here.”

The words were innocent, but that thought caused a lump to form in his throat. In the silence, both boys contemplated what life would have been like. They would have grown up together, gone to school together. Haru would have comforted Makoto when he was scared. Makoto would have acted as the buffer of protection between Haru and all those who thought he was strange and abnormal, and reminded him that he was exactly who he was supposed to be. There probably would have been fights, arguments where Makoto struggled to understand sometimes, or where Haru forgot just how much Makoto cared, but no matter what, they were sure that they would have stayed by each other’s side. Because that was how it had to be. Haruka and Makoto, Makoto and Haruka. They both knew that no matter what, no matter when they met, or how their lives had been to that point, once they met, they would always have to be together.

Then Makoto laughed, and Haru glanced at him as the taller boy doubled over in laughter. Once his laughter subsided to light chuckles, he looked at Haru, whose blue eyes were curious, questioning.

“Sorry, Haru, I was just thinking,” he laughed again. “I bet that if we hadn’t been connected by this Truemate thing, we probably would have been a little dense about how we felt.”

Haru stilled for a moment, then nodded, a small smile playing at his lips.

“You’re right. It’s not like we’re the most emotionally aware people ever. I thought I was sick when I met you.”

Makoto laughed. “I thought the same thing. I’d look at you, and my heart would just start pounding like crazy! I thought I was going to have a heart attack.”

Haru didn’t answer, his eyes widening slightly at Makoto’s words. Makoto felt a flush cover his cheeks as his heart picked up speed and he met Haru’s eyes. He leaned in, raising a hand not gripping Haru’s to cup Haru’s cheek, thumb raising to brush his lower lip gently. He bit his own lip, teeth kneading the bottom one as butterflies began an all-out attack on his stomach. His heart pounded in his chest, almost ready to leap out from his body. Haru’s eyes were wide, as though he was unsure of how to respond to Makoto’s advances, and Makoto paused, suddenly unsure if this was what Haru wanted. He tried to rely on the bond, to feel what Haru felt, but all he felt was jittery excitement, confusion, and nerves. He wasn’t even sure if those were Haru’s emotions or his own. So, he tried looking at Haru himself.

Makoto found that, for the most part, Haru could be easy to read when he wasn’t guarding his emotions. There were little signs, the way he would glance away when he was embarrassed or just
didn’t want to talk, or the way, when he was irritated, he would tense slightly and his eyebrows would pull together, or the quiet glint in his eyes and the energy that radiated off him when he was excited. Looking at Haru now, Makoto found that the look on the Omega’s face was new, but not completely unfamiliar; Haru’s eyes were shining in brilliant excitement, his body tense with nerves. It was so different, but Makoto thought that Haru was feeling the exact same way he was: terrified out of his mind, yet ready for this. So, so ready.

Makoto leaned in, gently. He hesitated for a moment, just a breath away from Haru, before Haru leaned forward and closed the gap, and Makoto found himself lost against Haru’s lips.

They were firm, a little chapped from being out in the windy weather all afternoon, and absolutely perfect. Makoto had kissed people before, at parties his friends used to drag him to, but this was something new. His heart pounded against his ribs as his lips moved softly against Haru’s, and he sincerely thought that it Haru would be able to hear it, as loud as it was. He let his thumb brush along Haru’s cheek, reveling in the smoothness of it. He noticed the way Haru’s breathing hitched slightly, and Makoto smiled into the kiss.

And then Haru broke away, gasping for air.

“Haru?” Makoto suddenly panicked. Maybe he had been wrong, maybe Haru hadn’t wanted this. Maybe Makoto was worse at kissing than he had thought he was. Maybe his breath smelled bad.

“Mako – ” Haru took a deep breath, finally meeting Makoto’s eyes with his own calm and happy ones. “Calm down.”

Oh. Okay. So it hadn’t been bad (hopefully).

“I’m fine,” Haru soothed, glancing at the sand beneath him. “You’ve just obviously had a little more practice than me.”

Oh. Crap.

“Haru that was your – oh god I’m so sorry I didn’t realize that – ”

“That I’d never been kissed before?” Haru shrugged. “Been stuck in that estate for years, and the only one who offered was Rin. Not that I was letting those teeth near me. I honestly wonder if he gets them shaped that way to freak people out.”

Makoto laughed tightly, the sudden image of Rin kissing Haru causing an angry green monster of jealousy reared its head inside him. No one else should be kissing Haru.

Haru playfully smacked Makoto’s arm. “Chill. He was sixteen and angry all the time. We’d just started talking again, and he got pissed, and yelled at me to kiss him. He didn’t mean anything by it though.”

Somehow, that idea only made it worse. If someone was going to kiss Haru, it sure as hell better be someone who realized how lucky they were.

“Makoto,” a warning now.

He sighed. “Sorry, Haru.”

“Hmm,” Haru stayed quiet for a second before saying, “not forgiven.” A small smirk playing upon his lips.
“What?”

“What?”

“Not forgiven. You’ll have to work for forgiveness.”

“Not forgiven. You’ll have to work for forgiveness.”

“Work for it? How?”

“Work for it? How?”

“Well, I have a few ideas…”

“Well, I have a few ideas…”

Makoto smiled, catching on rather slowly. “Maybe I could offer to help you practice with the kissing thing? I hear that practice makes perfect with these kinds of things.”

“Kissing thing?” Haru sounded completely amused now, all but laughing aloud at his Truemate.

“Kissing thing?” Haru sounded completely amused now, all but laughing aloud at his Truemate.

“Oh hush. I’m just as inexperienced at the flirting thing as you are at the kissing thing.”

“Oh hush. I’m just as inexperienced at the flirting thing as you are at the kissing thing.”

“Well, I don’t mind practicing either of those things with you, if you’re up to it.”

“Well, I don’t mind practicing either of those things with you, if you’re up to it.”

“Fine by me,” Makoto whispered, leaning in to claim Haru’s lips again.

The drive back to the estate seemed to take less time, the dark night covering them as they drove down the road. Haru had finally been coaxed back to the car half an hour after the sun had fallen, his sleepless night catching up to him and making him sleepy and, in Makoto’s own completely unbiased opinion, absolutely adorable. His eyes had drooped, and when Makoto had taken his hand and led him back to the car, he had stumbled quite a bit, pressing against Makoto’s side to keep him steady as they walked.

Makoto had gotten him in his seat, telling Haru that he would be back as he ran back and grabbed Haru’s shoes that Makoto had completely forgotten about until they were halfway back to the car. By the time he had returned, Haru had fallen asleep, his eyes fluttering, body relaxed and curled up in the seat. His breathing was slow and even, and when Makoto turned the car on, he barely stirred. So, Makoto turned the radio off and left Iwatobi, taking a moment to slow the car as he passed the familiar road that led to his parents and siblings, wondering if they were safe and asleep in their beds. But then he picked up the pace, eager to get Haru home so they could both rest, excited for morning, when Haru would be awake and relaxed and happy.

As he drove, he let his mind wander, occasionally glancing at Haru to make sure he was still sleeping, noting the way he had curled into a ball and cuddled into his hoodie as much as possible. It was a cute look, and Makoto chuckled, bringing his eyes back to the road.

He thought about the project that he had spent the last few weeks on. Haru’s gift would be ready by morning; Makoto had made the necessary arrangements before the trip to Tokyo to make sure it would be ready by the time they returned.

He knew he’d have to thank Amakata again for helping him with the funds for it, and Nagisa and Rin for keeping Haru distracted while he had been working. Of course, those two had been more excited when Makoto had asked them to prepare the other part of Haru’s surprise, and both Omegas had sworn they wouldn’t tell anyone what they had planned. Not Haru, and especially not Amakata. Makoto couldn’t help the shudder that went through him as he thought of what would happen if Amakata caught on to what was going on. The point of the next day was to give Haru the best day of his life, and Makoto had a feeling any good day would be ruined by the nearly poisonous food Amakata seemed to prepare.
Makoto turned his thoughts away from Amakata’s weaponized food and instead focused on something more pleasant, namely, the tiny box he had hidden in his dresser. He couldn’t wait to show Haru, to watch the curious sparkle in his eyes when Makoto gave him the small box he had stashed away. Technically, the small bit of metal in the box was just a formality, and he was sure Haru would be happy no matter what, but there was something about having it as a symbol, a way for Haru to know he always had a place to retreat to if he needed to, that warmed Makoto’s heart.

He spent the next few hours daydreaming about how Haru would look when he was given the box, when Makoto explained what had kept him busy for so long in the weeks before Tokyo.

The drive took less time than he had expected, and when they arrived at the estate, Makoto pulled the car up as close to the front door as possible, turning the car off and slipping out and around to Haru’s side. He shook the boy awake gently, peppering small kisses along his jaw in an attempt to rouse the boy from his slumber. Haru never fully awoke, mumbling as Makoto laughed quietly and helped him from the car and led him into the house.

Amakata was waiting for them, front door ajar, tight-lipped and concern in her eyes when she saw Haru. “Is he okay?”

Makoto nodded. “He didn’t sleep last night, and he’s not really awake now. I’ll get him up to his room, then come back and move the car.” He wasn’t even done speaking before Amakata was shaking her head, hand held out.

“Give me the keys, I’ll move it.” She paused, seeming conflicted, before saying, “If you want, tonight, he can stay in your room. He looks too comatose to function on his own.”

“Are yo – ”

“Don’t ask me if I’m sure, or I’ll take it back. Just go, and don’t do anything stupid, Makoto.”

He bit his lip, nodding, before turning back to Haru, who seemed to have fallen asleep standing up and leaning on Makoto. He began to coax Haru awake, leading him up the stairs when he heard Amakata say, “And maybe, if Sasabe agrees, you two can share a room. For a while. We have reports coming in saying there’s an influx of people possibly displaying Alpha and Omega characteristics, so since you two are so – ” she sighed and shook her head. “Never mind, it’s too late for that kind of talk. We’ll discuss it tomorrow. Goodnight.” And with that, the front door shut, leaving Makoto stunned on the bottom step of the stairs, Haru mumbling unintelligibly.

They finally made it back to Makoto’s room, and the tall boy fumbled with the door quietly, finally getting it open as Haru’s breathing was beginning to deepen.

“Come on Haru-chan. Go sit on my bed for a minute, and I’ll go get you something to change into.”

“Mako – ”

“Shh, Haru. Not so loud. Go to the bed, I’ll be back.” He shut the door slowly, pausing to watch Haru carefully through the crack as he made his way to the bed and collapsed on it. Makoto chuckled and shut the door, turning to run down the hall to Haru’s room.

Once he made it to Haru’s room, he fumbled through the drawers, noting that Haru would probably be irritated that Makoto’s search had disturbed his neat room. But finally, he unearthed a pair of underwear (a rather attractive pair of dark boxer briefs that Makoto did his best not to imagine fitting Haru’s frame tightly) and a pair of soft pajama pants. He began to look for a shirt when he looked at a chair placed in the corner, and noticed a familiar shirt hanging on the back of the chair. Makoto
abandoned his search of the dresser and grabbed the shirt. It was his orange and yellow t-shirt that he had noticed in Haru’s hotel room. He wondered once again where Haru had found it.

Taking the shirt and the other clothes, Makoto returned to his bedroom to give Haru the clothes. He opened the door to find Haru still collapsed on his bed. He set the clothes down and cleared his throat so Haru would look up. The dark-haired boy did, eyes catching on the shirt. He didn’t say anything, stiffening as he looked at it. But then he muttered, “Sorry.”

Makoto was baffled. “For what?”

“As we were in Tokyo, Rin… took it out of your room. He said that your scent would probably help me…”

Makoto stared at him in confusion. “Help?”

Haru bit his lip. “I guess I was – I mean, he thought your scent would calm me down. He thought maybe I was sick, but I just… missed you.”

“Oh,” Makoto wanted to kick himself, reminded once again of just how much he had hurt Haru in through his stupidity, but at the same time, his heart soared. Haru had missed him just as much as Makoto had missed him. “Did it help?” he asked.

“Yeah,” Haru was quiet, not quite meeting Makoto’s eyes, “But I like having you close more.”

Makoto flushed, and his jaw dropped when Haru sat up and began peeling off his shirt. He felt like he should look away, but he just couldn’t tear his eyes away as Haru threw his shirt to the ground.

Makoto swore Haru had somehow grown even more beautiful since the first time he had seen his bare chest, or even the second time at the public pool. His gaze slid over Haru’s smooth stomach, following the slight indentations of his hipbones and ribs. His fingers itched to trace along his body, to feel the warmth of Haru beneath his fingertips.

He had let his hands roam a little while they had been on the beach, but that had been over clothes, and there was something different about the idea of feeling the heat directly instead of through layers of clothing. Those imaginings crashed to a halt when Haru pulled the orange and yellow shirt over his head, and Makoto was struck but just how much bigger he was than Haru. The shirt hung off his body, and when Haru removed his pants, the shirt was so long on him that only a sliver of the bottom of his boxers was showing.

Haru looked up at him, and Makoto was struck by just how cute Haru was. If Makoto had his way, Haru would only ever wear this to bed. But at the same time, he thought about someone entering his room and seeing Haru looking like this, and he wanted to pull Haru into his arms and shield him from anyone else. It was selfish, but this sight, Haru getting ready to sleep in his bed, dressed in his shirt, was one that he never wanted anyone else to see.

He frowned to himself. Between this, and his thought of Haru kissing someone else, Makoto was beginning to wonder if maybe, just maybe, he was a little possessive. He wasn’t sure if he liked that idea, but if it didn’t bother Haru, and it didn’t restrict him, maybe it wasn’t too terrible to be a little possessive. Just a little.

“Come on,” Haru turned and collapsed on the bed, the shirt riding up until is just barely covered his butt. He buried his face in the blankets, so his words came out muffled. “Bed. Now.”

“Uh, but, Haru, don’t you want these?” Makoto held up the sleeping pants that he had brought, but Haru shook his head into the covers.
“Too hot for those. I’m fine like this.”

Makoto chuckled, then quickly went about getting ready for bed himself, setting the clothes he had grabbed for Haru aside as he went to the bathroom, brushing his teeth. When he came back, he noticed that Haru’s breathing had slowed down considerably. He felt safe enough, thinking Haru was asleep, to grab his own shorts and tee that he slept in, and began changing. He tossed aside his shirt, satisfied that it had at least hit the clothes basket before falling to the floor. He would pick it up tomorrow. Maybe.

He was kicking his jeans off when he felt Haru’s gaze on him. It was hard not to notice, and heat rose up his face. He didn’t look back, but his mind provided a helpful image of what he would most likely see: Haru propped up on his elbows, taking in the sight of Makoto nearly naked. Makoto swallowed dryly, pulse pounding at the idea of Haru checking him out.

“Th-thought you were asleep.”

“No, just wanted to enjoy the view. I knew if you thought I was awake, you’d change in the bathroom.”

“Haru!”

“No need to be embarrassed. You could take off a little more if you wanted. I wouldn’t mind.”

Makoto’s face was bright red, and he quickly tugged on his shorts and shirt. When he finally glanced behind him, Haru’s cheeks were slightly pink, but he looked disappointed that Makoto had decided to get dressed.

“Don’t look at me like that. Amakata would kill me if anything happened tonight.”

“Amakata would have a sea turtle if she thought any of us were holding hands without being bonded first,” he mumbled, though his voice held no edge of actual meaning. His eyes were drooping again.

“You’re too hard on her,” Makoto chuckled, pulling back the covers and sliding into the bed. He settled in quickly, sighing deeply as the muscles in his back stretched, then relaxed. He felt the bed shift next to him, and Haru sidled up next to him, curling along-side Makoto’s larger body. Makoto couldn’t help the smile that settled on his face, and he moved slowly to wrap his arms around Haru, unsure if the gesture would be welcome. It quite obviously was, as the moment Haru felt Makoto’s arms around him, he sighed happily and snuggled closer. Makoto bit his lip, trying to stop himself from chuckling at how completely adorable Haru was, and let his eyes fall shut, feeling the cooler body next to him as he slowly drifted off into what was easily the best night’s sleep he’d had in days, possibly ever.

Chapter End Notes

So just to get this out of the way: I have been waiting to post this chapter for so long!!!! for someone who lives for cute snuggling scenes, shameless flirting, and kissing between my OTPs, it took me forever to post a chapter with any of that in it. But here it is!!!!! And the next two chapters are going to be full of this kind of stuff, as well as a little more of Makoto’s possessive side.

This chapter, as well as the previous one, was one of the first chapters I wrote when I first came up with this story idea, and as such, this poor chapter has been rewritten and
edited so many times over the last two years, and this chapter was especially difficult because of one small scene: the scene in the car with the music. I can not even tell you how long I argued with myself over wanting to shamelessly shove an OLDCODEX reference in there, simply out of my love of the band (I love Rage On and Dried Up Youthful Fame, but my favorites are actually Aching Horns and Heaven). I finally settled for kind of insinuating that they're listening to OLDCODEX, rather than coming right out and saying it.

So, let me know what you thought; I thrive on your guys' comments and kudos! Thank you to sarahsharpiemarker, who did a fantastic job editing this chapter, and Thank you to everyone for reading this! Have a good week, everyone!!!
Surprise!!

Chapter Summary

Makoto has a surprise for Haru

Chapter Notes

Ok, so I know I said no more angst, but I kind of lied. This chapter involves Haru thinking about his mother, and as you can guess, his relationship with his mother is a rather sad one. but aside from that, nothing horrible here. Just a lot of fluff, kissing, and swimming!

Haru awoke slowly, grumbling as he rose from bed. The sheets around him were unusually warm. Had Amakata turned on the heat? That would be insane. It was June, way to soon to even consider starting to use a heater.

It was odd, he thought as he tossed the blankets aside and fumbled his way to the bathroom and filled the tap on the tub, water rushing out. The heat hadn’t been uncomfortable, not in the slightest. On the contrary, the only thing that was keeping Haru from returning to bed and seeking that warmth again was the grime he felt covering his skin, and the pull the water had on him as the tub slowly filled. So instead, he stripped himself of clothing, slightly confused when went to pull off his usual sleeping pants to reveal his jammers, and found neither on his body, just an orange shirt and a pair of boxers. Oh, right. He hadn’t worn his jammers yesterday after his bath. He hazily recalled how, yesterday, the usually soothing water seemed to only make him more anxious, and in his frustration, he had forgone the jammers for a pair of plain boxers.

There was something not quite right, something at the edge of his memory that just wasn’t connecting, and Haru chewed his lip as he stripped the boxers. After pondering for a moment, trying to make his sleep idled mind function, he simply shrugged. Oh well, it probably wasn’t important, and he didn’t need the swimsuit anyways. The allure of the water was back, so he sank into the lukewarm water, pleased to find his that the water once again welcomed him into its calming embrace. Taking a breath, he submerged his head, letting the water rush over him, the heat slowly fading from his skin.

He came up for air once his lungs began to ache, then sighed and leaned back against the side of the tub, his eyes drifting shut. Makoto was safe and okay, the water accepted him again and his father was far away, unable to hurt anyone he cared about. Things were good.

“Morning, Haru!”

Haru’s eyes snapped open. That voice brought back the vague, sleep-hazed memories of the night before. He glanced out of the tub, to the shirt he had tossed aside in his sleepy haze. An orange shirt Rin had tossed to him a few days ago, and that Makoto had brought to him the night before. He had vague memories of a dark car, of Makoto driving; his brilliant green eyes alight with joy and
excitement, his fingers warm when they occasionally brushed along Haru’s arm. He also remembered falling asleep safely in Makoto’s warm, strong arms.

Finally, that little thought that had been nagging at the edge of his mind presented itself, and Haru felt his cheeks light up. This was Makoto’s room and Makoto’s bathtub...

Haru plunged himself under the water again, desperately trying to beat back the embarrassment flooding him. He heard Makoto’s garbled voice, and felt a slight resentment towards the water for not letting him hide, yet still listen to Makoto’s wonderful voice. So, slowly, he peeked up, the water hovering just under his nose, and hoped Makoto would be able to feel the affectionate warmth in his chest. *I’m glad you’re here.*

Makoto smiled, his eyes gleaming with the happiness that seemed to radiate from him, and Haru guessed his message had gotten across. He watched as Makoto leaned against the door, noticing not for the first time just how beautiful Makoto’s body was. It seemed that freshly wakened Makoto was even more devastatingly attractive than ever. His usually slightly messy hair was a wreck, the hair on one side plastered flat against his head while the other half stuck up in random directions. His eyes seemed to sparkle, though it was dimmed slightly by the haze of sleep. Looking at him was like being bathed in the gentle springtime sunlight, warm and comfortable, with the promise of warmer weather on the horizon. Haru remembered that warmth, the heat between them as they had slept side by side, and sunk a little further into the water, color returning to his cheeks.

“I won’t bug you for long, Haru. I was just wondering if you had any plans for after breakfast.”

It was strange; just a few weeks ago, the idea of eating more than one meal in the dining room with the rest of the household had been so unappealing that he would actively avoid any meals he could, but since Makoto had showed up, the mornings weren’t actually that bad. It was almost as though Makoto’s presence provided him with a bubble of peace whenever the Alpha was near.

“No, no plans,” Haru said, having to lift his mouth out of the water to do so.

“Great! Wait for me in the library after breakfast, okay?”

“You won’t be there?”

Makoto shook his head. “I have a couple of things to take care of. But you need to eat. You haven’t eaten anything in over a day.”

“You haven’t either!”

“I’m fine. But I’ve got something planned, and you need food.” He walked forward, pressing a gentle kiss to the top of Haru’s head. “Just go with me on this.” And with that, he made his exit, Haru watching him as he left. He listened carefully as Makoto fumbled around in his room, before finally hearing the bedroom door open, then shut with a resounding thump.

Haru sighed. Breakfast held little interest to him knowing that Makoto wouldn’t be there. Maybe he would just stay in the tub for a bit longer.

Two hours later, Haru made his way towards the library, a piece of toast wrapped up in a napkin in his hand.

He had almost missed breakfast, preferring to soak in the tub. Makoto had anticipated this outcome,
however, and had sent Nagisa to fetch him. The blond had shuffled Haru along, picking out his
clothes since all Makoto had grabbed the night before were a pair of too short sleeping pants, a pair
of underwear, and a shirt. The only wearable thing was the underwear, but the gesture had been a
sweet one. Nagisa had urged him into the dining room, shoveling scrambled eggs and toast onto his
plate. Haru had finished the eggs and one slice of toast, finding the meal less satisfying than his usual
morning meal of toast and mackerel. He wondered if he could convince Makoto to let him cook it for
them for dinner.

Finally, the table had cleared, and Haru had grabbed the remaining toast for Makoto. After all, he
had gone just as long, if not longer, without eating, and he needed food too.

He found his way to the library, pushing open the door and calling out Makoto’s name, only to be
met with silence. He sighed and made his way into the room, shutting the door behind him. He set
the toast down on the desk beneath the window, staring out for a moment at the garden outside.

Usually, he preferred going to the garden at night. There was something peaceful about the way the
moonlight shone down on the garden, and the sound of the fountain splashing kept him calm. It also
helped that at nighttime the few stray cats that wandered the estate would come out. Haru had a
tendency to save some food (only when Rei cooked) to take to them. Once, he had taken some of
Amakata’s food out to them. It took him about a week to coax the cats to trust him again.

He turned away from the window, and made his way to the loveseat on the other side of the room,
 snagging a random book from a shelf as he went. It was one of Rin’s books; a sappy love story that
he loved to pretend belonged to Gou. No one believed him.

He collapsed on the seat, flipping through the pages, and tried to find something of interest in it while
he waited for Makoto. It was a terrible book, with cheesy lines and the characters seemed pretty
bland. Haru was beginning to wonder what Rin found enjoyable about these books but he found his
answer when he skipped through a few pages, and his eyes widened at the rather tasteless sex scene.
He flipped back to the first page, hoping that if he started from the beginning, maybe it would make
more sense, but he found himself drifting, and he glanced up at the door every few seconds.

The book was finally introducing the love interest of the main character, whose name he couldn’t
even remember, when he heard the thud of footsteps outside the library. He glanced up, and the door
was thrown wide as Makoto hurried in, calling out “Haru, you here?”

Haru, who realized that the loveseat was hidden behind the bookshelf, made a quiet noise in
confirmation, and Makoto followed the noise. The smile on his face when he caught sight of Haru
nearly stopped his heart. He had missed the sight of Makoto’s smile so much this last week, and he
felt like he could spend forever basking in the warmth of it without ever tiring.

“Sorry to keep you waiting,” Makoto said.

“It’s fine. I brought you toast.” Haru nodded towards the desk where he had set the napkins down,
and Makoto followed his gaze.

“You didn’t have to do that Haru! But thank you!” Haru bit back the smile trying to force its way
forward as he felt Makoto’s excitement. It really didn’t matter what kind of food it was, Makoto was
just thrilled anytime he was given food. He watched as the Alpha grabbed the napkin and tossed it
aside quickly devouring the toast, before coming to sit beside Haru on the loveseat. He nodded
towards the book still gripped in Haru hand. “Good book?”

“Terrible, actually. Not sure what Rin likes about it.” He set it aside, eyeing his Truemate as he
squirmed in his seat. “What going on?”
“Oh! Um, well, it’s not really anything…” He trailed off, laughing, but Haru felt nothing but nerves from the Alpha as he fumbled with something in his pockets. “Well, that’s a lie. It’s something I thought was really awesome, but now that I’m about to show you, I’m wondering if it was too much. I think you’ll like it, but…” his words trailed off again, and Haru reached out to place a hand on his arm, trying to calm him.

“Makoto if it comes from you, then I’ll like it. It’s what you were working on before Tokyo?” Makoto nodded. “Well then considering how much time you spent trying to get it done, I’m sure it will be fine.”

Makoto nodded, and took a deep breath. “You’re right. I’m just nervous.” He took another deep breath, then quickly pulled his hand out of his pocket, almost as though he was trying to get it over with, before his nerves got any worse. He opened his hand and revealed a tiny black box, almost like a jewelry box. “This is for you.”

Haru froze, mind racing as he tried to process what was in front of him. His first thought was a ring. Makoto had gotten him a ring. That thought was terrifying, but he quickly ruled it out. The box was too big to hold a ring, unless it was a massive ring, besides, Makoto surely wouldn’t get him a ring without talking about it first. Haru never doubted that they would be bonded or married, whichever Makoto wanted, but throwing a ring into the situation just seemed like something that they should talk about first. Or was it? Wasn’t the whole purposing thing supposed to be a surprise? Haru’s head began to spin in confusion.

He felt the bond grow cold, and Makoto spoke up weakly. “Haru, is everything ok?”

“Um, I just, I – ” He couldn’t find the words, and instead just stared helplessly at the box. God, what if it was a ring? Haru wanted to be with Makoto, with every fiber of his being, but could he say yes if Makoto asked him now? For god’s sake, it had been less than twenty-four hours since their first kiss!

Makoto frowned when Haru couldn’t respond, and he followed Haru’s stare to the box. His brow furrowed, and then he gasped, clearly grasping where Haru’s thoughts were. “Wait, no! it’s not an engagement ring, Haru, I swear!”

The words lifted a burden off Haru, and he sank back in his seat. “Oh god, you really had me worried there.”

“I didn’t even think that you would take it like that! I guess it does kind of look like a ring box, huh?” He laughed, turning the box over in his hands, and Haru was relieved when he felt amusement flood their bond. He had been worried that Makoto might take his reaction as rejection. He was about to ask; to make sure Makoto was okay with how he had responded, when the Alpha continued speaking. “I wouldn’t just spring a ring on you with no warning, Haru. That seems more like something we should discuss. Besides, I just want to enjoy being with you for now. I have every intention of being with you for as long as you’ll have me, but for now…” He let the words hang, and Haru reached out and took his hand that wasn’t clutching the box, nodding in agreement.

“So, what is in the box, then, if it’s not a massive engagement ring?”

Makoto pressed the boxing into Haru’s hand, and Haru, opened it quickly, only to stare in confusion at the rather ordinary silver key sitting inside.

“A key?” He looked up at Makoto, who grinned cheekily at Haru’s confusion. He stood and held out his hand, which Haru took, and led Haru out of the room. They were both silent as they walked a few feet down the hall and stopped in front of the door next to the library, and Haru quickly caught
on to the change. The door handle was new, the silver knob shinier than it had been in years, and in
the center of the knob was a lock.

Haru went cold. He just stared at the door in shock. It wasn’t possible. The chairman would never
have let anyone reopen the pool. He still recalled the last day he had been in that room, watching in
horror as a team of people, employed by the chairman, had quickly drained the pool. His father had
actually shown up to watch, deaf to the pleas of everyone in the household as they all begged him to
reconsider.

“It took a while to push the paperwork through, and a little longer to get it back in working
condition, but I think it was all worth it.” Makoto murmured. He was pressed close against Haru,
hands resting gently on Haru’s shoulder as he embraced him. The warmth and heat of him drew
Haru in, pulling him out of his memories.

His hands shook as he took the key from the box. He slid the key into the handle, and just kept his
finger still, unable to turn the key. He wanted to; god he did he ever want to. He wanted to turn the
key, to barrel forward through the door and into the embrace of the water he knew was just beyond
the door… but he couldn’t. He was terrified that he would open it, and he would just be faced with a
dark, cold, and broken room, and that he would wake up alone in his room, the last few weeks
nothing more than some brilliant, amazing dream. He didn’t deserve this, didn’t deserve Makoto.
What could he have ever done to deserve someone so patient and kind and giving? It had to be one
big dream, or just some cruel experiment.

Makoto’s arms slid around him completely, and Haru was completely taken in, sinking back into the
warmth. They said nothing, and Haru tried to let his Alpha’s presence push away the thoughts.
Finally, Makoto reached out a hand, cover Haru’s that was gripping the key.

“Ready?” his voice was hushed Haru’s ear, and Haru took a deep breath, nodded, and twisted the
key.

There was the slide of the lock, and a click as the knob turned. Haru dropped his hand, still tangled
with Makoto’s, and the door swung open. Haru took another deep breath, and stepped inside,
Makoto following.

Everything was bright and clean, the smell of fresh paint and chlorine in the air. Glancing around, he
found that the concrete floor had been repaired neatly, the cracks still visible, but just barely. The
walls had been painted over as well; three were a light tan, almost beige color, while the fourth wall
was lined with windows, providing a breathtaking view of the garden outside. Haru knew the
window acted as a sort of one way glass, showing the outside world, but keeping all on the other
side from seeing indoors. It was an idea that his mother had taken from their pool in Tokyo, where
Haru had spent much of his childhood. Haru had loved it as a child, being able to view the world
from the water, yet being completely obscure from anyone outside.

He moved his gaze toward the pool. He recalled the careless manner with which the crew of men
had treated the pool, the way they had chipped and scraped the paint. He recalled the one other time
he had entered the poolroom since it had been drained, the way cracks had grown as the pool fell
into disrepair. Now, the pools cracks were filled, and the blue and black lane lines that were newly
painted were magnified by the sparkle of the water. The sight made Haru’s heart sing and he felt a
pull towards the pool.

“Haru?” Haru blinked, glancing away from the pool. He could feel Makoto’s tension, both in the air
around them and through the bond. His nerves from earlier had returned in full force. Haru turned,
and threw himself into Makoto arms, burying his face into his chest, and Makoto moved instinctually
to wrap his arms around Haru. He felt Makoto press his lips against the top of Haru’s head, and felt
the tension release from the Alpha’s body.

“Thank you,” he whispered, praying Makoto wouldn’t notice the thick, choked tone of his voice, even if he could feel the tumultuous emotions raging through Haru anyways. Makoto didn’t reply, and instead pulling Haru closer.

They stood there wrapped around each other, lost in their embrace for a moment. Finally, Haru pulled back, his hands slipping down to link with Makoto’s and he took a step back, pulling Makoto with him. the call of the water was just too much. “Come swim with me.”

Makoto gave a laugh. “I had a feeling you’d want to. I grabbed your swimsuit earlier, and I think I put it over – wait, Haru!” His cry was met with a splash of water as Haru had slipped his pants off, sprinted towards the pool, tossed his shirt aside as he ran, and dived into the water. The moment he pierced through the surface, he felt as though an enormous weight had been removed, and he relished in the cool weightless feeling the water gave him. He felt a light pressure against his lower half, clinging to his skin. Huh, he had thought his boxers had come off with his pants. Oh well, it didn’t matter. Just as it had at the community pool a few weeks back, and as it had back when he was a child, the water welcomed him, encouraging him to push forward. His mind went blissfully blank, all the cruel thoughts that too often plagued his mind gone without a trace. Water had always been one of the only things that brought him this peace, and only one other thing ever did it to this extent.

Haru pushed upward, breaking the surface of the water, and shook his head to try and clear the streams of water covering his face. the chlorine made his eyes burn, and he raised the hand to rub at his eyes, then turned to glance around, searching for Makoto. He found him perched on the edge of the pool, feet dangling in the water as the he watched Haru.

“Having fun, little mermaid?” he called, and Haru made a face at the name, swimming up beside the Alpha. Makoto gave a laugh. “Guess that’s a no?”

“Just to the name. I even prefer Haru-chan over that.” Makoto sat up a little straighter, and his eyes sparkled mischievously, and Haru clarified, “That doesn’t mean you can call me that.”

Makoto just laughed, leaning forwards. “Just because I shouldn’t doesn’t mean I won’t.”

“Oh? Is that your life motto?”

“Yes, I’m a rebel; breaking rules, living on the edge, all those kinds of things.”

“Oh yes, I do seem to remember you driving just a notch above the speed limit last night. How daring.”

“Shut up,” he leaned down to splash water at Haru. “You were asleep the entire time. You have no clue how fast I was going.” They laughed, and Makoto leaned forward to brush his fingers through Haru’s wet strands. “So, are you going to swim some more? I thought that I would have had to bribe you in order to get you to leave.”

Haru shook his head, and held his hand out. “Yeah, but could you swim with me?”

Makoto gazed at him for a moment before nodding. “Oh, but I don’t have my swim trunks.”

“Just swim in your boxers.” Makoto nodded and stood, and Haru watched closely as he pulled his shirt off and tossed it to the side, the sight making his stomach drop. He realized that, outside of last night, he had never really looked at Makoto’s bare chest. There had been a few moments, at the community pool a few weeks beforehand, but Haru had been too caught up in the joy of the water to
pay any attention. Which was perhaps the biggest mistake Haru had ever made. He let his eyes follow the sculpted muscle of Makoto’s chest, drinking in the sight eagerly. When he had seen Makoto’s body the night before, he had quickly decided that the best way to describe it was majestic, but here in the light, he decided quickly that his memory was incredibly faulty. Makoto’s body wasn’t majestic. It was perfection, absolutely divine. How was it fair that his Alpha could have the heart and the body of an angel?

Of course, all thoughts went out the window when Makoto stripped off his shorts revealing legs that made Haru want to get down on his knees and praise any and every god that had a hand in the creation of this Alpha. Makoto slid himself into the water. He sank beneath the surface, the water briefly covering his head, before he stood up, and Haru’s mouth went dry as he watched the rivulets of water stream down his body, following the ridges and shadows of his muscles. Haru desperately wanted to lean in and let his mouth follow the path the water left. But was that something that was acceptable? Was that a normal thing people did with the one they care about? Was it normal to want to have his mouth, his tongue, his hands, all over Makoto’s body, claiming this beautiful Alpha as his own?

Haru glanced up, hoping to meet Makoto’s eyes, only to find the Alpha staring at him in a way that could only be described as hungry. Haru’s breath hitched. Okay, so maybe it was normal.

He hoped that Makoto would take the lead, be the first on to lean in, claiming Haru’s lips with his own, and he thought that maybe Makoto would do exactly that as the Alpha leaned down, but his hopes were dashed when Makoto simply pressed his lips to Haru’s cheek. Haru groaned, and Makoto chuckled darkly into his ear. “I thought you wanted to swim?”

Swim? Why would he swim when Makoto was right here, just within his grasp? Haru knew he could find the same peace water gave him in the arms of the Alpha. Makoto did not seem to understand this idea, though, as he pressed another kiss to Haru’s cheek, let his lips graze his jaw, and pulled away, leaving Haru dizzy from the contact. Makoto smiled, looking a little dazed himself, before taking Haru’s hand and pulling him, grumbling disappointedly, deeper into the water.

Haru wasn’t sure how long they spent swimming side by side, it could have been just a few minutes, it could have been days. All that mattered was the gentle push and pull of the water, the waves that splashed against him as Makoto swam by his side. They spent some time doing laps before flipping onto their backs and simply floating side by side, linking their fingers slowly as the water pushed them across the pool and into the shallow end.

They stayed silent for a long time, Haru closing his eyes as he traced small patterns along the back of Makoto’s hand. It was peaceful, and Haru relished in the silence. But then Makoto spoke up, and the words were so unexpected that Haru jolted out of his calm. “Happy Birthday, Haru.”

His body stiffened and he sank beneath the surface before fighting his way back up, spluttering in confusion, “What did you say?”

Makoto was treading water in front of him, eyes wide with confusion. “I wished you a happy birthday.”

“It’s not my birthday.”

“Yes, it is, Haru. It’s June 30th.”

Haru frowned thinking over the past few weeks. He remembered mentioning his birthday to Makoto a few weeks ago, when they had been talking about Makoto’s family coming to parent’s weekend, which was… tomorrow. He had heard Amakata on the phone, discussing it with the Tachibana’s
that morning at breakfast. Which meant it was definitely June 30th. He was 19 years old.

“Do you forgot your birthday?”

Haru nodded. “It’s not something I’ve celebrated since… Well, it’s been a while.”

“Oh,” Makoto didn’t quite meet Haru’s eyes, clearly understanding. “Since you presented?”

“Yeah.”

Makoto made a quiet noise, something torn between acknowledgement and distress, but after a moment, a look of determination on his face. “Well, this will just have to be a good enough birthday to make up for all the others you’ve missed!”

Haru smiled, then glanced around the pool, thinking. “This is actually the second time I’ve been given a pool for my birthday.”

“It is?”

“Yeah. When I turned fourteen, and my parents moved me here, this pool was my mother’s gift to me. She told me she wanted me to have one place that I could always go to and be myself. That was the last time I got to talk to her in person.”

He paused, lost in his memories. He could still remember his mother, tears in her eyes, the same colour as his own blue ones. She had pulled him close, promising that she would find a way to bring him home, that his father would see sense eventually. Promises that they both knew she could never keep. Maybe that was why she had whisper to him, while his father had been talking with Amakata and Sasabe. “Haruka, I wish I was strong enough to save you from this. I wish I was as brave as you are. I’ll try, Haruka, I’ll try. Just stay brave for me, my sweet boy. I love you.” His father had noticed them then, and pulled his wife away from Haru, keeping his perfect wife away their tainted child.

His mother had loved him, and still loved him if the letters she managed to sneak to him occasionally were to be believed. Unfortunately, that love wasn’t enough to keep him safe, or enough to get her away from her husband, no matter how horrible he might be to her.

But here was someone who cared for him, and who had been able to stand up to his father on Haru’s behalf, even if he shouldn’t have had to. By giving Haru the pool, Makoto was giving him a piece of himself back, one that his father had cruelly ripped away. Makoto was too good for him.

Haru was ripped away from his thoughts when he felt Makoto’s arms wrap around him, holding him close. “You deserve better, Haru. You deserve the world. You’re perfect, and I adore you, Haru.”

The words pulled him away from his dark thoughts, and he sank into the safety that was Makoto’s embrace. Haru leaned in, resting his head against Makoto’s chest, closing his eyes as he listened to the steady beating of the Alpha’s heart. He felt the rumble in Makoto’s chest as he continued speaking. “You know, this explains why Rin and Nagisa were so excited when I asked them to plan your party. They’ve been working on it for weeks. They wanted it to be this morning, so we could all hang out in the pool, but,” Makoto took a deep breath and blushed, his eyes cast down until all Haru could see was the dark brown of his lashed, so long they almost brushed his cheeks. “I kind of wanted you all to myself, if only for a little bit. Is that bad?”

Haru couldn’t help the smile that pulled at his lips as he looked at his Alpha, the words sending a little thrill through him. He wanted wrap himself around Makoto, to hide himself away with his TrueMate, but that wasn’t possible. So, he settled for leaning in and resting his head against the cooled expanse of Makoto’s chest, eyes slipping closed as he did. “Not bad at all. Not even a little.”
He felt the rise and fall of the Alpha’s chest, and the slight quiver of his hands as he wrapped his arms tighter around Haru. “Good, cause I’m not sure I could regret it even if it was bad.”

Haru smiled, but then pulled away, eyes flashing open in shock. “Wait, you said party. What birthday party?”

“Oh.” Makoto grimaced and stepped back, letting one arm fall to his side while the other just grazed down Haru’s arm before tangling his hand with Haru. He glanced towards the door. “I wasn’t supposed to tell you about that. They’re going to kill me.”

“You let Rin and Nagisa plan my birthday party?” Haru said with dread in his voice.

“Yeah, but Rei, Sousuke and I sat down with them and vetoed some of their crazier ideas, so it won’t be too bad.”

“There’s going to be strippers, you know that, right? They will invite strippers.”

Makoto shook his head. “Strippers was the first thing they brought up and it was the first thing we banned. No strippers, I promise.”

“Then they’ll dress up and be strippers themselves. But knowing them, there will be some kind of stripping involved.”

“They wouldn’t – ” Makoto started, but he was cut off by the rather loud cry of “THAT’S A GREAT IDEA!” The boys jumped and turned towards the door, where Rin and Nagisa were peering in, one of Rin hands covering the blond’s mouth.

“Jesus Nagisa, do you even know what the word ‘quiet’ means?” Rin hissed irritably, and Nagisa shook his head. He made a muffled noise, and Rin leaped away from him, knocking the door all the way open and yelping in disgust. “Dude, did you seriously lick me? That’s disgusting.” Rin turned and took a step towards the pool, freezing when Haru growled in a way that he hoped sounded menacing.

“Don’t even think about it,”

“But he – ”

“No,” Haru glared at him, and Rin just shook his head.

“Fine, but only because it’s your birthday.” He wiped the hand Nagisa had licked on his pants, grimacing. “Look, we just came to tell you that everything’s ready. But Nagisa’s right,” he grinned at Nagisa, who was bouncing on the balls of his feet, fingers flying as he typed away on his phone. “We could totally be strippers.”

“Rin, I thought we agree – ” Makoto tried, but Nagisa cut him off.

“We said that we wouldn’t call any strippers. Never said we couldn’t be strippers.” Nagisa laughed and looked up. “Gou says that she’s got some stuff we can use, Rin-chan!”

“Why does my sister have anything we could use for stripping?” Rin growled, but Nagisa was already pulling him away, calling behind him, “Get to the dining room you two!” before disappearing.

Haru and Makoto stared after them, both too shocked to speak.
“Are you sure we can’t just stay here?” Haru muttered, already sinking down further into the water.

“Yeah, I don’t think we could get away with that.” Makoto sighed and began to push through the water, headed for the stairs. He climbed out, and Haru didn’t even bother trying to hide it as he watch Makoto, noting with fascination that he could see his muscles flexing as he pulled himself out of the pool. Makoto turned towards the pool again, and bent down, holding out his hand. “Come on, Haru.”

Haru sighed and began to swim to the edge, reaching up and grasping Makoto’s hand, letting him help pull him out of the water. Once he was out, Makoto tried to release his hand and step away, but Haru stepped with him, letting himself press against Makoto. He gasped quietly at the feeling of the Alpha’s skin on his, and he leaned his head back to meet Makoto’s questioning eyes. “Thank you,” he murmured as stood on his tiptoes to press his lips against Makoto’s.

Makoto made a quiet noise of surprise, and Haru worried for a moment that Makoto would pull away, but instead, Makoto pressed back, hands moving up to cup Haru’s face. He kissed Haru’s carefully, and Haru could feel the tension radiating through him as he pulled away. “I’ve wanted to do that all day, and you beat me too it.” He laughed. “If I’m not careful, I’m going to get carried away.”

“Go ahead,” Haru tried to press back against Makoto’s lips, but Makoto was already there, and his lips were harder, pressing insistently against Haru’s. He kissed him hard and deeply, and Haru tried not to whimper at the feel of Makoto’s tongue brushing against his own. He wasn’t sure if he could ever get used to this, the way Makoto’s mouth against his made him feel.

He tried to kiss back, tried to match Makoto’s overwhelming enthusiasm, but he found himself just getting lost in the taste of his TrueMate, and anytime Makoto pulled away for even a moment, Haru was pulling him back in, unwilling to part for even a second.

“Hey! Are you two done sucking face, or are we going to be waiting here all day?” They pulled away reluctantly. Haru wanted to glare at whoever had interrupted them, but he was too busy trying to get his breathing under control. He was pleased to see that Makoto was having just a hard of time, and he admired the pink tint of Makoto cheeks as the Alpha flailed around, trying to find the source of the interruption. His gaze finally settled on Rin, who was leaning against the door, this time without Nagisa. Sousuke lurked behind him instead. They both looked a little green as they watched Haru and Makoto, and Haru felt indignation rise from Makoto.

“You two have no room to talk,” Makoto glared.

Rin groaned. “We apologize, Makoto. You were taking so long – ”

“It hasn’t even been five minutes!”

Rin just rolled his eyes. “Look, I’m not gonna argue with you right now. Just thought you’d want to know that Nagisa is five minutes away from destroying this place if Haru doesn’t show up.”

Haru sighed. “We’re coming,” he told Rin before turning his attention to Makoto. “Got any towels?”

Makoto nodded, and jogged across the room, grabbed a towel and tossed it to Haru. He snagged it out of the air and began drying off, glancing around to try and find his clothes. “It’ll take us a minute to get dressed,”

Rin frowned and shook his head. “Just dry off and come on. God knows you’ll probably be back in here in a few hours.”
“We’re in our underwear.”

“So? It’s just Gou and a bunch of people with mates. Just hurry up.”

Haru shook his head. “Ten minutes.”

Rin groaned, but agreed, saying “Fine, but we’re waiting out here for you. Nagisa will kill me if I show up without you.” He shut the door then, leaving Haru and Makoto alone once again.

Haru took another look around the room and spotted his clothes laying in a pile next to the wall. “We’d better hurry up.”

“Yeah,” Haru heard the sad note in his voice and glanced up to find Makoto shrugging on his shirt, eyes fixed on Haru. “How bad is it that I really wish I hadn’t asked them to do this? I really wanted just a little more time…”

Haru pulled up his shorts and walked over to the Alpha, leaning up to press a quick kiss to the corner of his mouth. “There’s always later. The day’s a long way from being over.”

Makoto cheered at the words, and he returned the kiss. Haru had to fight to keep himself steady at the brush of heat against his lips. Makoto pulled away and held out his hand, “Come on, Haru-chan.”

Haru glared but took his hand. “Seriously, would you stop that?”

Makoto laughed. “Nope.” He reached out and put a hand on the door, but paused to glance back down at Haru. “Hey, I know I said it before, but I want to say it again. Happy birthday, Haru.” He kissed Haru again, smiling against his mouth. Haru decided that maybe his birthday wasn’t so bad after all.

Chapter End Notes

So, this chapter was actually going to be a lot longer originally; I had a huge scene planned out for the party, but time kind of became an issue, so I wasn't able to get it done. But if I get the chance, I may write it and post it later on. I don't really have a lot to say this time, just that the next chapter is going to be the last one for a little while, but i promise that it is one big long fluff fest, so I hope you all enjoy it. I've got it written out already, and on paper, it's about 45 pages long. Anyways, I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. As alway, i love to hear what you guys think. Thank you all for reading!!!
Family

Chapter Summary

Parent's weekend arrives, and Makoto has to decide what to tell his parents about the recent revelations.

Chapter Notes

I'm so, so sorry it's this late. I'll explain what's been happening at the end. For now, enjoy a lot of fluff, and some MakoHaru smut.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“This is a terrible idea,” Makoto muttered to himself not for the first time in the brief three hours he had been awake. Sitting on the stairs, he stared at the front door where at any moment, his family would walk through. In those three hours, he had thought out at least a dozen plans to keep everyone from meeting his family; everything from simply calling them and telling them that there had been an accident on the road to the estate, and that it had been blocked off for a few days, to straight up kidnapping everyone who live on the estate and hiding when his parents knocked. It was ridiculous… and yet…

But no, the more his mind thought up hair-brained schemes to avoid seeing his family, the more he realized he had to do this, both for his own sake as well as for the sake of the other Alphas and Omegas. When he had told them that his family would be coming to the family day, everyone had been thrilled, claiming they were excited to meet them and how nice it would be to have company for once.

It went without saying that no one else’s parents would be coming.

Makoto didn’t think he would ever understand how composed every seemed about not seeing their families. Surely they missed them; Makoto knew he missed his every day. However, he had never been turned out of his home. His parents may not have understood all the scientific jargon that came with being an Alpha, but they still loved and supported their son. Maybe if they didn’t, he would have been just as resigned to not seeing them as his friends seemed to be towards their own families. He honestly didn’t know.

The other problem was his parents; how was he going to explain this to them? He knew that the moment his parents found out about situation, they would immediately accept every single one of his friends into they’re loving and caring embrace, but before that? He could see his father, fuming quietly while his mother cried in anger. Makoto wished he could protect them from this, and make them think everything was okay, but that wasn’t fair, not to them or to him. He had seen Haru’s suffering once his secret had come out, and while he didn’t agree with what Haru had done, he still understood that desire to protect. It was the same one churning in his own stomach at the moment. But Haru’s mistake had taught him better. It would hurt, but it was better to let his parents know the situation.
“Quit worrying,” a voice broke the silence, and Makoto’s heart leapt. He screeched and tumbled to the side, and the hand he meant to use to brace against his fall slipped. The brown of the foyer stairs was all he could see as he collapsed down the three stairs to the platform by the front door. The ceiling above him shimmered and his head ached. The brown ceiling was replaced by a set of beautiful blue eyes framed with dark locks.

“Hey Haru,” he groaned, embarrassed.

The boy said nothing, but tight concern and warm affection radiated through their bond. Makoto grinned and straightened up, holding his aching head in one hand. Once he could see straight, he gave Haru a more genuine smile.

“You’re right. It’s going to be fine.” His voice sounded more confident than he felt, but he figured it was a start to actually feeling confident. Fake it ‘til you make it or whatever.

Haru gave him a gentle smile and held out a hand, which Makoto gratefully took to help get himself back on his feet. Once he was standing, Haru attempted to pull his hand away, but Makoto pulled him close into a hug, feeling the cool embrace of his Truemate calm him.

Haru glanced up, and was about to speak, but a crash overhead cut him off. Glancing up the stairs, they watched as Nagisa sprinted across the balcony and down the stairs, flying into Makoto and Haru before rushing behind them, cowering.

“Mako-chan! Haru-chan! Help! Rin-chan’s gonna kill me!”

Sure enough, an angry shout was heard, and the three boys glanced up to see Rin charging down the stairs, Sousuke on his heels. Rin’s face as red as his hair in what was either embarrassment or anger, possibly both.

“You little pest, I’m going to strangle you!” He hissed, lunging forward until Sousuke grabbed him by the back of the shirt and held him back.

“I’m sorry, Rin-chan!” Nagisa peeked out between Haru and Makoto, still cowering. “Ama-chan told me to come wake you! I didn’t know Sou-chan was doing th–”

“Shut-up!” the red head bellowed, and he tried to rush forward again. Nagisa squeaked and clutched at Makoto tighter, his fingers digging into his shoulder.

Behind them, a cool voice called out, “Nagisa, are you alright?” The group turned their heads to see Rei standing by the front door, his arms crossed. Makoto caught a breeze of the slightly strained scent coming from the Alpha as the overhead fan pushed the air around, and Makoto found himself trying to put distance between the blond Omega and himself to put Rei at rest. No doubt he didn’t even realize he was causing the scent; it was just an instinctual reaction to seeing his Omega clinging to another Alpha.

Of course, there was no need for worry, as the moment he heard the Alpha’s voice, Nagisa was leaping to his side, clinging to his arm. “Rei-chan! You have to help me!”

Rei sighed in exasperation, the stressed scent fading quickly from the room. “Nagisa, did you bother Rin an Sousuke?”

“Ama-chan told me to go get them!” His wide eyes pleaded with Rei and instantly Rei’s gaze softened. “Well, if Amakata asked him to, then –”

“He still could have knocked!” Rin glared at the blonde, who completely ignored him, his eyes on
“Well, that’s true, I suppose,” Rei muttered, clearly torn between Rin’s anger and Nagisa’s adoring stare. He chewed his lip for a moment, thinking, before saying, “You should have been more respectful to their privacy, Nagisa.”

Nagisa sighed and loosened his grip on Rei’s arm, nodding. “You’re right.” he turned towards Rin. “I’m sorry, Rin.”

Rin huffed but nodded. “Apology acce–”

“I just didn’t think that you and Sousuke would be having se–”

“That’s it!” Rin roared, and even Sousuke couldn’t stop him from lunging at the boy, who squeaked and dodged out of the way. “Get over here so I can beat the hell out of you!”

“I’m sorry!” Nagisa called out with a breathless laugh. “You’re just too easy, Rin.”

The company on the stairs watched to two scrambling around, Rin hurling insults while Nagisa just laughed, everyone was laughing. Their laughter was cut short, though, as three sharp raps at the front door cut through the noise.

The hall went silent, everyone’s eyes flickering between the door and Makoto, and he felt his stomach drop, almost as though a solid weight was pressed against him.

“Uhm, we’ll be in dining room,” Sousuke said quietly, moving down the stairs. As he passed, he clapped a hand on Makoto shoulder, squeezing lightly, and Makoto tried to take comfort in his friend’s reassuring gesture, but it just wasn’t happening. His head was spinning, and he felt like he was going to be sick.

Everyone except Haru and Makoto filtered out of the hallway into the dining room, Rin and Sousuke both glancing back at them before making their way in, Nagisa giving a quick thumbs-up before following his Alpha into the room.

Makoto closed his eyes and took a deep breath, only to flinch back when the knocking at the door rang out again. Maybe he should have thought more seriously about a way to get out of this.

A cool hand slide into his own, and he opened his eyes to find Haru staring up at him, a cool and calm look on his face.

“It will be okay,” he murmured, squeezing Makoto’s hand. The touch made Makoto’s heart sing, and he found himself smiling down at Haru, before leaning in and pressing a chaste kiss against his lip. Haru kissed him back, then pulled away, and led Makoto down the stairs, towards the door. Once they were in front of it, Makoto took one last deep breath, and then nodded at Haru, who opened the door.

“Big Brother!” Two small bodies were crashing into him before he could even take in what was beyond the door, and his hand slid from Haru’s as he wrapped his arms around his siblings, holding them close. His smiled widened as he looked down at them, noting that their hazel and turquoise eyes were higher up than usual.

“Did you two get taller?” He laughed, ruffling they’re hair. Ren just laughed under the treatment, but Ran pouted, glaring up at her brother.

“They shot up so fast that none of their old clothes fit them,” his mother chuckled, stepping through
the door with her husband by her side. “We had to go and buy entirely new wardrobes for both of them.”

“Yeah, and they bought me a new dress, see?” Ran stepped and away and twirled in a circle to better show off her new flowy purple dress.


Makoto’s mother nudged her youngest children aside until she could reach Makoto and quickly pulled him into a hug, which he returned easily. He did the same with his father as his mother turned her attention to Haru, and Makoto noticed that instead of hugging him, she just gave him a warm smile. “How are you doing, Haru?”

“I’m doing well, Mrs. Tachibana,” Haru’s voice was soft and calming, respectful as he addressed Makoto’s mother. “Did you have trouble finding the estate?”

“No, the directions Dr. Amakata gave us to get us here were very clear. We were worried that maybe we were early; we didn’t see any other cars or anything here. Did we get the date wrong, or…?”

“No, no you’re right on time.” The Tachibana’s jumped as Amakata opened the dining room door, Sasabe trailing behind her. Makoto noticed that she was dressed the similarly to the first time he had met her. Her hair was pulled up into a neat up-do that made her usually semi-casual white dress suddenly look very elegant. Behind her, Sasabe was dressed up in a polo shirt and slacks, pulling unhappily at the collar of the shirt. “It’s so nice to finally see you both again. Did you have a pleasant drive?”

“Yes, it was quite nice.” Makoto’s mother reached out and shook Amakata’s hand.

“This is my mate, Doctor Sasabe Goro,” Amakata gestured to Sasabe, who quit fiddling with his collar long enough to shake hands with Makoto’s parents.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you,” Makoto’s father said. “Thank you so much for everything you’ve done to help Makoto. It’s been such a reassurance to know that you two are here helping him figure everything out.”

“No, thank you,” Sasabe shook his head. “Miho says that you two are the most cooperative and understanding parents we’ve handled in a long time. Thank you so much for supporting Makoto the way you have.”

The words twisted in Makoto’s gut, and his friends faces flashed before his eyes. He glanced away from his family toward the dining room.

Amakata clapped her hands together. “Well, let’s not keep everyone waiting.” She turned on her heel and walked toward the dining room, everyone trailing behind her. Makoto followed too, reaching out and grabbing Haru’s hand as they walked, and he felt Haru squeeze it tightly.

They walked into the dining room, and Makoto felt his jaw drop as he took in the room. Trays of food lined the walls, and Makoto was thrilled to find that all of it was finger food that took as little preparation as possible. He had been nervous when Amakata had mentioned that she would be doing the cooking, but Sasabe or Rei must have intervened, because everything looked and smelled delicious.

All around the room, Alphas and Omegas were spread out, speaking in hushed tones. Gou chatted amicably to Nagisa and Rei, Rin glared at the blond menacingly, only glancing away when Sousuke spoke to him. It was a familiar sight, one that over the past few weeks, he had seen every day and
had become almost as familiar as any scene he was used to at home. This was home, just one part of it, and now, with his family there as well, it felt as though both sides of his home had finally come together.

“Everyone,” Amakata stepped forward, bringing the room to order. “This is Makoto’s family.”

The Alphas and Omegas all introduced themselves, and Ran and Ren took an immediate liking to Nagisa and Rei. They took the twins aside, playing with them while everyone else sat around the table.

“It’s wonderful to meet you all. It’s nice to meet the people that we’ve been hearing so much about from Makoto. Aside from Haru, you’re all he talks about anymore. But…” Makoto’s mother frowned and looked around. Makoto bit his lip as he realized where this conversation was going. “Where are you families? Are you sure we got the date right? Or we didn’t get the times mixed up?”

“No, ma’am. It’s just…” Amakata struggled, casting Makoto a worried glance. Makoto took a deep breath, still not sure what he was going to say. “You see—”

Our parents aren’t quite as supportive of Alphas and Omegas as you two are,” Rin cut her off, giving Makoto a look that seemed to want to be apologetic, but just couldn’t quite manage it. “Sorry, but watching you two fumble around was just two painful. I can’t take anymore tiptoeing around the subject.”

Meanwhile, the Tachibana’s were staring at them in shock. “What do you mean they’re not supportive?”

“Well,” Amakata began. “Many of the Alphas and Omegas here were abandoned by their families because of their statuses as Alphas or Omegas, or because of their choice in partner.”

“All of you?” Makoto’s father spoke up then, and Makoto could hear the disbelief and anger in his voice. “So, you’re all safe here, correct? And all well taken care of?”

“For the most part, yes,” Haru said, and Makoto watched his parents look at Haru. He could practically see them working everything out in their heads, and the horror playing across their faces as they realized that the small boy that their son had brought home had also been abandoned. “This place was created by my father to keep my being an Omega hidden from his colleagues. He’s head of the medical department that studies Alphas and Omegas. This place has become a way for his people to keep track of all those who accept their dynamic, rather than hide it. But they leave us alone, for the most part, and even if our families have rejected us, we have each other.” He looked up at Makoto, who gave him a reassuring smile. He wished his family could feel the warmth and affection radiating through their bond. The feeling made him want to pull Haru into his arms and never let go.

“This is ridiculous. Absolutely awful.” Makoto’s mother was mumbling, and she looked around the room, meeting every set of eyes. “Every single one of you… what kind of parents could just abandon a child for what they can’t help…”

Makoto watched her, noticing the broken-hearted look in her eye. God, he wished he could have kept this from her, anything to keep that look out of her eyes. But as he watched, the heartbroken look faded to one of stubborn determination. “Well, this simply won’t stand.” She leaned down and rummaged around in her purse, before pulling out a notebook. She wrote in it quickly before ripping out the paper and shoving it forward on the table. “This is my phone number. If any of you need anything, anything at all, feel free to contact me.” She hesitated, turning to look at Amakata. “Unless… I don’t want to go over your head, Dr. Amakata. I might have gotten a little carried away
“No, no! It’s fine,” Amakata exclaimed. “If they request anything from me, I have to report it to my higher ups, so by all means,” she gestured for her to continue.

His mother smiled. “And of course, the offer is for you as well, Dr. Amakata. I have some recipes that Makoto and the twins love, or – ” Makoto was sure his mother had some other comforting services to offer to the woman who was taking care of so many teenagers, but at the mention of food not invented by the ever creative Amakata, everyone at the table stiffened, and eyes fixed hungrily on Makoto’s mother.

“Umm, Miho,” Sasabe cleared his throat and placed a tender hand on his mate’s shoulder. “Maybe you could take her up on those recipes… and maybe some cooking lessons?”

Amakata gasped and turned hurt eyes on her Omega. “Are you saying my cooking is bad?”

“Well, I mean – ” He stumbled for a moment, looking around the room desperately, but when he was met with pleading eyes, he just sighed. “Miho, love, I adore your creativity, I really do. But… sweetheart, you’re a mess in the kitchen.”

Rin piped up loudly “I prefer all of Haru’s freaking fish over… whatever it was we had last night. Was it sausage?”

“It was chicken!”

Rin pointed a finger at her. “My point exactly. Please, for the love of god, either take some lessons or let Rei take over in the kitchen.”

“I don’t mind cooking,” Rei called out from where he was on the floor. Ran and Ren were clambering on him like a jungle gym. “I recently learned a few new recipes that would be more appealing to both the eye and the pallet than last night’s meal. If you wish, I could even help you with lessons, Dr. Amakata.”

Amakata groaned and pressed her head against the table. “Why didn’t you just tell me it was bad?”

“You were always so proud of what you made, we just couldn’t say it.” Makoto comforted. “In all fairness, the beef stew we had last week wasn’t terrible.”

“It wasn’t beef.”

“Oh… pork?”

“There was no meat in it at all.”

Makoto frowned, recalling the chewy pieces of what he had assumed was beef, wondering what exactly had been in that stew, and his father laughed. “Son, you have no room to talk. Last I checked, you have yet to create a meal that wasn’t completely burned, or worse, on fire.”

Makoto flushed with embarrassment while his mother laughed. “Remember how he tried to make you breakfast for your birthday, dear? Cinnamon toast, cinnamon coffee, and cinnamon eggs.” She smiled and leaned across the table to stage whisper conspiratorially to Haru. “I would keep him as far from he kitchen as possible, Haruka, otherwise you two may starve.”

Haru gave her a gentle smile, but linked his hands with Makoto. “Don’t worry, I’ll keep him fed. But it’s probably going to be mainly fish.”
“Haru, I am not eating mackerel every day.” Haru turned his bright blue eyes on him, and he was pleased to find that the warm spark of humor he could feel through the bond was also visible in his eyes; it was so rare for Haru to be so openly visibly expressive, and the way he was now, happy and content, a smile on his lips and radiating warmth; it was the most beautiful Makoto had ever seen him.

“Is this a regular occurrence with them?” He heard his mother ask, but he couldn’t pull his gaze away from Haru’s to see whom she was talking about.

“It’s gotten worse since a few days ago. They disappeared for an afternoon, and when they came back, they won’t stop mooning over each other. It’s unbearable.” Haru flushed, a reaction most likely mirrored on Makoto’s face as they realized that they were the ones being talked about. Makoto cleared his throat and reluctantly pulled his gaze away from Haru’s to meet the peering eyes of his parents and friends.

“Sorry,” he mumbled, and he saw Haru nod out of the corner of his eye.

“It’s fine, sweetheart. Your father used to look at me the same way.” Her voice was gentle and teasing, but she squeaked when her husband wrapped an arm around her waist and pressed a kiss to her cheek.

“My dear, you obviously haven’t been watching, because I still look at you like that every day.” He gave her a charming smile and his mother giggled.

Rin mad a gagging noise. “I see where you get it, Makoto. Your parents are just as freaking cheesy. No offence, ma’am.” Makoto’s mother nodded, seemingly unfazed by the boy’s comment, but indignation rose inside Makoto, and he turned to his friend with a gentle, innocent smile.

“By the way Rin, what exactly was it that you were doing this morning when Nagisa came to get you and Sousuke?”

Sousuke, who had been minding his own business for the most part, choked on his drink, and Rin went pale and hissed, “None of your business, Tachibana.”

“Oh really?” he teased. “Well, if you’re not going to say, maybe Nagisa will tell me. I’m just so curious!”

“Fine! Fine! I’ll shut up about you and your parents being cheesy. Just drop it!” Rin groaned, collapsing back into his chair. “Damn, you’re terrifying when you’re angry. It doesn’t suit you.” Sousuke nodded, still coughing, trying to clear his throat.

Amakata frowned, glaring at the red head and growled, “Rin?”

“Nothing happened, Amakata!”

“You do remember that you’re not allowed to bond until – ”

“God, I know, please just don’t!” Rin shuddered, then shot Makoto a dark look. “You are the devil.” Makoto just smiled back kindly.

The conversations broke off then, Makoto’s father splitting off to talk to Sasabe and Amakata while his mother jumped into a conversation with Rin, Sousuke, and Gou as they talked about the bonding ceremony. Ran and Ren took turns getting piggyback rides from Rei, Nagisa strangely calm as he watched his mate play with the children.
Meanwhile, Haru’s alertness started to fade, and Makoto began to feel the strain coming from the boy as he began to droop from the social exhaustion. Before long, he threw Makoto a pleading, apologetic look, before sliding up from his seat and slipping out of the room. Makoto waited for a few moments until he was sure he wouldn’t be noticed, before following behind Haru. He closed the door of dining room and immediately headed towards the poolroom. The door was ajar, and he slipped through. Haru’s shoes and socks were already abandoned by the door, and Haru was sitting on the edge of the pool, legs dangling in the water. Makoto followed in suit, kicking his shoes aside and moving to sit beside Haru.

They didn’t speak, just basking in the quiet splashing of the water when they moved their feet.

“I like your family,” Haru murmured.

“I know. They adore you too.” Haru was silent, but Makoto felt the quiet warmth emanating from him.

“Hey, I told you that my parents left me here on my birthday, right?”

“Yes.”

Haru hummed, staring out at the water. “It’s funny, most fourteen-year-olds wouldn’t mind getting a house all to themselves. But I hated this place,” he laughed coldly. “Who would have thought I would actually appreciate them leaving me here so many years later.”

“Appreciate?”

“This house, this pool, everything…” He glanced up, blue orbs shimmering between dark lashes. “It let me meet you.”

Makoto couldn’t breathe; his throat and eyes burned as he reached out and took Haru’s hand, lifting it up to press it against his lips. He leaned in close, one hand going to cup Haru’s cheek. “Haru, I – ”

“Big Brother!” Makoto jumped, squeezing Haru’s hand as he twisted around to see his sibling barreling into the room, Nagisa on their heels. Makoto flushed bright pink and pulled away, much to Haru’s annoyance if the scowl tracing his lips was anything to go by.

“Hey, guys!” Makoto squeezed Haru’s hand apologetically. He had wanted more time with just Haru, but if he gave into his desires and kissed Haru here and now, his siblings would tease him to no end.

“Wow!” Ran gapped at the large body of water. “That’s a big pool! Can we swim?” she turned her teal eyes on Makoto, eyes pleading.

“guys, I don’t think you guys have clothes to go swimming in, and you don’t have any clothes to change into. It’s not a good idea.”

She pouted, turning her gaze to Haru, who stiffened under her pleading gaze.

“Maybe we have some smaller clothes upstairs that you guys could use,” he mumbled Looking at Nagisa. “Could you ask Gou if she has anything for Ran to wear? I’ll see if I have anything for Ren.”

The children squealed in delight and followed Nagisa out of the room. Haru didn’t look at Makoto, even as the Alpha stared a hole in the back his head.

“She’s persuasive,” was the only excuse he offered up.
Makoto just laughed and wrapped him up in a hug. Haru wiggled in his grip, trying halfheartedly to get away before sinking into Makoto’s embrace with a full body pout. “Shut up.”

“I didn’t say anything, Haru-chan.”

“Stop it with the -chan. And you don’t have to say it. I know what you’re thinking, and if you say it, I’ll push you in the pool.”

“Aww Haru, I can’t help it,” he half whined, half laughed. “You’re just too cute sometime!”

True to his word, Makoto was in the pool seconds later, with a very wet and very satisfied-looking Haru by his side.

“Haru!” Haru just smirked.

“I warned you. And besides,” He kicked back and started floating away, calling, “You look good when you’re wet.”

Makoto chewed his lip, heart pounding hard and fast in his chest, before diving under the water, quickly swimming towards his Truemate. He flipped himself upright and floated to the surface by Haru’s side. They floated quietly side by side, their hands reaching for each other and tangling together to keep close. The gently push and pull of the water rocked them into a relaxed state, and eventually, Makoto found himself able to emulate Haru by letting his eyes drift shut, letting the cool weight of Haru’s hand in his keep him from panicking at the thought of sinking beneath the water’s surface.

Time passed quickly, and it wasn’t until they heard the quick padding of tiny feet rushing down the hallway outside that Makoto remembered that Haru was supposed to be upstairs, looking for something for Ren to swim in. He pulled himself into an upright position, Haru tightening his grip on his hand as he continued to float.

Through the open door came the twins, followed by their parents, and then the rest of the Alphas and Omegas of the household. All except for the Parents, Amakata, and Sasabe were dressed in swimsuits.

“See,” Rin grumbled, fumbling with the goggles perched on his head. “No way was he going to leave the pool. It’s a good thing I had an old pair of trunks lying around.”

“Sorry,” Haru said, not bothering to open his eyes or sound the least bit apologetic.

There was a gasp and a groan, and Makoto turned his attention to the adults, freezing under his mother’s stare. “Haruka, couldn’t you have at least changed before you started swimming?” Amakata shouted while Makoto’s mother scolded her son for the same.

“Makoto, that is a nice shirt! What on earth are you doing?”

“Uh,” Makoto bit his lip, glancing at his Truemate, who was still holding his hand, but wasn’t looking at anyone, staring at the water instead. “I just kind of fell in, and…”

His mother sighed, but Makoto watched an amused smirk play at the corners of her mouth, so he figured he wasn’t in too much trouble. “Go get changed then. You too, Haruka.”

“Yes, ma’am.”
“Haru-chan’s going to win this time!” Ran chimed, leaning forward in interest as Rin and Haru climbed out of the pool only to line up on the edge again, ready to race as they had been for the last thirty minutes.

Everyone had swum together for some time, but most of the household got tired or hungry, and had disappeared after swimming for a few hours. Now, the only ones that remained were the twins, Haru, Rin, Sousuke, and Makoto. The two Alphas were sitting on the sidelines, next to the twins, who were goading the two Omegas into racing. Not that Rin needed much convincing. It didn’t help that Haru seemed to take on the challenge as long as Rin was willing.

“No way! He’s won most of the races! Rin’s gonna win this time for sure!” Ren argued, eyes not leaving the swimmers as they stretched carefully. “Who do you think will win, Makoto?”

Makoto chewed his lip. “Uhm, I’m not sure,” he replied, ignoring his bias heart in favor of neutrality.

Haru, who had been ignoring the comments of his audience up until that point, paused and glared at Makoto, who flinched under the sharp gaze.

“Well, you’re both really good!” He tried to offer an excuse but it didn’t work. Haru still regarded him coolly, taking a quick step closer to Rin, who slung an arm around his shoulders, looking disappointed.

“Wow, Haru,” Rin gave a low whistle. “He’s really…” He trailed off, trying to find the right word, but Haru filled in the blank rather quickly.

“He’s indecisive,” he mumbled, sliding out from Rin’s arm, finally looked away from Makoto with a pout.

Makoto leapt up from his seat on the edge of the pool and launched himself at Haru, wrapping him up in his arms and holding him close. Haru gasped and started squirming. “Makoto!”

“I’m sorry, Haru. You know I was joking. Of course, you’re going to win! I have absolute faith in you!”

Makoto couldn’t see Haru’s face, but he could feel the embarrassment from him, and he was sure the Omega was blushing. “Makoto, you’re heavy, let go!”

“No. You’re the best.” He leaned in a pressed a quick kiss to Haru’s cheek, feeling the heat of him beneath his lips.

Rin made a noise of disgust from beside them. “Look, you like him, sure, but did you have to go from saying we’re equal to practically worshiping him?”

“Do you want me to do that?” Sousuke offered dryly.

“Hell no! It’s embarrassing!”

“But Haru-chan and Big Brother are so cute!” Ran giggled.

Makoto wasn’t paying attention to them, preferring to mutter praises in Haru’s ear and pepper him with kisses until he stopped squirming.

“I’m not upset, it’s okay, can you let go now?”
Makoto considered. “Fine, but only if you give me a kiss.”

“You drive a hard bargain.”

“Well, only when I really want something,” He smirked and let one of his hands glide down Haru’s side brazenly, and delighted when he felt the Omega shiver in his arms.

“You’re terrible.”

“Maybe, but I adore you.”

Haru stiffened in his arms, and the sudden confidence Makoto had felt dropped in an instant. Crap, had he said something wrong? Should he have just not said that out loud? Or maybe it was the fact that people were around?

All of Makoto’s panicked thoughts went out the door when Haru flipped in his arms, and Makoto just barely caught sight of the burning look in his eyes before Haru was pulling him down, kissing him fiercely.

Makoto groaned as Haru deepened the kiss immediately, and he kissed back tenderly, letting Haru keep control and move at his own pace. He let one hand trace up and down his side, or run along the curve of his back, drinking in the quite noises Haru made at the touch. His other hand was tangled in Haru’s soft locks. Haru slid his own hands up to wrap around his neck, trying to bring himself closer.

Haru pulled back teasingly, and Makoto followed blindly, his only thoughts of wanting Haru’s lips on his again. When Haru leaned away again, a smirk on his face, Makoto growled and surged forward, the noise becoming one of satisfaction when Haru yielded beneath him and let Makoto kiss him how he liked.

Makoto broke the kiss, breathing heavy, and leaned his forehead against Haru’s, who was breathing just as hard. Haru made a quiet noise at the loss of the heat of his Truemate’s lips, and Makoto leaned in and pressed his lips against Haru’s once, then twice and then let his eyes fall closed, basking in the comfort of having Haru in his arms.

“Uhm, so that was gross, even on your usually nauseating scale.”

Haru huffed at the sound of his friend’s voice and turned to glare at him. “Fuck off, Rin,”

The red-head’s eyebrows raised, and he tutted loudly. “Language, Haruka.”

“Like you have any room to talk.”

“True, but at least I’m not dropping the F-bomb or sucking face with my mate when there are children and parents around.”

Makoto groaned, remembering his sibling’s presence in the room. God, that was embarrassing; they were going to tease him to no end about –

Wait. Children and parents?

Dread filled him as he dragged his gaze to the door, going cold as he met his mother’s cool gaze from where she stood by the door.

Oh hell. “Hi, mom.”

She chuckled quietly. “Maybe you should watch the language, Haruka.”
“Yes, ma’am.”

“Miss them already?”

Makoto glanced up from his phone in his hands to see Haru standing in the doorway of the bathroom. He had Makoto’s shirt on, freshly laundered, and was toweling his hair dry from his bath.

“A little, but it’s not so bad,” Makoto shrugged and set his phone on the nightstand next to his bed to keep his attention on Haru. “You staying here tonight?”

Haru chose not to respond. Instead, he tossed his towel in the hamper and plopped down beside Makoto on the bed. Makoto grinned and immediately reached for his hand, taking time to admire how well his smooth, slender one’s fit into his own much larger hand.

“Amakata gave us the go-ahead to move into the same room.” He told Haru. “Apparently, she wanted to run it by my mother first before she gave us her decision.”

Haru laughed, “Well, at least this means she’s okay with it.”

“Yeah,” Makoto chewed on his top lip, suddenly nervous. “You are sure you’re okay with this too Haru? I mean, cause if you’re not, that’s fine, we don’t have to share a room if that would make you uncomfortable.”

“I’m sure, Makoto. I’ve been sneaking in for the last few nights, so obviously I don’t have a problem with it. If I did, I wouldn’t be here.” Keeping a hold of Makoto’s hand, Haru maneuvered himself from he edge of the bed until he was resting against the headboard. He tugged on Makoto’s hand, and the Alpha followed obediently, crawling up to sit beside him. As soon as he was seated, Haru leaned and to rest his head against Makoto’s shoulder.

They sat together quietly, and Makoto found himself carding his fingers through Haru’s hair, occasionally letting his fingers drift lower, caressing the smooth carve of his neck and shoulder, only pausing when he felt Haru shift against him, and felt the warm press of his lips against his neck. His heart stutter in his chest, and his voice broke as he whispered his Omega’s name.

Haru didn’t speak, and his kisses became firmer, more insistent and somehow, though Makoto wasn’t sure when, he managed to twist around and straddle Makoto’s lap, giving him better access to Makoto’s throat, hands tracing the muscle beneath his t-shirt. “Haru, are you sure – ah, Haru!”

“You talk too much,” he murmured against him, before gently kissing the bite mark he had left. He kissed his way up Makoto’s neck to his lips, grazing them across teasingly and pulling away anytime Makoto tried to deepen it.

Meanwhile, Makoto’s head was spinning. On one hand, Haru’s lips were just too tempting, and he wanted to give into him. On the other hand…

“Haru,” he murmured in between kisses. “Amakata’s trusting us. Should we really – ”

Haru groaned and pulled away, staring Makoto in the eye. “Makoto, we are two teenagers who have barely been able to keep our hands to ourselves when other people are around. Hell, your mother caught us making out! And they still told us it was okay to room together. I don’t think anyone is that worried about us, or expecting us to be completely chaste.”
“But Haru, I –” he trailed off suddenly unsure of what he was trying to say. As he tried to work it out, the frustrated looked fell from Haru’s face.

“Wait, do you… not want to?” He asked, his voice gentle. “Because if so, that’s fine. I just thought…” He worried his bottom lip between his teeth before shaking his head. “Never mind. If you’re not ready, that’s okay. But you’re still okay with me sleeping here, right?” He started to slide off Makoto’s lap, but Makoto shook his head, laughing, and held onto Haru’s hips, keeping him seated.

“No! No, I want to, Haru, really. I’m not sure how anything I’ve done up to this point would make it seem like I didn’t want to.”

“But you said –”

“I was trying to give you a chance to back out, if you wanted.”

“Oh,” Haru frowned. “But I started it. Why would I want to stop?”

“People change their minds, Haru. Just because you wanted to kiss didn’t mean you were ready for sex.”

“I am. I just wanted to make sure you were comfortable with this too.“

Makoto smiled and slid his hands from is hips to wrap around his waist. “I feel like we’re just going in circles, Haru-chan.”

Haru frowned. “How many times do I have to tell you to stop calling me that?

“Hmm, I’m not sure. I may need you to tell me every day until you get it through my head.”

“For how long?”

“Depends. How long are you willing to stay by my side?” Haru jaw dropped, and his eyes widened in shock. Makoto wondered if he shouldn’t have said that. “Sorry, Haru, was that too much? I –” but he didn’t get a chance to finish as Haru’s mouth crashed into his, kissing him breathlessly.

“As long as I can,” he whispered against his mouth. “As long as you’ll have me.” He pressed back into the kiss, and Makoto quickly fell in line. They moved desperately, as though they hadn’t kissed in weeks, rather than just a few minutes ago. Haru’s fingers were grasping at his shoulder, and a quiet whisper slipped between them when Haru traced the contours of Makoto’s body. Makoto groaned at the touch and his hands began to wander, one moving to tangle in his hair, the other sliding down until he was cupping Haru’s ass pushing the Omega up until he was leaning over him, still kissing as he pushed Makoto back against the headboard.

It was hard to believe that it was only a few days ago that Haru had his first kiss with the way Haru was kissing him, leaving him breathless. The way he was grinding his hip down, the quiet whimpers gasping between them as they clung to each other; everything was Haru, and Makoto felt drunk on his Truemate’s touch.

Makoto slid his hand up, drifting from Haru’s butt to slide beneath the shirt, tracing up the arched curve of his back and running down along his sides, fingers digging into his hips, fingers slipping just underneath the band of his shorts. Finally, he dragged his hands back up underneath Haru’s shirt, paying attention to the quiet gasps that certain spots pulled from the dark-haired boy. The farther his hands traveled the further Haru shirt rose until finally, Haru growled in irritation and pulled away, ripping his shirt off. He reached for Makoto’s, and the Alpha raised his hands to let him pull it off.
Once the shirt was gone, abandoned to the floor, Haru’s hands went straight to Makoto shoulder before trailing down the rest of his body slowly. His thumbs brushed Makoto’s nipples, and Makoto gasped at the tender feeling. Haru smiled at the reaction and leaned in, only to bypass Makoto’s chest and trail kisses along the path his hands had laid out, starting at his shoulders, coming up occasionally to tease kisses against Makoto’s mouth.

“Haru, you’re gonna kill me,” he moaned weakly, and Haru just hummed, lips pressed against his jugular, his hands finally making their way down to Makoto’s hips, where they slipped beneath the fabric of Makoto’s shorts.

Makoto tensed, and Haru pulled away instantly. “Are you – ” he began, but was cut off as Makoto growled and pushed forward. Haru fell sideways onto the bed with a noise of surprise, and Makoto’s arms caged him as he hovered above the Omega.

“Haru,” His voice was a deep rumble that he barely recognized, and Haru shivered beneath him, crying out when Makoto move to bury his face into Haru’s neck. It was only now that he realized just how sweet Haru smelled, much more so that his usual lemony smell. He groaned and moved to suck at the spot the smell seemed to be emanating from. “You smell so good, Haruka,” he rolled his hips down, grinding against Haru with purpose, and the Omega went crazy. He whined, trying to press back, and his hands were scrambling at the waist of Makoto’s shorts, only to cry out when Makoto reached down to pull his hand away, before pinning it above his head.

“Makoto… Alpha, please!” He plead, thrusting his hip up to meet Makoto’s, and the Alpha’s mind went blank, the heat in his gut growing to almost painful levels. But it was a final cry of “please”, that broke him.

In a moment, his lips were against Haru’s ear, and he growled, “do not move them,” before releasing Haru’s hands to keep himself propped up, while his other hand began tracing Haru’s sides, his chest, anything he could reach, as his lips trailed along Haru’s lips and throat. His hips were grinding down slowly teasing Haru with the prospect of pressure. Haru moaned weakly, broken by Makoto’s teasing, and Makoto finally granted him mercy, lowering himself until he was pressed close. With a final kiss to his lips, he murmured. “You can move, Haruka. Move for me.”

Haru complied eagerly, hands flying up to grasp at his back, desperate for something to cling to, and they rolled to their sides, never putting an inch of space between them. They’re legs slotted together, and they were grinding against each other. Makoto thought he was going to lose himself the quiet moans and gasps of breath Haru made, and he leaned into to kiss the boy again, less a movement of lips and tongue and more just breathy gasps into each other’s mouths, both too far gone for any finesse.

Haru’s moans slowly began to build in intensity and frequency, and Makoto felt the movement of his hips begin to falter. The idea of bringing Haru to the edge of pleasure excited him, and he began mummering to Haru in the deep voice that seemed to affect him, his hips moving with more purpose, grinding harder, longer, until…

“Mako, I–I’m close. So close…”

“Me too,” he murmured, burying his face into Haru shoulder and, on and instinct that he could quite place, sought out the place where Haru’s scent was strongest and bit down, not breaking the skin, but enough to make Haru’s breath catch in his throat.

“Ah–Ma–ah!” Haru’s hips jerked once, then twice, and he was whimpering quietly, trying hard to press himself close to his Alpha who, lost in the beauty that was Haru coming undone against him, shattered. He growled as he came, eyes closing as his mind washed white with pleasure. When he
came to himself, he found himself half collapsed onto of Haru, who was boneless beneath him. He rolled off carefully, trying his best not to hurt Haru, before cuddling beside him, letting his finger run through the Omega’s damp hair.

When Haru opened his eyes, Makoto gave him a tired smile. “Hey.”

“Hey,” Haru’s breathing was settling down finally as he came off the his high. “That was… god, it was good. So good.”

Makoto couldn’t help the little self-satisfied smirk that crossed his face, Haru’s words stroking his ego just a little bit.

“Hey, don’t get a big head,” Haru frowned sleepily at him, but his snuggling into Makoto and the warmth and joy radiating throughout their bond belayed his words.

“Wouldn’t dream of it, Haru.” Makoto Just smiled and pulled Haru closer. “We should go clean up.”

“I wanna sleep,”

“Haru, we need to go clean up. Otherwise we’re going to hate ourselves in the morning. Plus, it’s just more sanitary.”

Haru just groaned and Makoto sighed. “Fine, but you asked for it.”

Haru’s eyes slid open as Makoto pulled away, sliding off the bed and turning to face him. “Where are you – hey!” He shouted as Makoto leaned down and, hooking Haru’s legs under one arm and wrapping the other around his torso, picked Haru up bridal style and carried him off to the bathroom. “No Fair,” he complained.

“If you clean up now, you get to take another bath,” he placated, setting Haru down outside the door. “You go ahead first, I’ll clean up once you’re done.” He leaned down and pressed a kiss to his cheek, then turned to go check to make sure the bed was clean, but he didn’t get far when Haru reached out to grab his wrist. “Haru?”

“There’s –” Haru paused, and Makoto was astonished to see that now, after everything they had done, his cheeks were bright red. There was a nervous tremor in his voice as he spoke. “There’s room in the shower for two… and the bath.”

Makoto stared, a little slow, before he finally caught on to what Haru was saying. Then it was his turn to blush, and he gaped momentarily as he tried to get his voice to work. Haru was just too cute, he stole Makoto’s breath away. It really wasn’t fair

However, he must have stared for too long, because The Omega began to fidget nervously. “Unless… you don’t want to… which is fine, I mean… I –” He shook his head, staring at the ground. “I’m just gonna go,” he muttered, turning to the bathroom before Makoto pulled him backwards into a hug.

“Like I’m going to say no to anything that keeps me near you.”

“Well, you could have just said so instead of staring at me like an idiot!”

“You were just so cute, Haru-chan, it knocked me speechless.”

“Drop the -chan,”
“Oh right. Sorry. I forgot that you really like being called by your full name, right Haruka?” When he said the name, he tried to drop his voice to mimic how he had sounded when he had called that name earlier. Makoto didn’t think he sounded very close, but a tremor ran through Haru’s body at the sound, so he thought he must have done something right, until Haru turned on him, cheeks blazing.

“Call me that outside of bed again, you go without sex for a month, got it?”

Makoto stilled under Haru’s gaze, a little scared to move. “Yes, sir.”

“Good.” He smiled and reached out, taking Makoto’s hand. “Come on. This stuff’s drying, and it’s getting itchy.” With another pull, they stepped into the bathroom, and Makoto pushed the door shut behind them.

Chapter End Notes

Ok, I posted this on my Tumblr, but I've been having some serious family problems for the last few weeks, and last week everything just kind of collapsed, so I ended up getting really behind on writing this chapter. I'm really, really sorry about this. I've mentioned this before, but this will be the last chapter for a few weeks. I'm working on trying to get the last few chapters mostly done, so I won't get so far behind again. On the plus side, I have the next chapter done, and I have the plot of the next few chapters. there will be seven more chapters and an epilogue, and these chapters will wrap up some of the remaining questions and plotlines I haven't laid to rest yet. If you're wanting to keep up with the progress I'm making while this story is on hiatus, I post pretty regularly on my Tumblr: psycho-dolphi. so if you're wanting to know about any changes as far as when the story will come back, that's where you can find the most recent information. As of this moment, I plan to start posting chapters again on December 9th.

As always, I'd like to thank my beta, Sarahsharpiemaker, who was really great about how late I got this chapter to her. She makes my life a million times less stressful! :) And thank you all for reading! I can never explain just how much it astounds me how much you all seem to like my story, and while i may get behind sometimes, you all are just so supportive. It makes me love every second I work on this story, and your kudos and comments help inspire me to keep working, so thank you all so much!!

I'll see you all in a few weeks with the next part of the story!!!
Doubts

Chapter Summary

A new arrival at the estate has Haru questioning everything he knows about Truemates

Chapter Notes

I'm Back!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Haru blinked slowly, feeling sleep fight to keep its hold on him. God, he hated mornings, always had. But the heat he felt beside him gave him an incentive to fight for consciousness, and after a few minutes, Haru found the strength to roll over on his stomach and raise himself up on his elbows.

The blanket had fallen off the golden figure next to him. He had no doubt tossed the blankets aside during the middle of the night, too warm since he was a practically a human shaped heater. Haru let his gaze trace his well-defined chest, following the contour of his body up his clavicle to set eyes on Makoto’s beautiful face.

Asleep, he looked like an angel. Actually, he looked like a freaking angel all the time, but the context of the situation often changed what kind of angel he was. Right now, he looked like a sweet and eternally beautiful one, nose twitching as though it itched, eyes fluttering rapidly as he dreamed. Haru wondered what this angel dreamt about, and selfishly hoped it was about him.

After all, Makoto Tachibana was all Haru dreamed about anymore, so it only seemed fair if the reverse was true too.

Haru settled his head back onto the pillow, content to simply admiring his Truemate, something he rarely got a chance to do. Makoto’s easily embarrassed nature made it impossible to admire the Alpha during the day, so Haru began living for these stolen moments.

He knew wasn’t the only one. On the rare occasions that he overslept, Haru would often wake to Makoto doing the same thing, those beautiful emerald eyes shining, as though watching Haru sleep was the most entertaining and engaging thing he’d ever seen. Sometimes, Haru would wake to him running his fingers through his hair, but stay perfectly still so Makoto would continue, though he was almost always called out for it. As much as he enjoyed having Makoto so completely in tune with him, it got quite irritating when he wanted to do something without Makoto knowing.

A startled breath from Makoto focused Haru, and he watched intently as Makoto began to awaken. His eyebrows pulled together tightly, before relaxing slowly, and one eyelid peeked open, a flash of green taking Haru’s breath away.

Catching Haru’s gaze, the eye slid shut again, and Haru observed in total rapture the way Makoto took a deep breath, stretching his back and chest, before groaning and relaxing slowly into the bed.
“Morning, Haru. Been up long?”

Haru shook his head, and Makoto chuckled, eyes still shut.

“Can’t see you yet, Haru. It’s too bright in here. Gonna need to hear your voice.”

This was another common thing in the morning, Makoto getting Haru to speak. Not that he needed it to understand Haru. This had puzzled Haru a bit the first couple of times he had done it, before finally he came to the conclusion that, while Makoto didn’t need to hear him to understand what his silences meant, he liked hearing Haru’s voice almost as much as Haru loved Makoto’s. The soft, gentle tenor voice, scratchy with sleep: it was Haru’s second favorite sound in the world, first being his Alpha’s laugh.

After Haru had realized this, he decided to make things interesting by making Makoto work for his voice. He pressed his lips together, hoping Makoto wouldn’t notice just how much he loved this part of the morning.

Makoto took the silence for what it was and opened his eyes, rolling onto his side and propping himself up. “Haru, you’re not gonna tease me this early, are you?” he pouted, but Haru watched a gleam appear in his still-sleepy eyes.

Haru remained silent.

Makoto sighed in fake defeat. “Fine, if you won’t cooperate,” a hand slid around Haru’s bare waist and, in a flash, Haru was on his back, Makoto looming over him, an arm on each side of his head keeping him hovering above Haru, so he wouldn’t crush the smaller boy. Not that Haru would have had a problem with that. Nothing felt better than Makoto’s body pressed against his. As it was, Makoto did lower himself, lining up his warm body along Haru’s, starting at the hips, which he rolled gently against Haru’s.

The feeling sent a wave of pleasure through Haru, a sharp jolt straight up his spine, and left him gasping. Makoto grinned and leaned in, his voice dropping lower and his eyes darkening from an electric green to something dark, lustful. Gone was the sweet cherub; hello fallen angel. “I’ll just have to beg for it, won’t I?”

He rolled his hips again, and Haru’s eyes rolled back. Makoto’s scent washed over him, leaving his head fuzzy, and he tried to press himself closer. Makoto kept him still, though, and all Haru could do was maneuver his head into the crook of Makoto’s neck, gasping in the hot scent.

This placed Makoto’s mouth right next to his ear, a fatal error he only realized when he heard the voice murmur “Please?” huskily in his ear. The sound forced a low, desperate groan from Haru.

Hips ground into him again, harder this time, and Makoto’s lips traced the shell of Haru’s ear.

“Please, Haruka?”

The use of his full name did it, and Haru found himself whimpering a volley of Makoto and please as his hips jutted up, trying to get the heat above him to grind again.

“Not enough, Haru ka.” The voice was sweet this time, placing emphasis on the last part of his name this time, and Haru gasped out, “Mako, please!”

Makoto chuckled, the sound affecting Haru just as much as any movement Makoto had made. “No, Haruka. I want you to answer the question I asked you: Have you been up long?” Teeth nipped the sensitive skin beneath his ear, Makoto’s tongue soothing the bite immediately after, and Haru
shivered as he felt Makoto’s hand trace down his chest, his stomach, before drawing circles along his hips.

“No,” was all Haru had time to gasp out before Makoto pulled away slightly. He caught sight of the sweet smile a split second before his lips crashed into Haru’s.

It was brief, Haru only able to get a taste of Makoto before he pulled away and pressed his forehead to Haru’s. “Good job, Haru. I love your voice,” he breathed.

Then his hand slipped beneath the band of his shorts.

Haru cried out, desperately bucking his hips into Makoto’s hand, and he felt heat pooling low within him. He felt Makoto push his shorts a little lower, freeing his member, then felt the heat of Makoto’s dick as it joined Haru’s in Makoto’s grasp. Makoto grunted, his first noise indicating how he was feeling, then groaned. “Haru, oh God, Haruka!”

The pace became erratic, Makoto moving faster, the touch leaving Haru whimpering quietly beneath him. He could feel Makoto getting close, the way his body tightening, the heavy gasps falling from his lip. Haru managed to excavate his hands from the blankets he was clutching and wound he arms around Makoto’s neck, pulling him in for another kiss, bringing their bodies closer, while the other reached between them, circling the tips of their cocks with teasing, gentle touches, and finally Makoto shuddered above him, Haru’s name falling from his lips like a prayer. Haru felt the large body shake above him, the wet heat between them as Makoto pressed as close as he could to Haru’s body, and felt his own release overtake him as he cried out Makoto’s name.

Makoto held him tight as the climax washed over Haru, carefully shifting so that he was on his side and pulled Haru close as he began to catch his breath. Haru pushed into the heat of Makoto’s chest, burying his face as he caught his breath.

“You cheated,” he muttered finally.

Makoto laughed, and the warmth that filled Haru at the sound felt almost as good as the fuzzy, floating feeling dazing his mind.

“Sorry, Haru, but you were just so cute!”

Haru grumbled at this, and Makoto laughed again, groaning as he rolled out of bed. “C’mon, Haru. We should clean up. The guy from the Australia estate shows up today.”

Haru glared at the hand held out to him before burying his face back into the pillows. “No.”

“Haru!”

“No.”

“We can take a bath together.”

Haru peeked up, then frowned to see Makoto smiling at his reaction.

“You keep cheating,” he accused again.

Makoto chuckled, pulling back the blankets. “Maybe I do, but the way you bewitch me, I need all the advantages I can get.”
“It’s about time you two got up!” Nagisa chirped as Haru and Makoto made their way into the dining room. “I know you two are like mystical soul mates or whatever, but it still seems kinda unfair that you guys get to stay in Haru’s room and screw like bunnies without bonding!”

Haru took the words in turn, not bothering to correct the fact that they had not technically had sex yet (though they had jerked each other off in the bath, which had turned what was supposed to be a quick clean-up into a very lengthy soak… not that Haru had a problem with that). Makoto, on the other hand, went red, spluttering uselessly. It almost made Haru laugh. He could pull off the dominant Alpha stuff when they were alone in bed, but Makoto was still a ridiculously adorable small-town boy.

“Nagisa, don’t be rude. Their private life is their own business, not yours.” Rei chided, not looking up from the egg he was meticulously cutting into.

“Come on, Rei-chan! Don’t tell me you’re not curious. After all, you’re the one who wanted to ask them about – ”

“Nagisa!” Rei finally tore his eyes away from his plate, face going pink.

“Nagisa, you shouldn’t tease him,” Rin said, not looking up from the newspaper in his hand, one hand holding a mug. “You two haven’t bonded yet, so he could still change his mind.”

“Rin, don’t say that.” Sousuke muttered next to him, catching sight of the uncertain and worried look in Nagisa’s eyes, as well as the panicked expression on Rei’s face.

“Rei, you wouldn’t do that, right? You know I’m just playing with you, right?”

“Of course, I do, Nagisa. Please don’t –” but Nagisa wasn’t listening, and the room filled with the Omega’s stressed scent as he lost himself in his mind. Rei made a quiet noise, and he pulled Nagisa aside, whispering to him quietly. Haru watched as his young friend began to look more and more worried. Nagisa hissed unintelligibly, and Rei groaned, his voice growing louder as he said “Nagisa, I – ”

The dining room door opening cut off Rei, and everyone turned to look at the door, except Nagisa and Rei, who continued their argument in quiet tones.

Amakata flung the door open, smiling at the room of people. “Good, you’re all up. I’d like you to meet the newest member of the household.” She grinned and stepped to the side, and the room hushed, except for Nagisa’s quiet gasps, as a boy walked in.

He was tall, almost as tall as Makoto, and only a few inches taller than Haru himself. His eyes were a bright lavender, his hair cotton candy pink. A familiar smell wafted through the room that set every Alpha in the room on edge, albeit unconsciously. Omega.

“This is Kisumi Shigino, an Omega from the Estate in Australia.” Amakata offered up, and the pink boy grinned.

“Hey! Nice to meet ya!” He reached back to rub the back of his head, eyes surveying the room slowly, resting on each face one at a time. His eyes meet Haru’s for a moment, and a feeling of unease settled over him. Haru watched as something sparked in Kisumi’s eyes as well, before letting his eyes drift on…

To rest on Makoto.

To Haru’s complete displeasure, he could practically feel the excitement radiating from the cotton
candy boy as he eyeballed Makoto. Haru frowned and pressed closer to Makoto, who jumped at the sudden, unprompted contact.

Amakata didn’t notice the exchange, quickly going around the room to introduce Kisumi to everyone. “This is Rin. He has a sister, Gou, but she’s visiting your estate.”

Kisumi grinned at Rin and raised a hand in greeting. “Ai told me to tell you hi, and that he’s totally coming to the bonding ceremony.”

Rin’s eyes lit up in delight, and he grinned at his Alpha. “I was wondering why that idiot hadn’t replied to the invitation yet. I was seriously worried that he wasn’t gonna come!”

Sousuke smiled gently at the ecstatic Omega. “We’ll chew him out for making us wait when we see him.”

Amakata smiled at the two boys, then turned her attention back to introductions. She went around the rest of the table before settling on Haru and Makoto.

“And this is Haruka and Makoto, our resident Truemates.”

“Truemates, huh?” Kisumi turned his gaze back to Haru and Makoto, eyes looking almost mischievous. ‘You didn’t explain that one very well, Amakata. Isn’t that like soulmates or something silly like that?’ Makoto flushed and Haru felt a wave of rage wash over him. But before he could say anything to rebuke the newcomer, Nagisa was already speaking, finally turning away from where he was still talking to Rei.

“It’s not silly, It’s beautiful!” Nagisa voice cracked with unshed tears. “Those two are the only ones whose future is sure. They’re made for each other, and no matter what they won’t leave each other.”

“Nagisa,” Rei tried to reassure him, placing a hand on Nagisa’s shoulder, but he shook it off and bolted from the room, pushing past Kisumi and a shocked Amakata.

“Did I miss something?” She cast a warning glance at Rei, who sighed.

“Just a misunderstanding,” he mumbled, chasing after his Omega.

Amakata stared after them, before turning to the rest of the room and saying, “It’s a little early, but how about lunch?”

Everyone in the room nodded except Haru, who was trying keeping an eye on Kisumi without being conspicuous. He took his regular seat, and Makoto followed, sitting beside Haru just as he always did. Haru fought to keep the satisfied smile off his face.

His smile slipped to a frown of distaste as Kisumi sat on Makoto’s other side and began immediately chatting up the Alpha. Haru watched all through lunch as Kisumi and Makoto spoke animatedly to each other. It all seemed rather innocent, but Haru noticed the way the pink haired boy would lean in just a little closer than necessary to Makoto, with a casual touch on the shoulder or an arm that lingered. Haru became incredibly uncomfortable with how Makoto seemed to just take it in stride.

Haru knew he was being ridiculous. Kisumi didn’t matter. Makoto was his, and he belonged to Makoto, so what was the point in worrying about some newbie Omega having a crush on Makoto? Haru trusted Makoto, so there shouldn’t be any problem. We’re Truemates, he thought, Nagisa’s words from before ringing in his mind. We’re made for each other.

As he continued to watch the comfortable way Makoto spoke to Kisumi, something in him froze. It
wasn’t like they knew all that much about Truemates; he and Makoto were the first ones that anyone alive could remember. All the information they had to go on were the hormone matchups that Goro had told them about and old stories that Amakata had managed to hunt down. They knew practically nothing about Truemates.

By the time lunch was over, Makoto and Kisumi were acting as though they had been the best of friends for years, and Haru was beginning to feel sick.

“So, Makoto, you think you and Haru can show me around a bit today?”

“Huh? But didn’t Amakata do that?”

“Yeah, but it was really quick. This house is so huge, what if I get lost at night and wander into your bedroom?” The comment set Haru on edge, and he glared at Kisumi, suddenly deciding to invest in a deadbolt for his and Makoto’s door.

“I doubt that will happen.” Makoto laughed, not seeming to notice Kisumi’s rather blatant flirting, which irritated Haru even more. Why did he have to be so naive sometimes? Kisumi might as well have been wearing a neon sign with “insert dick here!” written on it, but Makoto didn’t even seem to notice. “Besides, Haru and I had plans to go swimming today.”

“Swimming? Oh yeah, Amakata mentioned that you built him a pool or something like that. Pretty extreme, if you ask me, but what do I know.” Kisumi shrugged, every word grinding on Haru’s nerves. “Maybe it’s some Truemate thing.”

This time, even Makoto look put off by his tone. Haru almost hoped that Makoto would put the boy in his place, but no, there was no way that would happen. The only times Haru had ever seen Makoto lose his temper was when they were first testing whether they were Truemates and during that awful trip to Tokyo a few months back. Haru shivered, remembering the way the blinding rage had radiated off his usually gentle and mild-tempered mate. Anger was not a fit emotion for Makoto, and while he wanted Kisumi to back off, he was pleased to see that Makoto took the tone in stride and gave Kisumi a kind (but slightly pitying) smile.

“Maybe.”

“Well, that doesn’t matter. I like to swim, so can I go with you?”

“Uh, well – I mean, I guess you could, if Haru – ”

Haru stood instantly, panic whirling in his stomach. “It’s fine. You two go. I need to talk to Amakata.”

“Huh? Haru, you sure? Want me to – ”

“It’s fine. I’ll see you later.”

Makoto stood, seemingly about to follow after Haru, but he was gone, hurrying out of the dining room. His head was a mess. Kisumi in his pool. Kisumi hanging all over Makoto. Nagisa’s words “They’re Truemates”. Kisumi’s blatant disinterest in the weight that title carried, the promises the word entailed.

As he hurried towards Amakata’s office, he realized that this was how things would be. Up until this point, everyone in the house knew how important the Truemates bond was. They had watched, seen what had happened when they were separated, watched as Makoto defended Haru, witnessed the way Haru’s touch had instantly soothed Makoto’s emotions.
But Kisumi didn’t know. Haru’s parents didn’t know. The rest of the world didn’t know. If he was being honest, did he really know for sure that he and Makoto were inseparable? Despite the fact that Truemates were made to be together, maybe there was something or someone out there that could take Makoto from his side.

Just the thought made Haru’s insides feel like ash.

“Haruka?” Amakata looked completely baffled and concerned as she stared at Haru. He didn’t blame her. Halfway to her office, the thoughts and panic swirling inside him made him feel sick to his stomach. He had to rush to his bathroom to be sick. No doubt he was pale and his eyes were probably watery from heaving. “You look terrible!”

Yeah, he already knew that.

“I need to ask you,” he paused, wincing as his stomach clenched, threatening to bring up more bile. After all, that was all that could possibly be left in his stomach. “Do Truemates have to be together?”

Amakata’s eyes widened, and she set aside the book in her hands, gesturing for Haru to sit. “What brought this on?”

“ Doesn’t matter. I just need to know.”

The older Alpha sighed and shook her head. “Well, technically, Truemates are meant to be together. They pull off each other’s strength, support each other’s weaknesses. They balance each other perfectly, just a little better and more intensely than most Mates. However, all Alphas and Omegas are, first and foremost, human. Thus, human error must be taken into account. We don’t know if Truemates are rare, or if there’s one for everyone and you two are just the first ones in a long time to find each other. Either way, there is obviously a large amount of blind luck involved in Truemates finding each other. For instance, if my associate in Iwatobi hadn’t listened to me when I told him and his staff about Alphas and Omegas, and if he hadn’t noticed the signs, it’s quite possible that Makoto might have slipped under the radar, written off as a horny teenager.”

“But what about now?” Haru pressed. “Is there any way Ma– either of us could decide that we don’t want to be with the other?”

Amakata frowned, thinking for a moment. “Technically, I suppose it could be possible. When your separated, Makoto’s symptoms could easily be controlled through medication. He just becomes more irritable and angry, and since we managed to find a way to stabilize your condition when Makoto has to leave, you might always be a little weak, but you should physically be able to stand it.”

Her words punched straight through Haru, leaving him feeling hollow inside. Makoto could leave him.

“But what about now?” Haru pressed. “Is there any way Ma– either of us could decide that we don’t want to be with the other?”

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“On the other hand, neither of you would ever be completely satisfied ever again, even with another partner. Makoto might do better than you. Alphas feel both the physical pleasure, as well as the pleasure gained from pleasing an Omega, but the first is actually most important to satisfy an Alpha. You wouldn’t fair quite as well. Even between mates of regular Alphas and Omegas, bonded Omegas need their Mates to be completely happy. Unbound Omegas are okay with several partners, though they’ll never be as satisfied as bonded ones, not to mention how dangerous it can be to mate with someone unbonded. The risk of accidental bonding in heat of the moment is pretty high. However, with you, it’s hard to tell. Most likely, you will have problems ever being satisfied, and
Your heats would be, to put it bluntly, a living hell.” She paused, turning her serious gaze to Haru. “As with everything when it comes to Alphas and Omegas, it’s important to remember that we’re human first. We have free will when it comes to what we want and how we live our lives.”

So, he could leave. Kisumi, or really, just about anyone, could come along and Makoto could easily give his heart to someone else. Oddly enough, out of everything Amakata had said, the part about Makoto being able to live a satisfied and happy life was actually a bit of a comfort. While he didn’t want Makoto to leave him, if being with Haru didn’t make him happy, at least he could find happiness somewhere else. It would hurt, but if Makoto was healthy and happy, Haru didn’t really care what happened to himself. Even if it meant he got left to the wayside, Makoto’s happiness was most important.

“Not that I really think you need to worry about that, Haruka.”

The words brought him out of his thoughts, though he was still seeing images of Makoto smiling gently, apologizing as he rode off with Kisumi on a white horse, the cotton candy boy turning back to stick his tongue out at Haru.

“Why not?” He flinched again, his stomach getting worse with every moment. He hoped Amakata had a trashcan nearby that he could lurch for if need be.

“Because – ”

“HARU!” They went silent as the cry echoed outside the door, and Makoto barged into the room suddenly, his emerald eyes panicky and worried. “Are you okay?”

“Makoto?” How had Makoto known where he was? Haru thought back, blinking as he remembered mentioning something about seeing Amakata before storming out of the dining room.

He took a moment to examine Makoto, noticing that he was not wearing his swimsuit, and was still in the outfit Haru had picked out for him earlier that morning after their bath. A pair of dark denim jeans that accentuated just how long his legs were, and a pale blue button up, white undershirt poking out the bottom. It looked good on him.

“It felt like you were in pain.” He was bouncing on the balls of his feet, as though he wanted rush to Haru’s side, but was unsure if his presence would be welcome. “And it felt like you were stressed out, and I went looking for you, and Nagisa said that he saw you sprinting into the bathroom. You’re okay, right? If you’re sick, we need to get you into bed. Maybe I can make you some soup– ”

“NO!” Amakata and Haru spoke at the same time, both envisioning the first time Makoto had tried to cook in the house. He had almost burnt down the house trying to make rice. When Haru had tried to teach him to cook, the meat turned out so salty that even the wild cats outside wouldn’t touch it. Makoto in the kitchen was nothing less than a recipe for disaster.

Amakata cleared her throat and stood, eyeing Haru. “However, Makoto is right. You look terrible, Haruka, and could obviously use some rest. Makoto, escort him to your room. I’ll have dinner sent up for you two.” She paused for a moment before saying, “And Haruka? Don’t worry about our discussion earlier. I promise you, despite what I may have said, I think everything will be okay.”

Haru nodded, still uncertain. Makoto glanced between them, confused, before finally choosing to focus on Haru. “C’mon, Haru-chan, let’s get you to bed.”

Another pain hit him sharply as Makoto helped him to his feet, so his reply of “Drop the –chan” came out a little weaker than he wanted it to.
An hour later, Haru was freshly bathed and in bed, a cup of water on the bedside table, Makoto holding him gently and stroking his hair. The motion was comforting, enough that Haru almost forgot about the worries that had brought on this sudden wave of nausea.

Almost, but not quite.

“Hey, Haru?”

“Hmm?”

“What were you and Amakata talking about?” His voice was tight, concern laced in the usually calming tone.

“Nothing.”

“Haru!” The stroking stopped for a moment, but the continued, strong fingers threading in Haru’s hair. “You’re worried, but you shouldn’t be. You can rely on me more, if you want. I hate seeing you like this.”

The words weren’t worried or panicked. They were reassuring. Calming. Suddenly, Haru felt ridiculous. Why was he worried? Why did he doubt Makoto, the one person who had never done anything to hurt him or push him away? The one person who pulled him closer, but still let him breathe.

He looked at Makoto, whose gaze was calming and relaxed, except for a small furrow in his brow that told Haru he was worried. He wondered if maybe it wasn’t Makoto he doubted. After all, he couldn’t imagine Makoto purposefully doing something to hurt him. Maybe it was himself, his ability to give Makoto everything he deserved, that he doubted. That was just as stupid. Makoto deserved the world on a silver platter, and Haru knew that if Makoto asked, he would move heaven and earth to make sure the Alpha had everything he asked for and more. Doubting their relationship was completely stupid, and Haru knew it. Yet he wasn’t sure if he could say he would never doubt again. All he could do was hope Makoto was strong enough for both of them when Haru couldn’t help but doubt himself. All he could do was keep Makoto from doubting just how much he was needed.

“I do rely on you, stupid.” He mumbled, feeling the heat of Makoto’s body next to his and smiling. He turned carefully, notice the grumble of his stomach as he did, before pressing closer and burying his face in Makoto’s firm chest. Makoto stiffened in shock, before relaxing around Haru and pulling him closer. Haru felt Makoto’s lips press against his hair comfortingly. “I always need you,”

They lay there quietly for what could have been minutes, hours, maybe days. The time didn’t matter; they were safe in each other’s arms.

Chapter End Notes

Hello everyone! Sorry for the delay with this chapter. I had almost everything written and planned out, but i started running into some problems with the story. Mainly, in the original versions of the next few chapters, Kisumi was a massive dick. He was just so bad and purposefully malevolent that i started to feel pretty guilty. I’ve never been the biggest fan of Kisumi, but he was so bad in that i just had to go back and rewrite
everything so that he was a little less OC and less outright evil. The way things are going now, he's just a bit irritating and has a tendency to push things just a little too far.

Anyways, I've only got five more chapters left, and they're going to be tying up a lot of lose threads, and it's going to deal a lot with Haru trying to get a handle on where he stands when his life starts changing around him. It's not going to be necessarily pleasant since we all know how well Haru handles change.

Well, that's all i've got to say. thank you all for your patience with me, Thank you so much to my fantastic Beta SarahSarpieMarker, and I'll be back next week with the next chapter!
Chapter Summary

Haru struggles with his anxiety over Kisumi, Nagisa frets over his and Rei’s future together, and Rin makes a surprising announcement.

Chapter Notes

WARNING!!!!

Haru suffers from a pretty serious anxiety attack and some really negative thoughts.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Haru knew it wouldn’t be easy to put aside his worries, but as he watched Makoto and Kisumi interacting, he realized how difficult it really was. He sat on Kisumi’s bed, Makoto and Kisumi sitting shoulder-to-shoulder on floor beneath him. They argued good-naturedly with each other while playing on the gaming system Kisumi had brought with him.

Makoto had sworn that Haru wouldn’t be a third wheel while they hung out with Kisumi. His Alpha was certainly making an attempt to keep that promise, but anytime he wanted to lean back to talk to Haru, or asked if Haru wanted a turn, Kisumi would find some excuse to keep the attention on himself. The first few times, he pleaded with Makoto for “Just one more round! I won’t stop until I beat you,” but even Haru, who quite frankly knew very little about video games, was positive that Kisumi was throwing the matches on purpose. When it seemed that Makoto was finally catching on to the ruse, Kisumi finally won, and claimed that Makoto had to keep playing with him.

“I’ll lose momentum if we stop playing now, and if I do that I’ll never get good at this!”

Haru had tried to be patient, had tried not to see this for what it was. Makoto was clearly blind to it. It was all just a reason for Kisumi to spend as much time with Makoto as possible. He had promised himself that he wouldn’t get in the way of Makoto or make him stop being friends with Kisumi, but ignoring the other omega’s obvious flirting was just too difficult. Haru spent most of his time glaring holes in the back of the pink haired Omega’s head to try and deal with his anger.

Occasionally, Kisumi would turn around, usually with a devilish smirk or a wink in response to Haru’s gaze, which only ticked him off more. He wondered why Makoto hadn’t commented on the irritation Haru was sure was radiating from him. Was he too distracted to notice the emotions through their bond? Or did he notice, but just not care? No, Makoto would care; of course he would care.

But what if he cared more about keeping Kisumi happy, about keeping his new friend?
Haru shook his head, reaching for his phone beside him to distract himself. Those thoughts were becoming more and more frequent, and he hated them. Why did he doubt Makoto? Why did he doubt himself?

‘You were the first Omega Makoto ever met. The first to show him attention. Of course he’d get sick of you.’ These were the ever present and obnoxious thoughts that repeated themselves in his head. Haru wished that he had some headphones so he could try and ignore the seed of doubt that was growing inside him, but instead, he was offered another salvation when his phone pinged. It was a message from Rin. He opened up his messaging app quickly, praying that whatever Rin had to say would offer him an escape from Kisumi’s room.

‘Nagisa’s freaking out. Won’t talk until you’re here. In the dining room,’ it read. His phone pinged again, another message from Rin. ‘Hurry up.’

Short, sweet, to the point and most importantly, a way out. Haru had never been more grateful for Rin and Nagisa. He climbed off the bed and made his way to the door.

“Haru, are you okay?” He paused at Makoto’s voice and turned back to face him. The emerald eyes were fixed worriedly on him, his character on screen getting the crap beaten out of it by Kisumi’s.

Haru nodded. “Rin and Nagisa want to talk to me. I’ll be back soon.”

“Okay… do you want me to co—“

“Mako! You’re about to die!” Makoto jumped at Kisumi’s voice, and Haru almost growled at the nickname. When had Kisumi started say that? Makoto turned back to the TV, muttering an apology to Kisumi, and Haru just watched as he was forgotten about. Again.

Nausea pulled at his stomach as he slipped out of the room and down the stairs toward the dinning room. Kisumi’s room was right next to the stairs, a terrifyingly short three-door distance from where Makoto and Haru spent every night. It was closer than Haru liked. Why couldn’t they have stuck Kisumi in the attic or something? It wasn’t like he would be here for long; the exchange program only lasted three weeks. After that, Gou would be back, safe in the estate, and Kisumi would go back to being far away and not his problem. Maybe then, with the immediate threat gone, Haru could try to work out the distressing feelings that assaulted him everyday.

He pushed his way into the dinning room, and found Rin in one of the several chairs with his phone in hand, and Nagisa perched on top of the table beside him. Both glanced up at his entrance, Rin smiling, while Nagisa just looked tired.

“Yo, Haru, we were all just talking about you.”

“All?”

“Hey Haru!” a voice piped up from the phone, and Haru couldn’t help the smile on his face as he heard Gou’s greeting. It had been strangely peaceful this last week without the girl there, babbling about bonding ceremonies and flowers non-stop, but Haru still missed her. It was hard not to miss someone who you spent so much time around.

“Hi, Gou.” Haru said, popping his head into frame so that Gou could see him.

“We were just talking about how you’re going to be Rin’s Protector at the ceremony, since Amakata’s presiding over everything.” Haru wanted to groan.

Why they had to go through all of this extra stuff for Alphas and Omegas, he wasn’t sure. In essence,
the bonding ceremony was just like any regular wedding. All that changed was some of the words that were said, the titles people were given, and at the end of the ceremony, the Alpha and the Omega would have to drink the bonding serum. Other than that, it was like any other wedding. There would be rings exchanged like normal, and a kiss at the end. Haru’s role was, essentially, to give Rin away at the beginning of the ceremony. There would be a party afterwards, and then the Alpha and Omega went on a Honeymoon, where the real bonding would happen.

Okay, so that last bit was nothing like a regular wedding. In all honesty, it was the most important part. After they took the serum, their bodies would adjust to the medicine, and then the bonding bite happened, usually during sex. Haru didn’t have a lot of experience with traditional weddings, but he was pretty sure that biting your partner until they bled and had a permanent mark on them wasn’t something regular people did.

“Haru?” Gou’s voice was a little worried now. “You didn’t forget that you would have to do that, did you? You did look over that pamphlet I left for you, right?”

“Gou, if his pamphlet is anything like the one you left me, then it’s not a pamphlet. It’s a freaking novel.”

“His is a little shorter!” Gou’s voice was shrill and defending over the phone. “It’s only ten pages.”

Rin groaned at his little sister, shaking his head. “We will discuss this later, Gou. But for now, I gotta go, okay?”

“Okay. ‘Bye Haru. Nagisa, it will all work out, alright?”

Nagisa nodded, eyes dead as he stared at his feet. “Yeah, ‘bye.”

Rin hit the end call button and groaned as he tossed his phone aside. “That girl is gonna kill me.”

“I don’t even want to think about it.” His phone buzzed, the noise loud as the vibrations made it bounce on the table, and Rin’s hand snapped out grab it. He read the message, and grinned, “Awesome!”

“What? Did Gou change her mind and decide that all of us should do the ceremony in our pajamas?”

Naigsa’s voice was just as dead as his eyes, but he tried to crack a joke. Haru grimaced as the Omega raised his head; his usually sparkingly pink eyes a shell of what they usually were.

“Nah, but I’ll explain later. It’s good news.” Rin tapped out a message, then set the phone aside, turning his attention to the blond. “So, what exactly is going on with you?”

Nagisa remained quiet, and Haru tensed as the scent of the Omega’s stress permeate the room. It was overwhelming, almost fearful. What the hell was going on?

“I don’t think Rei wants to be with me.”

The quiet declaration was met with total silence as Haru and Rin processed his words. And then Rin spoke up. “Well, that’s the biggest load of bullshit I’ve ever heard.”

“No, it’s not. Rei—”

“No. Don’t even bother saying that again. I don’t even know where you got this idea. Have you seen the way he looks at you?” Rin shook his head. “I’ve never seen anyone moon over another person
more than he does for you. Well, maybe Haru over Makoto, but that doesn’t count.”

“Why do you think he doesn’t want to be with you?” Haru asked.

“It’s just… he doesn’t like talking about the future. Our future. I talk about having a family, and he tells me it’s too soon to even think about that. I talk about bonding, and he freaks out. I’ve asked him why he doesn’t want to talk about that stuff, and he just gets upset and won’t answer me.” Nagisa threw up his hands in frustration. “I tried talking to him last night, and he just told me not to worry about it, that we had plenty of time to think about the future. We’ve been together almost three years! Shouldn’t we be able to talk about this stuff?”

Haru frowned staring at the ground. That was pretty weird. Rin was right, of course. The idea of Rei not wanting to be with Nagisa was completely ridiculous. You didn’t need to spend more than five minutes around the Alpha to know just how completely devoted he was to Nagisa. But why wouldn’t he want to talk about bonding? It didn’t really make any sense.

There was a quiet thud that made him look up, glancing towards the door, but Nagisa and Rin didn’t seem to notice.

“I’m worried… you say that he’s always mooning over me.” Nagisa whispered, eyes watery as he stared at Rin. “He…. When we’re alone, he used call me his hero, and he told me that I’m the only thing that saved him when he moved here. What if…” Nagisa took a deep breath and seemed almost reluctant to release it, as though he didn’t really want to consider, but the thought was there, and it wasn’t going away. Haru knew how he felt. “What if that’s all he sees me as?”

“What? Like, a guardian angel or something?” Rin scoffed.

“Yeah, maybe. Or… I don’t know.” The blond sighed. “But I don’t want that. All I did was support him. He’s the one who helped himself. I just want him to see me for me, not as something like his salvation.”

“Nagisa,” Rin’s phone buzzed loudly, and Rin snagged it as he kept talking. “Honestly, you just need to sit down and talk about this with him.”

“But I’ve tried! He won’t say a thing. He just keeps telling me I don’t need to worry.”

“Well, tell him that’s not good enough. Tell him that you need to understand exactly where you two are going. Honestly, you should have done this a while ago. How have you two not talk about the future at all in three years? Sou and I were talking about it a year into our relationship.” Rin wasn’t looking up anymore, and was texting rapidly. Haru kicked the leg of his chair, and Rin jumped. “What?”

“Maybe you could pay attention if you’re going to give advice? And Rei and Nagisa aren’t you and Sousuke. Not everyone does things they way you two do, talking about the future at every turn.”

Rin grumbled, setting his phone aside, but Haru saw his thumb press the send button before the phone went dark. “Okay fine, so you don’t have to do things the way we did. But your future is something that you two should have discussed, especially in your situation. You two are both studying high school classes, right?” Nagisa nodded. “Well, what about after? How are you guys going to get out of here? Are you going to accept the benefits offered to you guys? That’s the only reason Sou and I are doing the ceremony, why Momo and Ai are doing it. We’re going to be together, but if we bond, then we get the benefits. You two need to figure out where you’re going.”

Nagisa whimpered, and Haru, despite himself, wanted to wrap a comforting arm around his friend.
He didn’t, but he did glare at Rin, irritated that, once again, what was supposed to be advice from Rin seemed to turn into a “my relationships are a gift from God to show people how they should live their lives.” Haru was sure he didn’t mean to come off that way, but it was still irritating.

“I could ask him to talk to you and explain things,” Haru offered. “Maybe if he hears it from someone else, he realize that he needs to talk to you.”

“But if anyone should be able to get him to talk to me, shouldn’t it be me?”

“Yeah, but sometimes people are stupid, and they need to hear it from someone else.”

Nagisa shook his head. “No, thanks though, Haru-chan. I’ll try again. But… I’m going to give him a choice. He either needs to talk to me, or…” Nagisa, who had been holding himself together fairly well up to this point, choked, and Haru’s heart broke as a single tear rolled down his cheek. “Or we’ll have to end things. We can’t move forward until he decides to talk to me.”

There was another thump, louder this time, and the other two Omegas heard it. They all glanced up towards the door, and Haru took step forward to open it, but it was unneeded. The door to the hallway burst open, and Rei barged in, freezing for a moment when he caught sight of the tears in Nagisa’s eyes. He strode forward and placed his hands on Nagisa’s shoulders and pulled him close. Nagisa struggled, but Rei held fast.

“Rei, let go– ”

“No. I won’t. I won’t let go, Nagisa. I’ve been an idiot, and all I can do is hold on to you and beg you to forgive me.”

Haru stepped forward, ready to pull Rei away. He didn’t think Rei would ever purposely hurt Nagisa, but if his claim on his Omega was threatened, Haru wasn’t sure what his instincts would drive him to do. He stopped himself when Nagisa began to cling to Rei, and he saw the Alpha’s body shaking, not with anger or from having his claim threatened, but his quiet, gasping sobs. Nagisa was crying too, though it was quieter. It seemed like a private moment between the two, one he was intruding on, and he traded glances with Rin, who seemed equally shocked and uncomfortable.

Finally, Rei pulled away, eyes red with unshed tears. His voice cracked as he spoke. “I thought I was doing right, Nagisa, I really did. And I didn’t mean to eavesdrop, but I was coming to find you, and when I heard what you were talking about… I couldn’t not listen.”

“How much?” Nagisa whispered.

“I started listening around the time you were talking about… how you believe I see you.” His voice was apologetic. “If I thought of you only as my salvation. You are partly right.” Nagisa let out a quiet, pained cry, but Rei was shaking his head, trying to get the Omega to pause. “Only partly. Yes, when I look at you, I do occasionally see the boy who helped to save me, and you did save me Nagisa. You gave me something to fight for, and you made me look at myself in a new light, but that is not all you are to me. You’re the one I wake up thinking about every day, the one who brings me peace while also lighting up my life in such a dazzling way that I can barely stand it. You drive me insane and sometimes push me to my very limits, but at the end of the day, you’re the only one I want by my side, and I fall asleep to thoughts of you, wondering about what I did to possibly deserve you.”

“Deserve me?”

Rei nodded. “I… I want to give you a future, a life you deserve. I want to be able to give you a life
where you never need or long for anything. I want to give us a life where we can raise our family.”

“What I deserve?” Nagisa’s voice was astonished as he pulled away, taking a step away. Rei’s eyes lit up hopefully, clearly thinking Nagisa was coming along to his line of thinking. He nodded excitedly.

“I can get a job and save money while I go to college. Once I graduate and get a good job, we can bond and leave. We can even start our own fami–OW!” He yelped as Nagisa smacked his arm hard, trembling not with tears this time, but anger.

“That’s not for you to decide!” He shouted, and Rei flinched back. “Our future isn’t yours to decide alone, and it is not for you to decide what I deserve. That’s for us to decide. Together. That’s why I’ve been trying to talk to you!”

“But I – ”

“No buts! You want to go to college, get a good job, that’s great. But don’t make plans that include me without me.”

The room was silent as Rei stared in horror. “I– I didn’t think. I just… I’m sorry.”

Nagisa sighed and shook his head, but he reached out to take Rei’s hand in his own. “You’re forgiven. But let’s work on this, okay? ‘Cause I want all of that. I really do. But only if we can work through it together.”

Rei nodded and moved to hug Nagisa, a silent agreement, but the moment was ruined as Rin phone buzzed loudly against the table, and the couple jumped apart, clearly having forgotten that they had an audience. Rin lunged for the phone, cursing as he tried to quiet it, and found himself glancing away, trying not to make it obvious that he had been staring the entire time.

“Nagisa, maybe we could go… somewhere else?”

Nagisa nodded and pulled away, walking over to hug Haru, and then Rin. “Thank you both.”

“I’m glad this is working out for you,” Rin hugged him back with one arm, but Haru watched his free hand tapping rapidly on the phone in his hand, making Haru’s eyes roll. Nagisa pulled away and with a still watery smile, he took Rei’s hand, and they strode out of the room.

The Omegas watched the couple leave, Rin smiling, while Haru frowned as he felt the beginning twists of Makoto’s worry in his gut. It was something that he had been feeling from Makoto more and more in the last week. When Haru had asked if anything was wrong, Makoto had just smiled and told him it was nothing, even as he could clearly feel the tremulous emotions coursing through them both.

“I’m glad they’re working things out,” Rin’s voice jolted Haru out of his worries. “Thank god Sou and I are past that whole stage. We’ve got it all figured out.”

“Oh yeah, no secrets or anything between you two,” Haru replied dryly.

“No, I wouldn’t say that. We’ve got secrets. Everyone has secrets. For instance, if Sousuke were to ask me about your life before the Estate, like the details and stuff, I wouldn’t tell him, ‘cause you asked me not to talk about it. And I’m sure Sousuke has secrets, some important ones… and some that are not so important. Some that he should probably tell me, or someone who knows that secret should tell me…” Rin’s voice trailed off, but his eyes were sharp as he leaned forward and stared Haru down, who met his gaze coolly.
“What are you talking about?”

“He still won’t tell me what you did to break his heart.”

“No.”

“Come on, Haru!” He whined, collapsing back in his chair. “What’s he ever done for you to earn this? I’m the one who doesn’t tell him any of your secrets!”

“Like he gives a shit about my secrets or my past.”

“Of course he – ”

“Only where it pertains to you. But it’s not for me to say,” Haru chewed his lip, considering his words, before shrugging. “Besides, you’re an idiot for not figuring it out already.”

“You ass!” Rin hissed as the door opened, and Makoto and Kisumi stepped in, the pink haired boy babbling contentedly, while Makoto just nodded, his eyes darting around the room until came across Haru.

“There you are, Haru!” Kisumi said before Makoto could say anything. “Where did you run off to?”

Haru cocked an eyebrow and glanced around the room. Wasn’t that obvious? Kisumi just laughed.

“Oh right, stupid question.”

Makoto stepped away from Kisumi towards Haru. “Haru, is everything… are you okay?”

Haru nodded, stubbornly not meeting his Truemates searching eyes, and tried his best not to react to the uncertainty he felt from him. He couldn’t tell Makoto about his misgivings, no matter how upset it made him. He wouldn’t keep Makoto from making friends, no matter how he felt about them.

Makoto frowned, eyes narrowing. “Haru, maybe we should – ” Whatever Makoto was going to say was silenced by a knock on the door, and Sousuke and Amakata poked their heads in.

“Good, Makoto you’re here. We need your help with something.”

“But – ” Makoto protested, but Rin nudged him forward, a grin on his face.

“You’d better go. It sounds important!”

Makoto sputtered uselessly, but finally nodded and left the room, leaving the Omegas alone. A heavy silence fell across the room, Kisumi smiling happily at Haru, while Haru just glared. Finally, Rin cleared his throat. “So, Kisumi, you having fun here so far?”

“Yeah, it’s been great! Makoto and Haru have just been really welcoming.”

“But – ” Makoto protested, but Rin nudged him forward, a grin on his face.

“You’d better go. It sounds important!”

Makoto sputtered uselessly, but finally nodded and left the room, leaving the Omegas alone. A heavy silence fell across the room, Kisumi smiling happily at Haru, while Haru just glared. Finally, Rin cleared his throat. “So, Kisumi, you having fun here so far?”

“Yeah, it’s been great! Makoto and Haru have just been really welcoming.”

“Really?” Rin cast a sidelong glance at Haru, who was still glaring mutely. “If you say so.”

“Yeah, they’ve been awesome. Makoto makes sure I’m always enjoying myself, and Haru’s just too funny.” He laughed. “You must be so happy here, Haru. Makoto is awesome!”

Haru stayed quiet, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

“But you don’t seem too happy right now, Haru.” Haru had to stop himself from rolling his eyes. “Maybe… are you Makoto having problems?”
There it was. Rin just gapped before saying, “Dude, don’t just ask like that! And what are you talking about? They’re as happy as ever.”

“Oh, come on! Makoto was telling me how you two and Nagisa are always talking! It’s boyfriend talk, right? Don’t leave me out of it!” Kisumi pouted and collapsed into a chair across from them dramatically. “I just want to get closer to you guys! There’s got to be a reason you haven’t been spending as much time with Makoto, Haru! The way everyone was going on, I thought you two were never apart.”

“Makoto’s his own person, we do stuff without each other sometimes.” Haru had to fight to keep his voice level; didn’t he ever just shut up?

“Oh? You know, now that I think about it, you guys are soulmates or something –”

“Truemates,” Haru hissed, and he felt something tug at the back hem of his Jacket, Rin’s hand, keeping a hand on him in case Kisumi pushed the wrong button a little too hard. Not that it was needed. He wouldn’t do anything to Makoto’s friend.

“Yeah, right. So anyways, you guys are meant to be together or whatever, but don’t you ever think you’d both be happier with someone else?”

The words stopped his heart, and the nagging thoughts were back, almost as though Kisumi had opened the door that was just barely keeping them back. Would Makoto be happier with someone else? He seemed so anxious lately; was that all Haru was good for? Causing him trouble?

Rin said something in a harsh voice, but Haru didn’t hear it. Instead, all he heard was Kisumi’s reply, saying out loud all the thoughts that had been repeating in Haru’s head for the last week. “I mean, you guys haven’t been together long, right? And what would have happened if you guys had never met? Maybe you would have been happier like that? Without having to worry about being the first Truemates and all that crap.”

“Kisumi, I’m not sure where you’re going with this, but you need to shut up,” Rin stood up, and his grip tightened on Haru’s sweater, this time almost as though he was trying to stop himself from lunging at the boy.

“Hmm? Why? I’m just trying to make sure Haru knows all his options. After all, I heard that you two don’t have to be together if you don’t want to. And if you’re unhappy, why would you want to be together?”

Haru didn’t think he was breathing. What was he thinking? Why would he bring that up?

“Wait… what? What are you taking about?” Rin paused, looking at Haru. “What does he mean? You guys have to be together, or you get sick, right?”

“Oh, yeah, they do, but Amakata told Makoto that they had ways of fixing them to where they could live they’re lives without each other.”

“Told Makoto?” Wait, Kisumi had heard this from Makoto? He had thought maybe Kisumi had just asked Amakata, or Sasabe. But for Makoto to know about this— “Makoto asked Amakata about what would happen if we didn’t want to be together?”

“Yeah, he was telling me about it yesterday. So technically, you two could split up, end up with other people –”

Haru wasn’t listening anymore. Makoto had asked Amakata. Maybe Makoto really didn’t want to be
with him anymore. Maybe his worries weren’t as unfounded as he’d thought. Since Haru had asked
Amakata about it, he had done his very best to not think about it, tried to focus on how Makoto had
treated him after he’d gotten sick, on Amakata telling him not to worry. But Makoto had been talking
about it, talking about it with someone who obviously liked him. So maybe he was giving it some
thought.

“Look, Kisumi, you crossed the line, and you need to back off now.” Rin was still gripping his
hoodie, but Haru didn’t care.

“I did? But I was just telling the truth. And Haru doesn’t seem to be bothered by it.”

He didn’t? Could this stupid Omega not see what he was doing? Of course not, the voice echoed in
his head, making it ache. It’s not like you show any emotion. You can’t show people how you feel,
can’t tell them. Maybe you aren’t really feeling anything at all. Maybe it’s all a lie. You’re broken;
you wouldn’t know a feeling if it hit you in the face. No wonder Makoto doesn’t want you— No, no
that wasn’t true. Haru knew he could feel things. He adored Makoto, loved him. Have you ever told
him? No, and if you did, he probably wouldn’t believe you. That’s why he’s leaving you, because
you’re broken. You can’t love— no, no it wasn’t true.

Kisumi and Rin were still talking as Haru slowly fell apart, but Haru didn’t listen. It wasn’t until Rin
was standing in front of him with his hands on his shoulders, calling his name.

“Haru? Haru, he’s gone. Take a deep breath for me, okay?” Haru tried to follow his instructions.
The gasps of air were shallow, but there was air moving. That was good. Who cares? Who cares if
They all got hurt because you weren’t good enough. Of course he doesn’t want you, who would
want someone so useless.

“Haru, you have to focus, okay? Keep breathing, you’re good.” Was he sitting down? Hadn’t he
been standing? Haru’s head swam as he tried to do as Rin asked, but he couldn’t think. Or maybe
that’s all he could do. Were these his thoughts? His head was pounding.

“Okay, good, keep breathing. Here,” Rin held up a piece of cloth, something Haru recognized
immediately. Nagisa’s sweater; he must have forgotten it when he’d left… how long ago was that? It
seemed like years since he and Nagisa and Rin had sat at this table, talking about Nagisa’s problems.

Rin must have noticed his concentration slipping again, and he waved the cloth in front Haru again.
“Look at it, Haru? What does it look like?”

“Pink, and yellow.”

“Good. Anything else?”

“There’s a patch on the front. I can see the corner.”

“Good. What does it feel like?”

Feel like? What did it feel like? He couldn’t remember, but he tried. “It’s soft.”

“Okay, that’s good. What about smell?”

“Nagisa. It smells like Nagisa.”

“And that smell like?”
“Sweet, but heavy.” His thoughts were a little clearer as he tried to find the words to describe the smell. “Kind of like flowers, I guess.”

Rin stayed quiet for a moment, lowering the jacket as he met Haru’s eyes. “Good. How do you feel now?”

Haru took a deep breath. “Tired. But I’m good.”

“Well, that’s better, I guess,” Rin Sighed and collapsed into the seat beside Haru “I was hoping that would work.” Haru gave him what he hoped was a questioning look, and Rin shrugged. I did some research, trying to find ways to help you during your panic attacks, since you won’t tell anyone and get any real help. But I haven’t seen you that bad off in a while. How long has it been since you’ve had an attack like that?”

“A while, I guess.” Haru lied. Well, it had been a while since he’d had one he couldn’t shake off. But Rin called him out on it.

“Don’t bullshit me. Look, you don’t have to tell me, but don’t lie.” Rin groaned, rubbing his neck.

Haru stayed quiet, deliberately not answering, before changing the subject. “Where’d Kisumi go?”

“I told him to get the hell out once I noticed how bad off you were. He ran out with his tail between his legs,” Rin barked out a tight laugh. “But- and you don’t have to answer if you don’t want to- but is what he said… is it true?”

Haru nodded.

“Ok, but you know Makoto’s probably not going to dump you, right?”

“It wasn’t that.”

“Well, then what brought it on? Kisumi being too loud? That bothers you sometime, right?”

Haru shook his head. “Look, it’s not important. Just don’t worry about it.”

“Like hell that’s gonna happen. Look, Haru, pretty soon I’m not going to always be here to help you through these. You can always call me or whatever, but shouldn’t you tell Makoto about these panic attacks? Honestly, I’m surprised he’s not breaking down the door to get to you right now.”

*He’s not breaking down the door because you’re not even worth that. He’s probably found Kisumi again and is actually happy for once.* Haru tried to ignore the thoughts, and simply shrugged to his friend, searching for a way to change the subject. “Where’s Makoto?”

“Wait, you said soon. What do you mean by soon? Your ceremony isn’t until December. You’ve got a few months left here.”

“Oh.” Rin suddenly looked uncomfortable, shifting in his seat. “Well… look, I wasn’t supposed to talk about it, ’cause it’s not a sure thing yet… but he should be ironing out the details now. That’s why they needed Makoto. So maybe—”

The door bust open then, and Sousuke came charging through, grinning ear to ear. “We’re good.”

Rin jumped up from his seat, all thoughts of Haru and his worries went out the window as he threw himself at Sousuke, who crushed the Omega to his chest and spun him around excitedly.

Amakata and Makoto walked in behind them quietly, Amakata smiling. Makoto was frowning, his brows pulled together as he walked over to Haru. “Haru, I– are you ok?”
“I’m fine.”

Makoto opened his mouth, hand going up as though to touch him, but his hand dropped, and he closed his mouth, nodding curtly. “Okay, I guess.”

Rin and Sousuke were still laughing and talking quickly. “Oh my god, I can’t believe it actually worked!”

“I know. But she got it approved, and we pushed the paperwork through, so– ”

“Oh, this is great! But Gou’s going to kill us.”

“You mean she’ll kill you. You’re her brother, and she’s going to be pissed that you didn’t tell her.”

“Hey, if we’re doing this, we’re in it together. So that means we’re both screwed.”

“What are they talking about?” Haru asked quietly, and Makoto shrugged.

“Honestly, I have no clue. They just had me sign a bunch of paperwork, but they didn’t tell me anything.”

Haru rolled his eyes, and then interrupted the clearly happy couple. “Hey! Are you going to tell us what’s going on, or are you going to make us guess?”

Rin turned on them, grinning toothily. “We’re getting bonded!”

Silence fell across the room as Haru and Makoto stared at them. Finally, Makoto cleared his throat.

“Oh,” Makoto smiled. “Well that’s great then. So, when is it now? November?”

“No, a little sooner.”

Haru didn’t have a good feeling about this. “How soon?”

“We’re going to have it when we go to Iwatobi for our summer trip to the beach.”

“Rin?”

“Yeah?”

“That’s next week.”

“Yeah.” He sighed, but he still looked excited, barely able to keep back his smile. “It’s next week. We moved our bonding ceremony to next week.”

Chapter End Notes

Ok, I may change the title of this chapter. I'm not sure if I'm happy with it.
Anyways, HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!! Please enjoys this fairly depressing chapter. I promise next week's chapter will be a little nicer, since it mainly centers around the bonding ceremony, Gou coming home and bringing two long-awaited friends with her! There will be tearful reunions galore!

Thank you all for your wonderful Kudos and comments! I really missed hearing from you all while i was on my break, and your comments made me grin like an idiot anytime i read one. Thanks to my fantastic beta, Sarahsharpiemarker, who goes through a lot to make sure this story is ready for all of you to read. And thank you all for reading! I wish you all a wonderful Holiday, a Merry Christmas, and I'll see you all with the next chapter on the 30th!
The Bonding Ceremony

Chapter Summary

Emotions are running high in Iwatobi the day of Rin and Sousuke's Bonding ceremony.

Chapter Notes

Guys... I am so sorry for the wait. The Holidays kicked my ass.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Oh my god, it’s perfect!” Rin all but squealed as he, Haru, and Nagisa clambered out of the car. He sprinted towards Mrs. Tachibana, who was carefully decorating the long table with elegant decorations, a vase of flowers in each hand as she turned and smiled at the Omegas.

“Oh good, you’re here! Rin, you never did tell me which flowers you liked better, so I just got a combination of lilies and lilacs. I hope that’s okay.” She held out one of the vase as Rin took it happily.

“They’re fantastic. You honestly could have put a cactus on the table and I would have been happy. I’m just thrilled to get to have the ceremony here.”

The two continued the wedding talk, and Haru finally gave up listening, instead ghosting towards the edge of the ocean, Nagisa uncharacteristically quiet by his side. It had been a long week since that day in the dining room, with Rin rushing around, making final arrangements, checking that everyone had something nice to wear to the ceremony, and determinedly avoiding his sister’s phone calls. During that time, the only thing Rin seemed capable of talking about was the ceremony, how thrilled he was to see Ai again and finally meet Momo in person, and how happy he was that he had managed to inconvenience the Estate board.

“They almost weren’t going to let us do it, but the idea of having a mated Alpha and Omega not accounted for was terrifying to them,” Rin had snickered as Haru had helped him tear through his closet, trying to gather all of the clothes he wanted to bring on his honeymoon. “In the end, they had no choice but to accommodate us.” He groaned when his phone began to ring for the fifth time that day. Haru had reached for it, but Rin snatched it from him.

“Rin, you have to talk to her eventually,” Haru tried reasoning. “She’s going to find out somethings up eventually.”

“Oh, she already knows.”

“You told her?”

“Not exactly.” Rin tossed one shoe aside and reached for another, trying his best not to meet Haru’s eyes. “I got Ai and Momo to tell her for me,” he mumbled.
Haru had stared at him in astonishment. “You didn’t talk to her?”

“I couldn’t, Haru!” Rin tossed aside yet another pair of shoes. “How could I tell her that I had messed with all of her plans? That all of her hard work was pretty much pointless?”

“So, you put that on Ai instead?” Haru raised his eyebrows in disapproval.

“She loves them. Plus, Ai’s always been better at talking to people than me. He’ll be able to get her to understand why I did this.”

Haru just shook his head at his friend. Rin sighed. “Look, I know I’m being a dick about this. Ai and Momo both told me as much… but she’ll be back the day of the ceremony, with them, and I’ll make it up to all of them. For now, I just want to work on packing for my honeymoon.” He looked at the piles of shoes and clothes. “Okay, none of these are going to work. I’m going to have to go shopping.” He turned his pleading eyes on Haru, who shook his head.

“No, not going to happen. I’ve left the estate too much lately. The chairman will find out if I keep leaving.” It was a bad excuse, but a necessary one. Haru had been spending as little time around people as possible lately, locking himself away and hiding as he did his best to manage the raging emotions and wild thoughts racing through him. Everyone was moving on, finding their own way: Rin and Sousuke were finally having their ceremony and would finally be able to be with Ai and Momo, Rei and Nagisa were finally communicating more, and Nagisa even mentioned plans to go to college with his mate, even if he hadn’t figured out what he wanted to study yet. He had mentioned half a dozen things he was interested in, while Rei looked on in complete adoration.

Then there was Makoto. He was still spending so much time with Kisumi. Not that Haru was doing anything to stop that. In fact, if he was being completely honest, he was avoiding them both. Seeing the two together made him feel sick, made the uneasiness inside him worse. The two had gotten close, and while Makoto seemed almost constantly filled with unease these days, it always seemed to lighten whenever Kisumi was in the room. It wasn’t something Haru liked feeling from his Truemate, but that didn’t matter. What he wanted didn’t matter. If having Kisumi around made Makoto happy, then Haru let them be happy.

This was all temporary though. After tomorrow, it wouldn’t be necessary to avoid them anymore. Kisumi would finally leave the next day, and either Makoto would go with him or he wouldn’t. Haru wanted to hold on to hope that maybe Makoto wouldn’t go, that maybe he would stay and they could work through whatever had driven this wedge between them, but Haru grew more and more pessimistic each day. He shifted moment to moment between feeling cold and empty to overwhelmingly emotional, and there was nothing he could do to control it. The nagging, painful thoughts that had only plagued him occasionally were almost constant now: You’re useless, worthless. Of course everyone’s leaving, who would want to be around you. They left him aching, and he felt out of control and confused all the time. It was like the world was moving in fast-forward, racing towards the day of the bonding ceremony, while he was left sprinting in slow motion while everything moved, too fast, around him. The panic attacks had become more frequent, and as much as he hated doing it, he had started trying to guard his emotions from Makoto again, trying to keep the Alpha from his pain. The first time he had done it, Makoto had spent the ages gapping at him in shock while Haru avoided his gaze.

“Funny, this doesn’t seem real, does it?” Haru was jolted out of his thoughts, and he glanced over to see Nagisa staring out across the water, a thoughtful expression on his face. Haru couldn’t help but agree with him. Not just the ceremony, but everything. Nothing felt real. He just nodded.

“I just… Gou’s been gone making friends in Australia, you have a mate, Rin’s leaving. It’s all just… changing so much. It’s kind of scary.”
Haru couldn’t agree more.

“You’re okay, right?” The question was more pointed, and Haru turned to find Nagisa’s bright eyes pinning him to the spot.

“What are you talking about?”

“You’ve been different these last few days. At first, I thought you were just going back to the way you were before Mako-chan got here, but this is different. You seem… I don’t know… Just not good, Haru-chan.”

Damn. He thought everyone would be too distracted with the bonding ceremony to worry about him, but it looked like he was wrong. “I’m fine, Nagisa. Don’t worry.”

Nagisa frowned, but nodded. “If you’re sure. Just remember we love you, Haru. We all love you. Nothing will ever change that, okay?”

Haru wasn’t sure what it was, maybe the serious tone to his voice, or the lack of a -chan at the end of his name, but there was something about the way Nagisa said that that had tears pricking at the corner of his eyes. Haru swallowed and looked out towards the ocean, muttering, “thanks, Nagisa,” quietly. The boy smiled at him and patted his shoulder, before turning and walking away.

“Come on, Haru-chan. Looks like Rin-chan’s about to have a conniption.” Haru sighed and followed behind. Sure enough, Rin was no longer talking to Makoto’s mother, instead pacing back and forth in the sand, looking frantic.

“You’d better handle this,” Nagisa whispered. “You were always better at getting through to him. I’ll go see if Rei needs any help with the bags back at the hotel.”

Haru nodded and walked over to Rin, who glanced up at the sound of his footsteps, a panicked expression on his face.

“They’re going to be here any minute… Oh my god, Gou’s going to kill me, isn’t she?”

“She’ll at least wait till the ceremony’s over. Probably after though.”

“Not helping, dickweed,” Rin said, glaring at the blue-eyed Omega.

“Sorry.” Haru chuckled and grabbed his friend’s arm, forcing him to stop pacing. “Look, were you a jerk about this? Yes. Could you have handled this whole ‘let’s piss off the government by subverting their rules’ thing better? Yes. Is Gou going to be pissed at you? Absolutely.”

“Haru? You going somewhere with this? Or are you just trying to make me feel worse the day of my ceremony?”

“Yes, I’m going somewhere with this, so shut up. Look, the point is, you’re a dick, but you’re still her family. She’ll forgive you, and you two will be fine.”

Rin sighed. “Yeah, I guess you’re right.” He groaned as Haru pulled him towards a table and sat him down. “God, what am I going to do without you?”

The words set like a brick in Haru’s stomach, and he had to look away again. Why did everyone have to keep bringing this stuff up? “Like you’re not going to call me every day, idiot.” Haru said sarcastically.
“True,” Rin laughed. “You’ll probably hear from me so often you’ll get sick of me. But still,” he sighed. “It’s not like it’s going to be the same. It’s not going to be like it’s been for so long. I’m going to miss you.”

“Same,” Haru muttered, feeling sick.

Rin looked like he was about to say something, but his phone buzzed. He pulled it out of his pocket and grimaced. “Oh god, Sousuke says that she’s on her way.” He peered around and paled as they watched a small, bright red figure jog towards them. Gou Matsuoka was a girl on a mission as she stormed forward toward her brother. Rin let out an almost pathetic whimpering sound as he stood and took a hesitant step towards her. “Hey, Go– ”

“Don’t you start!” she hissed, and even Haru flinched back from her glare. Maybe he had underestimated how angry she would be. “Don’t you even start with me. How dare you!”

“Gou, I know. I know I screwed up. I shouldn’t have moved the ceremony without talking to you first – ”

“I don’t care that you moved the stupid ceremony! What pisses me off is that I had to find out from Ai! You didn’t call, you didn’t even send me a text. When I did finally find out, you wouldn’t even take my fucking phone calls!” Her voice was broken as she yelled. “That’s the least you could have done, damn it! You’re all I have! You have Sousuke and Ai and Momo, and they all knew you were planning this, but you didn’t tell me! You kept me in the dark. What if I wanted to help?” She let out a shuddering gasp and wavered on her feet.

“Look,” she whispered. “I get it. You’re moving on, you’ve got this new life, and you’re going to change the way people look at Omegas and Alphas, whatever. Just… I don’t want to be left behind. Maybe it’s stupid and selfish, but without you, she’s all I have left, and I won’t go back to her, I won’t. I know that you’re trying to move on, go make a family all of your own and all, but… just… just don’t forget me. Please.”

Rin had his arms around her in a second as the tears fell from both siblings’ eyes. “I didn’t know you felt like that,” Rin choked out. “Gou, I would never leave you behind. You’re never going to have to see mom again. It won’t happen. I didn’t tell you because I didn’t want to upset you. Call me stupid, but when I look at you, you still look like the little knobby kneed kid with pigtails. You’re still my baby sister. I knew that if I tried moving the ceremony just to screw with them, the chairman might have done something to hurt you, so I thought I could protect you.” He laughed wetly; tears still welled in his eyes as he gently wiped his sister’s tears away.

“Gou, you are never going to be left behind. Hell, the entire time you were gone, I had Ai watching over you for me, telling me all about that Alpha you were hanging around. Someone named Chigusa, I hear?” Despite herself, Gou laughed, making Rin chuckle weakly. “You’re never going to get rid of me, sis. You’re my baby sister, and I’m going to watch over you and protect you until my dying day. But I’ll try my best in the future and remember that you’ve grown up. You’re strong enough that I don’t have to protect you from everything. I’ll try and remember that. I’m sorry. I’m sorry for being an ass, okay?”

The girl sniffed quietly, and nodded. “It’s okay. I always knew you were an ass. I guess expecting anything else would be stupid.” She pulled away, whipping away her own tears. “Just tell me the next time you decide to do something stupid like rearrange all of my plans.”

“Deal. So, are you the only one here yet, or…”

Gou smiled. “They were taking the bags to the hotel when I left. But they should be – oh!” The girl
turned, glancing over her shoulder, then gasped and pointed to the figures in the distance. Rin looked too, eyes widening as he took in the sight.

Five figures were making their way towards them. Haru immediately recognized Makoto’s brown unruly hair, Kisumi’s soft pink features standing out like a neon sign against the sand, and Sousuke’s dark features. Next to them were two boys, one more familiar than the other. Haru immediately noted how Ai’s silvery features stood out more than Kisumi’s. He looked almost exactly the same as he had three years ago, when he had been just a fourteen-year-old boy. He was a little taller maybe, and a little more well built, but as he got closer, Haru could make out the beautiful light blue eyes, shining with excitement and joy, a gentle smile on his face. His hand was linked together with the boy next to him, who contrasted Ai’s gentleness with fire and passion. He bounced as he walked, swinging his and Ai’s joined hands just a little too wildly, and seemed to be talking a mile a minute. Haru had only ever heard about him, but there was no doubt in his mind; that could only be Momotarou.

Haru looked at Rin, who had his eyes fixed on the boys walking towards them. He mouthed something that looked like Ai and took off, sprinting towards them, this time yelling, “Ai!”

Ai let go of Momo’s hand and ran towards Rin, flinging himself into Rin’s arms. Haru smiled at Gou, who grinned back, tears still welling in her eyes, and they both walked towards the reunited Omegas.

As they came closer, Haru could hear them talking, their voices cracked.

“God, Ai… I’ve missed you so much.”

“Me too.” Ai’s smile was wide and watery, eyes shimmering with unshed tears. “The video calls are amazing, but I’ve missed this.”

“I know. Ai, I– I’m so sor– ”

“No,” Ai shook his head. “Don’t apologize. You don’t need to apologize for anything. We’re here, we’re all together. We’ll move on, okay?” Rin sniffed and nodded, and Ai laughed, raising a hand to whip a stray tear away from Rin’s cheek. “Now, you’re getting bonded today. You shouldn’t be crying now. That comes later.”

“Oh, listen to you, all wise about this kind of stuff. But I’ve matured since you last saw me! No way am I going to cry.” Rin laughed and pulled the boy closer, squeezing him tight, before pulling back and walking over to Sousuke and Momo. Haru looked away politely as the foursome lost themselves in the joy of being together for the first time. Makoto and Kisumi stepped away, walking towards Haru. Haru looked away politely as the foursome lost themselves in the joy of being together for the first time. Makoto and Kisumi stepped away, walking towards Haru. Haru stomach twisted, and he saw Makoto’s face screw up momentarily at the feeling in their bond, but once he reached Haru’s side, the Alpha reached out hesitantly and took Haru’s hand, sending a little shock through the Omega.

In the last week, Makoto had rarely held his hand, and Haru hadn’t been able to bring himself to do anything to rectify that. Now, the touch of Makoto’s hand in his sent an instinctual sense of comfort through him… but he couldn’t shut out the doubt in his mind. Why was he doing this now, when all week he had made so little effort to talk to him or touch him in any way? Had he made a decision? Was this him telling Haru not to worry? Or had he decided that his heart really belonged with Kisumi? After all, the two had spent almost all their time together in the last week, and Kisumi would leave tomorrow. Maybe this was Makoto’s way of giving him one more night, or trying to be kind so that it would be easier to break the news that he would be leaving with Kisumi in the morning. After all, they were here, in Iwatobi. He would be able to say goodbye to his family, explain things to everyone, and say goodbye to Haru before leaving.
Despite these thoughts, Haru tightened his grip on Makoto’s hand, ignoring the quizzical and concerned look Makoto was giving him, and watched the happy reunion. If this was going to be the last night, his last night with Makoto, he was going to try and make the best of it. He’d do his best to pretend to be happy and blissful, even as his world crumbled around him.

Haru fiddled with the tie on his suit as he sat at one of the tables Makoto’s mother had set up, watching the newly bonded mates slow dance happily against the setting sun.

The ceremony had been beautiful, despite the rushed setup. Rin and Sousuke wore matching tuxedos, and Ai and Momo watched from the audience, beside Haru and Makoto. The Tachibana family came as well, the twins actually sitting still for once. Behind everyone else sat the representative from the Board of Alpha and Omega Affairs, who had come only to bring the paperwork Sousuke and Rin filled out before the ceremony and the Bonding Serum.

Rin spent the beginning part of the ceremony casting smug glances towards the man, thrilled with how he had been able to circumvent the system and the wait time. This only lasted the first five minutes of the ceremony though; he cried his way through the rest of the ceremony, shooting dirty looks at Haru when he chuckled. So much for his insistence that he wouldn’t cry. Sousuke spent the entire time with his eyes fixed on Rin, his eyes also a little watery.

Makoto kept his hand linked with Haru’s throughout the ceremony, but Haru caught Kisumi staring forlornly at them several times. Haru did his best to ignore him, and just held his mate’s hand a little tighter.

Now, everyone was dancing along to the music, except Haru, who was sat down, and Makoto and Kisumi, who were off talking to Makoto’s parents. Makoto had told him that he wanted his family to meet Kisumi, in case the Omega was ever back in the area and needed a place to stay.

They were making their way towards him now, Kisumi seeming just a little less perky than usual. “Hey Haru.” The boy plopped down beside him and casually swung an arm around Haru’s shoulders. He stiffened at the touch. “Man, Makoto’s parents are amazing. They’re just so nice.” He sighed. “Actually, this whole place is really nice. Don’t get me wrong, I love Australia, but I don’t think I’ve seen a sunset there that could compare to this.”

“Didn’t you used to live here in Japan, Kisumi?” Makoto sat down on the other side of Haru, leaning forward to look at Kisumi. Haru just stared straight ahead.

“Yeah, when I was little. My family moved to Australia when I was ten, right after my brother was born.”

“You have a little brother?”

“Yeah.” Kisumi’s fell arm away from his shoulder, and Haru couldn’t help but notice the wistful, adoring look on his face. “Hayato. He looks like me, I guess. I miss him like crazy. I haven’t talked to him since I presented, but sometimes my mom sends me pictures sometimes.”

“You’re parents don’t like that you’re an Omega?”

Kisumi shook his head, “Not really. Honestly, it’s less like they don’t like it and more like they just don’t know what to do with it. Dad just kind of pretends I don’t exist. Mom sends me emails occasionally, but she doesn’t know how to handle it either. But neither of them let Hayato have anything to do with me.”
Haru couldn’t help but feel a twinge of pity for the boy. “That sucks. I’m sorry.”

Kisumi froze, eyes wide as he stared at Haru. Then his face lit up like a Christmas tree. “Thanks, Haru! What about you? Do you get to see your family often? Have any siblings? I bet you’d be an amazing older brother!”

Oh god, he should have just kept his mouth shut. “Don’t like to talk about it.”

Kisumi frowned, eyes pleading. “Are you sure? I’m a really good listener. I can be quiet and just let you talk!”

Haru really doubted that he could be quiet. “I’m fine.”

Kisumi sighed. “Damn. Really thought we were getting somewhere for a second.”

Makoto just laughed and reached down to squeeze Haru’s hand. “Don’t take it too hard, Kisumi. It took a while for Haru to even tell me anything. He just doesn’t talk much.”

Kisumi just shook his head. “Well, the night is young, and I heard Rin say something about there being alcohol later.” The music picked up a little, and the three watched as Rin grinned leaned up to press a kiss to Sousuke’s cheek, before turning and cutting in on Momo and Ai. He bowed goofily to them, and they laughed as Momo and Rin began to spin Ai between them. Sousuke just watched them for a moment, before he turned and walked toward the three sitting down, a grin plastered on his face.

“You look like you’re having fun,” Makoto said as Sousuke leaned up against the table, his eyes fixed on the three dancing on the beach.

“Yeah, I am.” He nodded. “I am the luckiest guy on the planet.”

“At least you know it,” Haru muttered, and then said a little louder. “So, now that you’re bonded, would you please tell him? Cause he’s been pretty irritating.”

Sousuke laughed. “He’s still bugging you about that? I thought for sure he would have guessed.”

“No, he’s a bit of an idiot.”

“He can be, yeah.”

“What are you guys talking about?” Kisumi leaned forward. “Are you keeping secrets from your Omega already?”

“No, he’s just nosy,” Sousuke laughed. “But I’ll tell him next time he brings it up.”

“Wait, are you two talking about that whole Haru breaking your heart thing?” Makoto asked. “What is that all about?”

“Wait, what? Haru, you were with Sousuke?” Kisumi gasped dramatically. “So, you were with someone else before Makoto!”

“No,” Haru snapped, while Sousuke said at the same time, “Oh God, no. No way in hell.” The two eyed each other in mutual disgust as Makoto spoke up.

“Rin asked Sousuke why he seemed to hate Haru, and Sousuke said that it was because Haru broke his heart.”
“No, if you remember correctly, I said I thought he broke my heart.”

Kisumi furrowed his brows and stared at the ground, mumbling to himself, before he looked up at Sousuke against, ecstatic. “Oh! I get it! Rin, right? Haru hurt Rin?”

The words settled with a bit of unease on Haru as he realized the truth of them. No one else had ever come out and said it, and though Kisumi didn’t really know what he was saying, it was true. *You’re the reason all of this took so long,* the voice whispered, back despite Haru’s best efforts. *You’re the reason it took three years for Rin to get back to Ai.*

He couldn’t bring himself to argue with it anymore.

“Rin?” Makoto looked bewildered, carefully eyeing Haru. “Is there something you want to tell me?”

*I could ask you the same thing,* he thought, but instead he just shook his head.

“When I came here, Rin was a mess, and he couldn’t be in the same room as Haru without getting peeved off. At first, I thought Haru had dumped him or something.” Sousuke chuckled. “It took me a year to figure out that Haru didn’t actually hurt him. Which reminds me,” he turned to look at Haru now, and Haru squirmed as those serious eyes focused on him. It was like he was being examined under a microscope, all of his problems there for the tall, taciturn Alpha to see. He didn’t like it. “I never actually thanked you. I know you think he blamed you but he never did. He was angry and upset and since he couldn’t do anything to the chairman or the board, he got pissed at you. But as much as all that hurt him, he wouldn’t have changed a thing. Thanks to you, Rin got to see Ai before he left for Australia, and you stole his address from the chairman so I could get in contact with him.”

“Haru, you did that?” Kisumi sounded awed, but Haru just shook his head.

“We agreed not to bring that up again. As far as anyone’s concerned, that was all you.”

“I know, but I was a bit of an ass to you back then, so I’m thanking you properly now.” The tall Alpha let his gaze drift back to his mates where Rin was very slowly teaching Momo to dance. They all watched the young Alpha, brow furrowed in concentration, eyes fixed on his feet, as Rin slowly led them in a large circle around Ai.

“Rin might have been my heart since the beginning,” Sousuke murmured. “But thanks to you, Haru, I’ve got Momo and Ai too, and all three of them make me a better person than I could ever hope to be alone.”

Rin and Momo completed their circuit, and Momo let out a cheerful shout. “Did ya see that, Sou?”

“Not bad,” he called back. “But Rin sucks at dancing. Let’s see how you do with someone who doesn’t have two left feet.”

With Rin’s indignant squeak, Sousuke walked towards them with a grin.

“Well, that was adorable. He’s like a giant lovesick puppy,” Kisumi turned his bright smile on Haru, who instinctually shifted towards Makoto, uncomfortable with the closeness. Why was Kisumi suddenly turning all of his attention on him? He had spent the last two weeks clinging to Makoto and shooting Haru smug glances, but now Kisumi was hanging around him as though they were the best of friends. What was he trying to do? “Reminds me of someone else we know, huh?” His tone sounded like he was trying to clue Haru in on some private joke that only they knew, and Haru felt like he was freefalling in the worst of ways, grasping at thin air, trying to make sense of the behavior. He didn’t understand why Kisumi seemed to think they shared anything between them. All Haru had was Makoto.
Except that he didn’t have him. Maybe that was what all the extra attention was about. Was he trying to rub it in Haru’s face that he had managed to win Makoto over?

All of Haru’s attempts to pretend everything was fine fell away in an instant, and suddenly all Haru wanted was to run. He slid his chair out and mumbled, “I’m going to get something to drink.”

He made his move to escape, but a hand shot out and caught his wrist. He turned back, and Makoto stood, his grip tight on Haru’s wrist.

“Haru,” his voice was quiet and pained. Oh god, this was it; Makoto was going to tell him. Not now, he wanted to plead. Rin would notice, and it would dampen the happiest day of his life. Haru would suffer a million times over to keep him and his mates happy. They were leaving, moving on with their lives, but Haru would protect them from his problems one last time. It was all he could do.

It was all he was good for.

“No now,” his voice was harsh, not from anger, but fear and pain, but Makoto flinched back anyway. The sight would have hurt, his best friend, his Truemate, pulling away from him. But it didn’t. Nothing hurt. Or maybe everything hurt. He couldn’t tell the difference anymore.

Everything was moving too fast again, and Haru fought to keep his breathing steady. He prayed Makoto wouldn’t notice, that he could put on a brave face long enough to get away. It must have worked, because Makoto just continued talking.

“No, Haru,” Makoto voice was unsure, but his grip was tight. “We need to talk. There’s something –”

“I know.” Haru shook his head, cutting him off. “Just not now. Tonight. You can tell me tonight.”

He looked towards Rin, hoping Makoto would understand, and the Alpha’s gaze followed, finding Rin, Ai, Momo, and Sousuke, dancing and laughing together. His grip loosened, then fell away.

“Fine, but tonight, Haru. We have to talk. We can’t keep doing this.”

Haru just nodded numbly, and walked off.

On the table, he found a variety of sodas and bottle drinks. Haru grabbed a bottle of water, twisted off the lid, and chugged half of it down, feeling the cool liquid trickle down his throat. He watched out of the corner of his eye as Makoto stared after him, before sitting down at the table, head fallen into his hands. He looked tired and worn; how long had he looked like that? Haru couldn’t remember the last time he had taken a decent look at his Truemate.

He tried to reach for their bond, trying to grasp exactly what Makoto was feeling, but it was empty. Makoto must have shut him out. The thought made him want to scream, or rather, it made him want to be able to scream or cry. Anything to release the thoughts, but it was as if everything was on autopilot, so he didn’t scream. He didn’t cry. He just stared at the ocean, sipping on his water.

“You’re Chairman Nanase’s boy?”

Haru looked to his side to see a man in a suit next to him, sipping a bottle of water as well. Haru vaguely remembered him from the ceremony, realizing slowly that he was the representative of the Affairs Board, the one who had brought the serum.

“Oh, the chairman’s calling me his son now? Usually I’m just the bitch,” Haru muttered darkly.

“Hmph. Just as prickly as the boss.”
“Do you need something?”

“Actually, I’m here to warn you,” Haru gave him a glance, listening carefully despite his visible disinterest. It could be nothing of interest, but just in case, he should listen. “The Board is getting antsy. They’re not seeing the result they want from the Omegas and Alphas. The word on the grapevine is that they want to move one of you to the Tokyo facilities permanently. Not sure when, but soon anyone still unbonded will be at risk of being… recruited.”

Haru frowned, his gaze shifting to the Alphas and Omegas on the beach. Ai, Momo, Nagisa, Rei. Ai and Momo would be safe, once they went back to Australia, but Nagisa and Rei–

“Why are you telling me this?” He asked, suspicious. The man shrugged.

“Look, I’m not gonna lie, I don’t really get all this Alpha and Omega shit. It’s a job, and I’m just trying to get my kid through school. But I’ve heard how they talk about you guys, and I don’t know anyone who deserves to be treated the way the treat you. You’re different, but you’re still human.” He shrugged again. “I’m not sure what good me warning you will do, but I had to try. Couldn’t look myself in the mirror tomorrow if I didn’t.” The man gave a wave, and slowly began to saunter off.

Haru frowned. The warning did help, but what could they do about it? Everyone had someone who needed them. No one could volunteer to protect the others… except Haru. Nagisa had Rei, they could work things out, be happy together. Rin had his mates now, and wherever he went, he would probably take Gou with him, just to keep an eye on her. And Makoto… had Kisumi now.

It could only be him.

“Hey!” The representative froze at his call and turned around. “You headed back to the board? In Tokyo?”

“Yeah.”

“Take me with you.”

The man stared, his mouth open. “I’m sorry?”

“Take me to the board. Tell them I volunteer to be their personal guinea pig.”

“Haru?” Haru froze at the sound of his name, and he turned back to find a pair of shocked violet eyes staring at him. Damn. He had hoped he would be able to just slip away. “Haru, what are you talking about?”

“Nothing.” Haru took a step towards the representative. “Just… you won, okay? Take care of Makoto. Make sure he’s happy.” Haru tuned away, unable to look at Kisumi or any of his other friends in the distance. “Just… could you tell Makoto I love him? I always have.”

Haru heard Kisumi call his name, pain in his voice, but Haru didn’t look back. He walked away, praying for his friend’s happiness as he went.

Chapter End Notes

Happy New Year!!!!!!I know this chapter is late, guys and I'm really sorry. I spent all week last week traveling around with my family, so I was ridiculously busy. on the plus
side, this means you don't have to wait nearly as long for the next chapter, since I promise that will be up on Saturday. It's almost finished, I just need to do a little editing on it, and it will be ready for you guys.

Anyways, i know this is a terrible cliffhanger, and i'm really sorry, but everything will start making sense next chapter, I promise!!! As always, thank you all for your comments and Kudos. I thrive off of each and every one! thanks to my beta, SarahSharpieMarker, and i will see you all on Saturday!!!
Chapter Summary

Makoto and Rin hurry to try and stop Haru from making a big mistake.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Makoto stared at the table, unable to rid himself of the uneasy feeling weighing in his chest. It had been building there for the last week, ever since he had first felt Haru starting to shut him out, leaving their bond empty and numb. Or at least, that was what he had thought was going on, up until a few days ago.

He and Haru had been in the dining room with Sousuke and Rin. Makoto remembered he had been laughing about something Rin was saying when a heavy weight fell over the bond, leaving the already numb bond feeling muffled and unrecognizable, a sensation that haunted some of Makoto worst nightmares. Haru shutting him out left him feeling as though someone had cut off his arm, or sliced out his heart. An essential part of himself was missing anytime Haru closed their bond, but it hadn’t happened in so long that he didn’t know what to do when it did happen. He had tried speaking to Haru, but the Omega had run off not long after the incident, and Makoto couldn’t seem to catch him alone to talk about it. The only time they were alone together was in their room at night, but Haru always claimed he was tired and curled up in bed before Makoto had a chance to even start a conversation.

Makoto felt more lost than ever before. This was all too much like what had happened back in June and it left him feeling constantly uneasy. He knew that he and Haru needed to talk, preferably before one of them did something drastic and/or stupid. They couldn’t keep going like this. Makoto loved Haru more than anything, and feeling something broken between them was killing him.

“Hey, where’d Haru go?” Makoto looked up to find Rin standing in front of him, one hand linked with Momo and the other clutching what looked like an envelope. “Momo wanted to meet him, and I’ve got something for him.”

“Over by the refreshment table,” Makoto raise a hand to point Haru out, but froze when he saw the table empty. “Huh, that’s weird. He said he was going to get a drink.”

Rin’s brow furrowed. “Hey, has he seemed… off to you? Like, really off, more so than usual?”

Makoto hesitated. He didn’t really want to talk to someone else about his and Haru’s private lives, especially given that he hadn’t been able to talk to Haru yet, but he nodded anyways. “It’s our bond,” he told the Omega. “Something been wrong with it for the last few weeks. It’s there, but it feels empty or… hollow, I guess.”

“Empty,” Rin mumbled, before his eyebrows shot up, and his eyes went wide. “Shit, oh shit!” He cussed so loudly that both Momo and Makoto jumped. Ai and Sousuke, who had been dancing nearby, stopped and stared, curiosity and worry in their eyes. “We have got to find him, now!”

“What? Why?” Makoto leapt to his feet in alarm at Rin’s urgency.
“Panic attacks. He gets them really bad. He told me it didn’t happened often, but this will be the second this week.” Rin pulled his hand away from Momo, and shoved the envelope into his pocket. “Probably more, knowing Haru. He doesn’t like telling anyone when they happen.”

“Panic attacks?” Makoto frowned and reached for the bond, despairingly finding it still empty. People began to gather around, the faces of the Alphas and Omegas concerned, but confused. “But… but wouldn’t I feel it through our bond if he was panicking?”

“I don’t know! Maybe, maybe not. I’m not Amakata, Makoto. Hell, he might be fine right now, but I’m not chancing it. Where’s Kisumi?”

Rin’s fast-talking and constant changes in subject were leaving Makoto’s head spinning. “Kisumi?”

“Yes, Kisumi! Pink hair, irritating, hangs all over you while drooling over Haru behind your back? Sound familiar?”

Makoto winced at the word. He had hoped he was just being paranoid whenever he caught Kisumi staring at Haru, or talking about Haru, or dragging him around the Estate to hunt down Haru. He knew Kisumi seemed to irritate his Truemate, so he had hoped that the pink haired Omega simply wanted to befriend everyone, and wasn’t chasing after an Omega who was, A: already taken, and B: clearly not interested. Clearly those hopes had been in vain.

“He said he was going to talk to Haru, and went over to the table after him. Why?”

“He sort of triggered Haru’s last episode.”

“What?!” Makoto couldn’t help but start to get angry. Without the feeling of Haru’s usually calm presence in their bond, it was harder to rein in those emotions. “When was this?”

“Last week.”

“Why didn’t you tell me? Why didn’t Haru?”

“Haru asked me not to, he didn’t want to worry you. I told him it was stupid, but trying to convince that idiot of anything is like trying to convince a fish to do taxes.” Rin was glancing around, and stopped when he looked back towards the refreshment table. “Gotcha!”

Makoto looked over to see Kisumi sprinting towards them, eyes red and wide with panic. “Makoto! Rin!”

Makoto stood to go to him, but he heard Rin snarl, and before anyone could do anything, the newly bonded Omega charged Kisumi, a furious gleam in his eyes. “You! What the hell did you do?”

“I didn’t– ”

“Bullshit!” Rin grabbed him by the front of his shirt, and even though Kisumi had a few inches on him, he looked small and meek next to the furious Rin. “What the hell happened? You couldn’t just leave him be, and now– ”

“I swear it wasn’t me this time!” The Omega cried out. “The guy from the board. The representative. Haru left with him. They said something about going back to Tokyo!”

The words sent cold chills down Makoto’s spine. Tokyo. “Did he force Haru?” He growled lowly, and Kisumi’s eyes widened in fear.
“No, Haru offered. Said something about being a guinea pig for them? I tried to stop him, I did! I even followed them for a bit, in case Haru was being forced and tried to get away. But Haru… he…” The boy was shaking in fear as he turned his gaze toward Makoto. “He just said… to tell you he loved you. He said I won, and that he loved you.” His eyes were wide and pleading. “I didn’t know what to do! But if anyone can get through to him, it’s you! Please Makoto!”

Makoto swore loudly. Haru was going back to Tokyo.

Well, so much for stopping Haru from doing anything drastic and stupid.

Rin eyes were wide with horror, and he let go of Kisumi. “Has he gone yet?”

Kisumi shook his head, stumbling back a few steps. “They went back to the hotel.”

Rin turned and looked around at the crowd gathering. “Ai, can you go find Amakata? We may need her once we get Haru’s stupid ass back.”

“I’m already here,” Makoto turned at the hoarse and broken sound of Amakata’s voice. “Go get him back. I’ll check him out once you do.”

Makoto and Rin nodded, and Makoto turned to follow Rin back the way Kisumi had come, but Amakata’s hand reached out and caught his arm.

“Makoto… bring him home. I – I didn’t know…” She took a deep breath, her eyes falling closed as she tried to keep a hold of herself. “I’ll never forgive myself if something happens to him. If something’s wrong…” She paused and shook her head. “I’m sorry, I’m wasting time. Go.” She gave him a small push, encouraging him to go on, but Makoto reached out and took her hand. Amakata had practically raised Haru, had been one of the only people he trusted before Makoto had shown up. He knew what she was thinking, because he was thinking it himself: if anyone should have known something was wrong with Haru, it should have been them.

He didn’t say anything, just held her hand for a moment, and she squeezed it reassuringly. He let go, and ran up the hill to follow Rin.

They had been silently jogging down the beach towards the hotel for about ten minutes.

“Hey,” Rin panted as they ran. “I’m sorry about not telling you about Haru.”

Makoto was breathing too hard to answer properly. He spent quite a bit of time in the pool, swimming with Haru in the last month, but that didn’t stop him from getting winded not long after they took off. Instead of wasting his breath speaking, he just nodded.

“It’s happened before, on and off since we were kids, but I thought they’d stopped around the time he turned seventeen. We don’t exactly have access to any psychiatric help, besides Amakata, but Haru didn’t want to tell her, and any medication that could help him was denied by the board and the chairman.” Rin shook his head. “I swear, I thought that if his panic attacks got bad again, he would tell me… but I guess I was just being stupid. Haru doesn’t want open up to anyone, doesn’t want to inconvenience anyone.”

Makoto nodded again. It was stupid to think Haru would tell someone if he was upset or struggling with something, that just wasn’t Haru. Makoto hoped that, if – no, when they got to Haru in time, he’d be able to get Haru the help he needed. Anything to make him feel better.
“There,” Rin huffed. “That’s the hotel.”

Makoto recognized it. It was one of only two hotels in Iwatobi. It was tall building, compared to the other in the area, standing at three stories high. Its dark shape was silhouetted against the night sky, the brightly lit windows standing out against the darkness. The boys glanced at each other cautiously, and then picked up the pace.

Haru was loading his bag into a car when they sprinted up. Makoto was ready to run to him, pull him close, beg Haru to tell him everything that was wrong, but Rin beat him to the punch.

“Haru!” The boy yelled, and Haru turned just in time for Rin to crash into him, pinning him to the car.

“Rin, let go!” Haru tried to yell, but Rin was yelling over him.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?! You can’t go back there!”

Haru tried to push the red-haired Omega away. “I have to Rin!”

“Bullshit! Haru, I thought we told you to stop with this self-sacrificing bullshit! You don’t have to keep doing this!”

“Rin, you don’t get it. It’s going to be like this no matter what! They want one of us, and if I go now, everyone else will be okay!”

“To hell with everyone else! We’ll deal with that when it comes, but first, we need to get you help. You’re freaking out, and you’re not thinking straight.”

“I’m fine, Rin get off!” Haru struggled fruitlessly.

“No! Haru, you need help. Actual help, not just me surfing the internet until I find something that sounds sort of like you. Amakata wants to help. Makoto wants to help. We all want to help you. Please. Please let us help you.”

Haru just shook his head, his struggles growing more and more feeble. “There’s no point.” He whispered. “I belong to them. This is all I can do; it’s all I’m good for. I belong to him.” Haru’s hands finally dropped to his sides, defeated.

“That’s not true.” Rin and Haru both went quiet as Makoto spoke up. Rin moved aside, and Haru stood up straighter, looking confused and hurt as he stared at Makoto.

“Makoto– ”

“That’s all a load of crap, Haru. You don’t belong to the chairman, or the board. You don’t belong to me, or anyone else. You’re free, Haru. You don’t owe anyone anything, and you never have.”

“No…” Haru eyes were wide, scared, and he shook his head. “I’m not… I can’t– ”

“Yes, you can, Haru. I can’t feel what you’re feeling right now, but I think I get it.” He took a few steps forward as he reached out for Haru, linking their hands together. “You’re scared, and you don’t see yourself the way we see you. Haru, you are beautiful, and amazing, and absolutely worth it. I love you, Haru. I’ve loved you since that day in my bedroom, after you saved me from drowning. I’ve loved since the moment you fell asleep in my arms that day, and I realized that next to you was the only place I’ll ever want to be. And despite what you seem to think, you are worthy of that love, of mine, and Rin’s and Nagisa’s and so, so much more. You deserve a life where you can be happy,
where you don’t have to be afraid. You deserve a life where you don’t have to give all of yourself just to keep others happy. Please, Haru,” he pulled the boy close, wrapping his arms around him as Haru shivered. “Please come home. Don’t give yourself to them. Come home with us, and we’ll make things right.”

“No one needs me,” he whispered. “They don’t need me. This is all I can do.”

“You’re wrong,” Makoto kept his voice gentle and calming. “We all need you, Haru, and there are going to be more Alphas and Omegas who need us to help them. So stay. Please, Haru. Just stay.”

Haru looked shattered and confused, but he held tight to Makoto, clutching at his arms. He nodded. “I can’t hurt you,” he whispered, and the words ripped through Makoto’s heart.

“The only way you could hurt me is if you leave without talking to me. We’ll get through this, okay Haru? We’ll rest, we’ll get some help, and we’ll work though this, okay?”

Haru nodded again. He turned, still clinging to Makoto, to finally look at Rin. His eyes widened with momentary clarity, and Makoto glanced to the side to see tears streaming down Rin’s face.

“Rin,” Haru whispered. “I’m so– ”


Haru paused, eyes still slightly unfocused, and he swayed on his feet even as Makoto tried to keep him steady. Then he nodded. “You too.”

Rin laughed. “Don’t worry about me. I’ve got Momo and Ai and Sousuke to stop me from being an idiot, but you two might need a little more help.” He shook his head. “I’m going to head back. Take care of him, Makoto.”

Makoto nodded. “Could you let Amakata know what happened? She’ll probably want to make sure he’s okay.”

“On it!” Rin gave them a thumbs-up, then turned to jog back down to the beach.

Makoto turned back to Haru, a gentle smile on his face. “Let’s go inside, okay Haru?” Haru nodded, and they turned to go inside the hotel, only to pause at the sight of the board representative standing in front of the door, Haru’s suitcase in his hand.

There was an uncomfortable silence for a moment as they all stared at each other, and then the man cleared his throat. “I’ll– uh– I’ll take the suitcase back up.”

Makoto shook his head, cautious as he eyed the man. “I’ve got it.”

The man nodded and set the suitcase down. “Okay, that’s cool. Just… take care of that kid, okay?”

Makoto frowned. “If you’re so worried about him, maybe you shouldn’t have tried to– ”

“Wait, wait.” The man raised his hands in defense. “I only wanted to warn him about what was coming. I didn’t come here to take him away.”

“What’s coming?”

“The boards fixing to come down hard on you guys. I just thought a little warning would help you guys. I didn’t think he would volunteer to come back with me.” The man sighed. “They treat you
guys like shit. Just thought I’d try and even the playing field a little.” The man shook his head and shoved his hands in his pocket, walking towards his car, pausing before he got in. “You seem like good kids. I really hope things work out for you.” The man climbed into his car, and Makoto and Haru watched him drive away.

“He really didn’t make me do anything,” Haru murmured, voice shaking. “He spent the whole time trying to get me to go back. I just…” He went quiet, before whispering. “I messed things up.”

“It’s alright, Haru,” he soothed. “It will all be okay.” Makoto took his hand, grabbed Haru’s suitcase, and they made their way inside.

“Hey, how are you feeling?” Makoto smiled at Haru as he walked out of the bathroom in a fresh set of clothes, a towel wrapped around his shoulders.

“Okay. Better.” Haru was quiet as he crawled into bed, snuggling beneath the blankets. Makoto stretched out beside him, brushing Haru’s still wet bangs out of his eyes.

“You’re going to catch a cold if you don’t dry your hair,” he said gently, but Haru just looked away.

“I messed up, didn’t I?” He whispered.

“No, you didn’t. Haru, didn’t you hear what Amakata said?” The Alpha woman had stormed into the room not long after they had entered it. She had sent Makoto out of the room, ignoring both Makoto’s and Haru’s complaints, and talked to the boy for over hour. When Makoto had finally been allowed back in, Amakata had spoken to them both seriously.

“Honestly, I wish we could have known about this sooner. Maybe we could have stopped things from getting so bad, but at least nothing serious happened.” Amakata had turned to Makoto then. “You’re going to have to be patient, Makoto. Haru’s had a lot happen over the years, and it’s going to cause him problems for a while. You two just need to be patient, and Haru,” she looked at the quiet Omega. “You’re going to have to talk to us, okay? If you start thinking irrational things again, you need to remember that is your mental illness speaking and you need to come to one of us right away. I’m going to talk to the board, and we’ll see what we can do to get you professional help. If that fails, we’ll go over their heads.” She reached out and took the boy’s hand. “I’ve failed you so many times over the years, Haru. I should have tried to protect you more. But I won’t fail this time, Haru.”

Haru hadn’t said anything, but Makoto’s heart had soared as he watched Haru squeeze her hand back.

“I know what she said.” Haru told him now. “I just… I feel like you guys are taking it too easy to me. I cause so many problems, and I should have just said something, but I didn’t, and—”

“And that’s all in the past.” Makoto cut him off with a quick kiss to his cheek. “We’re going to move forward now, okay?”

Haru hesitated, and Makoto thrilled at the small amount that he could feel in their bond. It still felt mostly empty, something Amakata had, firstly, berated him for not bringing up to her earlier, and secondly, told him was most likely Haru’s mind’s way of protecting itself. She’d said that as Haru’s anxiety and depression became easier for him to manage, the bond would probably start returning to normal. For now, all Makoto could feel was numbness and the smallest bit of hope eating just around the edges. It wasn’t much, but it was a start.
“Maybe you’re right,” Haru’s eyes drooped sleepily, and Makoto couldn’t help the smile that pulled at his lips.

“Get some sleep Haru,” he started, but Haru’s eyes flew open.

“Wait,” he said. “I… I want to ask something.”

“Hmm?”

“Okay, so… I guess I blew things out of proportion with the whole Kisumi thing— ”

“Kisumi thing?”

Haru flushed. “I thought you were going to leave me. I thought you wanted to be with Kisumi.”


Haru blushed slightly, and refused to meet Makoto’s eyes. “Well, it’s just… he’s always hanging around you, and you always seemed so happy when he was near… and,” Haru fidgeted under the blankets. “You talked to Amakata about what would happen if we decided we didn’t want to be together.”

Makoto bit back a groan as he realized what had happened. “Who told you about that? Amakata?”

Haru shook his head. “I talked to her about it a few weeks ago, but she didn’t say anything. It was Kisumi. He said that you’d told him about it.”

“So Kisumi– wait. You talked to her about it too?” Haru froze, then nodded slowly. Makoto took a deep breath. “Okay, yes, I talked to Amakata about it, but not because I want to break up. As for telling Kisumi, it was only because he wouldn’t stop asking questions about Truemates, and it just slipped out.”

“Then why did you ask Amakata about it?”

“Why did you?”

“Because… At first it was because I wanted to know if it was possible for us to be apart at all. When I found out we could… I wanted to make sure that if you didn’t want to be with me anymore, you could still be happy.”

Makoto nodded. “That’s exactly why I did it too.”

“But I only thought about it because Kisumi was hanging all over you! What— ”

“Haru, I know what you’re about to ask, but please, don’t.”

“Why not!” Haru sat up a little straighter then, eyes cautious and nervous. “Did I… Did I do something, or— ”

“No! You didn’t do anything. Haru it’s— ” Makoto groaned, resting his face in his hands. “I… it was about two weeks before Kisumi showed up. You and Rin were talking about some of the people who had lived at the estate before I came here, and… and Rin mentioned an Alpha girl that you use to like.”

“Aki something or other. Rin said you had a thing for her, and I–”

“Wait!” Haru threw up a hand. “You’re telling me you got jealous over a girl who lived at the estate when I was fourteen, and was five years older than me?”

Makoto chewed his lip. “Well, when you put it like that it sounds stupid... but you’d never mentioned anyone before me–”

“Because there was no one before you. Aki was nice, but that’s it. I didn’t have a thing for her.”

“Yeah.” Makoto wasn’t completely convinced, but he tried to get the conversation back on topic. “I know you don’t like her anymore or anything. I just... I couldn’t help but wonder if you could break up with me, if you found someone better for you.” Makoto stared down at his hands. “I wanted to know that if you really wanted to leave, you could be happy.”

“Oh.” Haru went quiet. “The same as me, then.”

Makoto smiled gently and leaned in to press a kiss against Haru’s forehead. “Yeah, same as you.”

“We’re both kind of stupid, right?”

“Yeah. But that’s enough for tonight, Haru. It’s been a long night. Get some sleep, and we’ll talk more in the morning, okay?”

Haru nodded and laid back down, quiet for a moment, before he spoke up. “Makoto?”

“Yeah?”

“Could you... I mean...” Haru frowned, chewing his lip, but he didn’t need to speak. Makoto was overwhelmed by the strongest emotion he had felt from the bond in weeks. It was an aching feeling, one of longing, that echoed through the bond. It was a feeling Makoto echoed with every fiber of his being, every cell in his body urging him to seek out comfort with Haru, to start healing in his arms. He laid down, under the covers, and pulled Haru close. Haru twisted in his arms and wrapped his arms around Makoto, pressing his face into Makoto’s shoulder. Makoto sighed, bringing his face to the curve where Haru’s shoulder and neck met, breathing in the beautiful scent of his Truemate.

“I’ve missed this,” Makoto whispered. “I’ve missed you.”

“I’ve missed you too,” Haru whispered. They were quiet then, listening to the sound of each other’s breathing as they slowly drifted off to sleep in each other’s arms.

Chapter End Notes

Well, I hope that made up for all the drama in the last few chapters. Only one more chapter to go, and then we have the epilogue. I really hope that they both live up to your expectations guys!

Thank you all for reading! As always, I love hearing from all of you. Thanks again to my amazing beta reader, who actually came up with the name for this chapter. I hope you all enjoyed this week’s chapter, and I will see you all next week with the next chapter!
Farewells

Chapter Summary

The morning after all the craziness, Nagisa knocks on the door with a letter for Haru, setting some big changes in motion.

Chapter Notes

WARNING!!!

There are mentions of domestic abuse during the first scene on the beach. Nothing graphic, but you do see the brusies

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A pounding on the door woke Haru from his sleep, and he blinked around the room, sleepy and unfocused. He wasn’t sure exactly how late they had stayed up the night before, but he knew it had been well after midnight. He glared at the alarm clock, the neon red lights bright, informing him that it was only eight in the morning.

Someone knocked again, and Haru scrambled from the bed quietly, determined not to wake the Alpha sleeping beside him. He stumbled over to the door and pulled it open.

Haru wasn’t sure exactly how bad he looked, considering how little sleep he’d had, but judging by Nagisa’s face, it was probably pretty bad. Of course, Nagisa didn’t look much better. The boy seemed almost sickly, pale with dark shadows under eyes that watched him worriedly as Haru opened the door. “Haru-chan… Are you feeling okay?”

Haru tried to remember if he had seen Nagisa after he had left the celebration on the beach, but nothing came to mind, which meant that the Omega had probably only heard about everything that had happened in front of the hotel. No doubt from stressed out and slightly dramatic Rin. So, it was not surprising that Nagisa was looking at him like he expected Haru to fall to pieces at any moment.

Despite the mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion he felt, and the heavy weight of sleep that still had a hold on him, Haru found that he felt almost empty, though not in the same way as before. Before, the emptiness had weighed him down, leaving him feeling as though he was lost, unsure. Now he just felt light, almost weightless. It wasn’t necessarily a pleasant feeling, but he’d take it over the constant weight he’d felt for the last week.

Trying to focus, Haru grumbled out, “I’m okay. Is something wrong?”
“Nothing’s wrong, Haru! Why does something have to be wrong for me to come check on you?”

Haru just stared at him, and Nagisa sighed. “Okay. Really, it’s nothing wrong. It’s just… well, I wanted to make sure you were okay, and Rin wanted me to give this to you.” Nagisa held out a slightly crumpled envelope. “He said it was important. But then all that stuff happened with you and Mako-chan and Kisumi, and he just didn’t think it was the right time– ”

“Nagisa.”

“But he said it was important! So, he asked me to give it to you today, as soon as possible, and I know you probably don’t feel the best right now, but it looks… it looks like the letters. The ones you get at home sometimes.” He thrust his hand out, holding an envelope.

Haru’s mouth hung open, his dizzying weightlessness faded quickly as he stared at the envelope. He took it carefully, almost as though it was a snake ready to bite him.

He mumbled his thanks and shut the door, still staring at the letter. He leaned against the door and with a deep breath, opened it.

He pulled out a single, thin sheet of paper, identical to the ones he usually received at the Estate. His hands shook as he opened it, and he began to read.

Haruka,

Hello, sweetheart. I’m sorry I haven’t written in a while. Your father has been watching me more and more since he almost caught me sending the last one. He’s gotten worse in the last few months.

Haruka, I just thought I would let you know that I’m in Iwatobi right now. I know it’s sudden, and I know you might not want to see me, dear, and that’s fine. But your friend Rin encouraged me to come here, and he found me a place to stay where I couldn’t be tracked by your father. Rin mentioned that you’d found a mate, and I’m staying with his family. They’re so sweet, Haruka. If this Makoto is anything like them, I’m sure he’s an amazing young man.

If you would like to see me, I’ll be there until eight tomorrow. Rin wanted me to come to the ceremony tonight, but it just wasn’t right. I don’t deserve to intrude on your life any more than necessary, and especially not during something so important. But if you want to meet me, nothing could make me happier.

Anyways, if you want to see me, I’ll be here. If not, I understand. Just know that I love you Haruka. Despite everything, you are and have always been my world.

I love you, my sweet, brave boy.

-Mom

He read the letter once, then twice. Over and over again, until the words echoed in his head. His mother was here, in Iwatobi. She’d managed to get away, had risked the chairman’s wrath to come and see him. He stared at the letter, deliberating, before straightening up and walking back to the bed. He crawled on it, and gently began to shake Makoto awake. It took only a moment for his eyes to open, the green peering up at him. “Haru?”

“Hey, I know it’s early.”

“It’s fine,” he mumbled, sitting up. “What’s wrong?”
“Um, I wanted to see if you could get dressed and come with me. There’s someone I need you to meet.”

“Huh?” He rubbed his eyes. “You know someone here?”

Haru nodded. “It’s important.”

Makoto looked at him for a moment, then he nodded. He flipped the blankets back and rolled out of bed. “Okay, so where are we going?”

“Your house. I… I want you to meet my mother.”

They stood outside the Tachibana home, and Haru tried to ignore the way he trembled as he stared at the door.

Makoto reached out and took his hand, leaning down to press a kiss to the side of his head. “It’s okay, Haru, really.”

Haru just shook his head. He had been so sure he was ready to see her, after all this time, but now, just moments away from her, he didn’t think he was.

“If you really don’t want to, we can go back to the hotel. You don’t owe her anything.”

“I know… but I haven’t seen her since I was thirteen, Makoto. I want to see her. Getting letters from her just isn’t enough. I’ve missed her. But—” He couldn’t finish, just stared ahead.

“Take your time, Haru. We can wait.”

Haru almost smiled at the patient sound of his Truemates voice, and he shook his head. “No, let’s do this now.” He took a deep breath, and stepped forward, knocking on the door.

Beyond the door, they heard the sound of feet clomping towards door, and Haru took a step back and braced himself. The door flew open, and Ran and Ren surged through, Ran throwing herself into Haru as Ren rammed into his brother. “You’re here!” They chimed unison.

Makoto laughed and ruffled his brother’s hair, and Ran pulled away grinning. “Haru,” she whispered. “There’s a really pretty lady here. Mom and Dad won’t let us ask her any questions, but she looks like you, and she keeps asking about you and big brother. Do you know her?”

Haru swore his heart skipped in fear, but he nodded. “Yeah I know her. But don’t worry about it, okay?”

Ran frowned. “I’m not… okay, maybe I’m a little worried. But she’s not going to take you away, right Haru? You’re gonna stay with Makoto?”

Her stare was insistent, and Haru could feel Ren and Makoto’s eyes on them too. He still couldn’t quite make out Makoto’s feeling though their bond, but he thought that maybe there was something warm and reassuring there. “No, I’m not going anywhere.” he smiled at the girl and patted her head carefully, not wanting to mess up her hair. “Can you take us to her?”

Ran nodded. “Yeah, come on in!” she hurried back inside, calling, “Mom, Dad! Haru and Big Brother are here!”
“Geez, she didn’t even notice me,” Makoto laughed, walking up to Haru’s hand again. “Guess we know who her favorite is.”

“Still you. I’m just something new and exciting.”

“I don’t know,” Ren grinned. “You haven’t seen what she’s been writing in her diary about you. Oh, wait, I shouldn’t have said that,” he bit his lip nervously, looking up at the two older boys. “Don’t tell her?”

“As long as you stop reading the diary. That’s none of your business.” Makoto clapped a hand down on his brother’s shoulder and squeezed it carefully, frowning, but he couldn’t quite hide the amusement in his eyes, and Haru had to bite back a laugh.

“Okay, I won’t!” The boy promised as he led them into the house and towards the sitting room. They walked in, and Haru’s amusement died as he looked around the room to find Makoto’s parents watching him, concerned. Across from them, Haru met a pair of startlingly familiar eyes. Eyes that he looked at every day in the mirror, but that had always seemed warmer and kinder than his own.

Now they were filled with tears.

“Haruka,” his mother whispered, rising to her feet as she looked him over; Haru did the same. She was still as thin as ever, though she looked more sickly now, her raven black hair was still as dark as ever, despite her being in her forties by now. She must have dyed it, probably at the chairman’s insistence. After all, he couldn’t have a trophy wife that looked a day over twenty-five. And truly, she didn’t. She still had that strange, eternally youthful look that he remembered from when he was a child, and looked exactly like the pictures Haru kept hidden in an album under his bed.

His mother took a step towards him, hesitant. “My god,” she whispered. “You’ve grown up so much…you’re just so— I don’t—” She gave a weak laugh and shook her head. “I hate us for doing this to you. Watching you grow up through pictures snuck behind his back… you deserve so much better.” She gave a choked gasp, a hand going to her mouth. As she moved, her sleeve slipped down, and Haru almost growled at the purples and blues and blacks colored down her arm. “I’m sorry. I just— could just hold you, just for a moment?” She stepped forward again, then paused, her eyes widening in shock. “Oh, I forgot. Forget I asked, Haruka. I forgot you don’t like to be touched.” She sniffled, her smile watery as she stared adoringly at him. Before he could stop himself, before he even knew what he was doing, he dropped Makoto’s hand, closed the distance between them, and pulled her in for a hug. She gasped, then sobbed as she reached back, whispering his name over and over again. He didn’t speak; he just kept holding her.

They walked down the beach, Makoto and Haru holding hands as Haru’s mother walked by Haru’s side. Things were quiet for a while, no one knowing quite what to say. Haru watched his mother slowly loosen, suddenly reminded of how drastic the differences were between Mrs. Nanase, wife of Chairman Nanase, and his mother. Whenever others were around, or even when she was by herself, he had always seen her as cold and distant, holding herself to the high expectations that her husband’s title carried. But whenever Haru had been around, the cool facade dropped, and she was his mother again, the woman with his eyes, who shared his love of water, who taught him to swim. The woman who had done everything she could to protect him, when she could have protected herself.

“It’s beautiful here,” she said, pausing to stare out at the ocean. “What I wouldn’t give to be able to live so close to the water. You would probably never be able to drag me away from the ocean,
though.”

“You could live here,” Haru mumbled under his breath, and his mother must not have understood him, as she gave him a quizzing look, but before she could ask, Makoto stepped in.

“So, I guess Haru got his love of water from you. Most days it takes me at least an hour to convince him to leave the pool or the bath.”

Haru’s mother laughed. “That sounds like my son. He was exactly the same when he was little. I remember when he was five years old, he was convinced he was a mermaid, and told me that if he stayed in the water long enough, his legs would turn into fins.” She laughed. “His father told me that it wasn’t good to let him stay in there for hours on end, but it always made him so happy.”

Silence fell over the group, and the continued walking. Haru chewed his lip, desperately fishing for something to say, anything. So many years, so many questions he had wanted to ask, but now that she was here, he couldn’t think of anything. Finally, he asked, “Mom?”

“Yes?”

“Why… why are you still there? With him?”

She stopped in her tracks, and gave him a sad look. “Haruka.”

“No, Mom, I don’t understand.” Haru thought back to the bruises he had seen on her arms, saw how thin an almost sickly she looked, and anger rose in him. “It can’t be that you still love him! He hurts you, Mom! So why don’t you just–”

“It’s not that simple, Haruka.”

“Yes, it is!” Makoto tightened his grip on his hand, keeping him still, holding him steady. “He’s hurt you, he’s hurt all of us, you have to see that–”

“I do see it, Haruka.” Her gaze turned cold and hard, instantly quelling Haru’s anger. “I see it every day. Every time I wake up and realize that you are hours away from me, and that he’s the reason why. Every time I go that hospital and have to listen to those doctors talk about my son and his friends as though you’re animals.”

“Mom, I’m so–” he started, but she shook her head.

“No, you’re right to be angry, Haruka. You’ve been through so much. But, hopefully, that’s all going to change soon.”

“What do you mean?”

His mother sighed. “I’m not supposed to say anything. I will probably get in trouble for telling you this, but you deserve to know what’s coming.” She looked them both in the eyes, her gaze serious. “But you and Makoto are the first outsiders to know about what I’m about to tell you, and for your safety and the safety of your friends, I have to ask that you don’t tell anyone else.”

“What kind of changes, ma’am?” Makoto asked, his tone hard, suspicious. Haru’s mother caught it instantly and she laughed.

“Good. You’re right to be suspicious. I really do like him, Haruka. He’s smart.” She gave him a kind smile. “I hope that soon you won’t have to always be on guard, but for now, it’s a good thing.
“The changes will hopefully be for the best. I can’t tell you everything, but what I can say is that I’ve been working behind the scenes for the last few years, trying to get things changed for Alphas and Omegas. Basically, within the next few months, the Board of Alpha and Omega Affairs is going to be overturned. A select few doctors and I have been slowly gather evidence against the Board and hopefully, by the end of the year, we should have enough to take them out of office.”

The boys were silent, staring at Haru’s mother incredulously.

“When you say the board, do you mean—”

“I mean everyone. Every single member of the board will have multiple charges raised against them. Malpractice, medical negligence, unlawful human experimentation. By the time we’re done with them, not a single one will be able to work in the medical field again, and none of them will be able to hold positions of power.”

“So, wait,” Haru shook his head, trying to focus. “What does this mean? Are we revealing Alphas and Omegas to the public? What about the Chairman?”

“We don’t know about going public. Changing too much too fast could be ruinous. But, we are working to get some people who are more sympathetic to Alphas and Omegas to be in charge of that in the future. And as for your father,” his mother reached out and took his hand, locking eyes with him. “He’ll have a few extra charges against him. Once I’m done with him, he will never be able to touch us again.”

“Are you sure?”

His mother nodded. “I’ve got help, Haruka. Any time he lays a hand on me, any time he’s threatened me, or you in the last year, we have proof.” She gave him a gentle smile and squeezed his hand. “It’s just for a bit longer.”

“But, ma’am,” Makoto spoke up, drawing Haru’s mother’s attention to the Alpha. “Isn’t that dangerous for you?”

She nodded. “Yes, it is. But if I don’t do this, there are others who could be hurt worse.”

“What do you mean?” Haru asked, but his mother shook her head.

“I can’t tell you yet. But soon, Haruka. Very soon.” She dropped his hand and shuffled her feet. “Actually, I told you all that for a reason. I wouldn’t have asked if I thought there was any other way. I can’t stand that I’m putting you in more danger than you’re already in. But Haruka, you’ve been in the system longer than most. You’ve seen the problems it has, where improvements could be made. When this is all over, and the board has been replaced, we want someone on the inside who can help us. Would you be willing to help?”

Haru nodded without a second thought. “Of course.”

She smiled at him. “Thank you. It might be a little stressful, but I know you can handle it.”

Makoto stiffened beside him, and he glanced at Haru worriedly. “How would it be stressful?”

Haru shook his head. “It doesn’t matter. I’ll do it.”

“Haru—”

“Makoto, I’ll be fine,”
"I’m not sure."

"Makoto," Haru turned to his Truemate. Things had been so confused and messed up, but for the first time in a long while, Haru knew what he wanted. "You heard what she said. We’d be able to help others. We’d be able to help ourselves."

"I know, and that’s great, but are you sure that you’ll be okay?"

Haru nodded, lowering his voice so his mother wouldn’t hear him. "Yeah, I’ll be fine. We’ve still got some time to work out my issues. Whatever comes, I think we can do it."

Makoto stared at him for a moment, chewing on his lip as he watched Haru, and then he nodded. "Okay, we’ll do this. But I’ll have some stipulations. I want to make sure you’re okay first, Haru. I want to help everyone too, but your most important to me."

Haru felt his heartbeat pick up at the words, and he nodded. "Thank you."

Makoto said nothing, just squeezed his hand, and they turned back to Haru’s mother, who was looking at them worriedly. "Is everything okay?" she asked.

Haru nodded. "Everything’s fine. We’d be glad to help."

His mother’s smile was blinding. "Thank you. Thank you so much, Haruka. And you too, Makoto. Thank you for taking care of my boy."

"Ma’am, he does so much more for me." He squeezed Haru’s hand gently, and Haru’s mother smiled.

"Haruka, I really do like this one. Kind, smart, protective, and very easy on the eyes." She laughed as Makoto’s face lit up bright red.

The conversation lightened then, the tense pressure weighing over them all drifting away as they walked down the beach. Haru’s mother chatted happily about friends back on Tokyo and memories of Haru as a child, much to the Omegas dismay. "Okay, okay, last one, I promise." She ignored Haru’s glare, her gaze fixed on Makoto with a playful smile. "This one time, when he was probably about three-years-old, he had this stuffed dolphin—"

"Mom!"

"Haruka, I’m talking. Please do not interrupt. Anyways," her voice shifted from cool and chiding then back to warm in an instant, but the playful smile never left her lips. "He was never without that dolphin. I tried to wash it about a week after he got it, and he demanded that if Mr. Dolphin got to take a bath, he could just go in the bath with him." Makoto, the traitor, laughed. Haru frowned at him, facing heating up in embarrassment. "After I caught him trying to climb into the washing machine to be with it, I finally started sneaking it out of his room at night to wash it."

Makoto laughed again. "That’s cute."

"It’s embarrassing," Haru muttered, and Makoto squeezed his hand. His mother’s laughter died off as a she glanced at her watch, and her smile fell slightly. "It’s getting late, and your father will be home tomorrow."

The words settled hard on Haru. "Are you sure?"

She nodded. "Yes, I’m sure. It’s just for a while longer, Haruka. Then he won’t be able to hurt either
Haru nodded, chewing his lip, but he kept his grip tight on Makoto’s hand. He didn’t want to let her go back to that apartment, back where she could get hurt. She must have realized his hesitation, because, with a cautious glance around the empty beach, she leaned in close, her voice hushed. “Haruka, I need you to understand. I’m not just doing this for us. There’s someone back in Tokyo, someone that I have to protect.” Haru frowned at her, confused, and she continued. “He’s… young. Too young. And they’re doing awful things to him, Haruka. I have to make sure he will be safe before we can do anything. Please, please understand me, Haruka. I failed you so many times over the years. I don’t want to fail him, too.”

Haru didn’t want to understand, and he didn’t like how much sense what she’d said made to him. But protecting someone, even at the cost of her safety… that had been all he thought he could do for anyone else. He felt Makoto stiffen at his side, and knew he was thinking of last night.

Haru dropped Makoto’s hand and raised it to cover his mother’s on his arm. “Protecting him is fine. I understand. But you can’t just protect him because you feel you owe it to someone, or because you think it will redeem you. That thought will eat you up, tear you apart from the inside. The past is in the past, Mom. I’ve had to learn that lesson these last few weeks. Leave the past where it belongs, and work to become better for the future. Help that boy because it’s what needs to be done, Mom, not because you feel like you owe it to the world. But please stay safe. You can’t help anyone if you’re the one hurting.” He squeezed her hand, and he could feel Makoto incredulous gaze on him.

“When did you get so smart?” she whispered, voice broken as she pulled away. “I’ll try, Haruka. But you do the same for me, okay?”

Haru nodded, and his mother turned a kind smile on him. “We should go. Come on.”

The walk to the train station was a quiet one, Makoto watching Haru cautiously as the Omega and his mother walked side by side, arms brushing now and then. She had arranged to have her bags taken to the station earlier that morning, so there was no need to stop by the Tachibana house.

“She shook the Alpha’s hand before turning back to Haru. He leaned in and hugged her quickly, murmuring “Be safe,” in her ear.

“You too, dear. I’ll try my best to write again.”

Haru nodded, and she pulled away from him, took a deep, steadying breath, and stepped into the train, waving at them both before going inside to find a seat.

They stayed quiet, and Haru was sure that he could feel something aching in the bond; just a faint sense of something that reminded Haru of unease, but it still felt so faint, it was hard to tell if it was there, or if he was imagining it.

“Haru, you okay?” Makoto asked quietly, voice hesitant.

“Yeah, I think so.”

Makoto took deep breath, and said, “Um, so I think that maybe everyone else is here too. I think… “He paused, still unsure, then rushed out, “This is Kisumi’s train back to Tokyo too.” He rocked
back on his heels, waiting to see how Haru would respond.

Haru felt guilty at the mention of the Omega. Kisumi hadn’t really hadn’t done anything wrong in the last two weeks. Everything had just been a mess, and Kisumi had just ended up in the middle of it. Even though the boy still irritated him, Haru figured he owed him an apology at the least.

“Let’s go find them,” he said. “It shouldn’t be too difficult.”

It wasn’t difficult at all; the couple heard Nagisa’s voice long before they saw anyone, and when they finally did catch sight of the other Alphas and Omegas, they saw that the other travellers in the stations seemed to be giving the group a wide berth. They all looked up as Haru and Makoto walked up, their expressions varying degrees of confusions, curiosity, and caution, except for Kisumi, who looked horrified.

“Haru, are you–” he stared to ask, but Haru just raised a hand, cutting him off.

“I’m fine. Seriously, I’m good,” he glanced around the group, noting that Rin, Sousuke, Momo, and Ai were missing. “Where’s the newlyweds?”

“The left early this morning. That’s why Rin gave me that letter,” Nagisa piped up. He shoved his hand in his pocket and pulled out a tiny piece of paper and held it out to Haru. “He also wanted me to give you this, but you shut the door this morning before I could.”

Haru took it and opened it, finding Rin’s familiar scrawl on the page.

_They made me leave. They kept saying stuff like “these tickets are non-refundable” and “Haru will be fine, he has Makoto,” or whatever. But you better call as soon as you’re back at the Estate. You’ve got some questions to answer._

Haru sighed and held the paper out for Makoto to read, who chuckled nervously. “That’s going to be a fun conversation.”

“We’ll call tonight.” Haru shoved the paper in his pocket and turned to Kisumi. “Can I talk to you?”

Kisumi nodded, still looking scared, and they stepped away from the group. “Look Haru, I really need to–”

“I’m sorry.” Haru cut him off, leaving Kisumi with his mouth hanging open. “I was a dick to you, and I’m sorry about that.”

Kisumi just stared for a second as the words sunk in, and then he was shaking his head rapidly. “No way, Haru. This was all my fault. I didn’t know–”

“No one knew. That was the point of me not telling anyone. But I dragged you into my shit, and I was pretty suspicious of you, and I shouldn’t have been.”

“No, it’s fine. Wasn’t your fault. But I do have to ask… What did you mean last night? When you said I won?”

“Kisumi!” Makoto hissed. “Don’t bring that up!”

“I’m not a doll, Makoto. I won’t break.” Haru reached down to squeezed Makoto’s hand, trying to reassure him. He turned back to Kisumi. “I was under the impression that you liked Makoto. It was a bit stupid–”
“What!!?” Haru broke off at Kisumi shriek, watching as the boy’s face matched his hair. “Makoto? I don’t like Makoto! No offense,” he told Makoto, who just nodded.

“None taken.”

Haru continued from where he’d been interrupted. “Anyway, I know you don’t like him now. I was… confused, I guess. I was seeing stuff that wasn’t there. I should have known that you just wanted to be friends.”

Kisumi’s face went a little more pink, and he hung his head. “I mean… I was hanging around him a bit, I guess, but I never liked him.”

“I know, that’s why I–”

“I like you.”

Haru gaped dumbly at him, the words not quite sinking in. “What?”

“I never liked Makoto, at least like that. I mean he’s nice, but… you were more to my taste.” He sighed. “Ai used to show me pictures of all of you back in Australia, you know, things that Rin or Sousuke would send him, and I just really thought you were cute. And then I showed up, and I was excited to get to meet you, but the moment I walked in, you were practically draped around Makoto. So… I thought the best way to get you to look at me was to mess with what you loved, and since that seemed to be Makoto…” He trailed off, and then burst out “Look, in retrospect, it was a terrible idea. I just wanted you to look at me.” He went quiet then, arms crossed in front of him, staring determinedly away from Haru, whose mouth was still hanging open. They stayed quiet for a moment, and slowly the tenseness faded from Kisumi shoulders, and he seemed to sag a little.

“Wow, I actually feel a lot better. Maybe I should have just said it straight out to begin with. Probably would have saved us all a lot of trouble.”

Haru was reeling. Kisumi liked him? It just didn’t seem possible. But he had said it, had confessed his feelings aloud. Haru knew he should say something. After all, you were supposed to respond if someone confessed to you, right? With Makoto, things had just sort of grown naturally. This just seemed sudden and terrifying. “Uh, I… thank-you for telling me, but I, uh… I’m very committed to Makoto, so–”

“Oh my god!” Kisumi laughed, hand going to clutch his stomach as he laughed. “You are not seriously trying to reject me, right?” He was still giggling, and Haru turned to look at Makoto. Had he done something wrong?

Makoto just chuckled quietly. “Just give him a second.”

Kisumi’s laughter died off, and finally, he said, “Haru, I get it. It’s cool. Makoto’s a lucky guy. But I have to say, Ai definitely gave me the wrong impression about you.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, he always described you as so cool and collected. But you’re not. You actually pretty damn awkward. It’s kind of cute.” He sighed, but it was his usual dramatically drawn out sigh, and a smile still played on his lips. “I won’t promise not to flirt with you next time I see you, but I’ll try to cool it a little, okay?” Haru, still reeling, nodded, and Kisumi gave him an outright grin. “Great!” He turned and walked back to the group, and Makoto and Haru followed.

“Well,” Kisumi smiled at them all. “It’s been fun! Nagisa, you have to invite me to your ceremony, okay?”
The blond nodded enthusiastically. “Of course!”

“Great! I’ll try and come to visit again.” Kisumi waved and stepped onto the train. “I’ll let you know when I’m back in the area.”

“You’re always welcome with us, Kisumi.” Amakata gave him a kind smile as the intercom on the train announced its imminent departure.

“Thanks, Amakata.” He waved as the doors shut, and the train began to slowly pull away. They all waved as the train pulled away, watching until they could no longer make out Kisumi standing in the door way. Haru glanced in the windows as the train began to pick up speed, and he thought that maybe he spotted his mother in one of the window seats. He waved, just in case. They stood there, watching the train as it exited the station, down the tracks, until it was little more than a black dot on the horizon.

“Makoto, we have to leave soon,” Haru said as he followed Makoto back up the beach. After the train had pulled away, Amakata had told them that they would all be loading up and driving back to the Estate soon. When everyone split up, Makoto had taken Haru’s hand, saying that he had convinced Nagisa to pack for them. Now they were jogging down the beach, not far from the train station. The Alpha seemed to be looking for something in particular.

“This shouldn’t take long,” Makoto answered. “And we’re near my house. Amakata said she’d pick us up there.” he stopped, glancing around. “I think… this looks about right.” He turned and smiled at Haru. “This place looks familiar?”

Haru glanced around. This part of the beach honestly looked like the rest of the beach, but when he glanced off in to the distance, he thought that maybe he could see the shape of cars in a parking lot to his right, and down towards his left the houses did look slightly familiar. It wasn’t until he saw a group of children sprint down the street and onto the beach before he truly understood where they were.

“Is this… the beach from the night before my birthday?”

Makoto nodded eagerly. “Yeah! I had to do a little asking around to make sure I could find it again, but I’ve been wanting to bring you here for a while.”

“You have?”

He nodded. “I mean… yeah, but after last night… this is where we patched things up after Tokyo, it just seemed right to come here after last night.” He took a deep breath, and turned to face Haru head on, taking one of his hands in his own. “I’ve got a few things I want to say, if you’ll let me.”

“Aren’t you already saying things?”

Makoto laughed. “Yes, I guess I am.” He took another deep breath eyes falling shut, and when he opened them, Haru couldn’t help but get a little nervous. He looked so serious.

“Haru, things have been a bit of a mess these last couple weeks, and if I’m completely honest with you, it all scared the hell out of me. I’ve been able to tell when something wrong was for the last few months, and I was always able to help before, so knowing something was wrong and not being able to help… it almost killed me. But I think that just proves that we still have a lot to learn about each other, more room to grow. Things have just been so simple and easy between us for so long that it’s
easy for me to forget that we’ve only been together a few months.” He paused, shuffling in place, taking a couple deep breaths to steady himself, before continuing. “I know I’ve said it a lot in the heat of the moment, but… I want to tell you now, so that it’s all out there, so that you know exactly how I feel about you.”

“But you told me last night—”

“When I was desperate to keep you with me. When you were threatening to leave in order to protect us all. I want to say it now, right here, so you know that I love you no matter what. You are worth so much more to me than just some heat of the moment thing. I… maybe it’s stupid, but I wanted the first time I told you to be something huge, something that you would look back on and never doubt again. So, consider this my do-over, my chance to tell you without anything looming over us.”

“Makoto, you don’t need—”

“I know. I told you it was stupid.” He laughed weakly. “Just… can you go along with me on this? Please?”

Haru nodded, and Makoto sighed in relief.

“Great. Um… okay. Haru,” Makoto seemed to straighten up, and he looked Haru directly in the eyes, gaze never wavering as he spoke. “We have our problems. We’ve got stuff to work through. But the idea of spending that time with you, working together to try and move forward is honestly the greatest thing I can imagine for my future. I was never sure where I was going in my future. I had ideas, but there was nothing that ever really got me excited about my future. But now… I think I felt like that because my future was always headed towards you. That maybe my future didn’t make sense because I was still missing a major part of it. When we walked on this beach that night a few months ago, we talked about all the lives that we could have led, but each one involved us, together. You said that it was because, no matter what, in any life we led, we would have found each other, and I think you’re right.

“You are such an essential part of me now, that I don’t even want to imagine things without you. Haru… I love you. I love you so much, it drives me crazy some days. I’ve loved you for months, but I wasn’t brave enough to say it until you were almost gone, and I’m sorry for that. But it does not diminish how much I love you, not even a little bit. My love for you has changed since I first realized it. I used to not even be able to look at you without feeling almost dizzy with it. Now I look at you, I touch you, and it’s like the world around me calms. Everything slows down, and for just a moment, I remember what’s really important. The love I feel for you will probably change and grow day to day, but I am so excited and terrified to see where the future takes us.”

Haru couldn’t breathe; it felt like the air was trying to choke its way out of his throat, hitching in odd places. His eyes watered, but he didn’t cry. Instead he just shook his head. “I was just expecting you to say it. Didn’t realize you had prepared a speech.”

Makoto laughed, the sound filling Haru with joy for the first time in so long. He sounded so breathless, carefree. It was as though Makoto had been biting back those words every day, and now that there were out there, he could breathe again. He stepped forward, grasping of Haru’s hands in each of his own, and he swung them slightly.

“Yeah… I think I came up with three different things I wanted to say, and they all just kind of mixed together and rushed out. I swear, in my head, that all made a lot more sense.”

“It was perfect.” Haru leaned forward, leaning up to press his lips carefully to Makoto’s, joining them together for the first time in too long. They were cool, slightly chapped, so familiar that he just
wanted to cling to Makoto and never move. But the broke apart, Makoto staring at him as though he was his whole world.

“God, I love you,” Makoto whispered, leaning his forehead against Haru’s, eyes falling shut.

“I love you, too.” Makoto’s eyes snapped open, and Haru could his surprise faintly in the bond. The feelings were getting stronger, little by little. It reminded him of the very beginning, back when he had never even realized that the little feelings he felt pulling at him randomly weren’t his own. It wasn’t perfect, but it was a start.

“Haru, I didn’t tell you all that because I expected–”

“I know. It’s just… you said what was I thinking, only so much better.” He shook his head, but then smiled up at him, hoping that the feeling was returning to the bond for him too, that maybe Makoto could feel his sincerity, his absolute adoration when he leaned in, kissed him quickly and whispered. “I love you,” one more time.

Makoto breath hitched, and in an instant, his arms were around him, pulling him close. Haru wiggled his arms free from where Makoto had trapped them at his sides, and hugged him closer, burying his face into the Alpha shoulder.

Things would change, and they had challenges to face. Haru wasn’t sure what would happen in the coming years, but he was sure, standing on their beach, in Makoto’s arms, his Truemates voice murmuring in his ears, that whatever came their way, they could handle it. As long as they were together, they would manage.

Chapter End Notes

Guys, I’m sorry it’s a little late. I’ve just been a little anal about these last two chapters, trying to make sure that everything is perfect, or at least as close to perfect as we can get. The epilogue is finished, though, and unless disaster strikes, it should be up Saturday.

I'm not gonna say much here, since the epilogue goes up in a few day. I'll just put all of my blubbering feelings about the story ending there. For now, I'll just say thank you for reading and Thank you Sarahsharpiemarker for the work you put into making sure that this story is presentable. Please, let me know what you think of this chapter, and I'll see you all soon with the Epilogue: Changes.
Makoto awoke to the sound of the buzzing alarm clock distantly. He groaned, keeping his eyes shut as he tossed his arm to the side, out of the safety of the warm blankets, fumbling for the disturbance. He heard a crash, felt something cold and wet brush against his fingers, and his eyes shot open. He flung himself upright in his bed and looked over at the bedside table. The glass of water he had brought in last night was tipped over, spilling what little water had been left in it all over the wooden stand.

“Shoot,” he grumbled, scanning the floor around the familiar bedroom he and Haru shared. Hadn’t they left their clothes on the floor last night? There had to be something he could soak up the water with. But the floor around the bed was empty; Haru must have cleaned up before he had gotten up to go to the pool.

Makoto heard the quiet drip of the water falling to the floor. Cursing under his breath, he tossed the blankets to the side, shivering as his bare, warm skin met the cool August morning air. It was still too warm during the day to turn on the heater, which meant mornings were especially chilly, something the cold wooden floors beneath his feet attested to as he sprinted for the bathroom and hunted down a small towel to clean up the water. Once he found one, he hurried back to his bedside and began to mop up the water, quickly shifting his phone, the alarm clock, and the framed photo he kept there to the bed to stop any water damage. Once the worst of the water was cleaned up, he wiped down each object, clearing them of any water droplets they’d collected. Once the phone and the clock were back on the stand, he grabbed the photo and glanced it over carefully. Luckily, the photo was clear, untouched by the water, though it looked like the fame had collected some along the bottom. He wiped it away, then sat on the bed, looking at the picture.

It was his favorite of the numerous pictures taken at his and Haru’s bonding ceremony. Haru had complained when Makoto had framed it and given it the crowning spot on his nightstand, saying that it was a horrible picture of him, but Makoto disagreed. The Haru in the photo was breathtaking: his eyes were shimmering pooling of emotion, laughing in relief that the ceremony was over, that the three weeks of stressed planning and hurried decisions to make sure that everything was ready for their day had been worth it. Behind him, the ocean sparkled green and blue and orange against the setting sun, making the Omega’s eyes seem to dance along with the waves. His hair, which had started out neatly style, was windblown by the cool ocean breeze. It had been a March ceremony, only six months ago, and Gou had been worried it would be too cold to have the ceremony outdoors, but Makoto and Haru had insisted. Their spot on the Iwatobi beach was too important to them for them to be bonded anywhere else, and nature must have agreed; despite the cool breeze, the rest of the day had been mild, not so hot that they were dying in their suits, but not so cold that they spent the day shivering. It had been, to be completely honest, perfect.

Looking at the picture brought back so many memories from that day, like how Haru had looked at
him while Amakata had walked him down the aisle, acting as his protectors, the same role Haru had had for Rin’s ceremony. The Alpha woman had been unsure about taking on the role, since it was usually meant for family, and ever since the Board of Alpha and Omega Affairs had been arrested and Chairman Nanase had been forced out of office, divorced by his wife, and charged with domestic violence, along with his many medical crimes, Haru’s mother was a free woman, and had been using that freedom to see her son as often as possible. She also stepped in and helped to rebuild the board, replacing its previous members with doctors with a better understanding of and less hatred towards Alphas and Omegas. Without a college degree, she couldn’t act as true member of the board, so instead, she became the liaison, often traveling to meet Alphas and Omegas who were bonded and outside the estate, ones that had chosen not to live there, and visiting the estate as often as possible to help prepare its staff for the changes to come. This meant that she and Haru had been spending more time together, growing closer and making up for the years they had been kept apart. When Haru had asked Amakata to act as the protector in the ceremony, the woman had been surprised, sure that Haru would want his mother to have the role. It wasn’t until both Haru and his mother had cornered her one day, a week before the ceremony, and told her that she was the only one who was ever considered.

“You’ve been there for him where I couldn’t, Miho,” Haru’s mother had said. “You’ve been more of a mother to him than I could ever be. Nothing would make me happier than to see you in my son’s bonding ceremony, and I won’t hear a word otherwise.”

In the end, Amakata had been the one in the ceremony, while Haru’s mother had sat in the front row, tears of pride and joy in her eyes as she watched.

The picture brought back other memories too, ones that set butterflies in Makoto’s stomach just thinking about them. The way Haru had felt in his arms at the party afterwards, the way they had barely even danced to the music, and merely swaying in place, lost in each other. The way, later that night, when the bonding serum took effect, they lost themselves to the heat, the need to be together, and when they came to themselves, Makoto had spent what felt like a blissful eternity in Haru’s arms, marveling at the matching marks on their shoulders that linked them together physically.

At the memory, Makoto’s hand went the mark, feeling the indentations, how it ran just a few degrees cooler than the rest of his body, to match Haru’s temperature. It was more useful than he would have thought, knowing Haru’s temperature, mainly when it came to trying to find him around the Estate. If the mark was warmer than usual, then he was usually wandering outside. If it was cool, Makoto could usually find in him in the pool.

Of course, the most reliable way to find him was through their bond. Since the bonding ceremony, their Truemate connection had grown even stronger. Instead of just feeling what Haru felt, it often felt like a chord, tugging lightly at his chest, trying to lead him back to Haru’s side. It wasn’t distracting; in fact, unless he focused on it, he wouldn’t have even known it was there, but it was always reliable, thumping like a light pulse ready to lead him back to his heart.

Makoto smiled gently and set the photo aside, stood and stretched. It was almost nine; Haru would be waiting for him.

He dressed quickly, throwing on a t-shirt and his red and black plaid shirt button up over it. He quickly dug through his drawers in search of underwear and pants, leaving the clothes unfolded and piling out of the drawer afterwards, making it impossible to close. He tried to straighten things, but only managed to make it worse. Oh well, Haru would probably get on his case, but that was a problem for a later time. He finished dressing, brushed his finger through his hair quickly to make it look a little less flat, and hurried out the door, closing it behind him.
As he stepped into the hall, he could hear the thumping beat of music to his left, and he sighed. Had Asahi even gone to sleep last night? The boy seemed to be awake no matter the hour, and whether it was through his speakers or his headphones, he was always blaring music. Makoto didn’t really mind that in particular, if only–

“Hey Makoto!” Makoto jumped as the boy in question poked his head out, screaming loudly. The music, which should have gained clarity since the door opened, still just seemed to be a loud, thudding beat.

Makoto gave a quiet sigh as the beat began to pound its way into his head. If only Asahi didn’t have to yell anytime he needed to say something to be heard over his music. “Hi Asahi. You coming down for breakfast?”

“What’s Glasses making?”

“Rei. His name is Rei. And it’s pancakes.” There was a small headache now. It was almost like the beat had given up pounding, and was now drilling into his head.

“Sweet!” The young Alpha punched the air dramatically. “At least it’s not fish! I don’t know how Hard U can eat that stuff so early in the morning!”

The noise didn’t seem to be a beat anymore, just a constant, heavy thrumming. Makoto wondered if it was even music at all. “Uh huh,”

“I’ll be down in a bit!” the boy yelled a final time, then slammed the door shut, dulling the sound of the thumping, and Makoto blinked as his head cleared. He didn’t know how Asahi could stand that noise, but to each his own.

Makoto turned his back on the noisy room and headed downstairs. He glanced down the hallway towards the pool room, where the door was partially open, making Makoto smile. It looked like Haru’s little shadow had paid a visit. With a chuckle, Makoto made his way to the door and peered inside.

Haru was the only one there, happily swimming laps, blissfully unaware of anything except the water splashing around him, just like every morning when Makoto came to get him.

The morning swims had been Makoto’s idea, something that, when Haru’s therapist had heard about, she had enthusiastic about. She had encouraged Haru to start setting up a routine to follow every day, not something so strict that it could easily be broken, but more of a schedule that acted as a backbone for the rest of the day: swim for at least an hour in the morning, a walk around the estate with Makoto at three, a relaxing bath every evening. Just a few moments every day that, no matter how stressed Haru got, would give him some time to ground himself.

Haru had been unsure of the need for the routine in the beginning. The morning swim was always fine with him, and it was something he did with such a zealous delight that Makoto couldn’t help but feel a little proud that he had been the one to suggest something that could bring the Omega so much joy, and the bath in the evening never bothered him.

Haru had grumbled for the first few weeks whenever Makoto would pull him away from whatever he was doing to take the afternoon walk, muttering that it was unnecessary, but then, three weeks after the charges were brought against the board, when the new doctors were taking over management of the board, Haru’s mother showed up at their door, shivering in the cold February air, apologies on her tongue and a monumental stack of papers and folders in her arms.
“I’m so sorry, Haruka,” she’d gushed the moment that they’d let her in. “I didn’t realize just how messy this was going to be. I didn’t realize what I would be asking from you when I asked for your help.”

“Mom, it’s fine. I said that I’d help. What’s wrong?” Haru and Amakata had led the woman into the dining room, Makoto on their heels, Sasabe hurrying to the kitchen to get the exhausted-looking woman something to drink and eat. Haru’s mother set the mounds of papers down on the table, and then haphazardly started separating them into piles.

“They’re wanting to make more changes that I thought they would right off the bat.” She collapsed into a chair, her elbows going up on the table as she rested her head in her hands. “They want Amakata and Sasabe back in Tokyo. Not permanently, mind you. They won’t run the Estate anymore, but they will be the head medical staff here. They want to lighten your responsibilities; have you only worry about the medical side of the Estate. You’ll be running completely voluntary exams on Alphas and Omegas. Basically, the board wants to go back to what this place was supposed to be. It’s going to be a place where Alphas and Omegas are brought together to form a community, to find mates or help or anything else they need, and a place to actually explore how we can help you. It will be voluntary. No one will ever feel like they have to be a part of anything. I refuse to let that happen.” She raised her head, and Makoto was struck once again by just how similar she and Haru looked. The look in her eye, the fierce, protective set to her gaze was one that he saw so often in his Truemates eyes.

“Wait,” Haru had spoken up then, brow furrowing in confusion. “They want to take control of the Estate away from Amakata and Sasabe? But who would run it then?” His voice was carefully guarded, but he didn’t hide his emotions through their bond. Fear, panic, suspicion, doubt. They raged through Haru, and Makoto reached out and took his hand, squeezing it in reassurance.

“They want another Mated couple to take over. One that has proved to have leadership qualities, who already has the trust of the Alphas and Omegas at the Estate.” She looked at Haru with pleading, apologetic eyes. “They want you and Makoto to take over.” They had argued, saying that they weren’t right for the role, but by the time she left, Haru and Makoto had piles of paperwork stacked in their arms and a promise from Haru’s mother that she would be back in a week to collect the stacks.

With the stress of learning everything they needed to do to take over the Estate, Haru had begun to see the merit in taking time out of his afternoon to get away. These days, Makoto would often find Haru waiting anxiously for him, taking Makoto’s hand as soon as he arrived and whisking them outside, desperate for some time away from the responsibilities he now found placed on himself.

Makoto watched him now, slicing through the water intensely, and Makoto took a little time to admire Haru, noting just how relaxed and beautiful he looked in the water. It really was his natural element. Finally, he cleared his throat, trying to get Haru’s attention. “Morning, Haru.”

Haru swam towards him, and Makoto stepped towards the edge of the pool, offering out a hand to pull him out. “Ready to face the day?”

Haru grasped at the edge of the water and looked up at him, eyes shimmering like the water that surrounded him, and he blinked as the water streamed down from his hair into his eyes. “No, not really.” But he reached out and took Makoto’s hand anyways. Makoto pulled him up and out of the water, staying far enough back to keep himself dry, but leaning in to press a kiss his forehead.

“Feeling okay today?”

“Yeah, I’m good.” Haru gave him a gentle smile and released his hand. “I’ll go get dressed, then we
Haru laughed as he walked off towards the changing room, and Makoto followed behind him. “I thought you wanted to make it to breakfast? We both know what will happen if you try to help me get dressed.”

“Hey! Who said I was gonna start anything? Maybe I just want to be helpful?”

Haru turned to face him, a hand on the door to the changing room. “Makoto, when was the last time that you saw me take my clothes off and didn’t try to start something?”

Makoto couldn’t really argue with that. Even after they’d had their bonding ceremony, Makoto had been able to keep his hands to himself for the most part. But lately, there was just something magnetic about Haru that made it impossible for him to stay still. Of course, Haru never once complained. In fact, Makoto was pretty sure that Haru was the one who instigated some of their riskier and possibly embarrassing times lately. There had been the round in the downstairs bathroom last week, and they had gotten rather frisky beside the pool late one night. Then there had been three days ago, when Amakata and Sasabe had gone to Tokyo for the night, and Rei and Nagisa had decided to go with them. They’d had the house to themselves. Considering how… active they were when there were people around, people who wouldn’t hesitate to tease them at the sight of a hickey or some mussed hair, it wasn’t like Makoto didn’t expect something to happen. What he hadn’t been expecting was for Haru to make them a wonderful, romantic dinner… and serve it wearing only an apron. Needless to say, dinner had gotten very, very cold that night.

Haru gave him knowing smile and disappeared into the changing room. When he came out, he was fully dressed, hair still damp. Makoto gave him a smile and, no longer at risk of getting soaked, reached out to slide his arms around Haru’s waist, pulling his Omega closer. He pressed his lips against Haru’s neck, immediately taken in by the intoxicating scent of his mate. Over the last few weeks, Haru’s sent had shifted, the lemony scent growing sweeter, luring Makoto in and making him want to bathe everything he owned in Haru’s scent, so he was never without it.

“God, Haru… are you sure that you’re scent only changed because we’re bonded?” He murmured, lips moving involuntarily as they trailed up Haru’s neck, then down into the crook of his shoulder, where he latched on. Haru shivered at the touch.

“Makoto,” Haru’s voice tremored as he halfheartedhalfheartedly tried to shrug Makoto away, but Makoto felt Haru’s fingers begin to slide into his hair, tugging impatiently to guide Makoto up to his mouth. Makoto hovered just a breath away from Haru’s lips, trying to remember why he couldn’t just take his mate, right here, and Haru surged forward, gasping into Makoto’s mouth as their lips met.

The heat was exhilarating; Makoto was sure he would never get tired of the way Haru’s mouth moved on his, the way he tasted, the quiet noises Haru made when Makoto kissed him just right. Or the noise, the almost half gasp, half laugh sound the fell from Haru’s lips when Makoto pushed him back against the door, one hand going to tangle in Haru’s hair, tilting his head back so Makoto could kiss him deeper, his other hand pulling at Haru’s neat shirt, tugging it out of the way so he could reach the smooth skin beneath. He traced patterns along the now familiar skin of Haru’s side, reveling in the way it still made the Omega tremble beneath him. He slid his hand further down, and Haru sighed his name and Makoto’s hand slipped passed the waistband of his jeans, just barely loose enough for Makoto’s large hand to fit, and slide down the back, until he was gripping Haru’s ass. Makoto moved closer, giving himself a better grip as he fit one of his legs between Haru’s, keeping them pressed as close as possible together.
Makoto heard the creak of a door, and then a loud, horrified gasp, but by the time Makoto regained himself enough to pull just barely away from Haru and glance towards the door leading out into the hallway, all he caught sight of was a flash of green. The sound of footsteps sprinting down the hall echoed over his and Haru’s labored breathing.

“Shit,” he groaned, head falling back. “I forgot the door was open. Poor kid didn’t need to see that.”

“Ikuya?” Makoto nodded. “Well, it’s not that bad. We could have been naked. It looks like you were headed that way anyways.” Haru nodded down between them, and Makoto stared at their clothes. Haru’s shirt was a mess, half tucked in, half pulled out, his pant and underwear shoved down just enough to be scandalous. Makoto’s own clothes were untucked, and somehow, it looked like Haru had managed to unbutton his shirt and pull up the t-shirt underneath until Makoto’s stomach was visible.

“It looks like we were mauling each other!”

“Well, at least I made it out of this mauling fairly unscathed.” One of his hands slid free of Makoto’s hair for Haru to run a finger along his own neck, Makoto’s eyes following the trail it made hungrily.

“Actually, most of my bruises are in other places today. You really went crazy last night, you know?”

Makoto groaned. “Did I hurt you? Is it bad?”

“Not horrible, though it does look like you wrote out your initials on my back in hickeys. Not small either.” Haru took Makoto’s hand in his and guided it carefully until Makoto’s fingers were gliding down Haru’s back to where the shirt was pulled up, then back up along the bare skin, tracing Haru’s spine. Makoto felt his knees weaken at the touch. “You turned my back into a canvas.”

“God, Haru. I’m sorry. I don’t know what’s going on with me. It’s just… so hard to keep my hands off you. I don’t know what it is, but I just—” Haru hushed him, a hand going to caress his cheek.

“I know. I’m sure it’s nothing, Makoto. We were just… really stressed after our Bonding ceremony, and we had so much going on, and then… maybe my heat a few weeks back just kind of set things off. Most couples going through a period of time where they want to be close constantly. When Rin and Sousuke first got together, I walked in on more blowjobs than I ever, ever wanted to see.” He sounded almost convinced himself, but Makoto felt his confusion through their bond. It seemed Haru didn’t know what was going on any more than Makoto did.

Makoto just sighed and, after untangling his limbs from Haru, face bright red as he did so, Makoto stepped back, holding out his hand. “Well, we should probably go. We’re going to be late for breakfast.”

“That’s probably what Ikuya was coming to get us for.”

Makoto groaned at the reminder of who had seen them. “After everything that kid’s been through, the last thing he needed to be scared by is seeing a big, scary Alpha mauling his idol.”

“First, Makoto, you are not big and scary. Big, yeah, maybe, but scary?” Haru huffed a laugh. “I’ve seen more intimidating fuzzy socks than you. I doubt you scare him even a little bit.”

“You sure know how to boost my ego, you know that?”

Haru nudged him in the side as they made their way out into the hallway. “Not my point. And second, I’m not his Idol. He just wants to learn to swim. I figure, after everything my family has done to him, it’s the least I can do,”
Makoto frowned at that. “Haru, that was not you, and it wasn’t your mom. That was the Chairman. No one knew what he was doing to those kids. No one could have even guessed.”

Haru frowned. “It’s still… I can’t believe they would run those kinds of experiments on kids.” Makoto nodded. He still remembered the sickening feeling that stayed with him for days after finding out the truth.

Asahi and Ikuya had been the last, most well-kept secret of the board. Most of the documents about the experiments had been destroyed by them as soon as Haru’s mother and her group of doctors brought the charges against them, but some remained, and they were the most sickening documents that Makoto had ever read.

The boys had been part of an experiment to try and determine the secondary gender of people while they were still children. They had taken children from group homes and orphanages, ones that wouldn’t be missed, and administered drugs meant to force Alphas and Omegas to present. Of the almost five hundred children tested over a three-year period, Asahi and Ikuya had been the only ones to present. Asahi had presented a little over a year beforehand, at the age of eleven. Ikuya, who had been one of the first tested, presented two years earlier, at the age of nine.

In the months since gaining their freedom from the hospital that had been their home since presenting, Asahi seemed the quickest to adapt back to a normal life, aside from his penchant for loud, mind-numbing music. Amakata had said that that was probably just his way of working through everything that had happened, but she had set him up with Haru’s therapist immediately after getting the boy settled in, and with every day that passed, he seemed to fit in with the rest of the household a little better.

Ikuya did not start recovering the moment he left the hospital. In fact, for the first few weeks, the boy had only seemed to stagnate. He never talked, never actually responded to any questions posed towards him. It was as though the boy was nothing more than an empty husk. The only things that ever seemed to rouse him from his empty state was whenever Asahi talked to him, or tried to mess with him, always giving his friend an almost exasperated, but fond, look.

The only other time he seemed to show any emotion was when Haru was in the room. Makoto had watched the boy watch Haru, his gaze always careful and confused. The way he watched Haru was almost like a tiny child, looking to an older sibling or parent for guidance. Occasionally, he almost seemed to mimic Haru’s actions, trying to copy the way he held himself, or how he ate at the dining table. Haru never seemed to notice, but when Makoto had brought it up to him, he only shrugged.

“I think he’s the one mom told us about, a while back. The one she had to make sure was okay before she did anything about the board? Rin said that Ikuya reminded him of how I was when we first met. Maybe that’s why he looks at me? Maybe mom told him something.”

Makoto wasn’t sure if that was the case, or at least it wasn’t the whole truth. He couldn’t help but feel that his suspicion was confirmed when Haru, who never pushed him to talk, who just sat by his side silently, waiting for Ikuya to make the first move, was the first one Ikuya spoke to.

Makoto still remembered the surprise in his Truemate’s eyes when the boy asked Haru, in a voice that was harsh and broken from not being used, if he would teach him how to swim. He remembered how Haru had seemed more distant than usual for the rest of the day, wandering in a stupor as he realized just how much Ikuya must have trusted him to talk to him. He remembered the blush on Haru’s cheeks when he had complimented him later that night, praising how well he was able to handle the kid, and the embarrassed tone of his voice when he had thrown a pillow at Makoto and told him to shut up.
Ikuya still didn’t say much of anything, and when he did, it was often only to Haru or Asahi. Makoto had seen the way the boy seemed to light up with life in the water, much the same way Haru did, or how his eyes would spark whenever someone talked to him, like he wanted to respond, but still wasn’t sure if he could. Makoto didn’t know what exactly had happened to the boy during his three years in the hospital, but the idea that something had happened that was bad enough for him to fear talking, or feel like he couldn’t say anything at all, made Makoto want to hunt down the doctors and punch them in the face, hard.

Makoto turned to his Truemate, pressing a kiss to his forehead in reassurance as they reached the door to the dining room. “It’s awful, but that’s why we’re doing this, right? To make sure stuff like that doesn’t happen again? To keep these kids safe?” Haru nodded, squeezing Makoto’s hand, before taking a deep breath, and opening the door, ready to face the chaos of the day.

Chaos was the only way to describe the dining room. Even with Sousuke, Rin and Gou in Australia, the bonded couple wanting to live with Momo and Ai while Gou was being paid to plan a bonding ceremony there, the room was still loud and bustling. Rei was bringing in the food, stacks of pancakes and eggs filling the table, while Nagisa and Asahi gushed over a game on Asahi’s phone. Occasionally, Asahi would lean to his left to show Ikuya the phone, and while the boy didn’t seem to be paying too much attention, much, like usual, his eyes steadily avoided looking at Makoto and Haru, which wasn’t like usual at all. Makoto found himself unable to look the boy in the eye either. What was it about that pool that made him act stupid and embarrassing when kids were in the vicinity? First, he’d kissed Haru there, in front of his siblings, and now Ikuya had walked in on them too.

Maybe, he thought, we should just stop doing stuff like that near the pool… but then an image of Haru filled his mind, soaking wet, emerging from the pool, jammers accentuating his long, powerful legs… or maybe no jammers at all. Just Haru, in all his beautiful, distracting glory.

There was no way he would be able to stop himself from touching Haru by the pool. It just wasn’t going to be possible.

Trying to redirect his thoughts before things got even more embarrassing, Makoto turned his attention to Amakata and Sasabe, who sat next to each other, a computer set up in front of them. Amakata caught their eye as they made their way into the room, and she waved them over. “Haru, Makoto, come say hi to Rin.” She turned the computer, and there was Rin, alone at a table, the background behind him the living room of his and Sousuke’s apartment in Australia. The Omega grinned toothily and waved.

“About time you guys showed up.”

Makoto waved back. “Sorry, we got... held up” He swore he could feel Ikuya’s eyes on his back, boring a hole in it, and he shift his weight, uncomfortable.

“Yeah, I’m sure you did. God, it’s a wonder anyone would be able to sleep in that house now that you two are bonded and don’t have to sneak around. That loud new kid lives a couple doors down from you, right? I'll have to enlist him to get some blackmail material.”

“Good luck with that,” Haru muttered, then said, a little louder, “How are things down there?”

“Good. Sou and I are helping out at the Estate here a lot, spending any free time we get with Ai and Momo. Momo turns eighteen in a few months, so they’re going to be planning their bonding ceremony soon. You guys will be there, right?”

“Wouldn’t miss it for the world,” Makoto answered brightly.
“Good. I miss you guys like crazy, so they’d better hurry up with the plans so you guys can come here.” There was a loud crash in front of the computer, and Rin cursed, turning behind him to shout, “Winnie! Stay out of that!” They heard a quiet whine, and the nose of Rin’s dog poked up onto his lap.

“She’s gotten so big!” Makoto gushed leaning in to get a better look as the dog moved to rest her whole head on Rin’s lap. “She was so tiny last time we saw her.”

“I don’t get it really. Two months, and she’s become a monster.” He laughed, scratching the Winnie behind the ear lovingly. Then he sobered, still petting the dog, and asked, “Hey Haru. Any news back on that paperwork you were telling me about?”

Haru stiffened, and Makoto felt the rush of nerves vibrating their bond. Haru cast a cautious glance at Makoto, but then asked, “I’m not sure. Amakata, any word back on that?”

“Oh!” She exclaimed, face going a little pale as she turned to him. “I completely forgot. It arrived yesterday. We can go look at it after breakfast.”

“Some new forms we have to fill out to take over the Estate?” Makoto asked, and Haru shook his head.

“You were concerned about the change in my scent, right? Well, I had Amakata do some bloodwork and run some tests, just to make sure everything was okay.”

“Oh. Do you want me to come with you?”

“No, it should be nothing. I’ll tell you tonight if there’s anything weird.”

Makoto nodded, easily reassured. Haru had gotten better about keeping secrets and dealing with things on his own over the last few months. If he promised to talk about it, Makoto had complete faith that they would. Hopefully, it would be nothing, just a delayed reaction to the being bonded and mated, like Haru had said.

“Hey!” Rin’s voice crackled over the computer, making Makoto jump. “I’m still here, ya know. Make sure you text me, Haru, and let me know what’s going on.”

“I will.” Winnie whined again, loud through the computer’s speakers, and Rin groaned.

“Look, I have to go. Winnie needs her walk, and it looks like Sou’s skipping out on his turn. I’ll call again soon, okay?”

They all agreed, and said their goodbyes, Nagisa and Asahi choosing to shout theirs from across the room, leaving everyone else flinching at the noise, and Rin leaning in to try and make out what they said. Then the computer was shut down, and Haru and Makoto took their seats.

Breakfast was delicious; since the household had unanimously agreed that Rei should cook for them, there had been far less cases of mysterious meals, questionable ingredients, or cases of illness after a particularly creative meal. She did go in to help Rei occasionally, and every once in a while, they would eat some sort of dessert that Amakata had cooked up, most of which were actually rather tasty.

Breakfast was also fairly noisy; Nagisa and Asahi, and occasionally Rei when Nagisa got him wound up, always made sure the morning was filled with chatter. Today the discussion was about the college classes Nagisa was taking. He and Rei had started up college courses just a few weeks earlier, going to a local college nearby. It had been a first for the Alphas and Omegas. Previously, in
order to keep Alphas and Omegas away from the masses, the board had provided only for online classes for colleges or for private classes, but Rei and Nagisa traveled almost every day to take classes on campus. Of the two of them, Nagisa seemed the most excited for the chance, and came home almost every day to talk about the people he had met. Now, he was chattering on about meeting his friends from class later that afternoon while he waited for Rei to get out of class.

“Mari-chan said that there’s a great coffee place in town, so we’re going there.”

“Well, you’ll have to let us know how it is. Haru and I are needing a new date spot,” Makoto commented in between bites of his third helping of pancakes. Haru was finishing up his own helping, using a pancake to wipe up the syrup still on the plate.

“Ugh! You can’t! It’s where all the cool college kids hang out. If you guys go there, you’ll be like an old married couple. It will be cute for a minute, until you get confused trying to order the coffee.”

Makoto frowned at him. “Hey, I’m taking college courses too. And we’ve only been bonded for a few months. We’re not quite an old married couple yet!”

Nagisa shrugged. “Fine, you can go. You’ll stick out like a sore thumb though.” He pushed his plate aside, and stood then, giving his Alpha a grin. “Hurry up Rei! We’re going to be late!”

Rei set his own plate aside, and stood. “Yes, we’d better be off.” They walked towards the door that led to the hall and waved.

“See you guys tonight!” Nagisa chipped, and they were gone.

Makoto was the next to stand, and he started gathering the dishes to take to the kitchen. The Estate staff would wash them later, but he figured the least he could do would be to gather the dishes for them. As he walked passed, he leaned down to press a kiss to the top of Haru’s head. “See you later?” Haru nodded, handing Makoto his plate. “Yep. You off to study?”

Makoto nodded. In the last few weeks, he’d started taking online finance courses, trying to prepare himself to help Haru run the Estate. It was boring work, but Haru preferred paperwork to numbers. Besides, if things had been different, Makoto probably would have been pursuing a degree of that sort at a college in Tokyo anyways. At least this way he was working towards something he really wanted, instead of a boring desk job in the city.

Haru nodded and leaned up to press his lips lightly against Makoto’s, pulling away after just a second to mutter, “Work hard, okay?”

“I will. Just watch, once I start really helping out around here, we’ll save so much money, I’ll be able to heat your pool.”

Haru lit up at the suggestion, a smile playing around the corners on his mouth. “I’m looking forward to it.”

Makoto gave his Truemate a gentle smile, shifted the plates in his hands to one so he could wave, then took the dishes to the kitchen, ready to start his day.

Makoto collapsed on the bed, groaning as the muscles in his back stretched. It had been a long, hard day. He had spent hours slaving over his books and the computer, trying his best to finish his homework for the week. The class was supposedly just a basic finance class, just the fundamentals, but Makoto had never been phenomenal with math to begin with. It had taken him close to two hours to finish one spreadsheet, and he had three to get through today. By the time he had gone to get Haru
for their walk, Makoto had been ready to tear out his own hair in frustration.

Haru’s mood wasn’t much better. When Makoto had walked into his and Amakata’s temporarily joint office (Haru would get his own once Amakata felt he was fine to take over completely), Haru’s had all but jumped at the chance to escape the paperwork and heavy manuals surrounding him.

The walk had been a short one, and not very quiet, since Asahi had apparently decided that he wanted to spend his day out in the garden, blaring his music loudly, chatting at an equal volume at Ikuya about the new artist he was listening to. But it had been enough, just to get out of the house and spend a little time alone with Haru again. When they were ready to part ways, Makoto had given him a quick kiss, which had slowly devolved into them making out against the back door, only stopping when one of the wild cats who patrolled the garden had tangled itself between their feet.

The rest of the afternoon had passed slowly, dragging out as Makoto tried to learn another new formula. It was grueling, but he thought of the promise he had made Haru, about heating their pool, and he pressed on, finally sending an email to the professor, asking for more clarification on the subject, then emailing his online tutor. If all else failed, the internet had so many guides, he was sure he could find one that helped him make sense of the jumble of lines and letters and numbers.

Supper had been just as loud as breakfast, Nagisa returning from class with Rei, talking about how his quiet coffee with his friend had practically turned into a party at the coffee shop, with all of Mari’s friends coming to join them, eventually packing the coffee shop full of exhausted college students all surviving on instant ramen and caffeine. He had suggested inviting some of them to the Estate sometime, so everyone could meet them, and after some concerned glances and hushed whispers between Amakata and Haru before gaining their approval, had sprinted off to call his friends. Makoto had talked to Rei about classes, thrilled when Rei had offered to help him with his finance homework. After the light supper, everyone had dispersed. Makoto went up to take a shower, while Haru took Asahi and Ikuya to the pool to give them swimming lessons. Asahi struggled, despite claiming that he had practically been a fish before he had presented. Ikuya, on the other hand, actually was a fish. Haru always lit up when he talked about the way the boy was improving, describing how Ikuya had even been able to teach Asahi where Haru had failed.

By the time Makoto had gotten out of the shower, Haru was back, soaking wet, only wearing his black hoodie and his jammers. With just a quick smile and kiss for Makoto, Haru hurried to the bathroom, ready for his bath.

That had been almost half an hour ago, and now that he was in bed, letting the muscles in his back relax, Makoto found himself tuning to their bond, expecting to feel Haru’s peace and comfort from being in the bath.

Instead, he found that the bond was shaking, frazzled and panicked, and Makoto shot out of bed, crossing the room in three quick strides to knock on the bathroom door. “Haru?”

“I’m okay,” Haru’s muffled voice was quiet, more so than it should have been, and Makoto had a hand on the door, ready to break in, when Haru continued. “I’ll be out in a minute. I just… give me a second, okay?”

Makoto hesitated, but nodded, only to realize Haru couldn’t see him. So, he said, “Alright… but I’m here.”

“I know.” Makoto could hear Haru pacing behind the door, the footsteps thudding as he moved. Makoto took a deep breath, and sat back down on the bed, facing the door. After a minute, the door squeaked open, and Haru peeked out, eyes red, and he walked straight for Makoto, taking the hand the Alpha held out for him.
“What’s up?” He asked.

Haru shook his head, moving to sit beside Makoto on the bed. He took a deep breath, and then another. When he opened his eyes, the blood in Makoto’s veins froze at the watery look to them.

“I… I was so busy today, I didn’t get a chance to read the test results that came in. I… just looked at them in there,” he gestured vaguely towards the bathroom.

It felt like razors were slicing through Makoto, like every cut had been doused in lemon juice. He squeezed Haru’s hand, trying to be supportive and positive, but the thoughts swimming in his head were anything but positive. He knew there was something wrong.

What if Haru was sick? Was it something they could fix? Maybe it was some sort of strange illness that only Omegas could get? God, he should have said something earlier, back when he’d first noticed the change in Haru’s scent.

He didn’t say any of this out loud. Instead, he gave Haru what he hoped was a reassuring smile and said, “It’s alright Haru. Whatever’s it is, we’ll get through it. We’ve got access to some of the best doctors, and now you’ve got your mom, and she’d move heaven and hell to help you. I will too.”

Haru groaned at this, moaning, “Oh god, my mom. How am I going to tell her? I was just trying to figure out how to tell you, but mom’s gonna be a million times worse.”

Makoto felt like he was going to be sick if he had to wait any longer, so he just asked, “What it is? Is it treatable? You know that whatever happens, I’ll make sure you’re oka–”

“Makoto–”

“And I’ll pay any price. We’ll go wherever it takes to get you help–”

Haru just held up a hand, sighing. “You really need to calm down, Makoto. If you freak out, I’m going to freak out even more, and I’m the one with the little thing growing inside me.”

“Growing inside?” Oh god, it was a tumor. He remembered how one of his friend back in high school had a relative with a tumor. They were treatable, but scary. At least they could work through it.

“Yeah. It’s not a bad thing, really… unless you weren’t wanting one yet.” Haru wouldn’t quite meet his eyes, but Makoto wasn’t really listening. He was already trying to work out what to tell Amakata, or Haru’s mom. God, he was supposed to take care of Haru, and yet this had happened. A tumor…

“Makoto?” Haru’s worried tone brought him back. “Are you okay? I mean, I know it’s sudden and everything. We haven’t been bonded for all that long… I’m guessing we just weren’t careful enough during my heat a few weeks back.”

That gave Makoto pause. “Wait, your heat? Why would us not being careful during your heat cause this?”

Haru stared at him dumbly for just a second. “Um… Makoto? How exactly do you think babies are made?”

It was Makoto’s turn to pause. Baby? “What baby?”

“What baby? Our baby! I’m pregnant, Makoto!”
Everything stopped, the words echoing inside Makoto as he stared at the Omega. Baby. Pregnant.

Our Baby.

“Makoto what are you–” Haru began to ask, but he cut off with a gasp as Makoto leapt off the bed, tears burning in his eyes as he lifted Haru off the bed and into the air, spinning him around, only to curse loudly, setting Haru down gently and shoving his hands behind his back.

“Oh my god, your pregnant. I shouldn’t have done that. Are you okay? Did I hurt you? Either of you?”

“I’m fine. Makoto, what the hell did you think I was talking about this whole time?”

“You were scared and you looked like you were about to cry… I thought you were sick, like with a tumor or something.”

“Where the hell did you get an idea like that?”

Makoto shook his head. “I don’t know, you just looked so scared–”

“Of course I’m scared, Makoto. I’ve got a tiny, soon-to-be-person inside me! I’m only twenty, you won’t turn nineteen for couple months, we’ve got all these new responsibilities with the Estate, and I didn’t know how you would respond… I’d be crazy not to be scared.”

Haru had some good points of course. The idea of being a father was something he couldn’t quite process yet. He stepped closer and, carefully, took Haru’s hand with one of his own, the other one going to rest on Haru’s stomach. “That makes sense. Sorry I was being a little stupid.”

“A little?”

Makoto laughed. “Okay, a lot stupid. But Haru… even though I thought you were sick when I said it, I meant it. Whatever we face, I know we can make it through it. Whether it’s sickness or a baby, anything. We can do it. We can be scared together, but we’ll get through it, and we will raise the best damn kid the world has ever seen, with your eyes–”

“And your smile?”

Makoto couldn’t help but laugh at that, and he reached to cup Haru’s cheek. “Sure, but I like yours better. Honestly, our kid could look like an elephant, and it would still be the most beautiful child I’ve ever seen, because it’s ours. We’re young, we may be new at all this, but I believe in us.”

Makoto paused, thinking for a moment. “Wait. Was that too cheesy?”

Haru laughed, and the sound was like bells, making Makoto’s heart soar. “I think you crossed the cheesy line a while back, but I’ll take it.” He took a deep breath. “We’ve got this, right?”

“Oh course. We’ve always got it. It may be messy, it may not go smoothly, but we’ve got this.”

Tears were falling from Haru’s eyes then, and Makoto’s face was just as wet, but it didn’t stop them from leaning in, kissing gently, tasting the tears as they moved, the feeling so familiar, it was like breathing. When they broke apart, they rested against each other.

“Makoto?”

“Yeah?”

“Thank you.”
Makoto chuckled, pressing his lips to Haru’s forehead. “I should be thanking you Haru. You’ve completely changed my world, and I’m not sure I can ever thank you enough for everything you’ve done.

Haru just hummed, not saying the words, but Makoto could feel it. He couldn’t tell if it was the bond, or if it was just Haru, but he felt the warmth, the love, the safety, the complete conviction that they could do this. Run the Estate, help carve a place for Alphas and Omegas in the world, and raise their child, and any others that came after it.

Bound together, they could do it all.

Chapter End Notes

Wow... I can't actually believe it's over. I've been wandering around in a state of shock for the last week, cause I'm just not sure what to do with myself now that it's over. Anyways, I want to thank each and every one of you. Every single person who commented, or left a kudo, or even just click on the link to glance through the story, you all had such a big impact on me. if it wasn't for you guys and your constant support, I might have given up just a few chapters in. But you all stuck with me, even during some of the less favorable parts of the story, and I can't even tell you how much that means to me. I don't think I've ever written for such an amazing, supportive community, and it makes me happy to know that there are such amazing people out there who are will to encourage creativity and love for a fandom the way you guys have.

I'm not sure where I'll be going from here. I've got a one or two MakoHaru one-offs that are floating around my computer, so I may clean those up, and i'm planning on going through and cleaning up the first few chapters a little bit, and I'm sure that the new movies and the third season will inspire me to pick up a pen and start writing about these amazing characters again. but for now, I'm going to relax, focus on my school work, and just see where the wind take me from there.

I'd also like to give one more shout-out to my fantastic beta, Sarahsharpiemaker, who did a phenomenal job editing each chapter and catching my stupid mistakes and helped me with brainstorming several times. Sarah, I really couldn't have done this without you, and you'll be my first choice if I ever need a beta again!

Well, that's about all I can think of to say. Thank you all so, so much. I'd love to hear from you all, so let me know what you thought of this final chapter, if you had any questions, anything at all! And thank you all so much for bearing with me through this adventure and I look forward to hearing what you think!

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