Cherry Blossoms and Unpaid Debts
by dirtyretro, Krimmro

Summary

Kihyun strikes a deal with notorious gangster Son Hyunwoo to pay a debt. Exposed to the wicked underbelly of society and enraptured by its dark angel Hyunwoo, Kihyun has a choice: fall prey or rise above.

Notes

Trigger warning: This is NOT a sugar-coated organized crime/mafia AU. There are strong themes of violence, dubious and/or nonconsent, unhealthy coping mechanisms, exploitation of ABO dynamics, emotional manipulation, and mental and physical abuse ahead. Please do not read further if you are disturbed by any of these themes.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

Jo-pok is the Korean term for organized crime and gangsters. In this story, Hyunwoo is 30. Kihyun is mentioned to be 24.

To clarify, this story is of an ongoing role play between two people. It’s more fun for you to guess which of us is playing as Hyunwoo and the other as Kihyun~ Happy reading~ ;)

It had been awhile since Boss Son Hyunwoo had to deal with bullshit like this.

Usually, he’d sic his boys on noncompliant shop owners that relied on the jo-pok to resurrect their failing business. This old man, this piece of shit that couldn’t keep his own cafe afloat, was too far behind paying his dues. Apparently losing fingers, toes, and his crazy wife were not terrifying enough to scare him into making proper payment, but that was the consequence of sending a pack of betas to do an alpha’s job.

Cue Boss Son’s presence in a dank alleyway under the 2AM moon. Cigarette hanging from his lips, eyes blackened with the intent of murder, he toed his victim’s forehead with his boot: Mr. Yoo, 53 years old, owner of Cafe Tulip for the past thirty years.

The cafe was a cute place in a busy area that brewed mediocre lattes and dry pastries, but gentrification welcomed new, hip cafes that appealed to Gwangju’s younger demographic. Cafe Tulip couldn’t compete with the new cafes, so Mr. Yoo decided to renovate. Of course, renovations were pricey, and for an old man with dwindling revenue, renovations were nothing but pipe dreams. Luckily for old Mr. Yoo, the Gwangju branch of the South Korean jo-pok were generous, wealthy men who made pipe dreams reality.

And luckily for Son Hyunwoo, Gwangju branch boss, Mr. Yoo’s skull cracked like an egg on the asphalt when he bit the curb.

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Since old Mr. Yoo’s unfortunate and untimely death at the hands of the Gwangju branch, the large sum of debt he accrued burned a hole in their weekly revenue. Demands from the main branch in Seoul were strict, and loss of income reflected poorly on Boss Son’s leadership and business prowess. Naturally, an invasive search into the late Mr. Yoo’s family was necessary to ensure debts were paid, and as such Boss Son had his underlings exhaust any connections of Mr. Yoo’s. As it turned out, he had a young nephew who recently moved to Gwangju and moved into the old man’s home. It wasn’t difficult to find the address…

One night when the sky was starless and the air was crisp, Boss Son sent a pack of beta underlings to snoop for information and, if opportune, collect physical evidence.

It was just another boring, lonely night in suburbia for the resident that was a deceased old man’s only nephew. Even though he still had a dozen or two more boxes to unpack from the recent move, Kihyun found it exceptionally unmotivating. He obtained this house not by choice, but by
designation from being a single, financially-struggling omega who happened to be the only kin his old alpha uncle cared about.

He doubted the thought of trying to make the abode homier. No decoration or knick-knack could fill the empty space of losing a family member. His uncle’s scent was like a ghost; just a looming essence of stale cigars and musty carpets. But this was Kihyun’s home now, and he assumed it would be for a while. It was best to make due.

Supper had been forgotten for some time, but the low growl from his stomach made Kihyun move to the kitchen. He ran a hand through his dyed hair as he began preparations for a meal for one, humming a tune to himself to keep himself company.

The scent was different, that’s how the jo-pok betas knew they were at the right place. Old Mr. Yoo reeked of mildew and coffee grinds, his fingers saturated with the smell after brewing coffee all day at his failing cafe. For an alpha, he never rose to prominence, opting for a family and a humble life over power and glory. As such, his home, a suburban cookie-cutter, was just as simple as the man himself.

Breaking into it was disappointingly easy.

When the pack of betas neared the front door, they split up. Two picked the lock at the front, the other two crept to the side door. Their plan was to flank the young heir in the event he ran. Upon the go-ahead, two betas at the front kicked open the door. The door crashed into the wall behind it, causing an awful clamor sure to spook anyone inside. Kihyun jumped at the sudden noise, panic prickling his senses and stupidly anchoring him in place.

The betas charged in, sniffing out a distinct cherry scent from the kitchen. When they turned the corner and met the omega’s gaze, they smirked, beta fangs poking out from behind chapped lips. Kihyun barely had time to register how many there were before he felt something hold him back—the other two betas had snuck up behind him, one hooking an arm around his neck and restraining him in a chokehold.

Kihyun’s instincts told him to fight. He grabbed the arm around his neck, attempting to scream, but when he opened his mouth all that came out was a garbled choke.

“Is this him?” The beta choking the omega gritted, squeezing his grip tighter to stifle any noise.

Screaming victims always lead to nosy neighbors calling the police. Though Boss Son had great influence over the Gwangju police department—cops could be just as dirty as gangsters—preventing issues before they occurred was the way Boss ran business. Messes were just that, messes; there was rarely a need for them.

Another beta who had taken to ransacking the residence for stowed away money replied, “Yeah, seems it.”

He and the three others raided all rooms, quickly rifling through small boxes, bags, under mattresses, and anywhere else old folks stuffed cash. While they searched, the beta choking the young omega pulled a piece of cloth and a small vial from the depths of his jacket pocket. Kihyun’s panic intensified and fight or flight response activated, yet his attempts to break free proved ineffective, serving only to choke him more. He was too afraid. What did these scary men want? As the beta underling doused the cloth from his pocket in questionable liquid from the vial, Kihyun’s fear grew.

“No!” he cried out, eyes wide, but the beta smothered the chloroform-soaked cloth over the
omega’s nose and mouth.

He writhed to break free from his captor, but it was futile. He wasn’t weak but he wasn’t strong, but the beta restraining him was stronger than him. The effects soon took place as Kihyun’s vision blurred. His arms fell, his knees buckled, and he passed out with fear still holding strong even when his arms weren’t anymore.

Others from the pack returned to the kitchen without an item of interest. Mumbling profanities about how Boss wouldn’t approve of them showing up empty-handed, they acted out by kicking random objects and smashing boxes. One paced around the kitchen preparing to work up the gall to grovel before their judgemental boss.

The beta holding Kihyun’s limp body perked up, however. “Hey, we got this kid. Let’s just bring him back? Let the Boss decide what to do with him,” he suggested.

He was met with unanimous agreement, so he slung the omega’s body over his shoulder and they exited through the busted side door. The getaway driver, also a beta, met them at the curb, their matte Mercedes screeching to a halt so the pack could shove Mr. Yoo’s unconscious nephew into the back seat and quickly hop in.

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Boss Son Hyunwoo liked to blow off steam with sex, but when he couldn’t indulge in the best escorts Gwangju had to offer, lifting weights sufficed. After having spent the better half of the day threatening a young mother by roughing up her weasely, con artist boyfriend late on his payments, lifting heavy was in order.

The last hour and a half exerting himself proved effective, and just as he’d completed his third set of pull-ups, he was notified of his underlings’ return by a servant—the arrangement was to meet in the courtyard of his grand penthouse to give Hyunwoo enough time to light a smoke and make his way to the dimly lit, outdoor area.

There was a gathering of beta underlings in the courtyard by the time Hyunwoo arrived. A heap on the floor in the center of the gathering appeared to be a person, but they were so slow-moving that the alpha couldn’t be sure. The closer he approached, the thicker the air became with excitement—the underlings looked like proud vultures scavenging a well-picked prey. Perhaps Hyunwoo’s boys had done well after all.

At the center of attention, the few things Kihyun registered was that he was groggy, he didn’t remember falling asleep, and there was a blurry commotion happening all around him. He couldn’t make out faces or locations, but his heart raced as panic woke him quicker and quicker. The mix of beta pheromones made his head pound, or maybe that was something else?

Groaning as he finally came-to, Kihyun still had no idea where he was or what was happening. Everything was confusing, and everyone looked at him like a piece of meat. From being handled roughly before, he winced as he shifted on the ground; his feet were bare, and his blue button up shirt was half hanging out from the top of his black jeans. He sighed, then his nose picked up a distinct aroma—a dominating musk that made his inner omega twitch.

“Who the fuck is this?” Hyunwoo growled, cigarette hanging loosely from his lips. He glanced down at the person his betas offered him with displeasure.

Kihyun looked up from his knelt position. He saw what could be described as the most ruggedly dashing alpha he had ever laid eyes on—shirtless and sweaty, muscles pumped post-workout,
cherry blossom shoulder tattoo distinct and vivid; the man exuded alpha power. He resembled a beautiful, dark angel under the light of the luminous moon.

“He’s, uh... he's an investment, Boss.” One of the betas piped up, instinctively flinching when Hyunwoo stared at him. "We couldn't find any money, Boss. We found what we think is old Yoo’s nephew."

"That so?" Hyunwoo smirked as he sized up the boy on the floor. Slowly, he walked around the boy like he was scrutinizing an actual, tangible investment. The boy's smell was intoxicating, definitely an omega. Hyunwoo fought the urge to yank him up from off the floor and scent him; mark him just because of what he was.

He stopped in front of the omega and knelt before him on one knee, posture relaxed. Tilting his head almost condescendingly, he asked, "Is it true? Are you Mr. Yoo's nephew, boy?"

Kihyun had the defensive instinct to run, but he was intimidated, feeling like prey trapped. “I... I am,” he replied in a quiet tone.

Hyunwoo hummed low in his throat. He took a long drag of his cigarette and exhaled in the omega’s face, the smoke cloud dense and white as it filled the air. When the smoke cleared, he flicked the tip of his cig to remove the ash. He studied every detail of Mr. Yoo’s nephew’s face; much to his pleasant surprise, the boy was an absolute bombshell. The scent of fear that radiated off of him was delicious, too, and Hyunwoo wanted to smell more of it.

“Yeah? You got a name?” the alpha asked.

Why would Kihyun tell these men his name? They had apparent business with his deceased uncle, so what business did they have with him? Why did they get the omega involved at all? Yet amidst his uncertainty, Kihyun knew these men were dangerous, and maybe he shouldn’t mess around...

“K-Kihyun.”

“Kihyun. Ki... hyun.” Hyunwoo drawled the name, savoring the way it felt rolling off his tongue. “Yoo Kihyun, huh?” he asked rhetorically, saying it more as a verbal confirmation of the boy’s identity.

He squinted at Kihyun with a final look of scrutiny before standing tall again. He put one hand in his pocket, maintaining an air of indifference, as he took one last drag. Then, he tossed the cigarette butt on the ground, extinguishing it with the sole of his boot. With the same boot, he hooked the toe under Kihyun’s chin to force the boy to look up at him. The cold touch on Kihyun’s chin made the omega shiver, but not as bad as the tremble his own name caused when the alpha said his name in that tone. Kihyun gawked, too scared to move.

Establishing his power by exploiting Kihyun’s degrading position, Hyunwoo asked, “Did you know your uncle’s cafe was failing? Did you know your uncle was involved with powerful men?”

It made sense in a way. Kihyun’s uncle was secretive about how he had gotten all that money for Cafe Tulip, but his uncle wouldn’t stoop to this level, would he?

“I... I had n-no idea. He never told us anything. Please...” Maybe begging for his life would help let Kihyun see another day. He was honest to his word; he never knew what happened behind closed doors.

Hyunwoo laughed, and all his beta underlings did too. It was just like an omega to cower and plead in the face of danger. How embarrassing it must be to be belittled by his own omega biology.
Though, admittedly, the helpless stuttering was sexy; maybe Hyunwoo could get the boy to stutter more, maybe even cry.

“You say please like that means anything to me. You beg for your life like you think it’s worth killing,” Hyunwoo growled, aggressively shoving Kihyun’s face away with his boot.

The omega lost balance on his knees and toppled backwards onto his ass, as if his humiliation wasn’t enough. The laughs echoed in his mind, taunting his situation even more. He wanted to cry, but he wouldn’t give these assholes the satisfaction. “Then... then what do y-you want?”

“What do I want? I want my money! Your uncle was a careless man who didn’t pay back his debts. Can you fucking believe that? Your dear uncle didn’t respect the very men who saved his cafe,” Hyunwoo explained as he slipped another cigarette between his lips, cupped the tip, and lit it.

The betas circled around Kihyun laughed and muttered profanities about that ungrateful piece of shit Mr. Yoo, adding insult to, well, insult. All the insults made Kihyun’s blood boil like a kettle on the burner. How could people be so disrespectful of a family death? To a grieving nephew?

“Your uncle was a selfish man. But you, Kihyun? You look like a smart boy. You look like someone who understands the meaning of paying debts.”

The omega rubbed his chin where the boot had been. “I don’t have anything,” he voiced nervously, “There is nothing... not that I know of.”

“Nothing,” Hyunwoo mocked. “You hear that, boys? He’s got nothing for us.”

The betas laughed until the sound bounced off every corner of his penthouse courtyard. His dark brown eyes drank in Kihyun’s body, his mind warped by sadistic tendencies. Underneath the fear, underneath the innocent expression, Hyunwoo smelled Kihyun’s true nature. The fire within. Like a hungry predator stalking its prey, the alpha inhaled Kihyun’s cherry scent deep into his lungs.

“Money, assets... Everyone has something I can take. If you don’t have money, don’t have assets, I think you can think of something else to give me.”

What exactly was the alpha getting at? Kihyun had just said he had nothing to offer… Then it finally clicked, and his eyes opened wide in both surprise and fear. He wasn’t some slut! His legs shot closed for protection. And just when he didn’t think he could feel any more vulnerable, the way the alpha stared at him made him give off pheromones. Fear, anger, vulnerability: Hyunwoo couldn’t pinpoint the type of pheromone released, but like all other smells he emitted, Hyunwoo basked in their inadvertent seduction. His prey acting so innocent and scared turned him on—he could feel the ache in his very bones—so he took a drag to settle the alpha impulse to ravage the omega in front of everyone.

“Oh, so you do know what you can give me…” he drawled, smoke flowing from his lips after each word he spoke. He ran a hand through his sweaty, black hair and looked down at the omega with pity. “Mmm, whaddya think, boys? Wanna have some fun?”

“No, please don’t—” Kihyun pleaded pathetically. His fear skyrocketed; there was absolutely no remorse in situations like this. He just wanted to go home. He wanted this all to be a bad nightmare he could wake up from.

With a mere hand motion from Hyunwoo, the pack closed in on the frightened omega. They pulled at the boy’s clothes, at his belt, at his zipper, tugging his body back and forth between them as each beta fought over his half-naked body. Like the lust-crazed animals they were, they whispered
lewd pet names in Kihyun’s ears as their greedy hands groped wherever they pleased; as impatient and grabby as they were, they knew certain places were not to be violated by anyone other than Boss.

Kihyun closed his eyes, wishing the hands would go away, wishing, praying to whatever deity would hear his plea to free him from this peril. He suppressed his tears in an attempt to keep himself sane because he feared he’d break down and be mocked again.

Flicking the ash off his cigarette, Hyunwoo pondered Kihyun’s age. Definitely of age, but undoubtedly younger than himself; someone never exposed to the wicked games played by bad men. His pale skin, his ashy grey hair, those sultry, scared brown eyes; he briefly wondered if the boy was a virgin, and the thought nearly shattered his collected demeanor into millions of pieces. His breath hitched in his throat as a beta licked the shell of Kihyun’s ear and another pinched a pretty pink nipple.

Enough was enough; he wanted a turn.

Hyunwoo whistled loudly, jarring the betas from their ravenous assault. He motioned with his chin for them to bring the omega forth. One beta on either side of him, their grip painfully tight on each of Kihyun’s biceps, they roughly shoved him at Boss’s feet like some kind of offering.

Boss flashed the betas a look, and they obeyed. Strong grip still intact, they forced Kihyun to his knees and pushed his face in front of Hyunwoo’s crotch. Maybe they had broken his spirits enough to reiterate Hyunwoo’s initial suggestion.

“I’ll ask you one more time. Is there anything you can offer me, Yoo Kihyun?”

Sometimes Kihyun hated being an omega, hated the way other dynamics thought they could manipulate him so easily. He wouldn’t be broken so easily. “Y-yes,” he replied out of fear. “There is… B-Back at the house…”

“He’s lying, Boss. We searched the whole place and didn’t find anything valuable. I say he’s trying to get out of a good deal…” the beta teased, cackling and elbowing his brethren to the left. The other beta nodded, agreeing.

Hyunwoo hummed low in his throat as he regarded Kihyun. “What do you have for me?”

Kihyun gulped. “In... in a hidden safe—” he began nervously, no doubt that was all these men could smell from him. “I’ll get it. I’m the only one who knows where it is.”

“Allright,” Hyunwoo smirked. “Let’s hope you’re right, omega.”

With the orangey tip of his cigarette, he pointed at the exit gates. “You will escort dear Kihyun back to his dead uncle’s house. Retrieve the item. If it’s good—” He peered down at Kihyun to emphasize his next line, “And it better be good—Mr. Yoo’s debt will be paid. Then Kihyun here can return to his sad, little life.”

A sternness in his eyes, Hyunwoo asked his underlings, “Understand?”

They nodded profusely, obediently.

He then directed his attention to Kihyun again. “Understand?”

He nodded slowly, unsure.
During the awkward ride back to his uncle’s home—well, his home now—Kihyun replayed Son Hyunwoo’s words in his head: *sad little life.* He scoffed. Was that how all alphas saw an omega’s life? Sure, he wasn’t the happiest or most financially stable, but he was content with his life and the new direction it was going. That was, the direction before this massive, jo-pok block in the road brought everything to a screeching halt.

Which reminded him, how the hell was Kihyun going to pull this off? He had nothing to offer these dangerous men. There was no hidden safe, no stashed motherlode of money, no precious jewelry, no goods worth enough to pay back his uncle’s debt. He just blurted anything in the moment to get the heat off him and buy time, but time was running out…

As the Gwangju beta pack pulled up to Kihyun’s residence, the lights were still on. Everything appeared normal, like nothing nefarious had ever occurred. The illusion of another quiet night in suburbia; a quaint presence misleading of the terror that took place earlier in the night.

Two underlings remained in the black, Gwangju branch Mercedes SUV to keep lookout while the remaining two physically escorted the omega into the home. Once inside, Kihyun swallowed nervously and pretended to search for a safe he claimed his uncle kept hidden in the house.

“Where is it...? Ah, he must have moved it,” he said, trying to sound convincing.

The two underlings kept a watchful eye as they stepped over broken items and knocked over furniture from earlier ransacking. This wasn’t the first time someone tried to bamboozle the jo-pok out of money. Those liars and cowards got the punishment they deserved—a personal visit from Boss Son himself. A man, as Kihyun recently discovered, with sadistic tastes.

“Hurry up! You said you knew where it was!” A tall, slender beta snapped.

“Yeah! What is it anyway?” The other beta, this one short with blond hair, chimed in as he foolishly lowered his guard to look at family pictures on the walls.

Kihyun cautiously reached for his phone he left on the kitchen counter before being attacked and slid it into his pocket. “He moved it without my knowing,” he lied, acting as if he wasn’t planning an escape in his head. “I’ll go look in the bedroom.”

The two underlings flashed each other a knowing look. The omega thought he was so clever trying to pull one over on them. Well, this wasn’t their first time out. They knew better than to be so gullible.

“You’re not going alone, ya punk. I’m coming with you,” the tall beta said.

The blond beta waved them off dismissively. “Uh, I’ll keep watch out here just in case he tries to run or something.” The way he made pervy heart eyes at Kihyun’s family photos suggested he’d wouldn’t hold up his promise.

Kihyun gave the tall beta a disgruntled look but turned down a hallway. In the hall, there was an abundance of family photos, too, mostly of his uncle and his adventures abroad, as well as paintings and odd souvenirs displayed for house guests. The omega smiled faintly at the memories, equating them back to this very moment of being hunted down by gangsters for risky decisions his deceased uncle made. How did things end up like this? Everything was normal one minute, dangerous the next.

Room lighting dimmed the farther into the house they walked, and when Kihyun entered the
master bedroom, the beta lingered at the door frame. The beta was quiet, waiting on bated breath and ready to pounce should the omega decide to do anything shifty.

The omega exhaled calmly and pretended to look for the non-existent safe. He lowered to his knees, peeking under the bed where there was literally nothing. He then crawled forward on his hands and knees, the old carpet tickling his palms. Being on the ground brought the smell of old cigarettes and mildew into his nose, and he found himself cursing his late uncle’s cleaning habits in a time like this. Nevertheless, he patted around, looking for anything.

Resting his shoulder against the doorframe, arms crossed, the tall beta quirked a suspicious brow at the omega. "Well? Where is it?"

“I’m looking, jeez…” Kihyun mumbled sourly.

From the living room, a ringtone could be heard. The blond beta who had stayed in the living room took the call. From what the tall beta could hear from the bedroom, the rest of the pack in the Mercedes outside were wondering what the hold up was. They hadn’t really been gone for too long, but the world of organized crime was fast-paced. All it took was one call to the police to complicate business.

Tapping his foot impatiently, the tall beta hollered at the other on the phone. “Who is it? Did Boss ask where we were?” he shouted over his shoulder, voice echoing in the narrow hallway.

Kihyun rose to his feet, almost sick from the carpet odor. He dusted off his black pants and glanced at the closet, then back to the distracted beta. Ah, he finally had an idea! He casually approached the closet and pulled the old handle but faked its denial to open.

“Shit, it’s stuck! Hey, can you give me a hand?” he asked cautiously, eying the desk lamp in his peripheral vision. He needed to make this fast. "It won’t open…"

“The fuck?” The tall beta snarled as his attention was brought back into the bedroom. Kihyun was fussing with the closet door, but like the stupid omega he was, he was pushing a pull door. The beta rolled his eyes. “Goddamn, omegas really are worthless, aren’t they?”

He walked over to the closet door, purposely stepping in Kihyun’s way to grab the wooden handle and properly open the door. The omega stepped back with his arms behind his back. The insult didn’t go ignored. It hurt, but not as much as this would—he grabbed the lamp near the top, not caring if the long cord was plugged in. Raising the lamp up, he took aim, using what strength he had left in his arms to bash the rim of the lamp over the back of the beta’s head.

The lamp collided with the back of the tall beta’s skull, knocking him unconscious from blunt force trauma. The incandescent bulb scattered into tiny, sharp pieces and the dusty lamp shade dented with the shape of the beta’s dumb head. His body fell limp onto the mildewy floor. Blood the shade of crimson oozed from a nasty wound on the back of his neck, staining the carpet. He wasn’t dead, but he lay motionless and in need of medical attention.

Hearing the clamor, the blond beta in the living room dropped his cell phone and charged down the hallway to the master bedroom to investigate. Kihyun dropped the bloodied object and cursed under his breath. He dashed to the door, almost tripping on the unconscious body, and slammed the door shut, hurriedly twisting the clasp and locking it. He panicked, adrenaline coursing through him after retaliating against someone like that. Pressing his back against the door, he tried to collect his thoughts—what now? He was momentarily safe, but he was also trapped. His original idea was to knock one beta out and evade the other by locking him out, but as to an actual escape plan, he was lost… until he saw the window.
By the time the blond beta reached the bedroom door, he was locked out. With his fists, he pounded on the door so hard the hinges shook. Fuck this omega brat; he needed a lesson in respect! On his left hip was a gun holster disguised by a thick leather jacket. Reaching behind, he drew his Smith & Wesson in one fluid, skilled motion.

Cocking the handgun, he shouted, “You better open this fucking door if you know what’s good for you!”

It only took six seconds after the cell phone fell to the floor for the other two underlings to realize the situation. Revving up the engine, the getaway driver pulled into the driveway and a third, scruffy beta emerged from the SUV, sprinting towards the house and kicking open the unlocked front door. Once he entered the residence, the stench of sweet cherries and fear assaulted his nostrils, so he followed the scent down the hallway until he spotted his comrade.

“Motherfucker did something to Siwon!” the blond beta with the gun shouted, face sweaty and eyes reddened from stress—if they lost Boss’s investment, horrible and gruesome things were in the pack’s future.

“Where the fuck is he, then?” the scruffy beta growled. His reply came from the tip of the gun as the blond beta pointed it towards the locked door. “For fuck’s sake! Kick down the fucking door, you pussy!” he yelled.

Inside the locked room, Kihyun hurried to the window, pushed it open, and kicked out the screen. For the first time in his life, he was relieved his genes gave him a slim figure. He lifted his leg over the window frame and shimmied his body sideways. The pounding on the door frightened him, but he had to escape! He had to overcome this to save his own life.

Together, the two betas kicked at the wooden door. Each kick stronger than the next, the wood quickly cracked and splintered enough for one of them to reach their arm through the hole and unlock the door from the inside. Despite the commotion, with a firm push and grunt, the omega slipped through the window and landed on one foot, but he lost his balance and his torso met the hard ground with a thud.

A grunt slid past his lips, but he didn’t have time to wait—Kihyun scurried to his feet and booked it. He ran as fast as he could across the small yard, pressing his hands against the gate to force it open. Within seconds, he was gone. The adrenaline motivated his limbs to move, feet kicking up gravel as he dashed down the back alley.

The betas darted to the window, wild with adrenaline and their own heart-stopping fear. The blond beta fired the gun twice at the rapidly-disappearing figure of the fleeing omega, but he missed both times. Gun smoke danced from the short barrel of the gun as the two betas glanced at each other, horror-stricken. Copper permeated the stuffy bedroom air. They looked back to see their fallen packmate unconscious and bleeding out on the ash-caked carpet.

In the black Mercedes, the driver was alert. Eyes peeled for any commotion coming from the house, fingers strumming anxiously on the leather steering wheel, palm clasped on the gearshift ready to pull the SUV into reverse and speed off into the night. His excitement was soured when only two of the others stomped angrily out of the house, their hands tossed up with a mix of defeat and disappointment on their faces. When they opened the vehicle door, the driver looked confused. Slung over a shoulder was Siwon, the tall beta Kihyun had attacked. He had awakened but was very groggy and disoriented, and he flopped like deadweight onto the backseat when the others shoved him back there.

“What the fuck? What happened to Siwon? Where’s the omega?” yelled the driver.
“He escaped…” replied the blond beta.

“What?”

“He fucking got away!” the scruffy beta angrily added.

The driver growled. “Are you fucking serious? Boss is gonna kill us!”

“Yeah, motherfucker, like we don’t already know that…”

Yakuza called it yubitsume: cutting off segments of one’s little finger to atone for mistakes. Boss Son was a traditional man mentored by one of the most revered yakuza-turned-jo-pok bosses in Eastern organized crime. As such, it was a known fact that Boss Son expected deep apologies in the form of chopped fingers and sebae bows. Underlings who failed to show sincerity and respect by honoring Boss Son’s ways were dealt with accordingly.

Yubitsume was a self-inflicted punishment. Only those truly, deeply sorry were valourous enough to repent. Yubitsume had origins in Kendo fighting, where the little finger's grip was the tightest on the hilt. Amputating a little finger equated difficulty gripping a sword properly, thus weakening battle presence and dependence on protection from the boss. Over the years, Boss Son lost many men to cowardice, but the jo-pok didn’t accommodate weakness and neither did Boss Son. His men were expected to be loyal, obedient, and brave. They were to rely on him because they had nothing else. He was everything.

Of the four betas he sent out to investigate Mr. Yoo’s case, one repented and another was badly injured and would be dealt with after his concussion subsided. The two other betas wimped out of their punishment, instead kneeling with their forehead to the floor in a deep sebae bow. This wasn’t their first fuck up. This moment was an aggregation of mistakes. They cried and begged for their lives and swore they’d never fuck up again, but groveling wasn’t going to get them anywhere. A life of harassment and fear would be with them always, never knowing which day would be their last; to stay alive was to be constantly alert, constantly paranoid. Until one day, death. By drive by, by arson, by something intentional so no one would mistake who killed them.

Deceased Mr. Yoo’s humble cafe was dealt with, too. To set an example to the other small businesses in the Gwangju branch’s network, Boss Son sent a duo of lesser alphas called the enforcers to drive by the closed-down establishment and firebomb it. The quaint cafe that sustained a family and ultimately murdered a man burned down in orange flames. The fire department responded to the fire, but upon arrival they retreated; local governments were vehemently warned not to get involved with jo-pok disciplinary actions.

Left uninhibited, nothing of Cafe Tulip remained but sizzling ash as the entire block was engulfed in noxious, grey smoke…
Kihyun ran, panting with the exertion of his escape. His legs never stopped moving, no, for he was scared they would catch him.

Then what? He’d probably get murdered.

The burn in his thighs ached and his chest hurt, but he didn’t stop. His muscles felt heavy as if they transformed into bricks, but that didn’t stop him either. He ran with only one destination in mind; fear carried him like the wind.

Minhyuk lived in the inner city. It was just a fifteen minute drive from the outermost quadrant of the suburbs, which was where Kihyun’s uncle’s home was located. He and Kihyun were roommates until Kihyun, the lucky bastard, fell into some luck and inherited his uncle’s home. Since Kihyun’s departure, Minhyuk posted ads online searching for a new roommate because rent wasn’t cheap, and the boy still had three semesters until he earned his degree. As a beta, matching with a roommate wasn’t challenging, but he always seemed to find a flaw in all his prospects. None of them could compare to Kihyun.

Sitting on the blue hand-me-down couch his mom gave him, Minhyuk messaged with a prospective renter while occasionally glancing at the TV. Wheel of Fortune was on, a gameshow he was lousy at, but it was reminiscent of better times hanging out with Kihyun. As the multicolored wheel spun and the spokes clicked, teasing the contestants with various dollar amounts, Minhyuk watched with interest.

Relief swept over Kihyun when he came to the street his target house was on. He slowed to a jog, and when he reached a particular house, he banged on the door with his fist. “Minhyuk!” He called with a dry, wheezing breath.

Suddenly, loud banging on the door jarred Minhyuk from his calm reprieve. He heard his name… it sounded like Kihyun? He hurried to the door, figuring something bad was happening because Kihyun wouldn’t dare panic this much otherwise. Opening the door, he said, “Whoa! Are you okay, Ki?”

Seeing his long time friend open the door, Kihyun all but stumbled inside with swiftness. He caught himself from almost falling, still wheezing for breath. “Cl-close the door. Quick,” he demanded breathlessly.

Picking up on Kihyun’s intensity, Minhyuk did as requested and quickly closed the door. For some reason, he felt compelled to lock it too. He turned to face Kihyun with a concerned expression. “What happened? Is everything okay?”

Kihyun’s legs wobbled, and he leaned against the closest wall for support. The omega willed his breathing to slow, attempting to calm his racing heart and anxiety. “Water… please,” he beckoned, coughing due to the dry hoarseness in his throat.

“Oh! Y-yeah! I’m sorry!” Minhyuk stuttered as he tried to make sense of the situation. He walked into the kitchen and fetched a glass from the cabinet. He poured Kihyun cold water and rushed over, trying to hide the tremble in his hand as he gave his friend the drink. He swallowed hard, nervous to ask this next question. “Kihyun, are you in trouble?”

Kihyun’s legs finally gave way, and he dropped to the floor. Seeing the water, Kihyun didn’t
hesitate to reach out and grasp the cup, guiding the drink to his lips and gulping as if he hadn’t drank water in weeks. Minhyuk watched with wide eyes as Kihyun chugged the water he had given him just moments ago. Kihyun was in trouble?

Why was he so winded? Had he been running? From where? From who?

The question Minhyuk asked floated around Kihyun’s head as he finished the drink, leaving the cup empty. “I... think so?” he replied softly, chest still heaving, “Fuck!” He was a dead man now.

“Oh my God…” Minhyuk mumbled, unsure of what to say. “...with who?” His heart pounded in his chest. Suddenly, panic struck him too. He knelt on the floor in front of Kihyun, grabbing him by the shoulders. “Kihyun, are people following you? Did they see you come here?”

Kihyun’s hold on the cup faltered and it slipped to the ground, clinking and rolling beside him; small droplets of water painted the carpet. His eyes met Minhyuk’s and he saw the panic. “I-I don’t think so, Min—” he said, sweat dripping down his neck and chest.

Minhyuk sighed in relief. Lord, he was not prepared to deal with... whatever it was that was happening to his friend. He withdrew his arms and took a seat next to Kihyun on the floor, slinking against the wall with his legs crossed. He mulled over what to say. Clearly, Kihyun was in shock, but Minhyuk was very, very confused as to what was happening. He debated whether to ask Kihyun again what was happening, or to wait for Kihyun to explain it as his own pace. He channeled his worry by nibbling on his bottom lip, ignoring the building nausea in his gut.

Kihyun sighed deeply and lifted his knees to his chest to rest his elbow on the joint of his kneecap. He ran a hand through his sweaty, damp ashen hair. “Some guys came to my uncles—my house,” he started dismally. “They broke in, I blacked out, and I woke up at this penthouse... this rugged alpha was asking for money...”

“Holy shit!” exclaimed Minhyuk before he clamped his palm over his mouth.

Did Kihyun really just say that? His friend was kidnapped by... who? The mafia? Was the mafia even real? That was stuff that only happened in action movies, not real life... Like, he knew bad shit existed in the world, but for some reason he never realized it could happen to people he knew.

“What do they want from you? Did your uncle owe money or something?”

“Money, I guess?” Kihyun replied, fearing for his life now. His hand trembled, nervous that things could turn to shit very suddenly. “This alpha asked for money, because... my delightful fucking uncle got me kidnapped and almost molested by these... these... mafia men, I was tossed around like a fucking rag doll. My shirt is ripped to shit! He kept asking if I had anything and I... lied. I lied to save my ass. I told them my uncle had a secret safe... his grunts drove me home, and when I had the chance I bashed one of the beta’s on the head and escaped through the window and fucking booked it here.” He gripped his wrist to stop the shaking, but shit, he’d certainly be found and killed. He knew it.

For the first time in his life, Minhyuk didn’t know what to say. He was just guessing when he asked if the late Mr. Yoo owed money. Never in a million years did he think that was actually true! His heart thumped so rapidly in his chest he felt the vibrations in his throat. Oh fuck, he felt sick.

“They... they didn’t... you know, rape you... or anything, did they?” His voice was a low whisper as he scanned Kihyun’s body for evidence. He noticed a purplish spot on Kihyun’s chin; a bruise, perhaps? Oh god, they didn’t violate Kihyun when he was unconscious, did they?
The omega shook his head as reply. “No. I think they were close to it, though. Fucking asshole,” he scoffed and leaned his head back against the wall with an audible thump. “Shit, I’m going to have to dye my hair, move again... goddamnit Minhyuk, they know my name.”

Minhyuk ran a hand through his blond hair and sighed. He wasn’t mentally prepared to handle a situation like this. They didn’t teach you how to save your friend from a potentially life-threatening connection with organized crime in high school. No, instead they force-fed students the damn quadratic formula.

“Shit. I... I need a smoke.” He stood up and grabbed a pack of Camels from the coffee table. A cigarette sounded great; soothing and relaxing as the nicotine flooded his body. Maybe a light, easy high would be sufficient enough to calm him? He pulled a stick out and dug a lighter from his back pocket. “You want one? I think you need one...”

Kihyun peered up at his friend, pondering. He hadn’t smoked in a while. He only smoked when he was piss drunk or when he was agitated about something. He didn’t decline because now seemed appropriate, all things considered. His nerves were everywhere and maybe the nicotine would help. That or a dozen shots of tequila. “Sure.”

Minhyuk always stepped outside for a smoke, but outside was the last place he wanted to be. He fleetingly thought to ask Kihyun if it was okay to smoke inside, but he caught himself; Kihyun wasn’t his roommate anymore.

“Uh, I’m just going to light up inside...” he said as he did just that, tossing the lighter and pack of Camels to Kihyun after. He paced nervously, sucking in too much per drag as he willed down his panic.

Kihyun clumsily caught the pack and lighter before he plucked a cancer stick from its confines and placed it between his lips. The omega didn’t care about inside or outside smoking, his mind had bigger, racing voices to listen to. He flicked the lighter, lighting the end of the cigarette, inhaling to catch the heat.

Smoke filled Kihyun’s lungs with his inhale, and he held it in for a few seconds before blowing a puff of grey out into the air. “Thanks,” he said softly.

“Yeah,” replied Minhyuk on the exhale. He sat down on the arm of the blue couch and stared at Kihyun. Silence engulfed them, but his thoughts were loud. Was Kihyun going to hide out here? Was it even safe for Kihyun to be in Gwangju anymore?

“So, what’re you gonna do now?” he asked.

Kihyun stared at the foot of the couch, lungs burning with the toxins he inhaled; it also didn’t help that he abused his lungs when he ran all the way here.

“I don’t know, Min,” he sighed as he held the cigarette between his middle and index fingers, guiding the stick to his lips again. “I’m fucking dead. I can’t go back home. They’re probably going to be creeping around...” His mentality was depleting. The omega was sure he’d go insane with paranoia.

“I think… maybe it’s best for you to... maybe lay low here? You said they didn’t follow you, so they wouldn’t know about this place, right? I mean, do they have the ability to track you?” Minhyuk rambled, saying anything that crossed his mind. He was never particularly great at organizing his thoughts before speaking.
Kihyun blew another puff of grey past his lips. Minhyuk was always kind. “I would appreciate that, a lot. I have my phone and wallet still on me—”

Suddenly, Minhyuk realized something. He shot up from his seat, cutting Kihyun off. “What if… what if you’re wired? Have you checked? They could be on their way right now…”

The possibility that he was wired frightened, and Kihyun felt that rising panic again. “Should we check?”

“I don’t even know how to check that. What’s a wire look like? I guess on TV they’re like… actual wires, right?” Minhyuk rambled again. He rambled when he was unsure of odd circumstances. He took a long drag and exhaled the smoke through his nose in an effort to calm down.

“I don’t feel anything like that…” Kihyun felt around his hips and legs. He was relieved to feel nothing odd. “Fuck… I’ll have to lay low for a while. Call work and tell them I have a family emergency.” He smacked the back of his head against the wall in frustration.

“I’m dead, Minhyuk.”

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It had been a week since the unfortunate events pertaining to Mr. Yoo’s case transpired. The underlings sent to handle important matters were dealt with accordingly, though Mr. Son was intensely scolded by the ultimate boss of the South Korean syndicate. The shortcomings of his men were considered shortcomings of his own in the eyes of leader; his transgressions were not taken lightly and, therefore, his business practices were under a watchful eye from the main branch. Business was business; it continued despite mishaps and loss of product. Needless to say, Mr. Son’s expectations for his men were impossibly high, and the violence in his veins sang at the opportunity to pounce and kill. When collecting payment from particularly productive businesses, he went himself to collect debts and make threats.

A small pharmacy next to the Gwangju subway system with bright neon signs and multilingual product advertisements taped to the glass windows made great business due to a prime location near subway travellers. Having spent many days of his youth stealing gum and other small goods from that very pharmacy, Hyunwoo was quick to enter a business contract with the pharmacy when he was appointed his current position in the Gwangju jo-pok. On paper, the language was professional and diplomatic, though the actual term for this particular relationship was extortion. That was Hyunwoo’s specialty.

After hiding at Minhyuk’s for a week, Kihyun ventured out to the outside world. He’d barely been able to sleep, riddled with paranoia and anxiety, plagued by the events that partook only seven days ago. Though the omega remained incognito as much as he could, clad in a borrowed sweater from his friend and his own jeans and footwear, he couldn’t hide forever. What kind of life was that?

With the hood pulled up over his head, the omega wandered the streets from Minhyuk’s place with his hands hidden in the pockets of his warm sweater. Once reaching town, he entered a simple, small pharmacy to obtain a few necessities, maybe even something to help the anxiety besides cheap cigarettes.

Kihyun pulled his hands out of his pocket and grasped a basket by the door, daring himself to pull the hood of his sweater down. Still suspicious, he left it up; fear had really messed him up. He walked through the aisles, grabbing random items like makeup for the yellowing bruise on his chin, shampoo and conditioner, and body wash. He strolled past feminine hygiene products, bathroom amenities and rows of hair care until he came to the number one thing on his list: hair
He sighed, hand raising to finally push his hood back to scratch at his messy hair as he pondered the color. Black? Brown? Hell, orange?

In the back office of the pharmacy, Hyunwoo pinned the small, fragile owner by the collar of his shirt. His little feet dangled from how high Hyunwoo was holding him, and his wrinkly face flinched every time the jo-pok boss shouted. Hyunwoo had the kind of deep voice that carried through a room when he raised his tone. To that effect, he sounded as intimidating as he looked. And when he didn’t get his weekly payment in cash in full, the need to be intimidating was essential. Being intimidating earned him intel, like how the rest of the money the owner owed Hyunwoo was conveniently available in the cash register out front instead of conveniently in the designated payment envelope.

Just because Hyunwoo went into the pharmacy alone didn’t mean he actually was. When he let go of the collar, the short owner fell haphazardly to the floor like some unwanted plaything in the back office. Hyunwoo charged out to the main floor of the pharmacy and made a beeline to the register in the front of the store. The lighthearted, instrumental music that played in the background was a sharp contrast to his image and his actions. Customers shopping the aisles definitely noticed when he walked by, and they couldn’t help but stare.

Who was that man? Looking gruff in a leather jacket and hard eyes, was he a gangster? Surely he was up to no good.

The redheaded employee working the cash register immediately identified Hyunwoo. Quickly, she stepped aside to accommodate Hyunwoo’s large frame behind the narrow counter space. He asked what the code was to open it, and she obediently obliged by inputting the code; the till popped open and Hyunwoo snatched up all the large bills. In his angry haste, he had forgotten one of the most crucial crime skills—stealth. Customers in the front of the store who were able to witness his actions were wide-eyed and gossipy. Fuck. He wasn’t worried about the police, but he didn’t want the public to grow suspicious.

The omega huffed a breath of annoyance at his indecision; he was making himself anxious being away from Minhyuk’s for so long. Damn his fickle and queer field of interests! The dye boxes clattered onto the basket as he tossed them all in, eagerness to hurry back to Minhyuk’s tugging his nerves like a dog on a leash.

As Hyunwoo coolly fled from the register, he walked down the beauty and toiletries sections. Surely customers wouldn’t expect a manly man like him to be strolling those sections? Oh, that smell… sweet, fruity… like maraschino cherries. Too strong to be perfume or lotion. It had to be that omega!

Hyunwoo followed the scent just around the corner, only to see a very familiar figure loitering in the aisle with a basket of assorted products. Mr. Yoo’s nephew? What was his name? Kisun...Kih...Kihyun! Sticking to his theme of direct pursuit, Hyunwoo embarked down the same aisle as his runaway investment. When he neared the omega, he flashed a sly smile.

“Orange, huh? I’m not really into redheads.”

Kihyun’s frame tensed. That all too nostalgic voice made fear, panic, and other depraved emotions float to the surface. The omega could feel the knot in his throat he turned towards the presence he felt beside him. His dark chocolate eyes widened, the basket slipped from his grasp and clunked to the floor. He was stunned, frozen like a deer in headlights; the desire to run was strong, to flee to safety, but his body wouldn’t listen.

The realization on Kihyun’s face made Hyunwoo ache with the exertion of his alpha biology; he
loved feeling powerful just as much as he loved being powerful. He honed in on the frozen omega, body moving closer and closer with each passing second, eyes zeroing in on any potential move the omega may make.

He reached out and grabbed Kihyun by the arm, his grip tight and authoritative. “You don’t look so happy to see me.”

Kihyun panicked again, fearing these could be his final moments of life. The grip around his arm brought him back to reality and his eyebrows dipped down. “Let me go,” he insisted, pulling against the alpha to attempt to pry him off.

Hyunwoo couldn’t help but laugh. Did the omega really just demand to be let go? What kind of feeble attempt was that? After everything Hyunwoo’s boys put him through, Kihyun must still not wholly understand who he’s gotten himself involved with.

Tightening his grip on the omega’s arm, Hyunwoo yanked the small boy towards him and stared down at him demeaningly. “You don’t tell me what to do, boy,” Hyunwoo said mockingly. When he smirked, his alpha fangs poked out from beneath his full lips. “You’re coming with me.”

The close proximity, the tone in this alpha’s voice and the grip on his arm were setting all sorts of alarms off inside Kihyun’s head. That smirk alone shook him to his core.

“No—” Kihyun jerked to get away, but the alpha was strong. “No, let me go!” He pleaded, grounding his heels on the floor.

Maybe it was his sour mood, maybe it was Kihyun’s bodily pull, maybe it was the fact that Hyunwoo was being watched by the main branch, but being defied by a lowly omega didn’t settle well with the alpha. He snarled at the omega’s pleas.

Changing his original plan of pulling the omega out of the store by the arm to appear like some sort of couple’s quarrel, Hyunwoo planted a large palm in the center of the omega’s chest and pushed him into the shelves of the aisle. Products cascaded to the tiled floor with an awful clamor. Kihyun stumbled backwards into the shelves, hissing in pain as he slid to the floor with a hand on the back of his neck where the metal shelf made impact.

“No. You will do as I say. You were stupid enough to get caught. I won’t be as nice this time.” Hyunwoo snarled.

Kihyun rubbed his nape, fearing for any cuts or blood. This alpha had to be the biggest asshole on the planet.

Hyunwoo pulled out his cell phone and dialed his boys who were surrounding the building. He told them to get the car ready and to come in for reinforcement. Not that the alpha needed reinforcement, it was just for intimidation. It was always about scare tactics; the illusion of imminent fear. Truth be told, Kihyun was too valuable to injure...and, truth be told, the alpha didn’t want to hurt the omega. Something about the boy was oddly alluring.

“You’re coming back with me, and you’re going to reevaluate how to pay your uncle’s debt. Now, get up,” Hyunwoo instructed as he extended his hand for Kihyun to grab.

Kihyun looked up at the alpha, bitterness and anger in his eyes. He didn’t want to go anywhere with this man, and to prove it he stayed on the ground, dismissing the alpha with a cold stare. Just because he was an omega didn’t mean he had to submit when he felt threatened, and he wanted this asshole to know that.
Hyunwoo watched defiance shimmer in Kihyun’s eyes. Did the omega not understand the danger he was in?

“Don’t make me repeat myself,” the alpha warned as he seemingly went to pull something from his back pocket, but instead he flashed the shiny metal of a gun that was strapped to his belt and hidden under his thick leather jacket. “Act wisely.”

Kihyun’s eyes followed the alpha’s hand and the glimmer of such a deadly weapon piqued his fear. He gawked at the alpha incredulously, for this man had to be incredibly dangerous to carry a gun around… that, or just plain crazy with no fear of the law. Reluctantly he obeyed, avoiding the alpha’s gaze.

Ah, so the implication of gun violence was effective, huh? Kihyun’s compliance showed Hyunwoo that the boy could listen and be trained after all.

“Mmm, good boy,” the alpha whispered as he winked at the omega. Kihyun narrowed his eyes in disgust at the alpha’s wink. Hyunwoo laughed; it wasn’t common for an omega to hold their own, especially against an alpha, but Hyunwoo liked the challenge.

“Well? Walk.”

Wordlessly, Kihyun turned to the door and strode begrudgingly towards it with spiteful thoughts.

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The inside of Hyunwoo’s Mercedes was lavish: black leather seats, matte black interior, subwoofers with excellent sound quality, and even a mini bar.

Hyunwoo sat in the very back with Kihyun. Two alpha enforcers sat on either side of them, mostly to maintain the fear that Hyunwoo instilled in the omega back in the pharmacy. He sat relaxed in his seat with his arms folded over his broad chest. He wore dark, squarish sunglasses to mask his dark brown eyes. When he looked at Kihyun, the sunlight shining in from the windows reflected off his sunglasses. The omega’s sweet cherry scent permeated the confines of the vehicle, and Hyunwoo occasionally shot glances at the other two lesser alphas to remind them Kihyun was his new toy, not theirs.

“Yoo Kihyun, do you know who I am?”

To Kihyun, the whole car had an alpha musk and it screamed dominance. He had never been surrounded by so many intimidating alphas before. He kept himself curled up, defensive, with a timid demeanour.

“No,” Kihyun answered.

“To you, my name is Mr. Son. I’m a very important business man here in Gwangju,” Hyunwoo explained calmly. He glanced out the window briefly, then redirected his gaze to Kihyun.

Based on the omega’s old clothing, Hyunwoo figured the boy was young and broke; it was clear the Yoo family never tasted wealth. The omega’s uncomfortable body language appealed to Hyunwoo’s merciful side. The omega surely would never cooperate if he felt unsafe. After a long pause, the alpha decided to humanize himself.

“Don’t worry, you’re safe in this vehicle,” he said. He paused again. “I’m a man of wealth and power. No one will harm you if I tell them not to… Have you ever heard of the jo-pok?”
This man, this alpha, was still a complete stranger to Kihyun. Like hell he would drop his guard just because this man said it was safe. He wouldn’t feel safe until he was home. “No,” he replied bitterly.

“No?” Hyunwoo laughed. The jo-pok were everywhere, infiltrating buildings, stealing, threatening, bribing, intimidating, they were adept in extortion and fraud, they dealt drugs and razed establishments. They controlled the police force with methods of blackmail and defamation. No part of South Korea was untainted by the jo-pok. “Organized crime... black market business... international criminals who shake hands with the Italian mafia and the Mexican cartel. Do you understand now?”

Kihyun didn’t really understand since he usually kept to himself and lived quietly, but the mere mention of this jo-pok was intimidating. He nodded, staring at the alpha with a suspicious look.

“Good,” Hyunwoo said with a grin. He proceeded to study Kihyun silently, dissecting his minute gestures and analyzing each noise. He was an expert at reading people—it was tough to enter his line of work without such a skill. It was no hidden fact that the omega was strong-willed, but he seemed to mute himself more often than not. Hyunwoo didn’t like that; he liked his conquests to show their true, feisty colors.

“How old are you, Kihyun? Do you go to school? How did you come about being in your uncle’s home?”

The omega quirked an eyebrow at the onslaught of questions tossed at him one by one; the alpha was far too curious about his personal life. More red flags raised in his mind. Kihyun felt his shoulders drop. If he were a puppy, his ears would droop. “What do you want with me?”

“I suggest you answer my questions, as they have a lot to do with your fate, Kihyun.” Hyunwoo didn’t play into the omega’s pathetic, sad routine. The emotions of others were not Hyunwoo’s concern unless they directly benefited him. A businessman always made smart business moves. “I’m trying to get to know you, you see. What I want with you... is you.”

“Well, you have me,” he said bitterly.

Hyunwoo leaned in towards the omega, invading the other’s personal space with his prominent alpha energy. He removed his sunglasses, folded them up, and stuffed them into his shirt pocket. The smell of spiced citrus saturated the cab, causing the other alphas to shift uncomfortably. He was no doubt emitting pheromones that would fuck with Kihyun’s omega biology.

Staring at Kihyun, face a small distance from his, Hyunwoo whispered huskily, “Why don’t you ask me some questions? I’m an open book, as they say.”

Kihyun became more alert when the alpha moved closer. The closeness made him uneasy—god, what an awful time to be an omega. The alpha’s pheromones made him press his legs closed, his hands curling into fists on his thighs. Someone needed to crack a window or he would be sitting in a puddle of his own... juices, staining the black leather seats. The rush of alpha pheromones rattled Kihyun like the omega he was. He opened his eyes halfway, breath heavy thanks to Mr. Son’s earthy, citrus scent that caused all his muscles to twitch.

“I’m twenty-four,” Kihyun voiced softly. “Not a student...”

Ah, the omega was slightly older than Hyunwoo originally thought. With a pretty face like that, he could fool anyone. Not being a student was exceptionally convenient; no one would grow suspicious if Kihyun suddenly stopped attending classes.
“Do you work?” the alpha asked, seemingly mesmerized by the way his pheromones made Kihyun squirm. The answer to the question was moot. With his reach of influence, the alpha likely racked money from whichever part-time establishment Kihyun possibly worked at.

He found himself staring at the omega’s pink lips, enthralled at the way they quivered. Breathing in Kihyun’s bodily response to the alpha’s scent, Hyunwoo cleared his throat and took a moment to collect himself before continuing.

“Y-Yes,” Kihyun answered almost breathlessly. “I s-sing and work as a bartender at a bar.” He dropped his head to stare at his fists in an attempt to control himself; no amount of clenching was helping to keep his instincts at bay.

Hyunwoo hummed his approval. He always had a soft spot for cute boys with lovely voices. He bit his plump lower lip at the thought of how the omega would sound singing... moaning... saying Hyunwoo’s name over and over again as he fucked him—shit, he was picking up too much of the omega’s sultry-sweet scent. “Tell me Kihyun, do you find me attractive?”

What kind of fucking question? Kihyun gawked at the alpha. “I mean... um...” Fuck, his hormones were making him flustered.

“What’s the matter? Cat caught your tongue?” Hyunwoo taunted. He smirked at how flustered the omega was. The alphas on either side of them chuckled too. There was always something amusing about overwhelming omegas.

“I have a proposition for you. Your uncle’s debt won’t go away unless it’s paid. Ends have to meet, you see. For you, I’m willing to make a special offer.” The alpha pressed the coarse pad of his thumb over Kihyun’s lower lip, enjoying the way the pink skin stretched slightly when he pulled it lightly down. “Pay me with your body, and I’ll forgive your uncle’s debts.”

What? The alpha wanted to fuck him?! For payment?!

Kihyun blushed furiously and swallowed louder than intended. “What if I refuse?” he asked timidly.

Refuse? Only a fool would refuse his offer. Women and men alike fell to his feet, bloodthirsty for his wealth, power, and body.

Clicking his tongue, Hyunwoo withdrew his position away from the omega and sat back, the middle of his broad back pressed comfortably against the leather seat as he folded his arms over his chest haughtily. Arrogantly lifting his chin up, he smiled his signature fangy grin and replied, “…you pay with your life.”

So… Either sleep with the alpha or die? Fuck. Fucking fantastic.

The omega narrowed his eyes at Mr. Son, weighing the pros and cons of the offer. Obviously he didn’t want to die, but he also wasn’t some whore who threw himself at every alpha or beta who came into his life.

But… it would just be to pay for his uncle's mistakes, right? A quickie and it was all over…

“Fine,” Kihyun whispered, defeated. “I’ll... I’ll repay my uncle's debt myself.”
Chapter 3

Mr. Son’s matte Mercedes came to a dead halt in the driveway of his extravagant, hillside penthouse. The multilevel residence was buried in a jungle of vibrant, lush vegetation with striated leaves and colorful, fragrant flowers.

Last time Kihyun was here, it was night—the allure of the penthouse was cloaked in darkness. Now in daylight, it radiated wealth, beauty, and power under a blazing yellow sun.

Mr. Son’s door was opened for him by his personal valet crew. Once the enforcer alpha who sat next to him stepped out, he exited too. Immediately, he whirled around, extending his hand in a gentlemanly gesture for Kihyun to grab upon his exit. Kihyun cautiously stared at the alpha, choosing instead to step out of the car without Mr. Son’s help.

The downstairs portion of Mr. Son’s hillside penthouse contained social rooms—the living room, a lounge room, a miniature bar fully stocked with expensive liquors, and a bathroom. There was an outside seating area overlooking the hill with a fantastic view of the neon city lights and tall skyscrapers. A second area for outside seating was more quaint, complete with simple seating and warm outdoor lighting. This area shared space with a stairwell with small lights that illuminated each step as they ascended.

Upstairs was Hyunwoo’s room, amongst other rooms Kihyun would soon become familiar with.

Kihyun found it hard to focus on one thing; there were so many features that caught his curious look. The stairs, the lights, the vegetation, everything looked like a scene from a movie.

*Just how powerful was the alpha?*

Two female betas awaited Mr. Son and company at the foot of the marble staircase at the front door. Their black and white attire suggested they were servants of the house. They smiled warmly, their energy inviting and feminine; they were well-versed in hospitality and possessed mild-mannered, amicable personalities.

With his hand, Hyunwoo motioned for Kihyun to walk in front of him towards the women. The omega swallowed nervously—he was about to enter a stranger’s home to sleep with said stranger to pay off his uncle’s debt; he actually was an investment.

He found himself unable to move, rooted to the ground like a tree.

Annoyed, Hyunwoo forced the omega forward with a stiff push to his back. “Go on, Kihyun...” he whispered, tone as serious as a heart attack. The alpha’s forcefulness did nothing but increase Kihyun’s anxiety.

The beta servants looked at Mr. Son, unsure of what to do. He flashed them a knowing look and they understood instantly. They walked over to the frightened omega, bathing him in friendly female attention. He greeted them with a slight bow, their presence alone calming his nerves.

They were beautiful and exotic-looking, clearly foreigners to Korea. Their arrangement with Hyunwoo wasn’t as sketchy as one might initially presume, as they willingly chose a career of servitude. Hyunwoo was kind to them and provided them with the essentials of survival.

It was good for them here, just as it would be for Kihyun too.
Hyunwoo had the appearance of a gangster—body littered with scars and tattoos. His heart wasn’t as hardened. Unfortunately, his way of expressing his inner softness was laced with danger. As he admired from afar the delicate ways the beta women comforted the omega, the corner of his lips curled into a small smile.

“Ladies, please show him to the bath. Have him meet me in the lounge once he’s clean.”

Oddly, the bath was somewhat relaxing even in a stranger’s expensive home. It was a very lovely abode that made even the omega jealous—he could never achieve the alpha’s level of success. Mr. Son’s position and rank seemed to get to Kihyun the more he thought about it; the alpha was rich, dangerous, and strong, and he’d certainly never admit the alpha had a sort of mysterious, rugged handsomeness that was appealing.

Kihyun was thankful for the kind hospitality, but the exotic beta women left some questions about Mr. Son unanswered. He learned the alpha was thirty, but nothing else! He didn’t want to risk them tattling on him for his curiosity; what if he got murdered or something?

Post-bath, his skin smelling like coconut mixed with his usual cherry musk, the omega was lead through the penthouse by the betas. He wore new clothes, which he figured was best since he wore Minhyuk’s sweater and shirt that day. The alpha probably wouldn't take too kindly to him wearing someone else’s scent. Mr. Son’s shirt was a little loose around Kihyun’s torso, which felt comfortable, along with sweatpants. As the omega disliked socks, he wore nothing on his feet. His hair was still damp and messy, giving him a comfy and laidback demeanour. The shirt was white, simple, making the grey sweats stand out more—both items of clothing smelled so much like the alpha.

In his personal lounge room, Hyunwoo sat on the red velvet couch. He had shed his heavy leather jacket and draped it over the arm of the adjacent chair. His leather shoes were slipped off at the door, of course, so he was relaxing comfortably in just his dark denim jeans and a plain white t-shirt.

The lighting in the lounge was low, casting a honey-toned warmth over the cozy room and accenting the bronze tones of his skin. The sliding glass doors were open to allow circulation of smoke trailing off the tip of his half-finished cigarette—though admittedly, cigarette smoke already clung to the fabric of the room, in the cushions of the couch and the wool of the cherry blossom area rug, so airing out the room was pointless.

But Mr. Son enjoyed listening to the bustling city life, so he justified his actions in that way.

The alpha smelled the omega before he even entered the lounge. It wasn’t just that cherry scent he’d gotten accustomed to, it was something very, very different—a hybrid of the omega’s sweetness with the alpha’s spice. His attention darted to the entryway in anticipation of Kihyun’s arrival. Upon reaching the lounge with the maids, Kihyun saw the older male sitting on the couch. Hyunwoo drew in a sharp breath when he finally saw the omega standing there clad in the alpha’s clothes; they were too big for the boy, but the sight appealed to Hyunwoo’s innate alpha possessiveness.

He stared at Kihyun, though his words regarded the betas. “Thank you. You may leave.”

They obeyed without question, leaving Kihyun alone with Hyunwoo for the first time. Kihyun felt anxiety rise again when the alpha dismissed the maids.
“Come in. Take a seat,” The alpha greeted as he patted the couch cushion to his right.

Timidly, Kihyun approached the alpha, obviously nervous, though he didn’t disobey Mr. Son. As he walked, the oversized shirt slid a bit off the left side of his shoulder, exposing his clean, unscathed collarbone. The alpha eagerly drank in the delicious sight.

Kihyun strolled forward and sat where the alpha had patted the couch. He sat quietly.

After a long exhale of cigarette smoke, Hyunwoo said calmly, “Even now you’re nervous? I told you I won’t hurt you. You’re mine now. I protect what’s mine...” Maybe it was the look in the omega’s chocolate brown eyes, maybe it was the teasing glimpse of his body, but Hyunwoo’s earthy alpha pheromones filled the air, mingling with the stench of cigarettes. “I’m sure the help informed you about me... they’re gossipy women.”

The younger male licked his dry lips timidly and nodded his head once. “There were... a few things they wouldn’t tell me...” he admitted, avoiding the alpha’s eyes with his own, keeping his gaze down at his lap.

What did the alpha mean by ‘mine?’ He was too scared to know the answer.

“If you have questions, please ask me...” Hyunwoo insisted, now feeling the effects of his own pheromone release. The omega looked so small and touchable. What sounds would he make under the alpha’s skilled touch?

Hyunwoo sucked the nicotine from his cig and exhaled through his nose, the smoke billowing out in two streams. He leaned forward to tap the ashen tip in the dirty ashtray on the coffee table, specifically encroaching on Kihyun’s personal space to test the boy’s comfort levels. When he sat back, he twisted his posture slightly, his palm on the velvet backrest mere centimeters from Kihyun’s head.

Hyunwoo stared into the omega’s eyes and smiled. “I want this to be as fun for you as it is for me...” he said, though he knew the omega’s consent wasn’t necessary.

The pheromones had Kihyun keeping his head down, withdrawn into himself. The alpha was so close to him. So close. Damn, the combination of nicotine and alpha musk rattled his inner omega. His heart raced, nerves tensing as if it was his first time over and over again. His mouth ran dry, senses driving his mind into a foggy state.

“O-okay...” Kihyun mumbled, hoping he remembered that for later. If he remembered.

“You say very little… why? Am I that scary?” Hyunwoo rasped as he studied the omega's facial expressions. The question was rhetorical; he knew how intimidating his presence was. His gaze drifted down to Kihyun’s lips—a routine he had found himself falling into several times during their brief time together. Tilting his head, he returned his gaze to the omega’s eyes. Were they always this lovely, or was it his alpha hormones playing with his perception.

He slid the palm of his free hand up Kihyun’s sweatpant-covered thigh, stopping at a respectful location just before the juncture of his hips. His calloused fingers traced light circles over the fabric. “Kihyun, have you ever been with a man before?” His breath was smokey as he whispered it to the omega.

At such a sudden and random question, Kihyun finally looked at the alpha; he, too, studied Mr. Son’s face, taking in the older man’s expression. He could see every detail now.

Those whispered words danced around his mind, and he felt his face heat up ever so slightly. “I
have...” Kihyun admitted. “Sorry I’m not a virgin like most alphas want.”

He tried his best to ignore the hand on his hip, but his omega instincts begged him to give in, to cave first.

“I don’t care that you’ve fucked others,” Hyunwoo said crassly. It was true; he wasn’t gentle enough to be an omega’s first lover, and he certainly wasn’t empathetic enough to handle emotional attachments.

The alpha was curious, however, if the omega had been marked. A pang of jealousy struck him, and his flattened palm on Kihyun’s thigh tensed a bit. He willed down his instincts once more by taking another drag and holding in his breath. The way the smoke danced in his bloodstream evoked a pleasant lightheadedness.

As he exhaled, his gaze flickered to Kihyun’s lips. *Fuck,* he wanted to taste the omega to confirm that he really was as sweet as he smelled. “If I kissed you, what would you do?”

Kihyun’s eyes darted to the coffee table. *What could he do if the alpha kissed him?* Probably faint because nobody had actually kissed him in a long time.

The omega was at the alpha’s disposal. “Whatever you want me to do.”

Hyunwoo growled at Kihyun’s response. He moved in, flicking his tongue out to teasingly lick the omega’s lower lip, his own lips ghosting over the other’s, his hot breath filling the nanometers between them. The hand on the omega’s thigh slid between his legs near his crotch; Hyunwoo squeezed the flesh possessively, his thumb rubbing over the omega’s bulge. The motions were all so brusque to Kihyun—the lick made his skin trail with goosebumps, but the fondling right against his clothed cock hidden made his mouth fall open for a small but audible inhale of air.

Kihyun’s hands slid down to the couch on either side of his hips, instinctively opening his legs to subliminally beckon the strong alpha closer. His omega pheromones emitted essence of carnal desire. Intoxicated by the omega’s scent, Hyunwoo wanted to devour his lips with his own—*but what fun was that?*

Hyunwoo turned his head suddenly, sticking the cigarette in his mouth and took a drag. He inhaled a particularly large amount of smoke into his lungs before snuffing the little stub of his cigarette into the ashtray. Without warning, he grabbed a handful of Kihyun’s ashy grey hair and yanked his head back, exposing the boy’s vulnerable throat. The pull against Kihyun’s scalp was tantalizing, coursing a bolt of more arousal down to his loins.

Almost as quickly as he manipulated the omega, Hyunwoo pressed his lips against the other’s. The motion was fluid and swift, and he lingered a few seconds until Kihyun sucked in, getting what the elder wanted; the smoke filled the omega’s lungs, expanding his chest.

The omega’s shocked gasps shot straight to Hyunwoo’s cock, thrumming along with his innate alpha desire to want to devour smaller, cuter things. Once Kihyun inhaled the smoke Hyunwoo exhaled, he withdrew from the pseudo-kiss, subconsciously biting down on his lower lip as he watched the whitish smoke dance around the pretty omega. The hand in Kihyun’s grey hair still holding strong, decided to plant wet, open-mouthed kisses on the jugular vein pulsing under the pale skin of the omega’s exposed neck. His free hand returned to its spot at the omega’s crotch, this time rougher upon contact with Kihyun’s hardening dick. Immersed in that velvety-sweet cherry aroma, nipped at random patches of skin on the omega’s neck, each bite increasing in pressure. Kihyun whimpered, dick twitching to life.
Kihyun breathed out a sigh—the dread of being bitten or claimed hung like a dark shadow in his mind. This alpha wouldn’t go that far, would he? Claim Kihyun as insurance?

Hyunwoo rubbed the omega’s dick beneath the fabric of his sweatpants, curious as to the size, the girth, the color. If it was anything like the rest of the boy, it was small and pale and turned a cute shade of pink at the head from arousal. Kihyun gave in to his omega instincts, letting the alpha do as he saw fit—he couldn’t deny him now of all times, not when that alpha scent was playing with his feeble mind.

The alpha bit along Kihyun’s clavicle where the oversized collar slipped over his shoulder and exposed a glimpse of his beautiful body. A bite just below the collarbone punctured the soft flesh there, brilliant ruby liquid oozing from the bite wound and trickling slowly down until it bled into the fabric of his shirt. The pain from the bite made Kihyun squeeze shut his eyes, whimpering ‘fuck’ under his breath.

The omega’s whimper was the only confirmation the alpha needed.

Irritated at the clothing barrier, Hyunwoo ripped it at the collar and tore it off in one, swift motion, the material discarded to the floor. Cool air touched Kihyun’s bare torso, causing him to shudder. Where the blood had soaked into the fabric remained a smatter of the red liquid, the smell coppery and rich, so Hyunwoo licked at it until the flesh was pale once more. The new wound pulsed, the surrounding flesh tender, and it stung when the alpha licked him.

Cliché how aggressive the alpha was being to get to what he wanted.

The hand at the omega’s crotch worked deftly at the drawstrings. Hyunwoo moved both hands to grab at the waistband of Kihyun’s sweats, the elastic fabric bunching up from his haste. Using his alpha strength, he shifted his and Kihyun’s positions so that he was sitting on the red velvet couch and the omega was pulled onto his lap in a straddle. Instinctively, Kihyun set his hands on the alpha’s shoulders to ground himself. Hyunwoo leaned back and widened the gap between his knees, his posture large and masculine, to accommodate Khyun’s weight on his hips.

For the fun of it, Hyunwoo rolled his hips up into the omega, his dick hardening under the soft curve of the omega’s ass.

Folding his arms behind his head, Hyunwoo relaxed. Blood still oozed from the bite under Kihyun’s collarbone, and it dripped down his chest like a tease. Hyunwoo instinctively thrusted shallowly up against the omega again, enjoying the omega’s reactions.

The alpha had plans for the omega, but first the boy had to earn the attention. “Strip, dance, entertain me…” he whispered huskily.

Kihyun made another small noise when he felt the motion, which coursed right to his semi-hard dick. He gulped at the sudden request the alpha demanded from him, but that deep tone of voice was hard to resist. His hands slid cautiously from the alpha’s shoulders and rested on his own thighs.

“Um... w—” He was nervous to ask what the alpha wanted. The omega didn’t know what was okay and what would get him in trouble.

Hyunwoo grabbed Kihyun’s chin roughly and forced the boy to look him the eyes. The omega was so shy and concerned with everything, consumed by his own nerves. That was unacceptable; the omega should feel lucky Hyunwoo gave him the opportunity to fuck one of the wealthiest alphas in Korea.
With a snarl, he said, “What? Do I have to tell you twice or are you stupid? Strip, whore.”

Kihyun didn’t appreciate being called a whore or asked if he was stupid either, but he figured not saying anything would save him. He felt too intimidated and too vulnerable; that alpha snarl made the hairs on his arms stand. With wide, frightened eyes he replied with a quivering voice. “I-I just w-wanted to know if there w-would be music.”

Fuck. There it was—that distinctly omega demure nature that drove Hyunwoo crazy. The stutter was sexy too. The alpha smirked and softened his grip on the omega’s chin, his fingers carrying a gentle caress up Kihyun’s jaw that sharply contrasted his aggression seconds prior.

“Would you like there to be music?” the alpha grinded his hips into the omega as he asked the question. He was getting impatient, but he wanted to see what his new investment could do and how pretty he’d look naked.

The alpha’s touch against his skin tickled. He nodded. Music would help ease his nervousness, and probably give him a little confidence. “I dance better with music, sir.”

Hyunwoo quirked an eyebrow. Sir? His cock twitched at the formality.

He reached forward and grabbed Kihyun’s hips with both hands, thumbs dipping below the waistband to trace patterns in the v-shaped dip in the omega’s hipbones. He pushed the boy’s ass down onto the alpha’s growing dick, leaning forward until their chests touched. Kihyun’s eyes fluttered at the close proximity, the grasp on his hips fuelling that omega fire inside. Those pet names, those dark eyes, and the feel of an alpha cock; the alpha was affecting him more than he thought.

Against the omega’s lips, Hyunwoo groaned, “Mm, you should talk like that more often, pet.”

Those lips so pert and chaste against his own—holy shit, Kihyun needed to get laid. But instead of kissing those tasty lips, Hyunwoo turned his face to command the iHome to dim the lights and play music from the surround-sound speakers tucked into each corner of the lounge. Go Fuck Yourself by Two Feet played, soft and vibey as it created a slow, sexy atmosphere.

The slow build up of the music was sultry and he quickly found his rhythm, the bleeding bite near forgotten. If Kihyun was a pet, he didn’t want to disappoint the alpha because his life was still on the line, right? He pushed aside his pride and cleared his throat.

“Permission to get off your lap, sir?” he dragged the ending word into a whisper.

Hyunwoo’s lips curled into his signature fanged grin upon hearing the Kihyun ask for permission. Seemed the boy finally found his manners. He leaned back into the couch cushion, once more taking on a relaxed and collected demeanor that didn’t give away his truly aroused he was. His citrusy bergamot scent enveloped him—the only sign the alpha was entranced by the omega’s charms.

“By all means...” the alpha drawled.

With the verbal permission, Kihyun maneuvered his body to the left, raising his right leg up and twisting his body to set his foot on the ground, standing straight up off the couch. The omega then rounded the coffee table to ensure the alpha had full view of him. He was nervous. He’d never done a dance, let alone a striptease, for anyone before—an alpha usually just tore his clothes right off of him and used him for their delight.

Kihyun was already topless, thanks to the alpha’s aggressive haste. Unlike the alpha, the omega
had a slim figure with a little definition. Once upon a time he had abs, but working full time and the stress of adulthood didn’t allow him time to keep up. For some reason, he hoped his body would be able to satisfy the alpha. He wasn’t the best dancer, but being an omega with flexibility had its perks. His hips started to sway side to side to the music.

Hyunwoo watched every move the omega made from his comfortable spot on the couch. The lounge air still lingered with pungent cigarette smoke. The yellowish lights were dim, yet where Kihyun stood they illuminated him and highlighted his features. The open sliding glass door revealed the world just outside the lounge walls that thrummed with the pulse of nightlife in the city.

“Come on, beautiful. Show me something nice,” the alpha teased, always vocal about his desires.

Kihyun felt a little flattered by the new name, and he felt a small blush form over his cheeks. Kihyun had been to strip clubs before; he recalled the way the men and women seemed to flirt using their bodies, so he wanted to try a less than subtle approach to it. His hips made stronger motions, waving side to side as his arms raised up above his head, wrists crossing as if they were tied together.

Hyunwoo enjoyed the way the omega’s hips swayed; it instantly made him imagine the movement of the boy’s hips while he was riding Hyunwoo’s knot. His denim jeans were getting tight and the need to unzip his pants and release his cock was building, but he wasn’t about to let his impatience ruin a good show. His bulge was sizable even in its constraint and it ached for contact, so he palmed at the hardness as he continued to watch Kihyun.

Kihyun’s hands turned to run his knuckles along the side of his face, dragging them down the curve of his jaw to the juncture of his neck, all the while his hips swayed a little faster with the more upbeat tempo of the music. He ran his palms down his torso, his hands smeared the blood from his bite wounds against his peachy complexion. The smell of copper filled Hyunwoo’s nostrils as Kihyun smeared the blood from his bite wound across his chest, staining a nipple.

“Take off your clothes, pet,” Hyunwoo instructed, his voice laced with lust as he eyed the bulge beneath Kihyun’s sweatpants.

Kihyun’s eyes raised to the older man’s eyes. He licked his lips as his fingers walked from his chest, down his abdomen to the elastic of the grey sweats. His thumbs hooked around the band and started to slowly push them down. Then, he turned his back to Mr. Son. As he guided his pants down his hips, he bent forward, sticking his ass out to appease his audience.

Kihyun felt the band slide down each cheek, revealing the distinct colour of his pretty undergarments—the pretty blue and black lace contrasted against his skin beautifully, the elastic wedged enticingly between his ass cheeks. Kihyun mentally smirked—the maids lent him these, citing it as a personal favorite of Mr. Son.

Hyunwoo’s mouth went dry from the striptease in front of him.

*Where did Kihyun get those? Did he always wear effeminate undergarments?*

Fuck, his ass looked fucking great in that dark coloured thong the alpha couldn’t properly think. All he wanted was to grab Kihyun, pin him down, and fuck his tiny ass with that pretty thong pushed to the side. He palmed himself more in an attempt to ease the pressure until he finally succumbed and unzipped the fly, his boxer-brief clad cock jutting from the denim cage.

“Why don’t you come over here and finish your show, pet?”
Kihyun turned his head, leaning his torso to the left to eye the alpha. He nodded obediently and rose, fully stepping out of his sweats and leaving them in a heap on the floor. He strode with a slight sway in his hips, his half-hard appendage poking out a little at the top of his thong as he faced Mr. Son. He stopped shy a few inches of the couch, awaiting his next command.

That was how a good investment was supposed to be, right?

“Finish that sexy little dance on my lap...” Hyunwoo tapped his thigh with two fingers as an invitation for Kihyun.

Before waiting for the omega to act, he reached forward and hooked the elastic side strap of the omega’s lacy thong with his pointer finger. He pulled, encouraging the omega to come closer whilst teasing himself to see more of the omega’s beautiful body, to stretch the thin, lacy fabric barely covering his hard cock beneath the waistband.

“Keep these on,” Hyunwoo said with a smirk.

Kihyun shied with embarrassment. Dance on his lap? That was so... naughty.

The omega straddled Mr. Son’s leg, his own legs nestled against the older man’s thigh. Being this close to the alpha, he could smell the pheromones. God, he needed something —something stimulating because his body craved the intimate touch of another.

Right now, his biology craved Hyunwoo.

Hyunwoo shifted his posture to allow for Kihyun’s presence, sitting upright as the omega straddled his jean-covered thigh. His hands instinctively gravitated towards the boy’s hips to pull him closer in and to partially control his movements. When he moved the omega forth, Kihyun’s thigh rubbed against the alpha’s bulge, causing Hyunwoo to roll his hips upwards into the friction. Kihyun pushed against the bulge, earning a little twitch from his own cock. He yearned to know what was under that big tent, to feel it however he could. Shit, those rough hands on his bare ass made him wet.

“Come on, pet, show me those moves again...” Hyunwoo said coolly as his hands roamed over Kihyun’s hips to knead the soft flesh of his ass. The omega obeyed and rolled his hips in a circular motion, eyes half open, adding to the sexual ambiance and atmosphere.

Kihyun was so sexy.

He was beautiful, mostly naked, and smelled decadent, too.

More importantly, Kihyun was Hyunwoo’s.

The hands kneading the omega’s ass tensed momentarily as the alpha struggled between wanting to draw out the striptease or wanting to dive in. The mental tug-o-war was fleeting as he slipped his middle finger beneath the strip of lace between the omega’s ass; he followed the material down, his finger delving between the two globes until wetness touched the pad of his finger. His cock jumped in response to the wetness, so his other hand on Kihyun’s hip suddenly grabbed one of the omega’s hands and forced it upon his aching alpha cock.

He stared up at the boy as he rubbed Kihyun’s tight, wet hole with his fingertip. A small moan drew past Kihyun’s lips, deep and resonating upon feeling the alpha’s finger against his fluttering hole. Arousal allowed an omega’s ass to expand to accommodate a knot—fuck, he wanted it.

"Mmm, that’s a nice sound," Hyunwoo cooed as he teased the wet hole a little more before
plunging one finger in knuckle-deep. "Let's see what other sounds you make, hm?"

Kihyun’s mouth fell open for a breathless moan. His body curled forward, ass twitching with the sudden onslaught of pleasure in his wet pussy. The omega’s forehead pressed against the alpha’s shoulder as he hunched; it was all so much euphoria at once. The fingers were thicker than his, which made him wonder if the alpha’s dick would stretch him even more.

Without warning, without even teasing, Hyunwoo inserted a second finger and fucked into the pretty omega. His hips thrusted slightly in sync with his fingers, if only to serve as encouragement for the omega to play with his alpha cock.

"Touch it, baby boy," the alpha groaned. "Feel how hard I am for you."

Such words were enough to make Kihyun’s cock harder. With small mewls, he gripped the appendage best he could in his palm, giving it soft squeezes. Hyunwoo’s breath caught in his throat from the omega’s delicate touch on his cock. Kihyun’s scent was so strong it penetrated the alpha’s focus.

He turned his head, lips ghosting over the shell of the boy’s ear as he whispered, “I didn’t tell you to stop moving your hips, did I? I want you to fuck yourself in my fingers. Show me how you like to ride cock.”

Another small moan escaped Kihyun’s mouth; his lower body practically quivered with arousal. The alpha musk drove him crazy—he needed more. Slowly Kihyun rolled his hips back and forth, matching the speed of his hand on Mr. Son’s cock.

Hyunwoo thrusted a third finger into the omega’s wet hole, fingers curling forward just enough to press that pleasurable gland that made men see stars each time Kihyun rolled his sexy hips back against the alpha’s fingers. Kihyun’s twitching muscles clamped around the alpha’s fingers, making him wetter from the pleasure.

Then, the alpha grabbed the omega by the chin, directing his face up for their lips to crash together in a searing kiss. Lips were on his and he gave in, overcome by his biology to be bred. Kihyun’s hips stalled for a moment before he grinded back and forth faster, wishing he was actually riding cock instead.

But damn, this man knew what he was doing.

Against Kihyun’s lips, Hyunwoo groaned. “Fuck, look at you. Fucking yourself on my fingers like the slut you are…” A wave of possessiveness washed over him, and he slapped the omega’s ass hard. “My slut now. Mine.”

He slapped that ass twice, thrice until a red spot formed where his hand had been; he grabbed the omega’s reddened bottom and forced his hips down onto the alpha’s fingers more. Kihyun’s skin stung, his grunts turning to whimpers because this man was making him weak. Delicious, wet noises filled the room as Hyunwoo repeatedly thrusted into the omega’s stretched hole.

“Tell me you’re mine, pet. Tell me you’re mine to use as I please. Tell me this little omega ass is mine to fuck and breed.”

The scent, his provocative words, the fingers and the spanking—his omega pheromones begged him to be knotted. With a panting breath, Kihyun obeyed like the slut he was branded as.

“I’m your slut. Use me, ah —my pussy is yours t-to fuck, t-t-ah... to breed. Knot me, alpha. Please,” he pleaded.
Being told he belonged to someone was oddly comforting? All his life he wanted to be something to someone, to feel like he was wanted for more than just fornication. The possessiveness he felt from Mr. Son fed his instincts, even if they were misjudged.

With his alpha strength, Hyunwoo lifted Kihyun and himself up off the couch—fingers of one hand still knuckle-deep in the omega—and threw the boy back-first into the couch. Then, he grabbed one of Kihyun’s thighs and forced his legs apart, lifting the leg up and back by the omega’s head; with the elbow of the hand thrusting fingers into him, he reinforced the omega’s legs staying spread by forcing back his inner thigh.

“Oh fuck,” Kihyun groaned, writhing in pain and pleasure—pain from the sudden stretching position on his back, pleasure from alpha fingers hitting all the right spots.

Hyunwoo liked his possessions like this, open and exposed.

His cock thick and heavy as it hung from the open fly of his jeans, he debated whether he’d continue teasing the omega or if he’d stuff him with his knot.

The relentless assault on his sweet spot caused his gut to ignite a blissful fire, building, curling, pulsing. He didn’t know how long he would last like this. He was so close.

Kihyun’s hand gripped the base of his hard, leaking dick whilst the other scratched against the sofa cushion beside his head. Hyunwoo abandoned his grip on Kihyun’s thigh for a split second, which was all it took for him to slap the omega’s greedy hand away from his pathetic, weeping cock.

“Who the fuck said you could touch yourself?” he growled in his alpha tone, voice thick and raspy.

The alpha returned attention to Kihyun’s thigh—the one pushed back by his head—biting into the soft, pale skin of the omega’s inner thigh possessively. He bit hard and drew blood; slowly, he was marking his territory. The pain from the bite and from the stretch, his wonton moaning; the euphoria was almost too much for Kihyun.

Hyunwoo reverted his attention to the omega’s pretty, moaning face. The look of sheer pleasure made Hyunwoo want to inflict more upon Kihyun, so he did. He added a fourth finger without warning, finger tips curling into the silky, wet heat and repeatedly pressing the omega’s prostate. Kihyun whined; he was only trying to cut off blood flow to delay his orgasm, though the demand in Mr. Son’s voice told him not to attempt such an action again.

Hyunwoo savored the view of Kihyun’s slender legs splayed out, his thick alpha fingers plunging into the omega beside the delicate, dark lace thong.

This moment wasn’t about fucking, as much as he lead Kihyun to believe it was.

This moment was about asserting dominance and breaking Kihyun in.

“I’m—” the omega started breathlessly. “I’m gonna cum!” His hand found purchase on the couch cushion, gripping it as tightly as he could. Fuck, he was so wet, and he’d get even wetter if he was allowed to cum.

Fuck, hearing Kihyun moan those delicious words went straight to Hyunwoo’s cock, making it jump from a surge of blood flow to the swollen head. He waited a few seconds longer after Kihyun uttered his warning, enough to bring the omega closer to the edge of his orgasm, before removing his fingers entirely and pulling his attention away from the panting omega. The sudden emptiness was not what Kihyun wanted at all.
He wanted to cum; he needed to.

God dammit, he was right there.

Hyunwoo knelt between Kihyun’s spread legs on the velvety couch, cock hanging from his pants and sweat seeping through parts of his tight-fitted white shirt. From beneath the thin fabric, his cherry blossom jo-pok tattoo was clearly visible.

Looking down at the omega, he said, “You don’t deserve to cum. You haven’t earned it yet.”

He stroked his hard cock with the dripping wet hand he just fingerfucked his new investment with, groaning low in his throat at the sensation.

“Can you fit that slutty little mouth on my knot, pet?”
“Can you fit that slutty little mouth on my knot, pet?”

Kihyun felt his mouth go dry because holy shit, that? In his mouth?

Still panting, he placed his hands on his hips, readying himself. “You... want a b-blowjob?”

“Yes, pet. Come here, now.” Hyunwoo shook his dick slightly to tempt the boy.

His cock was heavy in his hand and leaked at the tip, veins bulged from the long, thick shaft, and at the base it widened into a slowly-developing knot nestled in dark, musky pubic hair. He pulled up the bottom of his shirt a little, enough to reveal his low abs and a neatly trimmed trail of hair that originated at his navel and delved into the nest of hair below.

Kihyun’s half-lidded eyes stared at the alpha cock dancing in its owner’s hand. That thick, meaty alpha cock looked so fucking enticing, needy, inviting, tasty—goddamn did it look appealing. Everything was so fucking perfect, the happy trail, the bush, the actual cock and... was he already starting to knot?

“No, that’s hot,” the omega groaned. Doing as instructed, Kihyun sat up and knelt on the couch in front of the alpha dick. That thing? A blowjob? "I can try..." he uttered, willing even if he wasn’t sure how much he could handle. He’d given blowjobs before, but not on such an impressive, huge cock like this. Just looking at it made his hole tremble with want.

“You’re... so big,” Kihyun muttered as he lowered onto his hands and knees.

The omega’s dumbfounded expression upon ogling Hyunwoo’s cock was amusing, but what really got the alpha going was Kihyun’s compliments.

Hyunwoo stiffened his posture as the omega fell to his hands and knees, subconsciously boasting his masculinity in the presence of a submitting omega. Having the boy be so cooperative now was encouraging, because though Hyunwoo appreciated a challenge, he much preferred it when his partner yearned for his rough alpha touch.

Finally replying to Kihyun’s statement, Hyunwoo said, “That’s right. Why don’t you put your cute mouth on it and see how much can fit in?”

As challenging as it was to fit all that alpha meat in his mouth, Kihyun felt the need to taste. To know how this man’s seed smelled and tasted. Would it taste bitter? Would it taste the same as his alpha musk?

Kihyun stared at Mr. Son’s cock in a trance, mouth salivating more than ever. Timidly, he wrapped his left hand around the thick base of the alpha’s erection and lowered his head, guiding the tip to meet his mouth. His tongue darted out and swept over the head with a quick motion. He let the taste sink in, but it wasn’t enough. He needed more. He opened his mouth around the head, digging the tip of his tongue into the slit to taste precum. Kihyun moaned out against the alpha cock.

Damn, he tasted better than he thought.

Hyunwoo groaned quietly at the gentle sensation on his cock. Kihyun’s timid tongue teasing and tasting him as if bracing himself for the stretch of his lips whenever he sucked the whole shaft in. Naturally, his hands found their way to the back of the omega’s head, one resting slightly lower
than the other amidst the silvery locks.

His shirt, taut on his muscular torso, remained bunched above his navel, so Hyunwoo’s view perfectly captured Kihyun’s shiny, pink lips suckling the swollen tip of his alpha cock. That tongue tasting him, savoring him, causing the omega’s moan to vibrate up his cock and straight up his spine.

“Come on, pet. I know you can take more of me in…” he said, the calm words spoken with a tone of warning. Fingers curled as he struggled to maintain the omega’s slow pace.

The dim belief the alpha had for Kihyun’s skill was almost humorous. Maybe he could take in more of the alpha, maybe not; he wouldn’t know unless he tried. If he didn’t try, this man could easily do whatever he wanted to Kihyun, like fuck him senseless and without mercy or shame, or he could kill him, hold him prisoner, or even hand him over to his lackeys to be handed back and forth like a branded whore for their pleasure.

That was all omegas were to people like this, right? Sluts who open their legs to anyone, to any knot, just to fill that biological need to be claimed, bred and carry bastards, birth them and bring them up into a dangerous world.

As much as Kihyun despised the idea of mating and breeding without love, he would love to have this knot deep inside him-hitting all those right spots. To be impregnated by a cock like this is every omegas dream. Just maybe not Kihyun’s. Not yet anyway.

Kihyun relaxed this throat, not being new to giving oral, and sunk lower on the alpha dick. He closed his eyes to focus breathing through his nose. Suddenly, amidst the descent, he felt the tip of the alpha’s cock press against the back of his throat. He was only merely halfway… Fuck, Mr. Son was huge.

Hyunwoo threw his head back and groaned long and low. The omega’s mouth was soft and hot as it enveloped his thick cock. He stared at the omega through half-lidded eyes, lips parted, arousal prominent on his hardened, masculine features. When the swollen head of his dick hit the back of Kihyun’s hot throat, his hands on the back of the omega’s head tightened, fingers curling into the hair as he subconsciously took hold of the boy.

Power exchange was not his forte. In fact, exchange of control was never a debatable topic. Wallowing in the omega’s careful pace was a one-time courtesy that Hyunwoo was battling. But as the omega’s velvety mouth sucked his alpha cock in deeper, the walls of his throat squeezing his thick shaft, Hyunwoo grunted. Without warning, without any indication whatsoever except perhaps for his impatient hands on the omega’s neck, the alpha forced the boy deeper. He didn’t relent until Kihyun’s nose was buried in his dark, musky pubic hair and his throbbing dick was fully lodged down the omega’s throat.

Kihyun’s eyes snapped open when he was forced down. He choked, sputtering for air around the alpha’s girth. The constriction allowed him to feel every thick vein, every dip and curve with his tongue. The omega gagged around Mr. Son and buried his fingers into the couch cushions as he tried to adjust to his abrupt cutoff of air. The pubic hair tickled his nose, making it harder to focus on breathing and relaxing his jaw and throat.

Hyunwoo groaned, relishing in the gagging noises from the omega. With a firm grip, he held Kihyun in place as his throat muscles spasmed around the alpha’s cock. Feeling generous, he eased his hold, slowly sliding his saliva-coated shaft out of the omega’s hot mouth until the head breached his swollen lips. Kihyun gasped for breath when he felt the movement, not wanting to admit that having his hair pulled was turning him on so much that he was dribbling more slick
down his thighs, tickling the omega’s skin. Thick precum mixed with Kihyun’s saliva smeared across the omega’s bottom lip, causing Hyunwoo to groan again as he drank in the lewd visual.

“Try again, faster.”

Kihyun coughed a few times, throat relaxing. The alpha wanted him to do more, but faster? With an audible gulp after a heavy breath, he nodded, probing his own lips with cock. “Y-Yes, sir.”

Opening his mouth, he curled his swelling lips around the head again, sucking against the head and hollowing his cheeks as if he was trying to slurp that last bit of juice from his juice box. He felt Mr. Son’s dick rub against the roof of his mouth. Hyunwoo grunted at the suction on his dick, fingers again curling in Kihyun’s silver hair.

So far, their play had been anything other than romantic. They only kissed briefly in the beginning, but it was enough for Hyunwoo; he wasn’t the charming, romantic type, or, rather, he never met anyone worth romancing. Like the primal alpha he was, he acted on impulse and thought of his own pleasure before another’s. He wasn’t mated, so fucking multiple orgasms out of an omega wasn’t his priority.

In fact, his new investment Kihyun needed to learn he came second after the alpha, if at all.

A mantra played in Kihyun’s head like a broken record, a mantra of soothing words to encourage himself. His throat relaxed best it could for the long descend down. His head gravitated lower which meant taking that half-formed alpha knot inside again. Kihyun’s mouth stretched to reconcile the alpha’s impressive size. The tip touched the back of his throat again and he made a small noise, a whimper because of the sheer girth of this stranger.

When Kihyun swallowed Hyunwoo’s entire length, the alpha thrusted shallowly, the tip of his cock colliding with the back of the omega’s hot throat. The way Kihyun’s lips stretched around his girth turned him on—hell, just the way the boy struggled to deepthroat him turned him on.

Looking down at the omega from his elevated point of view, Kihyun looked so small and submissive at this angle; mostly naked with dark, lacy thong and disheveled hair, fuck the boy was hot.

“There you go, pet,” Hyunwoo groaned. “You look so fucking hot sucking my cock. It barely fits in your mouth... Fuck, have you ever taken a knot before, baby boy? Bet you’re so tight... bet you look real pretty getting fucked... You want me to fuck you? Hm? You want to feel my knot stretch you open?” The alpha smirked, shallowing thrusting into the omega’s throat. His grip in Kihyun’s hair tightened again and his hips quickened. The gliding in and out of the omega’s slick mouth, the pressure on his cock, Hyunwoo couldn’t stop himself from fucking this pretty omega’s face.

“I’ll fuck you real good, pet. I’ll get my money’s worth, too,” he grunted, features glazed over with lust, body saturated with a sheen layer of sweat. His alpha pheromones enshrouded the entire lounge.

Every word sent a throb to Kihyun’s neglected cock; every damn carnal sentence caused the omega’s hole to drip with want, with need. He whimpered again, his heart racing from animalistic urges. Mr. Son’s deep, resonating voice was like honey, dripping in the most piquant elation. However, it lacked sweetness. It wasn’t honey, it was alcohol: addicting, bitter, strong, and detrimental.

Kihyun’s jaw was starting to get sore, drool seeped from the corners of his mouth, and he tried to tune his breathing with Mr. Son’s thrusting. His own pheromones carried want, practically begging
the alpha to fuck him, breed him, anything that would make him forget his own name. He couldn’t stop moaning. Hyunwoo chuckled in that condescending yet sexy way he was known for; the same brassy laugh from watching the terror eat away at his victim’s souls. He was a complex man with simple interests—sex and violence.

Kihyun’s muffled moan lit Hyunwoo’s nerve endings, sending pleasure straight to his bones. Yet despite his physical arousal and how fantastic everything felt, the blissed out expression on the omega’s face from being verbally embarrassed really got Hyunwoo off.

“Just a pathetic moan? That’s all you can manage?” the alpha sneered. He ceased his thrusts and pulled out slowly. Like before, he halted at Kihyun’s saliva-coated lips. He made sure to withdraw enough for the omega to collect his breath. Holding his slicked shaft in his left hand, body leaning back as his hips pushed forward, he stroked his dick as he spoke.

He decided to tease the little omega. Again.

“I asked you if you wanted me to fuck you… if you wanted to feel my cock split you open… When I ask you questions, you respond properly to me, understand? Now, pet, tell me what you want.”

The omega inhaled deeply, breath coming easily to him again through his parted lips. “Yes... yes sir,” he replied with a cracked voice, eyes following up the alpha’s lean body and to his face, meeting those dark and hypnotizing eyes. “Use me, alpha, fuck my tight pussy. I want you.”

He had no shame, no fucks because he wanted to be fucked. Bred by an alpha cock was every omega’s dream, whether they wanted to admit it or not, and Kihyun wanted to obey his biological instinct.

“Please, sir. Use me to your liking—fuck me however you want. Knot me, breed me, anything,” the omega begged with a sultry, dark tone. “Make me lose my mind,” he whispered like a challenge.

“Ah~” Hyunwoo smirked, intrigued by the omega’s boldness. After all this time, the alpha finally cracked that delicate, omega exterior to charm out the vixen beneath. Good, the sassy ones were always the most interesting. “Breed you? You’re that desperate?” the alpha taunted. “I’m that appealing?”

_Hah_, of course he was, but the confirmation always sounded better off a moaning slut’s swollen lips.

He groaned, more affected by that sultry omega than his words let on; his calloused hand pumped his hard cock to a slow build, lingering briefly at the developing bulge of his knot before stroking to the leaking head. And fuck, the sweet cherry scent of the omega’s arousal seeped into every pore, reacting to his own chemistry like fireworks beneath his skin. With Kihyun’s lips so close to his cock, he debated whether to claim the boy’s mouth again or to claim him another way, a more distinct and degrading way. The pleasure rippling up his shaft and through his body made his decision hasty.

“Open your mouth, tongue out.”

Wordlessly, Kihyun did as he was ordered and opened his mouth for the alpha, tongue hanging from out of his mouth and laying almost limp against his lip.

*What a fucking sight to behold.* Was Kihyun ever more beautiful than he was in this very moment? The alpha was learning more and more of the different aspects of the omega, and he liked it more
than he cared to admit.

His alpha instincts roared with the intensity of possessiveness; he could easily shove the boy down, force his face into the couch cushion, and claim him. A sharp, bloody bite to mark Kihyun as his. It would be simple—the omega was powerless over Hyunwoo’s authority. Then, the omega truly couldn’t leave. He’d be Hyunwoo’s investment for as long as the alpha wanted him. As tempting as the thought was, the pleasure building in his loins was escalating quickly.

With a few more tugs, he came in large spurts all over Kihyun’s pretty face, moaning louder than he had all night. Alphas produced a lot of cum, and the power of his orgasm made controlling where it landed difficult; some landed on the omega’s tongue, some on his cheeks, some on his nose and forehead too. Hyunwoo quaked with the pleasure of his orgasm, panting through the aftermath of its intensity. Fuck, he hadn’t had an orgasm that good in a long time.

It was the earthy scent that hit his nose first, smelling the hot and robust aroma of alpha cum as it landed in various spots on his face. Seeing an alpha orgasm—no, seeing Mr. Son orgasm was making Kihyun needier than ever, his twitching hole secreted more lubricant which dribbled down to his balls, small drops falling to the deep red couch and tainting the material to a darker tone. The stickiness felt weird, but Kihyun welcomed every spurt like a good bitch. God, he was so hard, so horny.

He pulled his tongue back into his mouth, tasting the decadent alpha pheromones on his tastebuds. Without any hesitation, Kihyun swallowed, Adam’s apple bobbing with the lewd action. His mouth opened again, revealing to Mr. Son he swallowed the sticky substance like a good cumslut in hopes he would finally have alpha cock drive into him.

“Ah, good boy,” Hyunwoo cooed as he watched Kihyun swallow the alpha’s load. The omega could be trained after all.

Feeling generous, he decided to play with Kihyun one more time, fingerfuck his little hole until he was squirming and mewling to cum, then deny him the pleasure once more. With a smirk, Hyunwoo pressed his fingers to Kihyun’s sternum and pushed him so the other would fall straight back onto the couch. Kihyun looked up at the alpha with pleading, lust-crazed honey brown eyes. Then, Hyunwoo moved between Kihyun’s legs, hips level with the boy’s creamy thighs, swelling knot poking into the omega’s slick-covered taint. The boy’s lacy thong still hiked to the side, his hole was perfectly visible. Hyunwoo groaned at the sight and his knot grew wider, heavier; he cradled the weight in his palm, purposefully rubbing the glossy head over Kihyun’s wet hole.

“Do you think you deserve this? Fuck, I don’t think it’ll even fit,” Hyunwoo taunted as he pushed the head in just enough to breach the surface and stretch Kihyun’s hole.

The taunting was driving him mad, his most intimate place was on display for the alpha but it seemed this man liked to tease his “investments”. The skin on skin contact made his back lift a few inches from the couch as a sharp intake of air filled his lungs. God, he needed this. He could feel the tip glide and stretch his displayed heat so deliciously.

“Yes, please alpha.” Kihyun resorted to begging again. “I can take it, I can... mmph, please fuck me.” His hips trembled, wanting to grind into the alpha cock and put an end to this teasing charade.

“What a slut. A few hours ago you hated me, couldn’t even look me in the eyes. Now, you’re squirming on my couch in my house begging for my knot. You want to pay your uncle’s debts that bad, huh?” Hyunwoo taunted, knowing the peculiar nature of their relationship and exploiting any emotion it would draw from the omega.
The name calling around here was incredible, but Kihyun didn’t say otherwise. To the alpha he probably was a slut, probably thought Kihyun took knots for money too. The omega wouldn’t stoop so low as to display his body in suggestive clothes and prance around with his ass out for people at street corners—he wasn’t a whore, but that didn’t matter to Mr. Son.

The alpha was twisted, and in the heat of the moment, he liked to pull his fucks into the darkness too. He pushed his cock in deeper, enough for Kihyun’s hole to fully engulf the head, then withdrew completely. Kihyun whimpered when he felt the alpha push in. Just when he thought he would finally be sated, the asshole pulled out and left Kihyun whimpering again. How did this alpha have so much self-control around a wet and eager omega, legs open and ready for a good fucking? How could he control his carnal instincts?

This was what Mr. Son wanted so why was he beating around the bush?

Hyunwoo grabbed one of Kihyun’s hands and forced him to grab the heavy knot. “You want it? Put it in yourself.”

Kihyun gave Mr. Son’s heavy knot a squeeze. “Really?” He asked breathlessly, wanting the alpha’s total consent. To have that knot stretching his walls, knot locked in place and spewing that thick, creamy, hot alpha seed, filling him. But holy shit, this knot was fucking thick! An omega was solemnly formed to accommodate and take alpha knots with ease, but this bulge… felt he should at least be stretched some.

It was all mind games. The omega was hot and wet and pliable, and fuck the instinct to breed was strong, but this was about discipline and ownership. Hyunwoo was a man with impeccable self-control, and if he faltered under any pretenses, his reputation was ruined. Reputation and honor were the jo-pok way; Mr. Son did not make haste.

“Why don’t you try and find out?” he said it like a challenge, a sultry dare, testing Kihyun’s grit. Their special arrangement wasn’t established on consensual grounds, what with the omega being under the influence of Hyunwoo’s potent alpha pheromones at the time. Arguably, now wouldn’t constitute a decision made on clear, sound conscience either, but the key was to trick Kihyun into thinking he was accountable for wanting Hyunwoo.

Call it a trick of the trade.

Somehow, the alpha’s reply made Kihyun a little wary. Was he testing Kihyun? Get the omega all riled up and wet for a knot, was that not the plan? Fuck, that knot was hot and heavy though and Kihyun gave into his primal needs. He licked his dry lips as he sat up on his elbow to see what he was doing with such an impressive length. His hand timidly guided Mr. Son’s cock to his quivering ass where the tip pressed against the rim. With a relaxed breath Kihyun slid the head in past that ring of muscle. It made him uneasy that the alpha was just sitting there watching him. Maybe he wanted Kihyun to show just how badly he wanted to get fucked.

“That’s it, baby boy,” Hyunwoo cooed, enjoying the pressure on his cock from Kihyun’s tight hole. “Take it. Take this fucking knot, you little omega bitch.” He knew the omega was probably going to cum well before he impaled himself on every last inch of Hyunwoo’s swollen alpha knot.

One hand still held the base of his cock, but the other grabbed the omega’s swollen, weeping dick and stroked it slowly, matching Kihyun’s speed of insertion. “Look at this small omega cock covered in precum. Fuck, it’s so hard. You must want to cum so badly, pet?” Hyunwoo teased, drinking in Kihyun’s wrecked image; sweat, tears, and cum littered his pretty pale skin, marking him as the slut he was, marking him as Hyunwoo’s property. “Fuck, you’re such a mess.”
The degradation, the humiliation this alpha was pushing onto him made Kihyun feel so small, yet even getting his average-sized appendage called something lesser turned the omega on. For some reason, he wanted approval from this handsome stranger, to show he could be *more*.

“Shit, I—” His progress with inserting the dick was forgotten because of his own need, his own pleasure. A familiar bubbling grew and his ass clenched tighter around the tip inside him. “I can’t... I’m gonna cum—” he mewled.

“Awww~ You’re gonna cum and my cock isn’t even halfway inside,” Hyunwoo teased with a smirk. Everything went according to plan—he knew the omega was too turned on to take anymore. As always, the alpha foresaw the entire evening from the moment the omega was chauffeured away by the maids to the moment he joined Hyunwoo in the lounge. Hyunwoo was inspecting his investment, testing out his limits, seeing how far the little omega could bend before he finally broke. As soon as he felt Kihyun’s ass clench around his knot, he withdrew completely.

Emptiness.

“What have you done to deserve to cum? Huh? You don’t cum unless I allow you to, understand?” Hyunwoo growled, alpha energy intense and menacing as he stared daggers at the panting omega on the sofa. “Get yourself cleaned up, you dirty slut.”

Was the alpha fucking serious?!

An omega was there for the taking and he just up and left like Kihyun wasn’t even worth a fuck. After all he just did?

Kihyun couldn’t believe it—the absolute maddening, irascible actions Mr. Son made him go through… so fucking deceptive. Everything was just a test? Mr. Son was a shameless son of a bitch.

The alpha stood up off the couch, tucking his knot into his jeans as best he could; a clear and distinct outline of his cock was extremely obvious underneath the non-stretchable denim. Kihyun watched with want when the alpha tucked that knot inside his pants, hating the way it was making his inner omega cry.

Hyunwoo turned to exit the lounge. “You’ll be staying in the guest room tonight. The maids will assist you. If you attempt to escape, you will be shot on sight.”

Kihyun shot daggers at Mr. Son, outright glaring at the man for leaving him with blue balls. “Yes... Sir,” Kihyun snarled, his hormones taken over by anger.
A Gwangju morning greeted the day with chirping birds and a tangerine-gold sunrise bleeding into sky blue. On the top balcony of Hyunwoo’s penthouse, a small, circular table decorated with a dainty, lace tablecloth and a hand-spun glass vase with a singular red rose. A cherry blossom tree in full bloom rustled in the gentle breeze; soft petals drifted down onto the balcony, coloring the silverish balcony floor in glorious pink. Silverware was neatly wrapped in cloth napkins and framed two porcelain plates, one larger than the other.

Breakfast had yet to be served, though the help assured him the meal was nearly done cooking, which was fine because it allowed his breakfast guest to make an appearance.

Hyunwoo sat on the far side of the balcony—the side with the best view of the sun-bathed cityscape below and of any guests who may enter. Stretched back in a wrought iron chair that matched the table, a half smoked cigarette hung from his lips as he observed the city. He wore a white button-down shirt completely unbuttoned and open, the bright fabric a sharp contrast to his caramel skin tone, and blue jeans that accented the muscles of his thighs. Hyunwoo ran a hand through his raven hair, pensive as he awaited his guest.

Sleep evaded Kihyun like a passing storm, it was there—cloudy and overcast, but no rain had fallen. After the lovely evening the previous night, Kihyun was forced to take care of himself in the guest suite; least to say it was the easiest he had came in a long time. Still, the strange bed, new smells, borrowed clothes were uncomfortable to Kihyun.

He found his phone on the side table in his room and sent a text to Minhyuk letting the beta know he was alive and he would return his friend’s sweater when he could. To be honest, he wanted to keep the item because Minhyuk’s minty pheromones calmed him. A dismal sigh passed his lips as he pulled back the duvet and Egyptian cotton sheet underneath. He stretched, relieved his bladder, and his stomach growled something fierce—he hadn’t eaten yet. After he washed up, he inspected the hickeys and bite wound scabs on his body. These were marks of ownership and he knew that. He sighed, putting on a white shirt and the same pyjama pants from the night before.

Exiting the room, a most divine smell permeated the air, which made the twist in Kihyun’s stomach tighten. He followed the aroma, pyjama pants dragging on the clean floor as he walked through the penthouse. He wasn’t even sure he was allowed to wander, but he was starving and thirsty.

Kihyun happened upon a maid and asked the alpha’s whereabouts, to which he was guided to the balcony. The scene took his breath away. City mornings never looked this wonderful and stunning. He couldn’t help but stare as he thanked the maid. Wandering outside, he inhaled fresh air and all his troubles were forgotten then and there.

Faint footsteps were heard on the balcony floor, causing Hyunwoo to look that way. He was greeted by a sleepy-looking omega with messy hair and pyjama pants. “Kihyun. Come, take a seat,” Hyunwoo said as he motioned to the empty chair on the other side of the table. Plates and silverware had been set for two. Surely the omega was hungry.

The sudden voice made Kihyun jump a little and get wide-eyed at the alpha of authority. He pressed his hand to his chest and sighed out, having been too mesmerized by the landscape to remember where he was; or know he wasn’t alone.

“Join me for breakfast, won’t you?” Like most things Mr. Son said, his words were prim and
polite, though his tone implied nothing short of stern authority. “What would you like to drink? Water? Coffee? I think they even have orange juice.” Wind carried cigarette smoke out into the vast, blue sky as he exhaled.

Kihyun nodded his head, silently walking to the seat and lowering his slightly-tender ass onto the chair, hands idly set on his lap like a good little omega. “I... orange juice. Please,” he replied in a timid tone.

The question he had most was set at the back of his mind, as he was unsure of what he was allowed to even say, or if he was allowed to voice anything other than answers to questions.

Hyunwoo snapped his fingers and a servant shuffled over. He ordered a tall glass of orange juice for Kihyun, and a bottle of champagne for the table. It was morning, after all, why not celebrate the beautiful day with mimosas? The servant nodded and bowed politely, then vanished into a hallway that lead to the kitchen.

“I imagine you’re hungry. They’ve told me breakfast will be served soon, if you can wait a little longer?” He asked, his disposition completely different than the night prior. “How are you feeling? Was the guest room comfortable?”

Kihyun eyed the alpha suspiciously through his bangs, his demeanour completely different than last night. It gave Kihyun so many mixed signals. “Um... I don’t do so well in strange beds, so it wasn’t the best sleep,” the omega answered. “But the room was nice, so, thank you. Also I’m... I am hungry, but I can wait.”

Hyunwoo sat back in his chair, finishing off his cigarette with one last drag. “I shouldn’t smoke at the breakfast table, I apologize,” he said blankly before snuffing the ashes in a nearby ashtray, “It’s a nasty habit of mine.” He smirked, emphasizing the words ‘nasty habit.’

He regarded Kihyun with careful thought, observing the way he sat stiffly in the wrought iron chair. The omega looked uncomfortable and tense. “Kihyun, relax. Embrace this lifestyle. It’s yours to enjoy so as long as I have you,” the alpha explained in a calm, cool tone.

A servant returned to the balcony to place a glass of orange juice beside Kihyun’s plate. She smiled sweetly at him before leaving.

“Do you understand my expectations of our... arrangement?”

Kihyun blinked at Mr. Son, mentally fighting with himself if he should relax or not. The alpha’s calm demeanour made the omega drop his shoulders, running a hand through his messy grey hair to get the bangs out of his face.

So this was to be his life for a day or so? Guess he couldn’t complain.

“You want me to have sex with you to pay off my uncle’s debt,” he replied, hoping that the alpha would actually want to have sex now after the game they played last night in the lounge. That way it could all be over.

“Yes,” Hyunwoo replied, confirming the omega’s answer. He studied Kihyun, intent on reading all the thoughts he kept locked inside. Alas, he was not as clairvoyant as his reputation built him to be.

Kihyun looked down. “Oh, also I’m sorry if I ruined your couch with my s... um, yeah...”

“Your slick?” The alpha specified with an eyebrow raised in intrigue. “Yeah, you made a mess of my furniture. The maids spent all night scouring the fabric. I’m curious what other furniture you’ll
ruin.”

Kihyun flushed. It wasn’t entirely his fault he produced slick! Besides, he wasn’t the one who picked the location and definitely wasn’t the one to start last night’s intimate tease. “I’m sorry,” he looked down, feeling bad for wrecking such a nice couch.

“Your cute when you’re embarrassed.” Hyunwoo grinned, alpha fangs apparent in his toothy smile. “I look forward to what other faces you make... but we have plenty of time to see all of you, don’t we?”

Kihyun’s eyebrows dipped into a frown, disregarding the comment. The omega looked back up once more and gave the alpha a noxious stare. “How long are you planning to keep me here?” he questioned dauntlessly.

Surely it was only for a one time thing... wasn’t it?

Hyunwoo chuckled to himself at Kihyun naïveté. “As long as I want you... There’s a lot of debt to pay.”

A gust of wind blew a cherry blossom onto the table; he picked up the delicate, pink flower, admiring its beauty and wafting it’s fragrance. The alpha returned his attention to Kihyun—his pretty omega with the sweet cherry scent. “You’re here until I’m done with you,” he said sternly, crushing the flower between his large, calloused fingers.

Kihyun’s face dropped in disbelief. He was to be a prisoner here until the alpha decided otherwise?!

A servant returned with a large, tapered champagne bottle with a shiny, gold label and gold foil over the cork. A white towel draped over their forearm and a metal basket full of crushed ice in hand, the servant presented the champagne to Hyunwoo. He scrutinized the label briefly, nodded his approval, and handed it back to the servant. They popped the cork off skillfully, carbon dioxide flowing out of the thin bottle stem like smoke. She poured two glasses of champagne and orange juice, give one mimosa each to Hyunwoo and Kihyun.

Grabbing the mimosa by the stem, Hyunwoo lifted the libation to insinuate a toast. “To us!”

Kihyun ignored the toast Mr. Son was initiating because he was not in the mood to celebrate, let alone celebrate his newly-discovered imprisonment. This wasn’t fair! “I can’t... What about my job?” Kihyun asked abruptly. “If I don’t show up they’ll get concerned. I need the money...” he urged, hoping the alpha understood he had responsibilities despite his pretty omega biology.

“Money is of no concern. You’ll stay here in the guest suite. You’ll have everything you need,” Hyunwoo explain coolly, unaffected by the omega’s sudden panic. He sipped his mimosa, savoring the burst of bubbly citrus on his tongue. “There is no need for work, no need for friends. I am your need. Everything you do, you do through me... Have you contacted anyone since being here? Honest answers are wise.”

Kihyun leaned back in the iron chair, feeling caged, trapped; like a fish in a tank. “Yes... I texted my best friend to let him know I wasn’t dead. I only told him I’d go out for supplies. I didn’t come back, so...” he explained to the alpha with a now tense demeanour.

Hyunwoo sat back in his chair, his unbuttoned shirt falling to the sides, exposing his chest. The edge of his jo-pok tattoo poked out beneath the hem of the shirt. Black waves and pink cherry blossoms—it seemed Mr. Son had an affinity for cherry blossoms. Kihyun almost choked on his
orange juice when he saw the exposed skin; the slight peek of muscle and tattoo was very sexy, but he wouldn’t admit that to the alpha out loud. The alpha sipped casually from his mimosa glass, clearly deep in thought as he stared at Kihyun. The omega felt a little shy and intimidated the way Mr. Son stared.

After a few long minutes of careful thought, Hyunwoo asked, “Where’s your phone now?”

“Um... it’s in the bedroom. Half battery cause I don’t have a charger on me... why?” Kihyun replied but was quick to ask, wondering why the alpha was questioning him about his phone.

Hyunwoo signaled for one of his servants with two fingers. They obeyed immediately, bowing respectfully as Hyunwoo turned to whisper something in the servant’s ear. They nodded and walked away briskly, clearly set out to do as the alpha asked. He focused his attention back to Kihyun. The sun had fully risen into the blue sky, and its brilliance glinted off the glassy curve of the flower vase on the table.

Ignoring Kihyun’s urgent question, he changed the mood. “My name is Son Hyunwoo. I’m thirty. As you can see, I’ve done well for myself. I’m not an average alpha, as you experienced last night...” the alpha smirked. “I have rules. As an investment, you’re expected to obey these rules.”

So his first name was Hyunwoo... it was a nice fit, or so Kihyun thought. “Hyunwoo...” he repeated softly just to get the feel of his boss’s name, then nodded at the older man. He was pretty impressed by the alpha’s success at his age. “Oh um, yes, sir,” Kihyun said politely, not wanting to upset or anger the alpha.

Shit, his name sounded so good rolling off the omega’s lips. It made the alpha instincts in him surge. He clenched and unclenched his fists, ousting away his hormonal whims. Just then, the servant he tasked returned with a small, rectangular object in hand.

“I think now is a fair time to explain rule number one: no external contact without my permission.” Hyunwoo held out his hand for the object—Kihyun’s cell phone. When he prodded at the screen, a lock code appeared. How inconvenient.

“Locked? Hmph. Secrets make enemies, Kihyun.”

The dastardly rule made Kihyun’s eyes widen, appalled he was to have no contact with anyone while with Hyunwoo.

“Seriously?” Kihyun quizzed incredulously. “I can’t... text or call anyone?” He felt mixed emotions. He had obligations and a life, whether this alpha believed it or not.

“Tell me the goddamn password, Kihyun,” Hyunwoo commanded in his alpha tone, causing the nearby security guard alphas to get a bit rowdy. Maybe with all the alpha attention on him, the omega would obey.

Kihyun closed his mouth, intimidated by all these damn pheromones wafting around. Even if they were outside, his omega senses were freaking the hell out. “It’s t-two... Seven... zero... two.” The omega gave the other male his passcode timidly.

Hyunwoo inputted the code to Kihyun’s cell phone, successfully unlocking it. He smirked at the lock screen image before snooping Kihyun’s recent calls list. Nothing too recent. He then checked texts—someone named Minhyuk texted the omega last night. A concerned friend? “Ah, Minhyuk, huh? Seems kind of worried about you, hm?”

“Well, yeah...” Kihyun muttered. “He’s my best friend and he—” Oh shit, should he tell Hyunwoo that Minhyuk knows the situation? That Minhyuk knows the jo-pok or whoever had been after
him? He wanted to protect Minhyuk, but at the same time the thought of pissing Mr. Son off made
him nervous. “—he was kind enough to let me crash at his place while your dogs were looking for
me.”

He assumed the alpha had his lackeys trace his whereabouts the last week anyway.

“What a nice guy,” Hyunwoo tsked, feigning interest.

He pulled Minhyuk’s profile up in Kihyun’s contact list, debating over contacting the
motherfucker via FaceTime or a simple call: one had more impact over the other, but one was safer
for his security as a gangster. He opted for the latter, pressing the call button and putting the phone
to his ear when the dial tone came.

It rang and rang and rang, then finally: “Hello? Kihyun?”

Ah, the kind, lilting tone of a concerned friend. How cute.

*What the hell was the alpha doing calling Minhyuk like that?!*

It gave Kihyun crippling anxiety, tenfold. He eyed his phone with shock before looking
incredulously at Hyunwoo, surprise written all over his face.

Putting Minhyuk on speakerphone, Hyunwoo grinned. “This is Minhyuk, isn’t it?” the alpha asked,
knowing the answer.

Minhyuk hesitated. *Shit,* that was definitely not Kihyun. “Where’s Kihyun?” Minhyuk asked
sternly, a sharp contrast to his previous tone.

The sound of Minhyuk’s voice made Kihyun act on impulse. “I’m here, Min!” he spoke out
quickly but softly, not wanting to alarm the beta more than he already was.

“Kihyun! Are you okay?” Minhyuk asked frantically almost instantly after hearing Kihyun’s voice.
“Where are you? Did that asshole alpha find you? Goddammit, did he take you?”

Hyunwoo chuckled, amused at the nickname Kihyun’s little friend gave him. Cutting in before
anyone else could speak, he said, “Ah, so you already know who I am. Excellent. I hate
introductions. Kihyun has agreed to—”

Minhyuk interjected, completely ignoring Hyunwoo and talking directly to Kihyun. “Kihyun! Tell
me where you are, I’ll be there. I’m calling the fucking cops.”

That wasn’t a good idea. Kihyun didn’t want the cops involved in fear of it doing more harm than
good. “Minhyuk, love, calm down please. Listen...” Kihyun declared in a gentle tone as he leaned
forward and sighed out softly. “I’m fine, I’m safe. Please don’t call the cops, okay? Listen to him
for a moment, Min... you needn’t worry. Though knowing you, you’re already freaking out. I’m
telling you I’m okay.”

Kihyun hoped the beta understood. He could almost smell the strong mint scent whenever his beta
friend became concerned, remembering the movie nights they once had together when Minhyuk
would get scared, or whenever Kihyun had personal problems and Minhyuk got emotional. He
*missed* that minty aroma.

“Oh, and I’m sorry I still have your sweater...” Honestly, that one article of clothing helped him
relax through the night.
Minhyuk’s jagged breathing heard through the phone calmed as he heard Kihyun’s voice. He had been up all night worrying about his friend. God, he was so mad at himself for letting the omega go into town alone. It had been a full week, he figured the heat had simmered down a bit. Wow, was he wrong. Foolish and wrong.

Despite Kihyun’s soothing tone, Minhyuk couldn’t understand why the omega was telling him not to call the police? He was kidnapped by some dangerous alpha gangster, wasn’t he? His panic bubbled inside him again, making him sick with worry. Fuck, Kihyun was going to die!

If only he’d been braver, he could have protected his best friend.

“Kihyun… I-I don’t understand what you’re saying…” Minhyuk said in a small voice after a long moment of silence.

The tone of his best friend’s voice wasn’t very reassuring in any aspect. “Listen, Min, I’m okay. I will be…” Kihyun had no idea if he would actually be okay in the end, but he wanted to ease Minhyuk’s concern. “I promise you, I’ll be okay. Just be patient while I sort things out with the alpha to pay my uncle’s debt. Please Minhyuk, trust me. You’ll see me again. I promise.”

“I don’t like this, Kihyun… You sound okay, but how do I know he’s not threatening you right now? What if you have, like… I don’t know, a gun to your head or something?” Minhyuk’s tone gradually picked up panic, the last few words of his sentence coming out as a jumbled, rushed mess.

Hyunwoo smirked, amused by Minhyuk’s anxiety. “If I wanted to kill him, he’d already be dead,” the alpha explained smoothly. “Your friend Kihyun has agreed to a unique business deal to alleviate him of his uncle’s debt. If you get involved in any way, I will find you. Your death will not be quick, and neither will Kihyun’s—”

Minhyuk cut Hyunwoo off. “I-Is that a threat—?”

“—Yes, that’s a fucking threat. I’ll ruin everything in your pathetic life, and I’ll kill you so slowly I’ll fucking get off to it. Stay the fuck out of business that does not concern you,” the alpha growled in an alpha tone, his earthy pheromones oozing into the morning breeze and riling up the nearby alphas again.

The verbal brawl between the alpha and Minhyuk was uncomfortable to say the least. The death threats were even more worrying. He mentally cursed himself for putting Minhyuk in this situation.

“Please, no…” Kihyun whimpered, pathetically pleading to Hyunwoo. “Please don’t hurt him.” He forgot all about his hunger for fear of his best friend’s safety. This alpha was sick, such fantasies were making the omega seep out fear, masking the area around him and clashing with strong alpha pheromones. God damn this pheromones.

Hyunwoo looked at Kihyun directly, but his words were meant for Minhyuk. “Stay out of this. Do not contact Kihyun again.”

Just as Minhyuk piped up, Hyunwoo ended the call. He stood abruptly from his seat. Suddenly, he threw the cellphone to the floor, the fragile screen shattering; what wasn’t broken from impact was completely shattered when the alpha smashed it with his boot repeatedly. By the time he was done, all that remained of the phone was broken glass and copper-green pieces of nanotechnology. A beta main promptly came over to sweep up the mess with a hand broom, almost like this was commonplace.
Sighing, Hyunwoo returned to his seat. “If he did get the police involved, they can’t track your location now.”

Kihyun could only stare in horror at the snide actions the alpha just pulled. His phone, smashed into unrecognizable pieces that weren’t worth salvaging.

“No!” He exclaimed, voice as shattered as his phone. “Oh my god, why...?” He couldn’t believe it. He lost everything: memories, contacts, appointments and prescriptions. Everything was gone.

“No.” He whispered, tears spilling from his eyes.

To everyone else it was just a phone but to him it was a vital piece of information in his life. He felt the hot moisture roll down his cheeks, throat aching with the warning of a sob. Kihyun could only sit in that chair, hands curled into fists on his lap.

They sat in uncomfortable silence until three servants finally came out, six silver domes of hot food stacked in each hand. They expanded a fold-out serving table and placed the dome trays on it, serving small portions of each onto Mr. Son’s plate first after presenting the menu. What a delectable aroma a multitude of expertly cooked, traditional Korean foods—rice, soup, meat, and a full array of side dishes, including grilled short ribs, spicy seafood salad, bean sprout rice, spicy stewed fish, cold cucumber soup, seasoned kelp, and radish strip kimchi. Kihyun watched in angry silence as his plate was served.

The servants sensed an awkward, tense aura between the alpha and omega, but they politely remained silent and commenced with their job. After both table guests were served, the three servants bowed and left, leaving Hyunwoo and Kihyun alone on the breezy, cherry blossom-covered balcony.

Kihyun didn’t feel hungry at all now. The alpha clearly didn’t understand what he had just done to his ‘insurance.’ Now, he felt even more hate towards Mr. Son—er, Hyunwoo.

Hyunwoo broke the long silence. “I’ll be heading into town today for collections. You’re free to explore the premises, but you cannot leave.”

Kihyun blankly stared at the rim of his plate. The alpha’s words were heard, but he couldn’t say anything; he tried to hold back a sob until he couldn’t do it anymore. He choked out a sob and covered his face with the palms of his hands, finally crying out loud in the open, heartbroken and hurt.

It wasn’t like Hyunwoo hadn’t seen someone cry in front of him before. Actually, it happened far more than it should’ve, especially in his line of work. The first few times it happened early in his jo-pok career, it affected him—he had to fight the strong, innate urge to comfort a crying individual. At this point, though, it was just another thing people did when they felt weak and hopeless. Hyunwoo came to realize that as him effectively doing his job.

Kihyun wasn’t here for anything other than to satisfy the alpha’s personal whims; he didn’t care if the omega was happy, mad, or sad, he was a plaything regardless.

So, as Kihyun broke down and bawled at the table, Hyunwoo ate the five-star breakfast he waited all morning for.

+ Minhyuk paced about his living room, mind wrought with worry and stomach twisted in knots. From one just anonymous phone call, he felt like a stranger in his own apartment. Foreign in his
own living room—the living room he and Kihyun shared just a few months ago. They were happy and carefree and okay back then. Now? Now, Kihyun’s piece of shit uncle passed on his insurmountable debt post-mortem, landing Kihyun on the forefront of the jo-pok’s radar as his only heir. Kihyun was suffering at the hands of a monster because of money.

Money didn’t die, but people did. It was only a matter of time before Kihyun was next.

Minhyuk rushed to the bathroom, dropping to his knees and cradling the bowl with his trembling hands as he puked all the dread and doom spoiling his insides. He sat back on his ass, legs on either side of the bowl as he panted, body sore from the stress of vomiting his anxiety. Fuck, he needed water. He stood up carefully, slumping onto the bathroom counter to slurp lukewarm tap water directly from the faucet. He rinsed out his mouth, gulped some down, then switched on the cold water and splashed it on his face to soothe the heat prickling his cheeks.

His heart beat in his throat like a throbbing echo.

Ah, his head pounded, too. Opening the medicine cabinet, he fumbled with the cylindrical pill bottles, feeling around for acetaminophen; the shake in his fingertips threatened his dexterity, causing pills to spill out when he finally popped the cap. God dammit! They scattered across the counter, so he palmed at the loose pills to collect them. Tears dripped from his eyes and plopped onto the counter in large gobs. It was only then that he realized he was crying.

Kihyun, his best friend, was going to die.

He was going to die.

Minhyuk had to do something. Fuck that pretentious alpha! *Fuck him.* Minhyuk was not going to remain quiet. He would not let Kihyun be another statistic. He was going to get the police involved. He was going to have that slimy fucking criminal on death row. He was going to do something. He had to.

*He had to.*

*A fucking runner. The worst kind of debtor.*

Runners always possessed the same foolish mindset—that they could outwit or outrun Mr. Son Hyunwoo. He wasn’t new to the game. He knew first time debtors always cheated their payments or tried to leave town before collection time rolled around. Was a shame, really, because he kindly offered two day extensions after a fair amount of roughhousing; when the debtor ran, however, he had to make an example out of them.

Except usually, runners didn’t rally together a brigade of friends welding aluminum bats or rusty crowbars or whatever else they scavenged from alleys. They definitely never thought to flank Hyunwoo as he pounded on the front door of the business yelling for *‘Mr. Park to get the f**k out and pay his f**king debts.’* No. Usually, they cowered in fear of Hyunwoo’s authority, trembling in fetal position in a dirty alleyway corner pleading for their life.

In other words, he wasn’t expecting a challenge.

There he stood in the center of five angry men, a mixture of betas and alphas itching to hone in on him. They snarled and growled, baring their teeth like wolves trying to intimidate their prey. Hyunwoo chuckled. These were no wolves, just sheep dressed in wolf’s clothing hoping to battle their way of a deal they intentionally sought.
“Mr. Park, what are you hoping will come of this?” Hyunwoo asked, directing his attention on the man in question. He was the only one who owed money. He was the one liable. Mr. Park refused to answer, instead bracing himself for attack. The alpha remained unaffected as he redirected his focus to the other four. “What is he giving you? Surely it isn’t money, being that he has none. A job? A job in his failing business? Hopefully not that either. I suppose it could be friendship… Protecting your friend in dire need, right?”

Hyunwoo focused on one alpha in particular—a lesser alpha that flinched when Hyunwoo moved closer to him. A coward, really. “Tell me, is Mr. Park worth dying for?” He smirked, fangs poking his lip, then swung a hard, balled fist straight into the lesser alpha’s nose, crushing the feature until skin split like butter around fragmented cartilage, blood spewing everywhere.

He fell to the floor in an unconscious heap, blood pooling around his face. His aluminum bat rattled on the asphalt as it fell. Hyunwoo swooped down to snatch it just in time to smack a lunging beta in the forehead as he whirled around. He, too, dropped to the floor unceremoniously, twitching with the last ounce of consciousness his body could preserve.

Two down, three to go.

Hyonwoo spun the bat in his hand as he stalk the remaining three. Mr. Park stood out from the pack as if assuming the leader position, making Hyunwoo laugh at the audacity. A man who employed the use of four others to defend his inability to pay debt. That wasn’t a leader, that was a con artist. The alpha lurched towards Mr. Park and their weapons clashed—aluminum to steel. Mr. Park possessed the better object, but good weapons were rendered useless if handled improperly.

The struggle for dominance was short lived as Hyunwoo skillfully gained control, yanking the steel crowbar from Mr. Park’s grip with precise twists and turns. Mr. Park froze when he was disarmed, stiffness overcoming him like rigor mortis. Hyunwoo twirled the crowbar between his fingers, smirking at the man’s sudden loss of confidence. Yet, Mr. Park’s trusty comrades ambushed Hyunwoo in unison while the alpha was distracted by Mr. Park’s hopelessness. Fuck, rookie move.

Finally with the upperhand, the trio took turns beating Hyunwoo with their weapons, though they only brought the alpha to his knees with their uncoordinated battery. It wasn’t until Mr. Park collected the fallen crowbar and clobbered the back of Hyunwoo’s neck that the alpha finally fell to the grimy alley floor. He fell with a loud thud, instantly encasing his head with his forearms in defense. They stomped his legs and kicked him in the ribs with their hard leather boots, repeatedly striking him with any weapon they found until blood oozed from nasty gashes and skin bruises from blunt force impact. They threatened him with macho profanities men shouted when they felt victory was near.

But this fight wasn’t over. No, it was far from over.

Spiced citrus and bergamot saturated the area, overwhelming even the foul stench of month-old garbage and rat caracasses. His alpha biology emitted his scent as a warning. Adrenaline alleviated the pain his body sustained, electrifying his nervous system with false invincibility. Any more damage, and his instincts would strike; innate, carnal alpha instincts to ravage and torture those who were weaker, those who were stronger, it didn’t matter. The impulse to kill was intense, addictive.

When Mr. Park hesitated just a little too long before taking the final blow, Hyunwoo seized the opportunity.

He didn’t make the same mistake Mr. Park did. He didn’t hesitate.
He’d paint the fucking alley walls with blood.

+ 

Being left alone in the penthouse while the owner was out seemed off-putting somehow.

There was an abundance of space to investigate, plenty of rooms to explore. Each room was unique, decorated and cleaned to the alpha’s taste. Kihyun dare not touch anything in fear of breaking or damaging it; any sort of relic, painting, figurine or statue he observed from a foot away. He didn’t want to make Hyunwoo angry again, let alone increase his debt.

Upon his investigation of the penthouse, he found a game room with a bar on the side. This was Kihyun’s favourite room thus far. The pool table, arcade games… the TV was huge! The TV stand was full of gaming consoles and rows and rows of games. The omega whimpered to himself; his fingers itched to try everything. As his adventure went on, he found a giant pool—Christ, how rich was Son Hyunwoo?! Kihyun could win the lottery and still couldn’t afford anything in this penthouse.

Kihyun made a quick stop to the kitchen since he didn’t eat much off his plate for breakfast and skipped lunch. After finding his way to the kitchen, he pondered asking a maid for help until he saw an apple in a pile of fruits on the long kitchen counter. He plucked it—one apple couldn’t hurt, right?

He walked and ate, finishing his exploration when he happened upon the balcony. Emotions flooded over him with a gloomy shadow. This was where he had lost all communication with family and friends, where he sobbed for an hour even when Hyunwoo left. The hatred couldn’t be described; he loathed the alpha for his actions.

But what could he do? Nothing. He was a prisoner used for the alpha’s uttermost needs.

After eating the apple he discarded the remains in a trash bin, the juicy taste still strong on his tongue. Kihyun made his way back inside, observing artwork on the walls with a heavy heart. Maybe a glass of water would calm him down.

Outside in the driveway, Hyunwoo’s body pulsed the magnitude of his aggression as he slammed shut the door of his Mercedes so hard the glass window rattled. He stomped up the stairs leading to the penthouse entrance and yanked open the door. Several maids and servants jolted at the alpha’s sudden intrusion, some even clustering together for safety upon sensing his rage. He reeked of spiced bergamot that indicated his irritation, and the smell was so pungent it caused even lesser alphas to cower.

When Hyunwoo turned the corner down a hallway just inside the living room, he took out his fury on the first thing he saw—he kicked a decorative plant, the terracotta pottery shattering in sharp shards and synthetic leaves littering the floor; the event was loud and unpleasant, spooking nearby servants. From somewhere in the house, Kihyun’s head shot up in alarm as he heard the loud bang. His hands paused under the tap as water filled a glass to quench his thirst.

The hell…? Why was it so noisy all of a sudden? Then it came to him: Hyunwoo.

Quickly, Kihyun twisted the handle and turned the water off, bringing the half-full cup to his lips and gulping down the cool liquid while he still could. In his haste he managed to make water slip from the sides of his lips, dripping down to his chin. The alpha seemed angry and aggressive; it frightened Kihyun, inadvertently causing him to release fear pheromones.

Where was he? Was he near?

Oh fuck, there it was… the transition from anger to arousal. Hyunwoo pursued the sweet scent, sharply twisting down hallways and through spacious rooms until he finally found the helpless little omega he held hostage for payment. His investment. His fucktoy.

Kihyun set the empty glass down on the counter beside the sink. He emerged with his hand wiping water from his chin, making only two steps to his guest room from the ensuite bathroom before he saw the burly alpha in the hall. His hand froze over his mouth, the side of his index finger halfway across the small water smear under his lip.

Spiced bergamot filled his nose. Kihyun gulped.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

**Trigger warning:** This chapter contains graphic depictions of physical abuse. Please note the tags.

Hyunwoo lunged at the scared omega like a predator to a prey.

Saying nothing, he simply growled, his dark brown eyes hungry with lust. Balling his fist in the fabric of Kihyun’s shirt, he manhandled the boy across the guest suite. Before Kihyun knew it, he was pressed against a wall, head colliding with the painted drywall with an audible thunk. Swiftly, the alpha grabbed a palmful of Kihyun’s thighs in each hand and hoisted the omega up so his thighs could cinch around Hyunwoo’s thick waist. The omega gasped upon being lifted up by strong alpha hands. At this close range, he could sense arousal from a whiff of Hyunwoo’s scent; the pungent, earthy aroma seeped into Kihyun’s skin and elated his own need.

Kihyun couldn’t put up a fight even if his brain told him to. He couldn’t do anything even if he tried. Hyunwoo was much stronger than he. He was at Hyunwoo’s disposal. Keeping his legs bent so he wouldn’t fall and hands relaxed against the cool temperature of the wall, Kihyun was compliant.

By pressing his hips into Kihyun’s ass, Hyunwoo pinned the omega to the wall with his muscular, clothed body. With his hands free, he grabbed Kihyun’s wrists and pinned them against the wall over his head. Once Kihyun was perfectly vulnerable, Hyunwoo captured the omega’s lips with his own, licking the remnants of cool water from the boy’s lips.

Kihyun didn’t expect the kiss; he figured Hyunwoo wasn’t the type to kiss. He was pleasantly surprised. It rattled his inner omega and awakened the desire for a knot. Sensing this, Hyunwoo ground his crotch into Kihyun’s ass, already so hungry and eager. He couldn't help it, his biology was wild with adrenaline and his potent hormones provoked the alpha within. The innate desire to hunt, fuck, and breed hijacked his better conscience, something he praised himself for having control of. Never was this an issue before—he’d simply come home after a vigorous fight with the blood of his enemies stained on his skin, taking his residual aggression out on inanimate objects and edging his comedown with a fresh pack of cigarettes. But now Hyunwoo had a prone omega ripe for the picking to come home to.

Instead of bashing objects, he’d ravage his biological counterpart until the lilt of Kihyun’s moans pacified his alpha hostility.

Hyunwoo licked at the omega’s soft lips until he slipped his tongue inside the boy’s mouth, claiming him in a surprisingly intimate way. His cock hardened as he rolled his hips into Kihyun. The strain in his tight pants was increasingly unbearable, yet his instincts motivated his every movement as if knowing exactly how to arouse an omega.

The constant grinding against his ass only clarified what was swimming in Kihyun’s mind—the alpha wanted to fuck now. Kihyun was here for that, though, wasn’t he? To be the alpha’s fucktoy whenever deemed fit?
Despite the motion of body against body, Kihyun didn’t expect the sudden company of Hyunwoo’s tongue joining his own inside his mouth, but it was rapaciously welcomed. The omega breathed in sharply through his nose, softly moaning at his growing wetness caused by the alpha’s cock.

The growing wetness against his cock drove Hyunwoo wild, and the delicious pheromones Kihyun secreted taunted his inner alpha, provoking him to attack the helpless omega. With a growl, he released his hold on the omega’s wrists in favor of hooking his fingers in the waistband of Kihyun’s sweatpants, roughly yanking the clothing off the boy’s hips. The action caused him to slightly lift the boy up off the wall, then drop him back abruptly to their original position. The material pooled at the omega’s thighs and obstructed Hyunwoo’s view of the omega’s cock; but in this new position, his ass was bare and vulnerable to anything the alpha wanted to do.

Hyunwoo growled again, deeper and more assertive, as he thrust his hips into the omega’s tight hole dripping with thick, pungent slick. The alpha coated his cock in the omega’s sweet slick as his large, calloused hands found their way to Kihyun’s hips, pinning the narrow omega hip bones to the wall as he teased Kihyun’s hole ceaselessly. Fuck, Hyunwoo drove himself crazy. At this point, he couldn’t tell who wanted it more—the omega or the alpha. Why was he like this? He normally was so self-composed. Goddamnit, all he wanted was to fuck the anger away, numb the painful throbbing of his cuts and bruises with animalistic ravaging. Fuck, why was Kihyun so hot with his omega demurity.

Kihyun was at the mercy of Hyunwoo’s advancing, the mercy of his strong, carnal alpha Master’s every need. The younger male was pliant, resisting nothing even though he was being manhandled. He secretly loved it—each rough motion by the other man made his cock twitch and his rim practically drip with lubricant. The feel of the alpha’s hands, his fingers, and the fucking teasing—Kihyun couldn’t stop the soft pants of arousal from ghosting past his parted lips from the feeling of Hyunwoo’s own lips still imprinted on the omega’s.

Shit, he was so turned on and the elder male had barely done anything other than pin him to a wall, kiss him, and tease his twitching hole.

Fuck, what this man was doing to him?

Their chests pressed together, their faces impossibly close; this was the most intimate sexual predicament they’d been in since they met each other. It would be, though, because this was the result of biological yearning, not from Hyunwoo choosing to tease Kihyun. Which was why the alpha found himself wanting the omega’s consent before he stretched him with his cock. Dammit, Kihyun’s soft pants were getting to him.

Gritting his teeth, Hyunwoo rested his forehead on Kihyun’s bare skin from where the oversized shirt slipped off his shoulder, cursing to himself about how fucking badly he wanted the omega. Hips still grinding into the omega, the alpha sighed deeply as he spoke against the flesh of Kihyun’s shoulder. “Tell me you fucking want this,” he groaned. “Tell me you want me.”

The potent alpha pheromones drove Kihyun to the brink of a lustful insanity. That mixed with the aroma of Hyunwoo’s perspiration and the bitter copper scent of blood—Kihyun’s body grew needier by the second. Was the alpha actually looking for verbal consent, or was it just for the sheer enjoyment of dirty talk? The omega would comply for both sakes due to the pungent scents attacking his nose.

The omega’s hands ghosted the alpha’s biceps and up to his shoulders where his hands balled into fists against the material of Hyunwoo’s shirt, pulling the clothing into his grasp. “I want it,” he whispered into Hyunwoo’s ear, voice dripping in lust.
He did want it. He wanted Hyunwoo to fuck him into next week. There was fear the alpha would leave him again like the prior night. However the thick, heavy hormones circulating the air implied otherwise.

“Give it to me, Hyunwoo.”

Hyunwoo’s first name sounded so good off Kihyun’s lips he almost wanted to capture them with his own again, swallowing each whimper and moan as he fucked into the omega.

He groaned against Kihyun’s shoulder as he grabbed the base of his throbbing dick, giving it a few brief strokes before lining the fat head with the omega’s dripping entrance. Thrusting his hips slowly forward, he pulled his head away from Kihyun’s shoulder to appreciate the sexy facial expressions the omega made as he took in the entirety of Hyunwoo’s massive alpha cock. When he was buried to the hilt, he groaned and immediately rolled his hips, fucking into Kihyun with a slow, deep pace. Kihyun’s mouth fell slightly ajar in both pain and pleasure. The sting of being stretched by a fat alpha cock caused his muscles to tense around the length inside him.

“Fuck—” Kihyun said almost without breath, secreting more lubricant for the cock penetrating and slowly fucking him.

Shit, Hyunwoo was able to get so deep in this position—Kihyun’s legs wrapped around the alpha’s hips, Hyunwoo’s strong arms holding him up and pinning him to the guest suite wall, their bodies shaping together the way nature designed. The alpha was already so deep that the tip of his dick pushed the thick ring of his womb. Kihyun shuddered, his dick hard and leaking without being touched. He wrapped his arms around the alpha’s shoulders, bending around his neck and pulling the dirty shirt to somehow ground himself.

Kihyun shamelessly clung to Hyunwoo, the back of his head pressing to the wall as he was finally, finally being used for his purpose here.

That sweet, maraschino cherry omega scent filled his nose and got the alpha high. Kihyun had only been in Hyunwoo’s custody for 24 hours, and he’d already gotten addicted to that exquisite scent. Suppose it was only a matter of time. He knew an omega’s presence would be dangerous, but the alpha was an adrenaline junkie easily seduced by danger and risk.

When Kihyun clung to him, Hyunwoo held tighter onto him, not fighting that innate desire to be closer. His hips quickened their pace as he pounded into Kihyun’s tight, wet heat, squelching noises filling in the spaces between their heavy breathing and soft moans. Lust in his brown eyes, Hyunwoo stared at Kihyun as he fucked him, aroused by how easily he was able to enamour the omega.

“Oh god, oh f—” Kihyun’s walls pulsed with every thrust, twitching when Hyunwoo brushed over all those spots just right. His body aflame, burning in a fiery lust as his inner omega took over completely, relaxing in the alpha’s hold. A small moan slipped past his lips with every breath, eyes half-lidded and that carnal, biological desire to be bred took over; Kihyun urged Hyunwoo with his pheromones to knot him. God, he wanted that fat alpha knot.

Hyunwoo was compelled to kiss Kihyun again, so he did. He pressed his lips to the other’s, instantly taking control of the kiss. Kihyun melted into the kiss, lost to his omega needs. Clearly, it wasn’t a battle for dominance, it was simply an alpha claiming what was his. The kiss was sloppy but passionate. Kihyun tasted as sweet as he smelled, and Hyunwoo savored the flavor on his tastebuds.

“Is it good, pet?” the alpha groaned against the omega’s lips, knowing fully well the answer, but
something inside of him needed the verbal confirmation.

Kihyun nodded. “S’good... so big...” he panted blissfully, hands still tightly held onto Hyunwoo’s shirt. He dared ask for more, fighting himself to beg for more.

“I fucking know it’s big, baby boy,” Hyunwoo smirked, punctuating his sentence with sharp, deep thrusts into Kihyun’s heat. “You’re so tight...” he grunted, succumbing to the pleasure as he fucked into the omega roughly. “You like being stretched open like this? You ever take a fat dick like this, pet?” He couldn’t help but be arrogant; he knew his worth.

The alpha’s words shot right to Kihyun’s cock, hidden from sight but pulsing with desire to cum. Unable to properly form words correctly, Kihyun nodded vigorously. That damn cocky smirk on Hyunwoo’s face, stretching those shapely lips—it made Kihyun shift, his back curled against the wall and his hips adjusted slightly, just enough of shift to reposition Hyunwoo’s alpha cock to press against a sweet spot. Kihyun gasped.

“Holy fuck—ah, there... oh God, right there, alpha!” he mewled, head falling forward against Hyunwoo’s shoulder. His wet, velvet walls pulsed stronger and twitched; slow, strong throbs he couldn’t control, his fingernails scratching at the elder man’s muscular, tatted back as he quivered through his oncoming orgasm.

“Yeah? Right there?” Hyunwoo rasped into Kihyun’s ear as he angled his hips just right. Repeatedly he hit the omega’s prostate, groaning at the way Kihyun’s hole twitched around his cock. The pleasure was so good, the omega was so good, so wet; his body small and pliant, his ass swallowing Hyunwoo’s alpha cock so fucking well. The urge to make him smaller and more pliant took over Hyunwoo, so he wrapped his muscular arms around Kihyun’s lithe body and lifted him up off the wall. His muscles were sore from the alleyway brawl during his collections rounds, but the will to fuck, claim, breed overwhelmed him again.

The alpha carried Kihyun across the room with his cock still buried deep inside the omega. The omega let out a fervid moan upon being lifted off the wall and carried after that one spot had been assaulted. Once he reached the guest bed, he practically slammed Kihyun down onto the mattress, his dick popping out from the action; without missing a beat, he grabbed the bunched material of Kihyun’s sweatpants and yanked them off the omega’s slender legs, tossing the clothing elsewhere. Hyunwoo stared down at the omega on the bed, lust consuming him.

Hyunwoo quickly shed his bloodied shirt and tossed it to the floor, revealing his sweaty, bruised and bloodied torso and cherry blossom jo-pok shoulder tattoo. With Hyunwoo’s shirt gone Kihyun was able to see his toned body. He raked his eyes across every muscle, every dip and curve of Hyunwoo’s thick body. The omega melted, legs spreading wider involuntarily; he was needy. The alpha scanned the omega’s prone, fucked out body with hungry eyes, his hand finding its way to his cock; it was slippery with Kihyun’s pungent slick. He pumped himself a few times, coating his hand in the lubricant.

“You’re so wet, pet. You got me so hard.” Fuck, the pheromones were so strong, so good. He brought his hand up to his lips, tongue darting out to lap the omega’s slick off his fingertips. His cock surged with arousal upon tasting Kihyun on his tongue.

Kihyun whimpered. Hyunwoo’s words made him melt, and he couldn’t help but blush because no alpha had actually tasted his slick before. Smirking, Hyunwoo climbed on the bed on his knees, stopping just short of Kihyun’s spread thighs. Kihyun’s hands found purchase on the sheets beside his head, fisting them in anticipation while the alpha closed the space between them. He shifted his position so the tops of his thighs met the backs of Kihyun’s, then he shoved his dick shallowly into the omega’s wet heat.
The alpha leaned over Kihyun’s body, their stomachs and chests touching as he hovered atop the omega, slowly thrusting deeper before pulling almost all the way out; he repeated the process several times until his hormones kicked in and he sped up his thrusts, focusing on find that magical button inside the pretty, moaning omega. Kihyun closed his eyes and turned his face into the duvet, Hyunwoo’s dick once again brushed over the sensitive bundle of nerves. His pussy felt amazing, filled with hot dick fucking him just right. The omega keened in bliss, cock leaking with precum with warning of an orgasm vastly approaching.

In this moment, the omega pondered what Hyunwoo’s knot would feel like—if the alpha decided to knot him.

Kihyun’s scent entered Hyunwoo’s nose and poisoned his brain, singeing any rational thought left in his mind as he succumbed fully to his alpha instincts. The way the omega twitched and moaned, the alpha knew he was close. Fuck, Hyunwoo was close too—he’d been so pent up from the brawl in the alleyway, he couldn’t stave off the pleasure bubbling inside him. He buried his nose in the crook of Kihyun’s neck, groaning at the pungent omega scent and licking the layer of sweat on his pulsing jugular vein. His tastebuds sang at the taste, and his fingers curled as the overwhelming alpha instinct to bite, claim, bond motivated his every move.

Hyunwoo’s hips snapped harder, faster as he pressed their bodies impossibly closer, fingernails puncturing crescent dents into the flesh of Kihyun’s shoulder and hip. The alpha lapped at the omega’s neck again, instinctively pursuing that sweet, sweet scent gland to sink his fanged teeth into. Kihyun released the blankets from his tight hold and gripped Hyunwoo’s shoulders, craving the scent of pure alpha. Fuck, he was going crazy. He dragged his hands down to Hyunwoo’s biceps, nails scratching lightly to form white lines in their wake.

“Hyunwoo—” Kihyun moaned. “Knot me?” He wanted it, needed the swell of alpha knot locking them together. The alpha’s ministrations didn’t help, and he wanted to hold his orgasm back, but shit he didn’t know how long he’d last.

“Fuck,” Hyunwoo groaned, tone pointed. “Fuck… fuck…” Hearing the omega ask to be knotted did not help his self-control—somewhere in the back of his mind, he knew this was a recipe for disaster. He was too prominent, too important in the world of organized crime to simply throw away his self-control and cave in to his alpha instincts. If he knotted this pretty omega… wait, was the boy even on suppressants? Mmm, but that maraschino scent… Ah, if he marked Kihyun, they’d be bonded for life. If rival gangs found out, they capitalize on his weakness.

This relationship of theirs was temporary and strictly business, right? But goddamnit the pleasure was unreal, the omega smelled too good, and Kihyun’s breathy mewls begging for Hyunwoo’s thick alpha knot was too fucking much to process.

When he licked a fat stripe up the nape of Kihyun’s neck right over his scent gland, Hyunwoo lost all control. With one last hard thrust, he came buried full hilt inside the whimpering omega, thick ropes of cum warm as they filled the boy; Hyunwoo moaned, the pressure of the slowly-forming knot at the base of his cock shooting tingles up his spine.

Kihyun writhed, small whimpers and moans escaping him until he felt it—that warmth, the stretch. His walls were so warm as they filled with alpha cum. God, it was so good, so tantalizing and euphoric. Kihyun came untouched with an erotic cry. His cum stuck between them, spewing where it could on Hyunwoo’s bare torso and his shirt. His eyes fluttered closed, limbs and torso twitching from the hot, raw pleasure of his orgasm.

When Kihyun came, the warmth of his cum set the alpha’s endorphins alight; the smell was earthy, but in a delicate way distinctly different from the alpha—as if Hyunwoo needed more tantalizing
smells from the omega. The omega panted, chest heaving and arms falling limp to his sides, basking in the afterglow of an amazing fuck. Hyunwoo lapped at Kihyun’s scent gland again and he felt himself wanting more than ever to claim his investment. He was cute and panting and clinging to Hyunwoo, so vulnerable and easy.

The sharp tip of his alpha fangs grazed over the sensitive patch of skin on the omega’s neck, causing his swelling knot to surge with a re-up of pheromones. They were locked together like this until Hyunwoo’s knot reduced in size, but the alpha wasn’t sure how much more he could take.

Kihyun felt a tickle on his neck and his eyes opened, the bliss now mixed with paranoia. “H-Hyunwoo...” he croaked, hoping the alpha wouldn’t give in to such an instinct. Kihyun realized how vulnerable he was right now. Was he going to claim him? So much for basking. “Hyunwoo...”

As much as it was Kihyun’s desire to be claimed due to his instincts, he was not about to be claimed by this alpha.

Hearing his name uttered by the omega raised conflicting emotions inside Hyunwoo. On one hand, alarms went off in his head upon the tone of fear in Kihyun’s voice—the alpha was about to make a very permanent decision based on a very temporary fling. On the other hand, Hyunwoo wanted to silence Kihyun by marking him because then the little omega couldn’t run; his biology would trap him here until all debts were paid no matter how badly he wanted to escape. But therein arose another problem—Kihyun would be Hyunwoo’s forever. The alpha wasn’t the type to make commitments.

Kihyun had barely caught his breath and was now nervous from the alpha’s silence. Fucking hell, this was all too much damn thinking!

The alpha’s fingernails dug deeper into Kihyun’s soft flesh as he battled with himself. Soon, surely, he’d puncture skin from the intense pressure. He grit his teeth together to resist the urge to bite.

Kihyun raised his arms up and took hold of each of Hyunwoo’s shoulders to push the alpha, or attempt to. He grunted, pain from the alpha’s clawing made him writhe, yet he struggled to shake off Hyunwoo. With his struggling, the omega felt the cock still nestled inside rub against his sensitive walls. He supressed a moan. Making any noise could provoke the alpha.

“God dammit!” Hyunwoo growled, projecting his internal frustrations outward at Kihyun. “Don’t fucking touch me like that!” he snarled in response to the omega’s feeble attempts at prying the alpha’s painful grip. Hyunwoo’s body stiffened—for some reason, Kihyun was pissing him off now. Who the fuck did he think he was? He was powerless compared to Hyunwoo. He better never forget his place in the pecking order.

And just like that, Hyunwoo’s innate alpha urges to bite and claim shifted back to rage, a state of mind he felt most comfortable in. Maybe it was a last ditch effort at garnering his self-control, maybe it was a self-defense mechanism, but nevertheless the alpha planted his large, bruised and bloodied hand on Kihyun’s clothed chest and shoved him down further into the mattress so he wouldn’t dare consider touching Son Hyunwoo like that again.

“What? You think I want you enough to claim you? Don’t flatter yourself.”

Kihyun groaned as he was held down. The damn alpha treated him without mercy. The weaker omega was just a fucktoy and apparently someone the alpha decided to take his anger out on. It also caught Kihyun’s attention that Hyunwoo didn’t like to admit his flaws, which pissed Kihyun
off too. The once-euphoric feelings were shattered and replaced with the familiar feeling of hatred.

Kihyun scowled—it wasn’t his fault he was an omega, wasn’t his fault Hyunwoo couldn’t admit he wanted to claim the omega. His eyebrows dipped down, hands withdrawing as he laid them beside his trapped body. “You alphas are all the same,” Kihyun gritted. “It makes me sick when you play the ‘I’m a higher status’ card. You alphas play with our feelings like we don’t fucking matter. Well I have news for you, alpha—omegas and betas have feelings too, and I’d rather be dead than be your mate.”

Anger boiled the blood in his veins. At this point, he didn’t care. Dying would be better than having to put up with Hyunwoo’s attitude any longer.

The more Kihyun spoke, the more Hyunwoo boiled with rage. With each passing word, he found himself less tolerant and more combative. Who gave a fuck if they were stuck together, supposedly filling the biological alpha-omega need to successfully reproduce. Fuck this smart mouth omega thinking he knew everything about what being an alpha was like—Hyunwoo was a monster by design. It wasn’t a fucking choice.

Just as the last word left Kihyun’s lips, Hyunwoo couldn’t stop himself from physically lashing out. He fought with his hands for a living, it was his default reaction. He punched Kihyun dead in the bridge of his nose, knuckles rolling over the shattered bone and lodging into the inner corner of his eye. It happened so fast Kihyun didn’t have time to defend himself when Hyunwoo’s fist made contact. Burning pain in his eye and nose, Kihyun reflexively closed his eyes; pain was the only feeling he could process right now as his hands came up to his nose.

“Fuck!” The alpha yelled, the pain from impact making him keenly aware of the existing pain in his hand and body. He slammed his throbbing fist on the bed immediately beside Kihyun’s head to channel the backlash of pain. He heaved with the adrenaline if his alpha condition, feeling something he seldom, if ever, felt: guilt.

It felt as if someone took a hot brand and pressed it to his face. “Ow, fuck!” Kihyun gasped as involuntary tears escaped his eyes from the intense pain. He felt a warm trickle on his face. He pulled his hand away only to see red liquid smeared across his fingers and palm. He was bleeding.

Hyunwoo furrowed his brows at Kihyun as if analyzing each sound and each facial expression of pain. He was familiar with all of it, yet why did the alpha feel bad about it this time? He owed nothing to Kihyun; Kihyun owed everything to him.

So what was this strange feeling of remorse?

The alpha’s knot had reduced in size enough to be forcibly pulled out, but it would probably cause the omega a fair amount of discomfort. Typically, he’d wait for it to reduce more, but given the current circumstances he wanted to bail as soon as possible. He couldn’t stand being around the omega any longer—maybe if Hyunwoo left him here, the alpha could gather his wits elsewhere? Finally tend to his wounds?

Kihyun brought the collar of his white shirt to his nose to soak up the rushing blood. As the omega tended to his wounds, Hyunwoo withdrew his large knot with force, pulling slow enough to not cause any further damage to Kihyun but quick enough to get the process over with. Kihyun grunted in discomfort. The alpha’s heavy knot dropped between his legs as the alpha scooted away from Kihyun and left the guest bedroom suite feeling sour. Despite his throbbing fists, he stuffed his knot in his pants as he navigated through the halls. Kihyun cracked his right eye open and raised his head off the bed, catching only the back of the alpha’s body vanishing out the door.
Once Hyunwoo reached a clearing, he shouted for maids to attend to Kihyun in the guest suite, citing ‘lots of blood.’ As a small herd of beta servants dashed around the corner, concern and worry evident in their faces, one toting a first aid kit, Hyunwoo vanished into his bedroom to tend to his own problems.

The omega laid his head black down, feeling the aftereffects of rough sex—slick and alpha cum drizzled out of him onto the bed sheets, hole empty and stretched from a knot, his face burning in pain from being stricken.

Just like a damn alpha to fuck and ditch, even if an omega was bleeding and in pain. If he didn’t hate Hyunwoo before, he certainly did now.
Chapter 7

Alpha seed and his own slick seeped into the grey duvet after the alpha outright abandoned him with a bloody nose. Kihyun had never been so embarrassed or in pain at one time.

His legs and torso were bare for the maids to see. Though, as shy as he was to thank them, the help Kihyun received was most generous. Nobody made a comment about his current state. The women even changed the duvet for him, and Kihyun felt like crying because that had been the most kindness shown to him since arriving to the dastardly penthouse.

Which brought forth an array of questions—*Had the maids done this before?* Tended to a poor omega after Hyunwoo was done with it? How often did it occur that these maids knew how to clean wounds for other people?

Fortunately, his nose stopped bleeding. The bone was not broken, though the area Hyunwoo punched already started to badly bruise. The corner of his eye still stung; red tainted the white sclera in his eye, but there was naught the maids could do for that. After they helped the imprisoned omega dress in new pyjama pants, another beta cleaned the bite mark from the previous night with ointment. He was given painkillers for the throbbing in his head. After, he graciously thanked the maids and was left alone once again.

The omega stood up off the seat in the bathroom where he was treated, then strolled towards the bedroom door. He paused, for some reason he was wanting to see if anyone helped Hyunwoo with his wounds. He supposed the alpha was too proud to get help in the most needed of times.

So, he made his way across the house to the alpha’s bedroom, fist knocking on the door softly but then louder for a few pounds.

White light from a waning gibbous moon poured in through the blinds of Hyunwoo’s bathroom window. In an otherwise dark room, he dressed his wounds with ointments and bandages in the moonlight after having already washed caked blood from his body after abandoning Kihyun in the guest suite.

The hot water on his body soothed his muscles, but pain throbbed from sites of injury. The power of adrenaline and potency of mating pheromones numbed him to the severity of his wounds—some cuts and gashes were deep enough to require stitches, but the alpha wasn’t the type to pursue medical treatment. He winced as he dribble hydrogen peroxide antiseptic over shallower cuts, the sting seeping into the wound to kill infection. A tab of gauze caught the excess antiseptic as it rolled off his arm, dried blood dissolving into pink foam as it soaked into the material.

Usually, moments of self-care like this brought Hyunwoo joy. Counting new wounds atop existing scars from previous quarrels boosted his alpha ego. Yet tonight, he couldn’t understand why he felt bad.

Couldn’t be from Kihyun, could it? That little brat’s smart ass mouth deserved to be shut up for speaking out of line.

So why did he feel bad about it?

Hyunwoo heard knocking on his bedroom door and felt immediately annoyed. Who was bothering him now? The maids had already done their cleaning for the day, dinnertime had passed already, and he wasn’t expecting his underlings back from their nightly rounds so early.
He stood up from the edge of the bathtub, body stiff and aching. He walked slowly through the en suite to the bedroom, grabbing a handgun from his dresser and tucking it into the waistband of his boxer-briefs just in case; for all he knew, Kihyun could be on the other side of the door anxious to retaliate, perhaps even rallying the help to riot with him.

Hyunwoo opened the door cautiously, making the gun’s presence apparent. To his surprise, it was Kihyun unarmed and bandaged up. Nervousness rose on Kihyun’s mind once the door opened, as he was once again in the presence of the alpha who gave him the bruise, red eye, and swollen eyelid. As the alpha stared down at Kihyun, those feelings of guilt resurfaced—he looked like he was in a lot of pain. His initial thought was to angrily inquire why the omega was here, but the words wouldn’t taste right on his tongue.

After a long pause without a proper greeting, Hyunwoo finally said, “I’m glad the maids were able to help you.”

Kihyun expected the alpha to instantly slam the door in his face or give him a matching punch, so upon hearing the alpha speak those words... it made him suspicious. Was Hyunwoo just saying that, or did he mean it? He lowered his head and his eyes caught sight of the gun.

Tsk, such a valorous (paranoid?) alpha.

“Um...” The omega cautiously stepped back. “I-if you’re busy then I’ll leave. I just w... wanted to, um, check a-and dress some of your injuries...” he said truthfully, keeping his head lowered as he spoke.

It took Hyunwoo a few seconds to realize Kihyun was probably stuttering because of the gun, among other unsavory things. He sighed. “Come in.”

He turned back into the room as he said it, withdrawing the gun from his boxer-briefs and returning it to the dresser. Kihyun watched Hyunwoo dispose of the weapon, which made him feel a little more at ease. Given that all the alpha was wearing was a tight, blue pair of Calvin Klein boxer-briefs and nothing else, pulling a gun from them must’ve seemed peculiar to Kihyun. Nevertheless, he kept walking through the room back into the bathroom to continue where he left off—he had disinfected most of his wounds, so now he just needed to bandage them.

Kihyun walked into the bedroom, admiring the dark decor as he pushed the door closed with his hand, hearing the door click into place. The omega’s eyes darted around the room, taking in the personal effects of the great alpha owner. The smell was strong, potent in Kihyun’s sensitive omega nose. Inhaling that citrusy bergamot aroma was doing all sorts of things to his senses. That, and the fact Hyunwoo was in nothing but boxers, leaving almost nothing to the imagination.

Those muscles, the tan skin, the tattoo... His omega hormones reacted too wildly, and he found himself becoming complacent. He was unsure if he would last long in the room alone with Hyunwoo again. The alpha could do anything he wanted to Kihyun, and the omega would be powerless against him. Again.

The younger male stopped at the doorframe of the bathroom and rubbed his hand over his shoulder, almost afraid to approach Hyunwoo without any consent. The punch to the face brought forward a new fear, and naturally he became more timid.

Hyunwoo noticed Kihyun’s hesitation as being distinctly different from his usual apprehension around the alpha. He wasn’t a fool. He understood why. He sat on the edge of the ceramic bathtub again amongst the antiseptic, ointments, and bandages. His posture was large, wide, and relaxed—very masculine, very casual in the omega’s presence. He was neither tense nor angry, horny nor
aggressive. He was exhausted and hungover from being hijacked by his pheromones earlier. All his defenses were down because he just didn’t have the energy to maintain them.

Maybe it was the guilt that provoked him to allow Kihyun into his room, maybe it wasn’t. Either way, it happened. So Hyunwoo just stared at Kihyun in the doorway. “Well? These are my injuries…” he said, extending his arms to show off his wounds.

Kihyun eyed the alpha curiously, sensing there was no danger, no alarm or need for his defenses to be up. He pushed off the doorframe and walked closer to Hyunwoo, inspecting the alpha’s scarred and injured body. So many old injuries marred his skin, disturbing the natural flow of the alpha’s flesh.

“Um... have you started cleaning some yourself?” He asked, gazing at the bottle of hydrogen peroxide by the tub.

“Yeah,” Hyunwoo said, eyes darting to the pile of soggy gauze pads pink with diluted blood in the trash can.

Upon Kihyun’s closer inspection, it looked as if the alpha actually needed stitches for a few. “Do you have a needle and... a sort of synthetic for stitches? Cause some of these are pretty... gashed.”

“There’s medical supplies in the top right drawer… I don’t usually stitch myself…” Hyunwoo replied, though he wasn’t sure why. He felt comfortable. Could it be Kihyun’s gentle omega hormones? Just as pungent alpha scents affected other dynamics, omega scents affected alphas as well. Yin and yang. Balance. Peace.

In the stellar moonlight, Kihyun’s features glowed, and though Hyunwoo normally found the omega attractive, he looked radiant in this moment. What was happening to the alpha?

Kihyun’s head turned to look for said drawer and walked over to it. “Do your maids do it... or you just... don’t at all?” he pondered aloud, pulling the drawer open to look for items that would help suture Hyunwoo’s wounds. He was no professional, but he figured those sewing lessons with his mom many years ago would help today… right?

Hyunwoo chuckled to himself at the omega’s concern. “I leave them be. They take longer to heal, but... that’s the nature of what I do. Probably pop a stitch anyway.”

Kihyun grasped a small, plastic container that contained a needle and thread from the drawer. Plucking the needed materials from the container, he began threading the needle at the bathroom counter. Hearing that the alpha didn’t get the proper care for his injuries made him feel sulky. He could picture Hyunwoo coming home from a brawl with bleeding cuts and gashes, leaving them to heal over the weeks by themselves.

Hyunwoo eyed the needle and thread Kihyun plucked from the first aid kit from behind the omega’s body. He wasn’t particularly fond of needles or getting stitched without a numbing agent, perhaps that was a contributing factor to his lack of appropriate wound care, but if the omega was willing to aid then he wasn’t going to protest.

He wriggled his fingers before forming a fist with his hand, smirking at the green and purple bruises on each of his knuckles. The alpha furrowed his brows at the fist, then flickered his gaze to the omega. This same fist—the fist he used to brutalize and murder people—was the same fist that struck Kihyun in an unassuming moment. After another long pause, Hyunwoo apologized. “Sorry for...” he trailed off, “…you didn’t deserve it.”
The sudden apology caught Kihyun off guard. He turned to the alpha and sighed softly. Closing the space between them, he replied, “Not the first time it’s happened. I shouldn’t have aggravated you either. I’m sorry.” He returned the apology, truthfully and sincerely as it wasn’t his intention to make the alpha angry. A good pet didn’t run his mouth anyway...

For some reason, hearing Kihyun reveal he had been mistreated by an alpha before struck a pang of jealousy in Hyunwoo. Who the fuck else was giving him a hard time? Not that he should be proud of his mistreatment either… but he felt a sense of responsibility and protectiveness.

“It’s fine,” Hyunwoo finally replied, ignoring his inner monologue. “You ever stitch someone up before?”

Kihyun squished the small needle between his index finger and thumb. “Um, no... but I’m no amateur with… I have some skill with a needle, okay? Do you have alcohol nearby I could use?” Kihyun asked, his eyes darting around Hyunwoo’s toned and beautiful body as he mentally counted how many cuts on his skin would need to be stitched.

"Yeah... here.” Hyunwoo grabbed the half-empty bottle of isopropyl alcohol from off the lip of the bathtub beside him. He'd used it already on his lesser wounds, hence why half the bottle was empty. He handed the omega the bottle of alcohol and stared at him expectantly. “You're gonna make this hurt, aren't you?” he smirked, half toying with the omega, half genuinely asking. He knew he deserved it regardless.

The younger male set the kit down on the counter before grasping the item as it was handed to him, slim fingers curled around the circular bottle. “Thanks,” he sighed out nervously. It was okay to be nervous, right? “I’ll try not to hurt you, but no promises since I am repeatedly sticking a needle into your skin.”

“Hey,” Hyunwoo said suddenly but in a surprisingly soft-toned voice. “Take it easy, okay? You don’t have to be so nervous all the time. I know I’m an asshole, but… you don’t deserve to put up with this shit.”

The alpha wasn’t stupid. Of course Mr. Yoo’s humongous debt wasn’t Kihyun’s doing, but debt did not dissolve in the event of death. Mr. Yoo was more than a noncompliant debtor, he was a thief, a liar, and a snitch. It wasn’t like the police didn’t know about the jo-pok, but they often turned a blind eye from shady jo-pok dealings. The jo-pok possessed too much reputation-damaging intelligence about Korea’s so-called noble police force. It was agreed upon that Mr. Son and associates would stay quiet about what they knew in exchange for special privileges that placed the jo-pok above the law. But a snitch like Mr. Yoo caused complications that strained this pact and forced police involvement. Hyunwoo did what was best for the jo-pok. Doing so left unresolved debt still highly demanded by the main Seoul branch—Hyunwoo’s boss. The alpha had no choice but to capture Mr. Yoo’s only known living relative, Kihyun. And he knew deep down, the omega didn’t deserve any of this, but the moment Hyunwoo caught a whiff of that sweet cherry scent, he knew Kihyun had to be his.

“You don’t have to stitch me either…”

Kihyun couldn’t help his timid omega demeanour. It was just how he was, especially around a burly, ruggedly handsome alpha who had fucked him real good earlier. His walls were still wet, pulsing softly with alpha seed. Yet, even after a punch in the face he still wanted to stitch the elder’s cuts out of sheer kindness. He learned a long time ago that to forgive and forget was better than holding a grudge for the rest of his life. One day his kind-heartedness would catch up to him.

With the tilt of his wrist, Kihyun poured a gracious amount of alcohol onto a cut and watched the
wound bubble. Hyunwoo flinched slightly at the stinging effect of the antiseptic on his wound. He watched calmly as the liquid disinfected the tender, raw area before dripping off his arm onto the tile floor by his feet. Kihyun must be new to this, as he didn’t prepare gauze strips to catch run-off, but the good intention was admirable. He tried not to make too much of a fuss when he realized that the pink-ish bubbly liquid was running down Hyunwoo’s arm and into the floor; this was incredibly different than sewing. Hyunwoo smiled, amused, albeit flinching upon each poke.

“Just hold still—” Kihyun paused for a second, then decided to add, “—asshole.” Kihyun’s tone meant for a little light-hearted and harmless joke. The alpha took keenly to the playful banter Kihyun roused by chuckling quietly. Though his left eye was tender, sore, puffy and red, Kihyun wouldn’t leave Hyunwoo’s cuts to fester, and he’d still bask in the lighthearted atmosphere, as fleeting as it may be. He hated how kind he was.

The thought hung heavy in Kihyun’s mind as he lowered his torso to, without a warning, poke the needle through the alpha’s skin. The more relaxed energy between them distracted Hyunwoo from the sharp, pointed prick of the needle in the already sensitive area of one of his largest wounds. He hissed. It was a familiar pain, yet different than one comparable to a tattoo gun. With calm, focused eyes the omega dragged the needle through Hyunwoo’s cut, repeating the action several times.

Hyunwoo watched the surprisingly intricate pattern stitched into his skin, and it somehow entranced him. Clearly, Kihyun was good with a needle.

“It won’t be perfect, but it’s better than nothing,” Kihyun muttered, noticing Hyunwoo’s careful attention.

The omega was new to stitching human flesh, that much was obvious even to Hyunwoo, but it made the alpha ponder what Kihyun’s life was life before he snatched him away from it. Did he learn sewing in high school? Did a parent teach him?

“Where’d you learn to sew?” Hyunwoo said, intending for it to be a reply to Kihyun’s comment.

Kihyun finished the first stitch with a nervous mind, but he didn’t want the alpha to know he was feeling that way. The question, though, caught him off guard because that would mean revealing part of his past. He wasn’t too keen on sharing anything like that with Hyunwoo. “Um... just a little hobby I picked up for quick money,” Kihyun replied, reaching with his free hand for the open first aid kit where he grabbed the small scissors and cut a length he could tie the ends together at.

Hyunwoo studied the answer Kihyun gave him. It didn’t surprise him the omega gave him a guarded, half-truth reply.

“Quick money? For what?” the alpha asked, knowing it was invasive but not stopping himself from asking questions he genuinely wanted to ask. He didn’t waver from asking unconventional questions just because it was socially impolite to do so. Hell, his whole life was established off a socially impolite attitude. “I know you don’t come from a family of wealth. What other things did you do for money?”

Kihyun tied the ends in small knots, fingers nimble and as precise as he could get them. He set the needle down on the counter and grasped the gauze. ‘Oh, the cliché stuff. Babysit the neighbour’s kids, work part time at a convenience store...’” He answered just as simply as before as he cut a chunk of gauze off the spool and used it to wipe the trail of antiseptic off Hyunwoo’s strong, sexy arm. Jeez, these muscles were thick. He dabbed the material against the sutured cut and took a step back to admire his handiwork.
Not too bad, if he did say so himself.

Hyunwoo’s inner alpha surged at the thought of Kihyun babysitting pups, but he willed down the thought because it was purely instinctive and not at all reflective of him or his lifestyle. When Kihyun stepped back to analyze his stitching skills, Hyunwoo lifted his arm to closer examine the work himself.

“Looks good. Guess you’re better with a thread and needle than I gave you credit for, omega,” the alpha teased playfully, keeping up the lighthearted atmosphere that encompassed them. The younger male wanted to throw the used gauze at Hyunwoo, right in his cocky mug. Due to his situation, he refused to dive into his urges and just tossed the gauze in the trash.

“Thanks?” Kihyun grinned, rolling out a new chunk of gauze.

“...when’s the last time you spent money on something other than bills?” Hyunwoo suddenly asked, mind straying on the topic of finances. Force of habit.

“Uh, I, um...” What was the last thing he bought? “I bought takeout for supper a week or so ago.” That was before he had bought groceries for the new house. His uncle’s house. They were probably old by now, rotting in his fridge.

Hyunwoo hummed low in his throat. “I meant, when was the last time you bought a non-necessity for yourself? Clothes, entertainment... hell, drugs?”

For some reason, he felt like he was onto something. The guilt he felt for hitting the omega earlier... maybe he could make up for it in the only way Hyunwoo knew how to express an apology—with money. If he finally rid himself of this nasty feeling of guilt, he could move on with his life. Things would return to normal: he’d go on a collections run tomorrow, take it easy due to his injuries, possibly visit with an informant or maybe even stop by one of the popular host clubs he owned.

A soft sigh escaped Kihyun’s nostrils, curiosity piqued. “Why do want to know?” The omega asked, setting the gauze down and cutting new pieces for the other remaining injuries that needed to be stitched. To be honest, Kihyun couldn’t quite remember the last time he splurged for his own entertainment. The jeans currently being washed by the maids were bought a year ago.

“Because I do,” Hyunwoo vaguely justified. Internal alpha frustrations swelled within him. He was extending a moment of compassion to Kihyun; it would be wise for the omega to remain compliant and cooperative. Ah, damnit. He channeled his aggravation by tightly clenching his fist, teeth gritting when his newly sutured wounds tingled in pain from the action. Don’t ruin the moment, he thought to himself.

“You don’t have any clothes here. Anything good, at least. I can’t take you out on business runs with me when you dress so pitifully.” He clenched and unclenched his fist, adjusting to the pain.

Well, excuse Kihyun for not having clothes. He didn’t have time to pack when he was being kidnapped.

“Get ready. We’re going out,” the alpha announced as he stood up, elongating his spine in a quick stretch before shaking off residual stiffness in his limbs. Kihyun had set the gauze and scissors down before he stepped back and felt his lower back bump into the edge of the counter, wary of the alpha’s sudden movements. He was especially wary of that clenched fist, which made his own injury pulse with awareness.
“Out? But I haven’t finished stitching you—and it’s late.” It was true, sky outside the windows of Mr. Son’s bathroom was dark and starry. And... Kihyun dared not tell Hyunwoo he was sore from their earlier *endeavour*. “And... I think, um... y-you should at least get some sleep to give your injuries a chance to heal.”

Why was he so concerned about the alpha?

Smirking, Hyunwoo stepped towards Kihyun in a slow, deliberate manner. If his actions seemed predatory, it was unintentional. When he neared the omega, he honed in on him by pressing their bodies together, purposefully pinning Kihyun to the granite bathroom counter. Kihyun could feel the quickened pace of his heart as the alpha’s large, muscular arms encased either side of him, Hyunwoo’s palms planted on the end of the countertop and fingers curling over the edge. Eyes locked on Hyunwoo, Kihyun’s arms went limp at his side as their bodies touched a little too intimately.

“No rest for the wicked…” the alpha whispered after leaning in, his face a short distance from Kihyun’s. “...or so they say.”

The familiar aroma of alpha musk radiated from Hyunwoo, affecting the defenseless omega a third time. He was reminded he was not in charge, had no say what Hyunwoo could or couldn’t do to him. *So close...* Kihyun couldn’t read the older man. Damn that mysterious demeanor. Damn that voice. Damn it all.

Kihyun slowly blinked at Hyunwoo, too timid to raise his hands and brush the bangs out of his eyes that tickled his bruised, swollen eye. Hyunwoo brought his lips impossibly closer to Kihyun’s, eyes locked on the cute swell of the omega’s bottom lip. In this close proximity, the alpha could easily scent the omega. The younger male leaned back a few inches when the alpha almost closed the space between them. It was not a small jerk back, eyes trained on those dark, perilous, mysterious eyes in front of him.

Given the fact they were going out, scent marking the omega wasn’t a bad idea. The boy was good looking; he’d definitely attract a wandering eye, especially in the presence of a dominant alpha like Hyunwoo. The dynamics of the world of alphas, betas, and omegas were intricately ruled by instincts, scents, and social classes borne of biological distinction. If an alpha saw an omega in the care, so to speak, of another alpha, competition sparked. The idea was that the omega must be special and therefore desirable. In an effort to discourage competition, alphas marked their omega counterparts with their scent. Scent marking existed in all social classes—parents to children, friends to friends, lovers, etc.

As such, Hyunwoo’s spiced citrus essence saturated the small bathroom space, intentionally covering Kihyun in the smell. And there it was, as if on cue the scent wafted through Kihyun, making him grip the hem of his oversized shirt at his sides. His eyelids fluttered for a moment whilst a soft exhale of breath filled the silence. It melted into the omega’s flesh, masking his sweet cherry aroma. Earthy citrus that Kihyun wanted to loath with all his being.

There was no doubt—Hyunwoo was scenting him. Damn his omega biology for being so captivated by one alpha smell. He hated being so pliant.

Noticing Kihyun’s shift in demeanor, Hyunwoo eased back. Finally answering the omega’s initial protest to going out, the alpha said, “I have connections. Clients keep excellent hours for me…”

He grinned, standing away from Kihyun once he deemed the omega sufficiently scent marked. He carded a swollen, bandaged hand through his dark hair, his muscles rippling under bronze skin from the action. “We can have the whole store to ourselves.”
Kihyun’s fists remained tightly balled up in his shirt, shoulders relaxing once the burly alpha was a safe distance away from him. All he could smell was Hyunwoo’s musk, his biological scent. Kihyun wasn’t too keen on going out with a black eye, not to mention he was starving; his stomach rumbled with small growls.

But his mind was swayed by the alpha’s intoxicating scent and he couldn’t refuse.

“Okay.”
Hyunwoo flicked the lightswitch on. Several rows of fluorescent lights illuminated one by one, each showcasing an expensive, shiny vehicle from famed international vehicle manufacturers—Bugatti, McLaren, Koenigsegg, Aston Martin, Lamborghini, LeBlanc.

Each were well-kept and magnificent, and, judging by the tread on the tires, only driven a few times since purchase. It was clear these were not cars used for business; these were purely statement cars driven for leisure and status.

Kihyun had tried to style his bangs to the left to hide his bruise, but he knew the attempt was futile. Clad in an oversized, black shirt and borrowed sweater, Kihyun also knew he wouldn’t fit the description of rich even if he were to ride in one of these amazing vehicles. Each one glowed with its own colors. He couldn’t stop looking around at all the cars, shining and beautiful in their displays.

The alpha smiled to himself as he scanned the multicolored sea of vehicles in the penthouse’s massive garage. These vehicles were like his trophies. He suddenly felt reminiscent. The glossy, midnight blue Bugatti was his first purchase after his first major jo-pok promotion. Of all the cars, that one held the most sentimental value. Quickly, Hyunwoo tucked his memories away before Kihyun noticed the excitement on his face.

Clearing his throat, he said, “Pick which one we take.”

Kihyun looked at the alpha incredulously. Surely, he jested. He turned his attention back to the rows of cars, illuminated as if they were to appear on the cover of a magazine.

“Um... I’ve never rode in a Lamborghini before,” he replied timidly, hoping that was a good pick.

The omega’s answer was, dare he think, cute. Hyunwoo always enjoyed the exhilaration of driving one of his trophy cars, but the thrill of their unveiling upon the flick of a lightswitch had lost its novelty for him. Witnessing the awe on Kihyun’s face struck a chord of pride in him.

“Lamborghini it is.”

Hyunwoo strolled over to the lime green vehicle, calloused finger stroking the length of the car to the passenger handle. Though equipped with keyless entry, his alpa ego wanted to bolster any remnant of chivalry remaining between the two. He popped the handle and the door lifted vertically like a glorious wing.

Running a hand through his black hair, the alpha looked opulent and imposing in a black t-shirt refined with a pinstripe blazer, tight black denim jeans with a leather belt, and matte black Oxfords. “Come.”

Kihyun followed to the vibrant colored car and ogled at the sleek shine. The way the doors opened made him stare in absolute awe for he could never afford even an interior part of the car. Kihyun was shy when he walked closer, peeking inside the vehicle with admiration. God, it was so clean and perfect. He feared he would reduce its value by just sitting in it.

“Yeah, it’s nice, hmm?” Hyunwoo drawled, his ego stroked more and more with each passing second of Kihyun ogling the black leather interior. The inside of the car still had that new car smell mixed with trace amounts of lingering bergamont.
The alpha motioned with his chin to the car. “Get in, pet,” he said firmly, yet his tone wasn’t as menacing as it had been in previous interactions with the omega. The way he said ‘pet,’ though a term of endearment, implied ownership. Off his tongue, it sounded like gentle coercion.

Kihyun glanced at Hyunwoo for a split second and reality came back to him. He nodded and maneuvered his body into the vehicle, trying to be as smooth and delicate as he could be. His ass sat against the leather, legs lifted in and carried. Kihyun set his feet on the floor and relaxed into the seat with a soft sigh. The interior was just as flashy and impressive as the rest of the car, making Kihyun stare at such perfection in wonder. This was so cool.

As soon as Kihyun sat in the passenger seat, Hyunwoo slammed shut the door. He walked around the front of the lime green vehicle, thigh grazing the chrome grill, before grasping the chrome handle of the driver’s side. Popping the handle, the door opened vertically just as the passenger side had, and he swooped into the leather driver seat fluidly.

Closing the door, he stuck his keys in his pocket and pressed the startup button in the glossy black center console that divided Kihyun from himself. The engine roared awake before settling into a smooth purr. All the lights and buttons and symbols on the dashboard lit up in a color of green almost as shocking as the exterior. Kihyun’s eyes opened wide at the display of flashy dials and lights.

It was the engine, though, that got him; the alluring purr was really sexy. Fuck, it was just a sexy car, and Kihyun didn’t feel adequate sitting in such a beast.

Hyunwoo turned on the radio and some random R&B boomed hard and deep through the deluxe subwoofers. The soft hum of the engine was drowned out by the thrum of the bass, pounding in Kihyun’s ears like a heartbeat.

Over the bass, the alpha said, “Pick any song you’d like.”

Honestly, Kihyun wasn’t sure how to pick a song in such a complex car, so he politely declined with the shake of his head. “...No thank you.”

“What? You don’t like music?” Hyunwoo said like knee-jerk reaction. Here he was granting Kihyun the opportunity to ride in a vehicle so prestigious he’d likely never even see one in his boring, suburban life, and the kid didn’t even want to partake in the fun it provided.

Showing off his car collection was a shallow repercussion of his inflated ego, but it was also insight into what Hyunwoo liked. The alpha was sharing something meaningful, even if it was in some boastful, convoluted manner. “Fuck it.” The alpha turned up the volume to drown out any outside noise.

Hyunwoo shifted the car into reverse to back out of its reserved space, then shift to first gear to drive down the wide center aisle of the garage towards the exit. Kihyun hoisted his shoulders up, showing a sulky demeanor. He loved music—hell, he even used to sing at a bar on Thursday nights for money and the love of singing—but he didn’t know why he felt bad when Hyunwoo offered him to pick a song. He couldn’t even do that. God, he was such a timid thing.

Maybe it was how intimidating the alpha was? After all, Hyunwoo bathed in riches beyond Kihyun’s wildest dreams...

The omega sighed out softly, eyes watching ahead as the parking spot became further away.

Once the lime green Lamborghini left the large garage, the garage door rolled shut automatically as
the vehicle drove down the slightly sloped driveway and through the marbled courtyard where the two had first met. The long driveway to the tall, spiked iron exit gates took them through a journey of lush, vibrant vegetation masked in the black of night. Insects chirped and bushes rustled from nocturnal critters scampering out of the view of bright headlights.

As they reached the gates, a portly gatekeeper bowed politely to Mr. Son and opened the gates from the safety of his cramped, rectangular gatekeeper office. Once out on the road, Hyunwoo rolled down both his and Kihyun’s windows to feel the rush of cool hillside air on their faces. Kihyun felt the chill of the night air tickle his cheek. The smell of night was comforting; the fresh air was needed even if it had a chill. Goosebumps tickled his skin under the sweater he wore, but it was worth seeing the night sky and city lights.

Kihyun gazed out the window, watching the world go by behind a lime green beast. He was a sucker for the glow of the city with its luminescence, street lights, billboard signs, strobe lights from nearby bars or dance clubs—it was all so oddly fascinating. All the colours seemed brilliant in the night’s ambiance. Gwangju at night was truly a sight to behold.

Hyunwoo first fell in love with the city as a teenage punk stealing packs of cigarettes from the convenience stores he now took collections from. The sophisticated allure was something he’d never grow tired of.

He was fond, too, of the prolonged stares from passersby as he drove such an illustrious car through the multicolored cityscape. The glow of nightlife reflected off the immaculate shine of his Lamborghini. Make no mistake about it, whenever a vehicle this nice rolled through town, everyone knew who the owner was—Son Hyunwoo was the name on everyone’s lips, whether good or bad.

Unlike Hyunwoo, the staring made Kihyun nervous. He idly pondered if these staring strangers envied him. He hoped that wasn’t the case since his situation was not one to be envied.

While stopped at an intersection nestled between skyscrapers, Hyunwoo pulled a cigarette out of a box he kept stashed in the inner pocket of his blazer and pinned it between his lips. He took a lighter out of a tiny compartment of the car and lit the tip of the stick until it glowed orange. He slung his arm out of the window as he took the first drag, fingers tapping the exterior as he waited through the streetlight.

Kihyun watched with a longing look as Hyunwoo smoked a cigarette, but he was too shy, too timid to ask if he could have one too. His lips pressed together as he observed the way the cancer stick burned as much as his burning desire for one… It’d certainly take the edge off.

Hyunwoo felt the omega’s stare. He turned his head to the passenger side while blowing a cloud of smoke out the side of his mouth toward the window. “What? You have a whole fucking city to look at. Why are you staring me?” he asked, annoyed.

After all the sad eyes from being cooped up in a penthouse others would kill to live in, the omega still wasn’t happy even when Hyunwoo granted him the opportunity to be out in town again? Fuck, there was just no making Kihyun happy.

Kihyun opened his mouth to reply, but it closed when he realized snarking the alpha wasn’t the best, not when Hyunwoo was being the asshole he was branded to be.

The omega sighed and looked away. “I wasn’t looking at you...” he finally muttered. “I just wanted a drag...” Defeated, he looked back out the window, wondering how far he could get if he ran.
“Then say something about it,” Hyunwoo sneered. “I’m sick of you making victimized looks. Use your goddamn words.”

Kihyun could feel his wrathful hate for the alpha double. Why was he such a prick? *Hyunwoo, who hurt you?* Besides, Kihyun wouldn’t be making victimized looks if he hadn’t been taken against his will in the first place. He was only playing his role as a victim… because he was one.

The red light turned green and the alpha hit the gas pedal a little harder than intended. His quick temper ruined an otherwise okay moment again. The omega’s body pressed into the seat at the harsh take off, annoyed now that Hyunwoo had the temper of a old man. The alpha stuck the cigarette back between his lips and took a long drag as he wove through slow-moving traffic with one hand on the leather-clad steering wheel.

A few awkward minutes passed.

Sighing, Hyunwoo let the cigarette dangle off his lower lip as he retrieved his pack of cigarettes from his blazer pocket and tossed them on Kihyun’s lap. “Lighter is in the center compartment.”

Kihyun was startled when the pack of cigarettes landed on his thighs so suddenly. What was this for? Just because the alpha let him have a smoke didn’t mean Kihyun would like him.

“Thanks.” A mumble came out as he picked up the small box and plucked his own cigarette from its confines. After placing it between his lips, he found the lighter and lit the end. Upon inhale he closed his eyes, milking in the strong taste of nicotine on his tongue. He exhaled the smoke through his nose, head leaning back to bask in the unhealthy addiction.

Kihyun could feel his nervousness fade with the smoke.

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They pulled up to a trendy clothing store with KYE emblazoned in neon red letters across the front. KYE sold quirky, expensive menswear—practically every male idol wore the brand. When Kihyun read the sign, he tilted his head. He had heard of this store before from somewhere but couldn’t exactly place where. The name sounded so familiar, though he failed to remember. Hyunwoo figured because Kihyun was young, he’d be interested in such fashions. Based on his current attire, the omega probably had been striving for KYE’s aesthetic with bargain knock-off brands anyway.

Hyunwoo parked at the curb immediately in front of the glass entrance, which was a parking violation, so he could keep an eye from within the store. Unbeknownst to Kihyun, they’d been followed by a group of beta underlings from Hyunwoo’s crew as added security measure; for the most part, they’d simply watch his precious Lamborghini, but the key was to keep everything on a need-to-know basis with the omega. Right now, he didn’t need to know.

The engine shut off and the car stilled. Unlocking the car, Hyunwoo opened the vertical door and stepped out onto the gum-littered sidewalk. Kihyun felt less tense after that much needed cigarette. And when the roar of the engine stopped, the omega carefully opened the vertical door and dropped the spent cigarette to the ground. He got out of the vehicle, stepping on the bud and twisting his ankle to squish it into the hard ground.

Hyunwoo flicked his half-finished cigarette to the ground, not bothering to put it out as it skittered across the cement and continued to burn until eventually smoldering out. He called the store owner, Lisa, prior to leaving his penthouse, expecting the store to be opened specially for one Mr. Son Hyunwoo and company upon his arrival.
And, sure enough, the petite beta store owner with orange creamsicle colored hair pulled into a sloppy bun greeted them with a small wave. She was forcing a smile, that much was obvious, but she did her best to appear not as annoyed as she was—after all, it was nearly midnight and she would rather be anywhere other than her place of employment after working an eight hour day there, but whatever.

“Ah, Mr. Son! What a beautiful car,” Lisa said in the most energetic customer service voice she could muster. “How are you?” she added in a high-pitched tone when Hyunwoo didn’t reply.

“Well,” Hyunwoo replied curtly as he locked the Lamborghini with the key fob and waited for Kihyun to enter first through the door KYE’s owner kindly held open for them.

Kihyun stepped up onto the sidewalk with a shy demeanor about him. When he approached the store owner, he gave a slight bow, having been taught manners and politeness when he was growing up. She seemed cheery enough, though Hyunwoo’s reply was less than kind. Kihyun wanted to scoff because Hyunwoo didn’t seem to appreciate anything.

To make up for the alpha’s rudeness, Kihyun offered her a small smile. “Hello,” he greeted, walking past her into the store where his mouth almost dropped open.

Hyunwoo followed Kihyun into the store, chuckling upon witnessing the omega’s stunned reaction. The sound of the front door closing followed by high heels clacking against tile echoed in the very large, very modern style interior. The new-style architecture complemented the chic clothing designs strewn on stylish mannequins, posters of models, and even the way the clothing was hung up on hangers. Oh, and the store smelled of the manager’s fresh orange zest scent.

“Nice, right?” Hyunwoo asked Kihyun. “Get anything you want, I don’t care. Lisa will help you with sizes.”

Kihyun whirled around, gaping at the alpha with surprise and uncertainty. Did he hear that right? “Anything?” He questioned, one eye wide in awe but the other still swollen.

“Yeah, anything.” Hyunwoo confirmed.

Spending money really meant nothing to him, especially when it came to fine cuisine or fine clothing. It was not only proper but expected to dress wealthily and keep a clean, sharp appearance in the jo-pok. High ranked gangsters were to showcase their status by looking like the epitome of it. To look powerful was to garner respect. If Hyunwoo was going to keep Kihyun around, the omega had better look like something desirable.

Time evaded Kihyun whilst he looked at clothing. He even tried on an item or two. If Hyunwoo wanted him to look good then he would do his best. The omega had good fashion sense in his own mind, a true fashionista at heart. He was thankful the owner helped because he knew nothing about high end brands.

When Kihyun thought he collected enough items, he piled them onto the counter at the register. Had he gone overboard? Was there a limit? He didn’t know how many shops they were going to, but Hyunwoo did say anything. Everything looked so cool that Kihyun had difficulty picking just a few outfits. He sought items he thought would appeal to higher statuses. Majority of the materials hugged his body and showed off his thin figure… alphas liked that, right?

Lisa scanned each article of clothing and any shiny accessories threw into the giant pile on the check-out counter. As she scanned them, she removed the security tag and folded them with the practiced skill of a retail employee so they’d stack neatly in the large, rectangular bag that read
KYE across the side. Each ding from the register racked up the price displayed on the output screen. Hyunwoo regarded it with indifference.

Kihyun watched the price increase. Inside he felt a little guilt, but he had never owned such luxurious clothing like this before, so it was thrilling knowing these were his new clothes… even if it was only per Hyunwoo’s preference.

When Lisa finished, she eyed the omega with curiosity; he looked very out of place alongside tall, dark, and handsome Son Hyunwoo. Admittedly, it wasn’t all that surprising. She figured the omega was another host Mr. Son was grooming for work at one of his many host clubs. He often brought pretty faces to her store for this purpose, and this boy was likely no different.

She announced the price and Hyunwoo shrugged, saying, “Put it on my tab.”

“Thank you for your assistance,” Kihyun said to Lisa and gave a quick bow to show his gratefulness.

“Happy to assist! You have great taste.” Lisa bowed as Kihyun bowed and then smiled at the omega. She didn’t know his name, but that was another common occurrence when the alpha was involved. She knew better than to ask.

Hyunwoo observed their interaction quietly, noticing the strain in Lisa’s performance. Digging his hand in his pocket, he withdrew his fine leather wallet. He carded through it briefly before pulling out several thousand won in cash. He tossed it casually on the countertop in front of Lisa. “For your troubles.”

With that, he stuck his wallet in his pocket once more and grabbed the large shopping bags. “Let’s go,” Hyunwoo said to the omega, motioning to the exit with his eyes.

Kihyun gave the woman one last kind smile before he turned and strode for the door. It was nice to have female company, even for less than an hour... other than the few maids at his ‘prison.’

He pushed the door open and stepped out into the night again, holding the door open for the alpha since he was kind enough to carry the bags. The omega had thought he would be the one to carry everything since they were shopping for him—especially since Hyunwoo was the rich jo-pok guy and Kihyun was the lesser omega, but he didn’t complain.

Hyunwoo quirked a brow at Kihyun holding open the door for him but said nothing as he walked by. He continued walking straight to the lime green vehicle, unlocking it from afar to be easily able to pop open the door. However, instead of opening the driver door, he walked around the front of the car to once again open Kihyun’s passenger door first. He awaited Kihyun’s arrival by leaning coolly against the vehicle, free hand buried in his denim pocket as the other held the bags.

Kihyun gawked at Hyunwoo’s actions once more, fingers releasing the metal bar of the door to let it swing closed. He blinked a few times. So chivalry wasn’t dead?

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The omega stepped off the sidewalk and approached the Lamborghini. “Thanks,” he said with a little less hesitation this time, eyes quickly raking over Hyunwoo’s body before he climbed into the car. After Kihyun got in the car, Hyunwoo ducked down into the passenger side himself. When the door didn’t close and Hyunwoo leaned over him, Kihyun froze on the spot. The alpha pulled the shopping bags with him, trying his best to maneuver them around Kihyun before tossing them in the back seat.

Couldn’t he had done that on his side or put the bags in before he let Kihyun go in first?
The alpha made sure, however, to encroach Kihyun’s personal space as much as possible. Their bodies were close as Hyunwoo reached over him. When he pulled back, their faces were incredibly close; he could smell the tobacco on Kihyun’s breath. That smell mixed with maraschino cherries made him grip the leather seat tightly as he willed down the desire to capture the omega’s lips with his own. The omega’s eyes fixated on Hyunwoo’s lips. They were so close he could smell nothing but cigarette residue and bergamot.

Instead of kissing Kihyun, Hyunwoo hummed and quickly withdrew from the car. He slammed shut the door and composed himself with a deep breath. Everything was going well. He didn’t need to ‘alpha up’ the situation and ruin a good thing.

After a few seconds, Hyunwoo walked around to the driver’s side and hopped in. Kihyun relaxed into his seat, stomach gurgling alive with hunger.

+ 

After KYE, they went to several other expensive, designer shops. As with KYE, they were the only two customers in the store because the store was specially opened just for them. After a few hours of constant shopping, the back of Hyunwoo’s Lamborghini was overstuffed with oversized shopping bags. Whether Kihyun admitted it or not, the alpha spoiled him. Never in his life would the omega afford any of this, not even one article of clothing from one of the stores—Hyunwoo gave him something previously unattainable.

Perhaps now Kihyun would forgive the alpha for striking him in the heat of the moment. Maybe then Hyunwoo could stop feeling this foreign sensation of guilt.

All the action of the day made Kihyun tired, worn out, and a little sluggish. The city sounds were like a lullaby, beckoning him to sleep. He’d only been with Hyunwoo a day—a horribly long and emotionally draining day. He’d lost all connections with the world when his phone was smashed, lost his freedom, had his best friend threatened by an alpha asshole, used for sex, punched in the face, and now was being dragged around to pricey stores for new clothing so he’d fit in with the alpha’s ritzy crowd.

He didn’t know how much longer he would be able to keep up.

After their final stop, they sat in silence in the vehicle. Lounging in the leather seat, Hyunwoo puffed on another cigarette. The windows were open so both the music of the radio and the stop and go of traffic could be heard. Pensive, he stared at Kihyun through the rearview mirror. “You hungry?”

The omega’s eyes shot open when the alpha spoke, and he looked over at Hyunwoo with his sleepy eyes. “Famished,” he replied honestly, a hand sliding back and forth over his aching and empty stomach.

In the near distance were the signature golden arches of McDonalds. It was too late to deal with a classy, sit down restaurant, if any were open. He looked over his shoulder at Kihyun. “You like McDonalds?”

The irony of the suggestion was not lost on him. Here he was, an eminent alpha in a gorgeous vehicle with a two hundred million won price tag and a small mountain of shopping bags from elite fashion brand stores in the back seat offering to go to McDonalds for a 2AM meal.

At the offer, Kihyun shrugged. He wasn’t huge into fast food, but that was just his inner chef speaking. After his day, a burger did sound good, then again anything did. “Yeah, I suppose.”
Hyunwoo drove the short distance through the vibrant city to McDonalds, his underlings following a safe distance behind them in an inconspicuous black car. When they pulled into the mostly-empty parking lot, he parked in a front spot to again be able to keep watch of his vehicle. The underlings parked in the back along the shrub-lined perimeter to remain incognito.

Hyunwoo smirked, his alpha ego stroked when the few diners inside the fast food establishment gawked at the Lamborghini; one little girl was so enamored she dropped the fry she was about to eat. Employees even looked over the fast food counter to investigate what the diners were staring at. The tall manager in the headset with the shiny name badge was not as impressed and immediately recognized both the vehicle and the well-dressed alpha. He slumped his shoulders as anxiety very obviously overtook him.

Hyunwoo didn’t notice, however, as he waited patiently for Kihyun to exit the vehicle so they could enter the establishment together. The omega got out of the fancy vehicle and closed the door behind him, eagerly approaching the door. Maybe after this they could finally retreat back to Hyunwoo’s penthouse so Kihyun could sleep this nightmare away.

Kihyun grasped the handle on the door and pulled it open, hoping food would give him more energy. He could smell the strong odor of fast food when they walked in, and he salivated at merely the scent. Everyone stared at them as they entered. An alpha with an omega wasn’t uncommon. It was the way they looked and what vehicle they got out of that astounded them. A tall, roguishly handsome alpha covered in scabbed over wounds and shoddy sutures and a slender omega with a bruised eye and swollen nose. Either the omega was a prostitute that had been knocked around a few times, or they were a couple with a bad domestic abuse problem.

The Lamborghini was an inexplicable variable currently not factored into the bewildering equation.

At the ordering counter, the employee that previously manned the station was swapped with the manager, who was an omega too masked in fryer grease to discern a scent. He eyed the odd pair as they approached. He greeted both of them kindly, but expressed a clear disdain for the alpha. “Hi! Welcome to McDonalds. What can I get for you?”

The shorter male stepped towards the counter, eyes looking up at the rows of burgers and other assorted fast food items. “Hi...” He saw his prize and looked at the manager with a smile. “I’ll get a Big Mac meal and ten chicken nuggets with sweet and sour sauce.” He figured he could just grab whatever drink from the fountain’s many picks of pop off to the left.

Hyunwoo was impressed at how communicative Kihyun could be—this wasn’t a side the alpha had experienced yet. Or, maybe he was just hungry and knew the menu too well. Hyunwoo, however, couldn’t recall the last time he’d been to a McDonalds, let alone any fast food restaurant, to eat. He glanced at the menu board and tried to make sense of the Mc-whatevers offered several different ways. Wasn’t a hamburger just that, a burger? What the hell was special sauce?

By the look on Hyunwoo’s face, Kihyun couldn’t help but wonder if the taller male was unfamiliar with fast food joints. He couldn’t stop the small smile that stretched his lips; even with the alpha’s roguish appearance he could still have cute charms that appealed to the omega. Kihyun turned his head, looking away to avoid the way his lips curled in to suppress his laughter.

The omega manager readjusted his uniform visor as he stared at Hyunwoo impatiently. “Sir, will you be ordering anything or?” the manager asked, irritated. The alpha averted his gaze to look directly at the manager. “I’ll have what he’s having...”

With their food order in and paid for, Hyunwoo eyed the bold order number on their receipt as the manager slid two cups across the counter to Kihyun. The alpha then glanced at the soda fountain,
realizing that even the drink selection had changed since the last time he’d been to a McDonalds years ago.

“Uh… just get me Coke,” he said to the omega, opting for the classic burger and Coca-Cola experience (the only one he readily knew).

Kihyun nodded as he grasped the two paper cups and turned over to the fountain, unaware of the eyes on him. He set the cups down on the metal tray under the fountain and pressed the ice button. The frozen cubes plopped down into the empty cup and he took his finger off the button, only giving a dozen or so cubes before he rotated then and added a small pile into the other cup. Kihyun filled the one cup with Coke as requested and the other with root beer, his personal favourite.

Leaving Kihyun to do as he pleased, Hyunwoo took a seat at a table in the back corner of the establishment. From there, he could easily surveil both the entrance and his vehicle. In his seat, Hyunwoo realized just how many pairs of eyes were staring at Kihyun and himself—literally everyone. He met their eyes with his own cold, standoffish glare.

After the cups were filled Kihyun lidded them, put straws in and carried them to the table he saw where Hyunwoo was and he set the beverage in front of the alpha. “Thanks, by the way, for supper.”

It took Hyunwoo a minute to realize Kihyun thanked him. The feelings of guilt had subsided and were replaced by a peculiar sense of worth; he, the alpha, was able to do something to satisfy the omega. Taking care of Kihyun in this way tugged at a quality of his alpha dynamic typically ignored by Hyunwoo.

“It’s nothing,” he said, brushing off Kihyun’s thoughtful comment like it didn’t affect him as much as it did. He grabbed the cup of Coke placed before him and took a sip, flicking his gaze between the other diners and Kihyun. “We must be fascinating…” He spoke loud enough for those nearby to hear it, get flustered, and look away, though the comment was meant for Kihyun.

Kihyun sat on the opposite side of Hyunwoo, both hands grasping the cup as he looked around behind him, meeting all sorts of eyes with his discoloured one. “Seems so.”

He felt those eyes on him now, paranoid of the stranger’s looks. Kihyun picked at the plastic lid, anxiety riddled. Usually he would pick up his phone and send Minhyuk a funny picture or meme by now to channel the awkwardness, but alas his phone was shattered. He had nothing to keep his attention busy with as he sat at the table with Hyunwoo, staring mindlessly at the middle of their table.

Despite the constant stares from others, Hyunwoo fixed his eyes on Kihyun. There it was again, that calming energy emitted by his omega pheromone, even though he himself looked nervous, scared, and anxious; he was trying his best to not show it. Regardless, his omega pheromones eased Hyunwoo’s instinctive alpha inclination to snap at all the diners. But also, the omega’s energy was enticing as it lulled Hyunwoo’s mind into a serene, sexual fantasy where all he saw was Kihyun’s handsome face moaning and needy like it was just hours ago.

Lost in his reverie, Hyunwoo hadn’t realize he’d been very obviously staring at Kihyun. Clenching his jaw, he took another sip of his Coke as their order number was called. He stood up and walked to the counter to retrieve their meals. Just before the alpha stood up, Kihyun pondered if he felt Hyunwoo’s eyes on him as well, or if he was actually that paranoid.

Was he really worth staring at? The thought plagued his mind whilst he leaned over, back hunched as he sipped the cool carbonated beverage uncomfortably.
When Hyunwoo returned with their orders, he placed the large tray on the tabletop before taking his seat. He stared at the Big Mac in the tiny cardboard box it came in. When did they start selling them like that? What happened to wrapping everything in logoed parchment paper? Nevertheless, he opened the box and plucked the hamburger from it. When he took a bite, his eyes brows perked. *Whoa,* so that’s what special sauce tasted like? McDonalds really perfected the formula over the years because this no longer tasted like the cardboard it was served in.

Kihyun moved his cup to the side and picked up the chicken nuggets, set them aside and then grabbed his own Big Mac box. He pulled the lid open and grasped his medium fries where he dumped them into the top of the lid like a pro—something Minhyuk taught him when they forgot to grab groceries and fast food was their only option.

“Ah, I forgot ketchup. Do you want any?” Kihyun lifted himself from his seat, eyes on the alpha for his answer.

Their interactions were strange, as they should be given their *relationship* to one another, but the bits of polite conversation randomly peppered between long bouts of awkward silence made Hyunwoo feel some type of way. Usually, he controlled every aspect of his interpersonal relations. He was excellent at reading people and even better at manipulating them, but this was the first time since his early twenties that his alpha biology usurped his logic so dramatically.

Even as Kihyun stood from his seat, Hyunwoo wanted to pounce on him and fuck him in the middle of the dining area.

“Uh, sure,” the alpha replied.

Kihyun gave a small nod in acknowledgment, then he walked back towards the fountains. His arms stretched out to the collect of small paper cups and pulled two out before pumped the ketchup in both. He tried to ignore the stares; he felt so *judged.* He picked up the tiny cups and carried them back to the table, setting one in front of Hyunwoo before sitting down.

“Thanks,” Hyunwoo said. He continued eating his Big Mac, occasionally dipping the fries into the ketchup Kihyun retrieved and occasionally dunking a chicken nugget into the sweet and sour sauce—*which,* by the way, was another new item added to the fast food restaurant’s menu since his last experience there.

For the most part, they ate in silence. Intermittently, the alpha eyed the Lamborghini to make sure some young punks didn’t vandalize or otherwise fuck with his vehicle.

The alpha also noted the strange behavior the grouchy omega manager displayed; phone pinned between his ear and his shoulder, arms crossed, eyes bulging and creepy as he stared Hyunwoo down. *He was definitely up to something…*

Kihyun silently nibbled on his food and occasionally sipped his root beer. He wasn’t in any hurry but by the look on Hyunwoo’s face he was starting to think otherwise.

“What?” He asked softly, trying to pinpoint the exact expression Hyunwoo was giving. He and the alpha were still strangers, so Kihyun was unfamiliar with most of the older man’s expressions. Were they being watched? Was Hyunwoo just being skeptical? Shit, he didn’t know what to do.

Hyunwoo ignored the omega’s question as he studied the manager’s weird behavior patterns. Once the manager noticed the alpha was eyeing him, the quickly whirled around. It was then Hyunwoo saw the tremble in the manager’s hand as he held the phone. Fuck, something was *happening.*
He averted his stare outside, noticing his underlings exiting their vehicle as flashes of red and blue illuminated the dark McDonalds parking lot. The loud cry of police sirens jarred everyone from their meal, and again all eyes were on Hyunwoo and the omega. The alpha grit his teeth.

_Fuck these people and their social profiling._

“Get up, we’re leaving,” Hyunwoo spoke it calmly so as to not panic Kihyun, but he swiftly rose from his seat and grabbed the omega by his bicep. Kihyun dropped his chicken nugget and shot the other male a concerned look. Knowing the omega would probably panic at the alpha’s sudden hold on him, he shot the boy a glare that implied now was not the time to protest. The omega didn’t question it and rose to his feet.

When Kihyun saw the flashing out the corner of his eye, he turned his head, heart racing.

_Were they here for Hyunwoo?!_

Hyunwoo’s cell phone rang in his pocket and he already knew who the caller was. An underling, no doubt warning Boss of the _problem_ the piece of shit manager put _everyone_ in.

As more police car turned into the parking lot, Hyunwoo charged towards the front of the restaurant, dragging Kihyun behind him. Snarling, he said, “Your karma will come back to you, _motherfucker._”

The manager shivered at the baritone of Hyunwoo’s alpha tone, eyes wide and frantic as they watched Hyunwoo flee the establishment with Kihyun.

Though his underlings were handling the cops as best they could, but without an actual reason the cops wouldn’t fuss with them too long before realizing the person of interest, _Yoo Kihyun_, was being toted away by known gangster Son Hyunwoo.

“_Get in the fucking car, _” Hyunwoo growled, anger welling up inside of him at their current predicament.

Kihyun rushed to the vehicle, pulling the door open and wedging himself inside the lime green car as fast as he could, panicky and terrified.
He knew going out into public with Kihyun was a gamble, but figuring the locations they visited at such a late hour, he didn’t think Kihyun would be identified by a fucking McDonalds employee…

How did the manager identify Kihyun? He had to know what, who to look for… Fucking hell, did that meddling beta Kihyun knew get the police involved?

“That fucking beta. He told the fucking police! I’ll fucking kill him…” Hyunwoo growled as he got into the Lamborghini, slamming shut the door and revving the engine with a fierce roar.

The cab of the vehicle saturated with spicy bergamont almost instantaneously. Watching from the rearview mirror, Hyunwoo noticed that the few policeman distracted by his underlings heard the engine start, and they immediately pushed through the pack of betas as they reached for their gun holsters. Without the okay to act from Mr. Son, the betas kept arguing instead of drawing their own weapons.

Violent conflict with the police would sever their taboo arrangement of turning a blind eye and would probably raise questions regarding illegal acquisition of firearms. Their tight formation and skilled aim at Hyunwoo and Kihyun from across the parking lot implied their compliance to the law to which they abided and to the citizens they were sworn to protect, but the hesitation in pulling the trigger spoke volumes—they didn’t want conflict with Son Hyunwoo, or, by extension, the main syndicate branch in Seoul. Firing at Hyunwoo meant initiating a war with the jo-pok. Nonetheless, they had a lawful reputation to uphold and were no doubt going to pose a challenge.

Kihyun didn’t understand what was going on. Alpha pheromones wafted around the car, putting him more on edge- heart rate accelerating and every nerve stimulated. God, he was filled with emotions he had never felt before. He was terrified.

“You gonna fucking say anything? Did you tell your friend to contact the fucking pigs?” Hyunwoo snapped as he shifted the car into reverse and slammed the gas pedal, forcing the vehicle back abruptly with a loud screech of tires against crumbling asphalt. His body jerked forward like a mini whiplash as he moved the gear shift into first, second gear, rapidly picking up speed as he moved into third. “Huh? You were in on all this shit, weren’t you?”

Of course the alpha assumed Kihyun contacted someone. “How could I? You smashed my phone, remember?”

Hyunwoo clipped the front left tire on a curb as he maneuvered a turn at an intersection, nearly crashing into left-turning traffic with the right of way. Kihyun pressed the flat of his hand against the dashboard to keep himself grounded as best he could in the speeding car. The vehicle narrowly missed collision, warning a crescendo of horns from irked drivers. Hot on the alpha’s trail were two cop cars.

“I’ll fucking murder him,” Hyunwoo growled under his breath as he skillfully swerved around various cars on the street. The fucking beta… what was his name? Minhyuk? The beta Kihyun spoke so sweetly to? He must mean a lot to the omega. They clearly had some sort of relationship beyond what a stranger would presume. They must’ve conspired against him...

Dammit, he knew that week of lag time between his underlings losing track of the omega was gonna fuck him over. Such sloppy work. Hyunwoo would be damned if a goddamn beta was gonna show a dominant alpha like him up.
Kihyun went into full panic mode as he started questioning his situation. What would happen if they were caught? Would he obtain freedom? Would he go to jail for being affiliated with Hyunwoo?! What if he got shot? Damn, it was so dark out, how did the alpha know where to go? He felt his chest tighten and breathing pick up as he watched the cops in the passenger mirror.

Hyunwoo sharply twisted down a less traffic congested street with the cops mimicking his every turn. Their obnoxiously vibrant lights flashed in the rearview mirror of the Lamborghini. Squinting his eyes, the alpha was finally able to discern that his underlings were in hot pursuit of the police vehicles, acting as effective distractions.

A damn Lamborghini was a luxury car, not a performance car; the car itself would never outlast the V8 engine of a police Charger. Hyunwoo’s only option was to complicate the chase by adding distracting variables. That, and he had an advantage the Gwangju police thought they had. He knew this city better than anyone could ever hope to. He knew the good, the bad, the ugly—every twist and turn, every alleyway, every building, every pothole, everything. He owned these streets, and he had more authority than the law. His strategy? Outwit, not outrun.

In the rearview mirror he watched his underlings advance on one of the police vehicles by charging into the back of it. The cop car didn’t stray too far off course, though judging by the swirl of grey smoke, the back right tire was failing; control of the wheel was difficult when steering was jerky. The alpha smirked to himself knowing the front grill of the vehicle the betas drove was reinforced metal, just like the cop car.

Kihyun turned and glanced behind him as he watched the scene unfold with scared eyes. Was the alpha crazy or just that confident messing with the police like that? Who was in the other black car? Where they involved too? Couldn’t be Hyunwoo’s beta underlings, could they? What would happen to them? Where were they going? Kihyun was drowning in ‘what ifs,’ and it made him panic more.

Citizen vehicles divided on either side of the street, clearing the way for the high speed chase in the interest of their own safety by not being involved as best they could. Some people exited their cars and flocked to the sidewalk to gawk at the scene, cupping their hands over their eyes to block out the flash of red and blue; other people documented the chase using the video function of their cellphones, going so far as to chase the cars as they sped by.

 Nonetheless, the betas continued to strike, slowly down just enough to gain distance from the second police vehicle before rapidly accelerating and crashing into the back again, wreaking havoc on the structural integrity of the car and wearing down that smoking tire. The intention wasn’t to destroy either vehicle—that was impossible since police vehicles were a sturdier, stronger build than a common vehicle—but to provoke and distract attention away from Hyunwoo. So far, it proved effective, as Hyunwoo focused solely on losing the police car closing the distance behind him.

“Holy shit!” Kihyun shouted, tense and shaky in his seat. He was scared, his heartbeat was loud in his ears; with every sudden noise he jumped in his seat.

A mantra played in his head as he told himself he was okay, that everything would be fine, that he would be safe.

As Hyunwoo turned a tight corner, tires skidding and squealing as the vehicle’s inertia caused them to drift, the cop behind him seized the opportunity to ram into the back of the Lamborghini with practiced skill. The sound of car scraping against car was toe-curling. The alpha lurched forward from the harsh impact, whiplash from the seat belt rattling his bones. Kihyun’s head jerked forward and back from the sudden clash, head bouncing off the headrest of his seat. He
curled a hand around the back of his neck, where he feared he might have pulled something.

“Fuck!” Hyunwoo growled, correcting the car after the strike knocked it off course. The back tire rapidly lost pressure, ruining the smooth control the vehicle previously displayed. Shit, this vehicle was not meant for this type of impact. The alpha debated pulling his gun from his hip holster and telling Kihyun to grab the wheel while he hung out the window and opened fire, but he didn’t trust Kihyun to operate the car effectively and his handgun wasn’t suitable at long range.

If only Kihyun could be more useful, maybe they could lose the cops easier, quicker. *Wait, what was he thinking?* He figured that was just the adrenaline talking… But shit, they really needed to get out of the thick of action before more cops showed up.

At an intersection, the flow of traffic was perpendicular to theirs, meaning they were going to crash directly into a bumper to bumper jam of distressed drivers. And fuck, there was no way in hell was he going to stop at the red light in a police chase to accommodate moronic drivers. Either they’d get the memo and move the fuck out of the way, or he was slamming into them like bowling pins.

Mentally, Kihyun screamed at Hyunwoo, but on the outside he bit his lip and gripped the seat like a lifeline. Oh lord, today was the day he’d die! The omega watched the outside world blur, eyes darting to the vehicles around them. The closer to the intersection they drove, the more panicked drivers became by haphazardly tapping their brakes, swerving about wildly, mashing their horns, or, best case scenario, actually accelerating away from the oncoming danger. Though tense, Hyunwoo couldn’t help but snicker; it never ceased to amaze him how naive the average person was to vehicular peril and traffic accidents. It was simple—*get the fuck out of the way.*

Seeing his opportunity, albeit extremely risky and tight, Hyunwoo blazed through a narrow opening of cars too stupid to move to safety, scratching the side of one and cleaving the passenger mirror off another with a loud thwack. The omega jerked away from the window when he heard a loud noise from somewhere way too close for comfort.

Holy fuck!

He was going to be sick!

Anxiety and fear mixed with adrenaline and nausea—he felt the fast food roll in his stomach. Did the cop have the balls to intentionally put civilian lives at risk? Hyunwoo certainly did.

The alpha watched in his rearview mirror as the police vehicle slammed the brakes so abruptly the car lost control and spun out, whipping about wildly in erratic circular patterns and colliding into a public transit bus too long and cumbersome to move to safety. Almost instantaneously, both vehicles erupted into hot, orange flames. People who fled from their cars to avoid danger congregated around the fire, some sobbing and other valiantly climbing into the tipped over bus to rescue any passengers who didn’t have the chance to evacuate before collision.

Fiery light burned behind them as Kihyun looked on in horror. He felt awful. He wanted to go back and check if civilians were okay, but Hyunwoo sped on without so much as a second glance. The omega only hoped nobody was seriously hurt, or worse, *killed.* The battered, lime green Lamborghini vanished down another small street before any more of the catastrophic scene could be witnessed.

Adrenaline coursed through Kihyun, the rush of everything still clinging to his nerves. Panting, he loosened his grip on the seat and relaxed as best he could. How Hyunwoo managed to look so unaffected was terrifying and fascinating.

Down a tight, dark alleyway, Hyunwoo flipped off his headlights, encasing them in pitch darkness. The hum of the motor vibrated in the alley, but otherwise they seemed in conspicuous. Off in the near distance, police and ambulance sirens wailed loudly amidst honking traffic and police radios. Even though emergency personnel attention was focused on the crash, Hyunwoo and Kihyun
would still have to abandon the Lamborghini if they didn’t want to get caught.

After a long pause to catch his breath and collect himself from his adrenaline high, the alpha laughed, his ego inflated larger than the moon at having outwitted the cops. Sure, he gambled with civilian lives, but he never claimed to be a saint.

_Goddamn, he was the man!_

Kihyun’s attention was on Hyunwoo as he watched the man’s shadow in the dark. His heart raced — this night was far from any humdrum routine he was used to. Was this why Hyunwoo lead the life he did? For the thrill and excitement of a chase? To feel the adrenaline and bask in the victory of outsmarting the law?

After a few moments of celebration, the alpha grabbed his phone from his back pocket and dialed, placing the phone to his ear as he waited through the dial tone. “Pick us up at the docks,” he said before promptly ending the call and slipping pocket in his pocket once more.

Relaxing into the driver’s seat, he sighed and studied Kihyun’s demeanor in his peripheral. Obviously, the boy wasn’t anticipating an encounter with the police judging by how shaken he was, which eliminated the theory that he conspired with that beta Minhyuk. Though, there was no doubt Minhyuk was behind this—and he was going to get his, just as Hyunwoo threatened; there would be no mercy until the alpha’s hands were stained red with victory.

“Give it a few minutes until the sirens die down, then we’re footing it.”

Kihyun sighed but nodded obediently. Sure, he was glad they weren’t being chased anymore, but it was unknown to him why they were being chased in the first place. What the alpha said... did Minhyuk call the cops? Was his best friend really that adamant about helping that he tipped off the police?

It occurred to Kihyun that Minhyuk didn’t even know what Hyunwoo looked like, so if his friend did get in contact with the police he would have only known Kihyun’s description. Was Hyunwoo’s reputation so grand that the cops automatically assumed he was involved in Kihyun’s kidnapping? News must’ve travelled fast because a stranger at a fast food joint recognized him and tipped off the police. So… they were chased because of Kihyun? The omega sighed again, thoughts coursing through his mind like an angry river.

Hyunwoo snarled, his adrenaline rush simmering into scathing anger as he finally had time to think about what just happened.

He hit the leather steering wheel with his palm, shouting, “Motherfucker!” Spiced citrus was pungent in the vehicle—no calming omega pheromones would reel him out of his mindset this time. “Your good for nothing friend told the cops... probably filed you as a fucking missing person. I bet tomorrow your face will be plastered on every street corner... How the fuck else did that McDonald’s manager know what to look for?” Hyunwoo looked Kihyun dead in the eyes. “Your friend Minhyuk is the reason you have to be confined to my penthouse from now on. He took your freedom away, remember that.”

Kihyun flinched at the alpha’s outburst. _No_, the omega’s freedom was taken away by Hyunwoo, not Minhyuk. The alpha really was egotistical to the point of perceived faultlessness. He huffed and turned away; if he spoke his mind again he’d probably catch another black eye.

“The truth hurts,” Hyunwoo added, now staring at the back of Kihyun’s head. “I warned him not to get involved… Now I have to waste time and resources making sure he’s not a problem anymore.
What a fucking pest.”

The alpha snickered to himself again, as if the idea of murdering yet another person brought him the purest joy. It felt good, though, to revert back to dangerous thinking, to regarding human lives as disposable pawns, to not being controlled by the pacifying pheromones of a helpless, kindhearted, weak omega like Kihyun. Yeah, Hyunwoo was a man of flighty, hormone-driven moods, but he felt each and every one of them intensely and purely.

Kihyun’s hand curled into a fist on his lap, not acknowledging anything the asshole alpha said. But with the adrenaline still flowing through him, he needed to find a way to channel it because just getting more pissed off at Hyunwoo wasn’t helping. His maraschino cherry scent wafted through the small space, strong but with no real purpose other than to let his own sense of adrenaline known.

Hyunwoo laughed at Kihyun’s passive, cowardly omega reaction. Of course a stupid omega couldn’t take responsibility or accountability for anything. Seems they couldn’t be grateful either. They were in this mess because of that nosy beta, and Kihyun refused to acknowledge that simple truth.

Kihyun’s teeth clenched behind his lips and his legs spread as he leaned back into his seat, mimicking Hyunwoo’s wide, prideful body language. Every time the alpha spoke, Kihyun grew more agitated. Fuck, he was so damn sick of Hyunwoo after just one day.

“What’s the matter? Cat got your tongue?” The alpha snarled, noticing the tense shift in the omega’s temperament. Was he finally provoking him to do something? Good, maybe Kihyun was more than just a pretty face afterall. Maybe he could aggravate the omega enough to bring forth that flicker of personality that came out after they fucked. “I’m talking to you, omega. What do you have to say for yourself? What do you have to say about that piece of shit Minhyuk?”

What did the fuck did Hyunwoo know? Nothing! It was absolutely uncalled for to call Kihyun’s friend a piece of shit. This man needed to learn a fucking lesson.

Kihyun turned to the door, pressed the unlock button, and opened the door without a word. The car door lifted up and the omega ducked his head as he exited the car, too impatient to wait for it to open all the way. Once out, he pushed it closed and rounded the car in a huff. God, he had never been this mad in his entire life. He gripped the driver’s door and opened it, all the while glaring with a clenched fist as the door revealed the pompous alpha driver.

“Get out,” Kihyun demanded, voice as sour as his feelings for Hyunwoo.

Hyunwoo all but cackled when the omega left the vehicle in an angry rage. He figured the boy would run away, maybe flag down a police officer and rat out the alpha. Freedom was just outside the dark alleyway, and Kihyun could’ve made the conscientious decision to escape his captor. But he didn’t. Instead, he allowed an alpha provoke him enough to seek retribution and avenge his beloved friend’s name and honor by physically retaliating? Hyunwoo smirked.

Omegas were so easily manipulated.

“Get out? What are you gonna do? Beat me up? Fuck, I’m so scared.” The alpha continued to instigate Kihyun, adding theatrical voice inflections to play up the offensive nature of his words. “You want me out? What are you gonna fucking do to get me out?”

God damn this fucking alpha and that proud, unflawed ego he was so certain of. That sarcastic tone was infuriating. Kihyun had enough. He leaned over, torso halfway in the car and face a few inches
from Hyunwoo’s. He gripped the man by the shirt and pulled, trying to pry Hyunwoo out of the vehicle. “Get the fuck out. Now.”

Hyunwoo’s torso moved forward with each angry tug from Kihyun. He couldn’t help but be amused at the omega’s tenacity—it was kind of adorable, really. He liked this feisty side the omega was only now revealing to him in full. He always loved it when his prey fought back.

With a fanged smile, the alpha continued with the pulling motion on his shirt, stepping out of the car and onto the grimy, trash-littered alley floor. Hyunwoo stood tall, chest puffed and shoulders wide as he stared down at Kihyun with a looming, intimidating figure.

Cocking his head, he taunted Kihyun with a low whisper, “Now what, omega?”

Hyunwoo was intimidating, but Kihyun was too pissed off to care. Still gripping the shirt at the alpha’s chest, he used what power he had to shove Hyunwoo. The alpha slammed back into his Lamborghini, still feeling the imprint of Kihyun’s forceful shove on his sternum. Lacking strength and bite, the omega’s push was neither painful nor damaging, it just served as a symbol of how far the alpha had violated Kihyun’s patience.

“I’m fucking sick of your attitude. You know nothing about my life or my history with Minhyuk. You think you’re so high and fucking mighty on your high horse, belittling those lesser than you for your own sick, twisted games... using people and not giving a shit about the aftermath. Everything has to be about you, you sadistic freak.” The omega all but growled up at the alpha, shooting daggers with his eyes. “Talk all the smack you want about me—hell, take it all out on me—but you leave Minhyuk alone!” His voice was raising but he didn’t give a fuck. He wanted to let his rage all out.

Hyunwoo’s lips curled into a condescending fanged grin, he winked when the omega called him a sadistic freak. As much as Hyunwoo enjoyed the omega’s little show, the gangster in him remembered they were hiding out from the cops and needed to remain quiet and inconspicuous.

“Oh, I’ll take whatever I want to out on you, but right now you need to shut the fuck up.”

That grin and wink made Kihyun feel mocked; he was so fed up with feeling that way.

He released his hold on Hyunwoo’s shirt and stepped back, eyes narrowing the best they could with the swelling. “The fuck I will! Let them come!” he practically bellowed. “I’ll let every fucking person in this area know I’m with a fucking psycho piece of shit!”

Hyunwoo, too, narrowed his dark eyes at Kihyun. What a little shit. Just like the childish, spiteful omega brat he was, he did exactly the opposite of the alpha’s warning. Once again, that smart mouth was gonna land him in trouble so deep he couldn’t get out.

It was Hyunwoo’s turn to plant his large hands on Kihyun and roughly shove the boy back. He grit his teeth and stepped forward, shoving Kihyun again until the omega crashed into the dirty brick wall of a building unceremoniously with a pained gasp. Hyunwoo quickly closed in on the omega, pinning his lithe body to the wall with the length of the alpha’s big forearm. The pressure against Kihyun’s chest was heavy, enough to restrict the expansion of his diaphragm should the omega gasp for air or raise his voice again. Kihyun raised his hands to desperately grab Hyunwoo’s forearm on his chest.

Hyunwoo stared at the boy with a level of frustration not previously revealed to him. A nasty snarl on his face, he said, “Shut the fuck up if you know what’s good for you, omega.”
“Let go!” Kihyun yelled breathlessly.

Hyunwoo reflexively brought his hand up to silence the omega, hand cupping over his lips to muffle any noises. He drove his forearm harder into Kihyun’s chest to reinforce how serious he was. He shushed Kihyun right as a bright flash of light lit up the side of the alley immediately around the corner of where both them and the Lamborghini were hidden.

Fuck, did the cops find them? Fucking omega too was fucking loud... or was it their scents? Were the cops sniffing out the potent scent of a distressed omega?

No, couldn’t be that... Kihyun’s velvety sweet scent didn’t even permeate the small corner of the alley they hid in... But goddamn, there was another smell, a new, intoxicating omega scent that drove Hyunwoo wild. God, he could kiss him…

The hand over his mouth wasn’t surprising, but before the omega could bite the hand that silenced him, lights flashed in his peripheral vision and he froze. If he wanted to escape, now was his chance, but he could hardly move, hardly breathe thanks to Hyunwoo. Still, Kihyun writhed against the alpha, twisting his head back and forth as his tried to pry that large hand off his face. His protests of ‘get off’ and ‘fuck you’ were garbled.

The lights got brighter, more distracting, more nerve wrecking. The squeal of sirens droned in his ear like a gnat. Then, silence followed by the sound of a car door opening, footsteps on the ground, and a loud slam. Were they investigating the area? Shit, with all of Kihyun’s protesting, the cops surely would find them.

Hyunwoo had to act fast, impulsively, so he caved in to his desires and allowed himself to be swayed by Kihyun’s new, arousing scent. Urgency and lust: the perfect storm. Hyunwoo moved his hand from Kihyun’s mouth and replaced it with his own lips, swallowing every muffled protest from the omega’s mouth.

And fuck, it was good, so good, but Kihyun would not succumb, not be affected by a mere kiss.

He did what he could in his current predicament—he bit down on Hyunwoo’s bottom lip. He clamped down hard, too, hoping his sharp omega canines would draw blood.

Hyunwoo’s initial reaction was to push Kihyun away as the taste of copper bathed his taste buds. The pain came second as his bottom lip throbbed from the bite. It didn’t take long for the alpha to realize the little bastard was trying to fend him off.

Hyunwoo grunted and reflexively forced his forearm harder into Kihyun’s chest, enough to fully restrict full lung capacity, enough to deprive the boy of any oxygen at all. His other hand grasped onto Kihyun’s throat, squeezing the sides of his neck instead of the front in an effort to pinch blood flow from his carotid arteries. Restricted blood flow to the head would eventually made the omega lightheaded and compliant.

Maybe then the boy would let go of Hyunwoo’s lip.

Kihyun wheezed as more of his air supply was cut off. He was still breathing, but the pressure was insurmountable. The taste of Hyunwoo’s blood in his mouth fuelled his courage, but he didn’t have the strength or energy. The more he waited, the more he realized the alpha wasn’t going to let him go. His head spun, dizzy from lack of oxygen; he had to give in before he’d pass out. Who knew what twisted things Hyunwoo would do to his unconscious body.

Kihyun released Hyunwoo’s lip, oddly finding his lightheadedness tantalizing, almost... *euphoric.*
For some strange reason, the yellow glow of police flashlights now only flashed intermittently in the alleyway Hyunwoo, Kihyun, and the Lamborghini were hiding in. So the cops really had no idea where they were, they were simply investigating any dark alley they could in a pitiful attempt to find the missing omega, Kihyun. *Good.*

Hyunwoo exhaled softly when his lip was released and deeply inhaled the sweet aroma of the now complacent omega. Kihyun almost dropped to his knees when he was free from the alpha’s chokehold, air rushing back to his lungs as he coughed. Hyunwoo looked over the boy with something akin to irritated arousal—he wanted to punch Kihyun in that smart mouth, but he also wanted to kiss that mouth again, over and over, savoring the taste of his own blood off the omega’s lips.

He pulled away from Kihyun, drinking in his small frame and pouty, huffy face. Fuck... Alpha instincts taking over, he stepped towards the omega once more, lacing his calloused fingers through the boy’s silver locks and coercing him to his knees on the dirty ground, his face pushed inches away from Hyunwoo’s growing crotch. “Know your place, omega.”

The fuzziness in Kihyun’s head dispersed to make room for the realization that Hyunwoo’s hand was in his hair, and that his knees felt cold on the ground on the early morning Gwangju air. Kihyun raised his hands up and pushed his palms against Hyunwoo’s thighs, trying once more to evade the alpha but the hand tangled in his hair proved difficult to fight.

“Let go!” Kihyun shouted again, voice raspy.

To muffle Kihyun, Hyunwoo shoved the boy’s face into his crotch, inwardly groaning at the visual of the omega forced to his knees looking up at Hyunwoo, face level with the alpha’s crotch. He resisted the urge to grind his semi-erection against Kihyun’s cheek, knowing fully well that doing so would trigger a release of strong alpha pheromone, which would unwittingly give away their location to any snooping, sniffing cops. But goddamn, Kihyun just looked so good, so pretty like this.

The hand in the omega’s hair tightened as Hyunwoo licked his blood off his swollen bottom lip. “Be a good boy and do as you’re told.”

Hell hath no wrath like the burning hatred coiling inside the omega as he glared up at Hyunwoo. The pressure against his cheek was definitely that demented man’s cock. Ugh, of course the alpha would get off to something like this, forcing someone to do what they didn’t want to do…

But fuck, that alpha musk... that earthy scent of bergamot and citrus mixed with the coppery scent of Hyunwoo’s blood. Kihyun couldn’t explain what it was doing to him, but on the outside he wanted to be far away from Hyunwoo. The pull of his hair made him whimper softly, though he continued to push at Hyunwoo’s thighs.

“Where’d all that anger go? Weren’t you gonna teach me a lesson? Beat me up?” Hyunwoo taunted in a low whisper, as if part of the fun in humiliating Kihyun was for the cops to actually discover them. An alpha’s cock in his mouth, what a way to be found. Better yet, *enjoying* a cock in his mouth when the flashlights shined upon his flushed face.

With one hand, Hyunwoo unbuckled his belt just enough to get at the fly of his pants. After unzipping his fly, the shape of his dick was easily seen beneath his boxer-briefs, the same blue pair he wore when Kihyun stitched the alpha’s wounds in the guest bathroom.

“Look at you now, omega, whimpering on your knees like the little bitch you are.”
Kihyun shuddered at the sound of the zipper—oh god no, Hyunwoo wasn’t actually going to make him suck him off, was he? *Fuck no!* Kihyun pushed his palms against Hyunwoo’s hips and tried to scurry away from the alpha, omega bitch or not he did not want to pleasure the other man tonight.

He grunted as he jerked, but his movement was again restrained by the hold in his hair. “Fucking let go!” he demanded, disregarding his biological omega urges as long as he could.

Perhaps it was the desperate squirming, but Hyunwoo was growing harder with each passing second. Something about dubious consent really struck his fancy, or maybe it was Kihyun’s conflicted facial expressions of simultaneous protest and yearning.

The alpha knew the boy hated him, but he also knew the omega biologically craved the rough, authoritative touch of an alpha like Hyunwoo. He knew that to be true because Kihyun didn’t bolt to freedom at the several opportunities presented to him throughout the evening; the shopping and dining in public, it was all a test to gauge just how tightly he had Kihyun wrapped around his finger. The police chase was unplanned, though the boy’s acquiescence was a welcomed surprise.

“Fuck, you look good like this, pet.”

Kihyun growled at Hyunwoo, hands balled into fists and pounding on the alpha’s thighs as hard as he could. “Let go, you fucker,” he hissed, the strain on his head starting to give him a headache.

His biology fought him, wanting him to give in, but he’d fight it as long as he could.

Hyunwoo rubbed himself through the fabric of his undergarments, relishing the moment. If the police were still searching the area, he didn’t care. Most of their efforts were focused on ambulatory care of innocent civilian lives harmed by a police officer anyway. Families would probably sue the city! Such a scandal would surely keep the legal system busy enough to redirect attention away from Hyunwoo and Kihyun. Hah, he got away with yet another crime.

He liked winning. He liked dominating. He liked exerting himself onto others.

Hyunwoo couldn’t stop himself from grinding into Kihyun’s cheek, the soft slope of the omega’s cheek silky against the hardness of his cock. His alpha musk was strong now and the aroma wafted into Kihyun’s nose, making him lower his defenses. How he hated being an omega sometimes… The bulge against his cheek tempted his feeble omega senses; he remembered that knot in his mouth, inside of him… and he gave in.

A satisfied smirk found its way upon Hyunwoo’s lips as he watched defeat sweep across Kihyun’s features.

“Fuck, I’m so hard,” Hyunwoo groaned in an alpha tone, knowing it got to Kihyun in all the right ways. “Suck it, pet. I want to see those pretty lips wrapped around my dick… C’mon, how about you put that smart mouth to better use.”

The omega sneered at Hyunwoo, yet as angry as he was he obliged—he couldn’t resist Hyunwoo’s authoritative alpha tone. The police were all but forgotten when Kihyun raised his hands and pulled Hyunwoo’s monster from its confines. The mere sight had Kihyun’s insides quivering with want, that savory smell had him salivating; he wanted to taste Hyunwoo again, needing that flavor imprinted on his tongue.

His fingers wrapped around the base as he stared at the thick cock in front of his lips. Even with the dull light around them, he could see veins bulging. Hyunwoo shivered at the warm contact, loving
how compliant the omega was as he did what he was told. The hunger in his eyes upon staring at
the alpha’s sizeable dick made Hyunwoo groan. Kihyun’s mouth opened, tongue poking out and
licking the beautiful tip. His inner omega keened. He sucked the tip, coating the fat head in saliva.
The hand in Kihyun’s hair tightened as the boy lapped at the alpha.

Damn, he knew exactly how to drive Hyunwoo crazy.

His sweet omega scent mixed with that new scent tried the alpha’s patience. Fuck, Hyunwoo
wanted to ram his dick in Kihyun’s throat, but the delicate tease of the omega’s shy, wandering
tongue was amazing. After a few moments, Kihyun’s mouth opened wider and engulfed the head,
lips curling around the head. He sucked, tongue swirling, pushing into the slit to quench his need to
taste more.

Hyunwoo groaned at the beautiful sight before him. Fuck, Kihyun was hot. God, he was so much
better like this than when he was bitching about everything. He closed his eyes, enjoying the warm,
wet pressure on his cock. Swept up in the sensation, the scents, the post-adrenaline high... it was all
so fucking good, so fucking—

Ring, ring~!

Hyunwoo’s cell phone vibrating in his back pocket ripped him from Cloud Nine. What the fuck? Who
the fuck? Keeping one hand in Kihyun’s silver locks, forcing the boy to keep his mouth on
his cock, the alpha retrieved the phone from his pocket and took the call.

“What?” He growled, hard lines in his otherwise handsome face softening as he listened.

Shit, they needed to be at the meeting place soon. He needed to stay on track and not be swayed by
omega wiles. But when Kihyun took Hyunwoo in until dick touched the back of his throat,
Hyunwoo’s determination faltered. Kihyun groaned at the strong taste of alpha on his tongue, and
Hyunwoo’s breathing hitched in his throat. Fuck, he didn’t want to stop, especially after how long
it took to get Kihyun compliant, but he had to.

The caller was one of his beta underlings in the black car that followed them calling from the
police station. Considered accomplices, they were taken in for questioning. Apparently, the police
were onto Hyunwoo and Kihyun’s location. Of course, betas of Gwangju’s tightest crime syndicate
were no snitches, so they tipped the cops off to a false location to grant Hyunwoo time. As such,
the alpha and omega needed to bail as soon as possible, and now Hyunwoo needed to destroy his
phone so the cops couldn’t track his location any more than they already likely were.

Hanging up, Hyunwoo threw the phone to the dirty asphalt and stomped on it.

With a heavy sigh, he reluctantly pulled Kihyun’s mouth off his cock. The hand in the omega’s
hair pulled, harshly yanking the boy to his feet and making him grunt at the rough treatment. Of
fucking course they had to leave, just when the omega had mentally gotten into the mood of giving
this asshole a blow job.

“We need to leave.” Hyunwoo stuffed himself back into his black jeans and zipped up, not
bothering with his belt since he only had one free hand at the moment. He dragged the omega the
short distance to the Lamborghini. The car was still unlocked, so he opened the vertical door and
tossed the omega a cold glance. “You fucking run, and I won’t think twice about shooting you.
The police will find your body dead in this alleyway, you got that?”

After a tense moment of reinforcing his threat with a pointed stare, the alpha released his hold on
the omega and reached into the car to fish out the shopping bags.
The threats, to say the least, were nothing new to Kihyun—he half expected them now every time he was in Hyunwoo’s presence. Fucking alpha. Kihyun collected saliva in his mouth, finding the lingering alpha taste in his mouth to be sour. He spat to his right away from Hyunwoo’s fancy ass shoes. The taste of alpha was the last thing he wanted now.

“Yeah, I got it...” Kihyun answered dully, unfazed by the glare. “Where... where are we going?”

“Away from here,” Hyunwoo replied, keeping it intentionally vague.

After pulling all the shopping bags from the backseat, he slammed shut the door and locked the vehicle. It pained him to abandon the car, especially knowing the police would use it as evidence to remove any suspicion from others and trace everything back to Hyunwoo.

He grabbed Kihyun by the arm and dragged him into the dark alley away from the lime green Lamborghini, the nosy flashlights, and the wail of an ambulance in the distance.
Kihyun didn’t know how long they had been walking.

Since leaving the dark alleyway where the alpha had forced him to do demeaning acts, Kihyun had receded into himself as a defense mechanism against the sadistic Son Hyunwoo. And, like the asshole he was, Hyunwoo addressed nothing even as his temper calmed, choosing instead to yank Kihyun like a freak on a leash down the dark alleyway instead of owning up to his fiendish coercion.

Dragged like a dog, Kihyun wasn’t too fond of the aggressive treatment, but he couldn’t run. No matter how badly he wanted to leave, no matter how much he longed to be free from Hyunwoo, he didn’t have the strength or skill—and maybe that wasn’t entirely true, but being in Hyunwoo’s presence triggered a mental relapse he had long since overcome, or so he thought.

He was paralyzed by his fear. Hyunwoo’s grip on his shirt collar was so strong, so unwavering - that Kihyun felt more and more powerless with each passing step.

Why was the alpha so quiet? Why did he say nothing? His silence was more terrifying to Kihyun than any verbal vulgarity, leaving his cruel imagination to fill in the nothingness.

Hyunwoo learned in his early gangster years not to dignify any action with a response unless deemed necessary. He didn’t owe the omega an explanation for his actions; he owed no one anything except the head of the jo-pok clan in Seoul.

He learned, too, that victims rationalized their predicaments in different ways regardless of provided explanation—sometimes, they mistook Hyunwoo’s abuse as affection, devotion.

They walked on until they reached a clearing. Passing a few large, wooden crates, they entered an industrial area smelling distinctly of saltwater. Kihyun’s feet were dragging from exhaustion now; he was so tired, too tired. How did Hyunwoo do it? God, the alpha was an inexhaustible powerhouse. All Kihyun wanted was to curl up in a ball and sleep; sleep and not wake up for years.

As he looked around, Kihyun noticed the sky was lightening as the early morning peeked through the somber sky. The blackness turned a grey-blue hue as puffy, saturated clouds dripped rain onto the asphalt, adding to his drowsiness.

Ahead he saw a familiar sight, something he hadn’t seen since his mid teens: the docks overlooking the Yeongsan River.

Why were they here of all places? For a meeting? A pick up?

His eyes widened in fright.

Was Hyunwoo finally going to kill him?

Unbeknownst to Kihyun, the Yeongsan River was where Hyunwoo conducted a lot of business. Though parts of it were open to public enjoyment, other parts were sectioned off for industrial use. The sector of industry was sealed off from the public by heavy metal cargo ships in the large, deep mouth of the river that led to the Yellow Sea. Water-stained wooden crates full of transport goods stacked tall in the gaps between moored ships. In other words, the industrial area was completely sectioned away from public eye. Though trade ships sailed at night, most industry workers were either onboard or stacking crates in the massive warehouse to the right of the loading docks.
By four, five o'clock in the morning, a steady fog rolled in that loomed low over the creaky wooden docks Hyunwoo and Kihyun were waiting on. The night had been long and exhausting, his wounds throbbed from lack of rest, but this was all part of the life he chose, so Hyunwoo would suffer through the bad and the good of it. Luckily, the docks weren’t terribly far from where the Lamborghini was hidden, so the walk wasn’t as awful as other conundrums Hyunwoo had found himself in.

In the brief time they waited, the heavy clouds rained upon them. Their pick-up arrived in a matte black Mercedes, just like the cars Hyunwoo’s other underlings drove, so Kihyun knew the Mercedes was there for them. His heart rate reduced a little upon realizing he in fact wasn’t about to be murdered.

The headlights dim in the rolling fog, a beta grunt exited the vehicle with a dome-shaped black umbrella with a curled, wooden handle.

“Morning, Boss,” the beta greeted. He respectively bowed to his superior before offering the alpha the umbrella with two hands in exchange for the many shopping bags in his hands. Hyunwoo took it, propping it over his and Kihyun’s heads as the two were escorted by the beta to the back of the Mercedes. The beta politely opened the door and stepped aside, motioning for Kihyun to enter first.

Raindrops pattered atop the umbrella, dripping down as large gobs of water before crashing onto Kihyun’s arm as he entered the vehicle. Once inside, he slumped into the seat on the far side of the car to make room for Hyunwoo. Legs spread out and head lolling against the closed window, he closed the alpha out best he could.

Hyunwoo slipped into the backseat after. Keeping the opened umbrella outside the door, he returned the umbrella to the beta underling still standing by the door. The beta took the object and closed Hyunwoo’s door, rounding the vehicle to the front passenger seat and hoping in. He closed the umbrella and shook off the excess water before slamming the door shut.

Inside the car, news reports of a major traffic accident involving a police vehicle and a public transit bus in a bustling intersection played on the radio.

{ ...According to recent reports, the police vehicle had been involved in a high speed chase in pursuit of a man thought to be involved in the kidnapping that took place just one night ago. Civilian interviews suggested jo-pok involvement in the abduction of Yoo Kihyun, some even name dropping notorious Gwangju gangster Son Hyunwoo... }  

Hyunwoo scoffed. The intel on the radio was beneficial but nonetheless aggravating. Instead, he opted to look out the window, raindrops racing across the fogged glass as the Mercedes drove out of the loading dock area.

Kihyun closed his eyes, blocking out the chatter on the radio. Instead, he focused on the calm rhythm of the rain. He loved the sound of rain, loved the smell of it too; it was so familiar, so comforting and nostalgic. It was almost like a lullaby, coaxing him to sleep, but for some reason he remained awake. Maybe it was the residual panic in his bones? Whatever the reason, he stared out the window, watching the world go by from yet another pane of glass—a sobering reminder of his very real imprisonment.

As they drove, Kihyun raised a hand and wiped away the fog on the glass to get a better view of the passing world. A yawn stretched his mouth open.

On the other side of the backseat, Hyunwoo licked the dried blood off his lips from when Kihyun
bit him. Just after the swelling finally subsided from his fist fight earlier in the day, his bottom lip was swollen yet again from another wound. Couldn’t say he didn’t have it coming, though; most things he did, he deserved the backslash for.

Sensing the alpha’s quiet tension, the beta in the front passenger seat changed the radio station to early morning talk radio, the type of stuff nine-to-fivers listened to in 8AM traffic jams. Aside from the chatter of pop culture trivia from 98.3FM, heavy quietness distanced Hyunwoo and Kihyun from the betas in the front seats.

The alpha was too tired to alter the tense mood. It wasn’t like he could improve upon it anyway. Any leeway he gained with the omega was shattered when his alpha temper took over after the car chase. He’d have to start again from scratch, but it’d have to wait until tomorrow.

Kihyun’s mouth opened wide from another yawn. Perhaps the pitter-patter of the rain culled his leftover nerves, and so his eyes fluttered shut. Though they were only closed for a split second, there, a short distance away, a familiar building stood out from the city canopy of tall buildings. He lifted from his seat, eyes fully open as the building came closer.

It was a hospital; the hospital. An ache surfaced inside the tired omega’s body—no, a desire, a want that he couldn’t follow through with, couldn’t sate. His eyes were glued to the roof of the building, the large red H symbol; it was so close but so far…

It occurred to Kihyun as he stared at the building that salvation had shown itself many times. His freedom could have been real on many occasions, and it gave him a feeling of dread. There were opportunities, there were openings where he could have ran or escaped, yet instead he stayed with Hyunwoo out of fear, anxiety, worry for his loved ones.

He could be at the hospital right now, with her, safe from the alpha... yet there he was sitting beside his captor like a coward.

Hyunwoo noticed an energy shift in Kihyun, so he turned to look at the boy. His eyes were glued to something outside. They weren’t anywhere near the suburbs, so it wasn’t the house he was abducted in. They weren’t even near the highway that lead to the suburbs, either. Was it a building? The hospital? Whatever it was, Kihyun gawked at it with more interest than Hyunwoo knew him to have.

When the car stopped at an intersection near the one the accident took place, Hyunwoo looked out his own window once more. Traffic was bumper-to-bumper, but it crawled by nevertheless. It seemed police had refocused their efforts to traffic control. Little did they know evidence was just beyond their line of sight; they were near where the Lamborghini was abandoned.

“17th and 30th,” Hyunwoo said suddenly, watching a policeman in a neon orange safety vest motion for their vehicle to move forward.

The beta in the passenger seat acknowledged his boss with a nod, as if knowing what that meant without further explanation. Then, the beta pulled a cell phone from his pocket and made a call—probably to inform another pack of underlings of the vehicle’s location for later retrieval, if the police hadn’t already discovered and seized it.

Hyunwoo watched the congestion outside with a careful eye, trying to detect any vital information he could to better understand the depth of the scene that unfolded nearly an hour and a half ago. The more he knew, the better his chances of swindling his way out of lawful consequences.

When the congestion cleared, the car assimilated into traffic, blending in like another vehicle
amidst a sea of laypeople caught in early morning rain showers.

Despite converted police efforts to control traffic, he knew others on the force still scoured the area looking for something flashy, something distinctly jo-pok, and their efforts were amiss, but Hyunwoo knew they’d rear their ugly heads sooner or later.


lashback

It happened when he was six months old, still too new to understand the world and all its sicknesses, horrors, wars, and famines. Too new to know when there was something wrong. Too new to understand why daddy left and never came back.

Why was it just him and mommy?

He grew to learn, his father had left because his mom was sick, unexpectedly stricken with a terminal illness. Father didn’t want to be with someone sick. Too expensive, too inconvenient, too oppressive for his life—he left because he didn’t want to take care of someone who was ill.

It wasn’t love after all.

To Kihyun, love was helping his mother knit scarves and sew small goods for money. Love was working late nights and getting just three hours of sleep before school. Love was cuddling his mother when she cried out of disdain for their situation. Love was being there for her when she needed to go to the hospital. Love was spending his earnings on medication instead of a new school bag.

His mother came first, for even in her fragile state she always managed to make Kihyun feel important. His mother was all he had. And that was love.

At nineteen, six months fresh out of high school, Kihyun fell in love. An alpha, naturally. The alpha, Dongho was his name, was handsome and smelled like the sweet scent of fresh baked goods, warm and palatable. The alpha courted Kihyun with red roses, drove him and his mom around because he was chivalrous and kind.

Kihyun was head over heels.

Of course, the happiness didn’t last.

A year passed. Still living with and caring for his sick mother in his childhood home, Kihyun’s sleepy eyes fluttered open to see the angry red of the LED clock read half past 2AM. A clamour sounded from somewhere in the small house. Sleepily, he got up and investigated the disturbance only to find it was his boyfriend, that sweet aroma of fresh baked goods tainted by the strong stench of alcohol.

That was the first night he struck Kihyun.

Dongho blamed his rut. He promised not to do it again, not after seeing the bruise on Kihyun’s cheek the next day.

It was a lie. He’d do it again.
The second time, Kihyun picked up the wrong beer from the convenience store. He was tossed to the floor and repeatedly kicked. Stupid omega.

Dongho promised not to do it again.

It was a lie. He’d do it again.

And the third time, he broke Kihyun’s arm. And just like the first two times, he told Kihyun he would stop.

It was a lie. He’d do it again. And again. And again.

It wasn’t love.

Summer passed. Half asleep on a newly autumn night, Kihyun rolled over to find the other half of the bed empty. It was nothing new to the young omega; Dongho always went out late and didn’t return for hours. Sometimes he’d come home smelling of other scents... other omega scents.

Kihyun got out of bed, choosing to empty his bladder before getting a glass of water. He wandered into the hallway from the bathroom, taking a left to finish his trek to the kitchen, yawning on his way. After retrieving a glass of water, the front door opened just as Kihyun passed into the living room. Dongho sauntered in, the reeking smell of booze emanated off his large body.

The omega watched in dissatisfaction, judging the alpha as he slammed the door. “Can you be any louder?” He hushed with a sassy tone, approaching the still-stumbling alpha as he lazily kicked off his shoes.

Said alpha turned to Kihyun, eyes dark and pupils blown. Kihyun didn’t have to ask why.

“The fuck you say to me?” The drunk man asked, body towering over the omega with an intimidating demeanor.

Kihyun, holding tightly onto the glass in his hand, gazed up at his boyfriend with a squeamish feeling. “My mom. She’s sleeping,” he clarified.

At first Kihyun thought Dongho would protect him, shield him from the dangers of the world. That was what alphas were supposed to do for omegas, at least... that was what all the textbooks in health class from high school taught him. He was a good little omega, too; he put so much hope and faith into Dongho, assuming and thinking he and his mother were safe with a strong and kind alpha to protect them.

He had never been so wrong in his life.

That fateful night months prior, the night Dongho struck the omega for the first time, Kihyun understood his knight in shining armor to be nothing like he portrayed himself to be. Their entire relationship was a lie up until that night. Ever since, Kihyun knew about his boyfriend’s drinking problem, knew how out of control Dongho became with liquor in his system; it turned him into something menacing, but Kihyun was too in love and too afraid to leave.

Maybe the alpha would change.

He wouldn’t.

Dongho was an alcoholic, and an abusive alpha who took no pity in harming those he thought were worth the assault. Kihyun was just easy prey.
The alpha scowled. “Like I give a fuck,” he sneered as he pushed Kihyun backwards with a powerful push on the omega’s shoulder.

Kihyun stumbled backwards. “Do you feel good when you push me around like that? Huh? Coming home piss drunk to push your boyfriend around like some... some doll? Fuck him over - like he’s just another whore who sells himself to you?”

Dongho struck him in the right temple with a hard fist, knocking Kihyun to the ground unceremoniously. Water splattered onto the hardwood floor, skittering around broken glass. The alpha gripped Kihyun’s shoulders, lifting the boy up like he weighed nothing and slamming the powerless omega against the wall with a loud thump. The alpha’s hand raised again as he slapped the side of Kihyun’s head again.

“You dare to talk back to me, you slut. You fucking bitch, you have no say in what I do. You’re a pathetic omega who needs an alpha, so act like one.”

Kihyun’s head pounded with pain from the impact, terrified his boyfriend would beat him to a pulp and leave him to drown in his own blood on the floor. He’d lost count at how many times he pondered if this time would be the last time.

In self defense, he lifted his leg and kicked the alpha’s crotch. Dongho hissed through his clenched, fanged teeth and dropped his arms to ensure his goods weren’t damaged.

Kihyun took the opportunity to flee, pushing off the floor in a flurry, but Dongho was quicker. He caught a fistful of Kihyun’s hair, yanking the omega back. The younger male cried out in pain, his body slammed against the cold wall once more, but this time there were large hands around his neck.

“Heh, think you’re clever? Think you can outsmart me? You little shit,” Dongho growled darkly, tightening his hands around Kihyun’s neck. “It’s time you knew your fucking place! You’re a worthless, pitiful fucktoy who only lives for an alpha’s enjoyment. All you’re good for is taking a knot and bearing pups.”

Kihyun struggled against his boyfriend, kicking and scratching at Dongho to get away. He couldn’t breathe. He felt the fight in his body rapidly diminish.

“Kihyun?” A soft voice echoed from the hallway, a sleepy yet angelic sound. Kihyun’s mother had awoken no doubt from the loud clamor of their quarrel. Goddamnit, his sick and weary mother got out of bed when she wasn’t supposed to.

Dongho’s grip loosened for a moment, giving Kihyun the chance to look down the hall to see his mom standing halfway out of the doorframe, her head poking out to look down the darkly lit hall. God, he hoped she couldn’t see anything.

“M-mom, it’s okay. Go back to bed—” Kihyun called with a tender but strained tone, not wanting to alarm the ill woman, or worse, put her in danger too.

But it was too late.

Dongho released his grip around Kihyun’s neck. He started to drunkenly wobble down the hallway towards the ill woman. “This damn house full of useless omegas,” he slurred. “Come here, bitch."

Kihyun rubbed his neck where his boyfriend choked him. He hacked loudly, wheezing as air rushed back into his lungs; his neck, littered in hand-shaped red marks, throbbed painfully. It was an all too familiar feeling, but he’d live through it.
When he saw the drunken alpha stumble towards his dear mother, a rage ignited inside him. No fear, no caution; he didn’t think twice. Kihyun sprinted after Dongho, jumping on his back and hooking his arms around the alpha’s neck tightly. He needed to protect his mother.

“Don’t you fucking dare!” he growled. “Lay a hand on her, and I’ll fucking kill you Dongho, I swear.”

Dongho had almost tumbled over forward when Kihyun jumped him, but even with failing motor skills he still managed to remain standing. “Get the fuck off me!” the alpha demanded, throwing Kihyun’s smaller body into the nearest the wall.

Kihyun crashed into the wall, then plummeted to the floor, making hard contact with the pantry door, the handle stabbing into his pelvic bone; he landed on his still-healing fractured arm, crying out in pain from the harsh impact.

Dongho snarled as he used his foot to push Kihyun onto his back. Straddling the omega, both hands curled around his neck again, he growled, “You’re such a fucking nuisance. If I knew you would be this much trouble, I wouldn’t have bothered to get into your pants. That’s all I ever wanted from you. Even if your attitude is shit, you still have a nice ass. Good for taking an alpha knot. Tsk, to think I almost knocked you up when your heat came… Hah, nobody is going to ever want you when I’m done with you, Kihyun.” He pressed down on the omega’s esophagus, cutting off Kihyun’s air supply. “And when I’m done with you, I’ll do worse things do your mom.”

The alpha’s words stung, ripping a hole in his fragile heart. To think he gave Dongho everything—his attention, his kindness, his affection, his time, his body, his love... All for this?

No. He wouldn’t die like this. He couldn’t.

Kihyun writhed on the cold floor, kicking his feet and desperately pushing off the floor to get Dongho off of him. Just when Kihyun thought it couldn’t get worse, the alpha pulled a pocket knife from his back pocket and pointed it at the omega’s neck. Kihyun’s teary eyes widened in horror at the weapon. A whimper emitted from deep inside as fear enveloped him again

“I wonder if you bleed as prettily as you cry?” The sadistic alpha hummed, running the blunt side of the knife across the omega’s cheekbone. “Mmm, where should I mark you, hm? Here?” He pointed the tip under Kihyun’s chin, slowly guiding the knife down to Kihyun’s chest. “Should I stab your heart?”

Kihyun froze upon seeing the sharp weapon. His vision spun. He’d never been stabbed before, nor sliced nor cut nor even in the presence of a knife in this regard. His skin prickled in anticipation of what was to come. His spinning vision went blurry, and he felt lightheaded.

Before he blacked out, before the adrenaline pulled him into unconsciousness, Dongho was suddenly ripped off of him.

Kihyun gasped, hacking for air, and trying to gather his bearings as he rolled over and curled into a defensive position. In his periphery, he noticed red and blue light flashing.

Men in uniform were apprehending the crazed alpha, forcing him to the floor and cuffing the monster. Relief washed over Kihyun as he watched the man he once called his boyfriend, his lover, be served the justice he deserved many months ago.

Ms. Yoo approached her son, hysterical with worry as she kneeled beside her battered son.

Together they watched as Dongho was taken away, kicking and screaming and yelling but
ultimately powerless.

That was the last time Kihyun saw him.

Kihyun cried in his mother’s arms that night. Cried out of fear, cried from a broken heart, cried because he let an asshole like Dongho into his life, cried because he was so sure he would die, cried because he was so sure she’d die.

After that, Dongho was sentenced to life in prison for numerous violations of the law. And, after the scars, bruises and broken bones healed, Kihyun’s mother became significantly worse. She was put in long term care facility permanently, and Kihyun was forced to sell the house he grew up in.

He visited his mother every day, for hours on end if he could. He even sought employment at the hospital just to be near her more frequently. They didn’t hire him, of course, because he didn’t have any worthy credentials. But when he finally did find employment, he found a listing online seeking a roommate to split rent for a small apartment.

That was when he moved in with a blond beta named Minhyuk who showed him more kindness than any man ever had in his entire life.

They grew close, Kihyun and Minhyuk. Minhyuk’s warm presence offered Kihyun a calm, empathetic energy that soothed and healed his damaged past. It was good. Those three years with the beta had been the best of Kihyun’s short life.

Then one day in the mail he received an important notice in an embossed envelope… His uncle had passed away.

End Flashback

It had been a week since the wild police chase.

One week since the awkward car ride back to Hyunwoo’s penthouse.

One week and one day since Kihyun was abducted from his uncle’s home.

The entire week, the omega was kept under strict lockdown and 24 hour surveillance. He was confined to the penthouse by Hyunwoo’s orders, banned from venturing outside the grounds and banned from outside contact with his loved ones. Hyunwoo’s sketchy underlings and doting house servants were the only company the omega had.

As such, Kihyun always felt eyes on him, staring at him as obscenely as they wanted to, undressing the trapped omega with their strong gaze, no doubt using his vulnerability to feed their twisted minds. They never dared touch him, though. He belonged to Hyunwoo, and the alpha wasn’t one to be messed with when someone touched what was his.

Too distraught and depressed from the violation of his privacy and autonomy, Kihyun took to the closest thing that gave him actual, real comfort: alcohol. Alcohol helped him cope with his situation in unexpected ways, clouding the myriad of emotions inside him. Combined with his recent trauma, intoxication helped him compartmentalize his entrapment. Analyzing each variable, piece by piece, Kihyun came to understand his situation as an opportunity.
He wasn’t exactly a prisoner, was he? Hyunwoo was heavily involved with the jo-pok, but deep inside Kihyun figured the alpha was just keeping him safe from higher ranked members of the main branch. Surely, if they knew about Kihyun’s debt then they would have sent hitmen more dangerous than Hyunwoo, right?

_It all made sense now._

Hyunwoo was protecting him from the evil outside. Why didn’t he see that before? The nasty attitude was just for show. Hyunwoo really did care about him in his own way.

The alpha wasn’t as heartless as Kihyun had originally thought.

Every time Hyunwoo barged into the penthouse bleeding and huffing from another alley brawl, he sought Kihyun. Anytime he extorted, embezzled, or laundered money through his multitudinous outlets scattered about Gwangju, riding the coattails of his success, he sought Kihyun. He used the boy repeatedly for sex—an arrangement they _agreed_ upon, regardless of whether Kihyun was of sound comprehension to agree upon such a demented contract.

At some point, the resistance to the alpha’s advances diminished. In fact, Kihyun anticipated them, craved them. He was Hyunwoo’s, a title that somehow gave him a sense of satisfaction and belonging. Hyunwoo was protecting him, after all, and he was paying his uncle’s debt at the same time.

He was _finally_ living the proper life of an omega; in union with an alpha with traditional values. His mother would be so happy.

+  

At the end of the long week, as with most other days prior, Kihyun loitered at the pool. Dressed in bathing suit shorts and a tank top, he basked under the sunlight in a chair sipping his seventh or eighth cherry blossom cocktail—specially mixed for him by the poolside bartender. Least to say, Kihyun was drunk.

The low hum of a radio somewhere sang English pop songs, and he tapped his finger on his thigh to the beat. Dark sunglasses shaded his eyes from afternoon sun rays. Condensation dribbled down the side of his chilled cherry blossom martini glass. It was hot, but the peaceful solitude was something he grew to enjoy about his days.

A pretty, foreign beta Kihyun remembered to be named Elise scurried across the pool deck to Kihyun. Shielding her eyes from the bright sun, she stopped at the omega’s right and stared down at him lounging on the lawn chair. Pulled from his booze-induced buzz, Kihyun rolled his head to face the maid. Through the tint of his sunglasses, he stared drunkenly at her.

Elise gulped upon realizing how inebriated the omega was—she knew she’d get an earful from the head servant about not monitoring him better. He was going to be a drunk mess at the dinner table.

Sighing, she said, “Um, sir, it is my responsibility to remind you that Mr. Son is hosting a clan dinner tonight…”

Clan dinners were very important. Not only did they grant a formal platform for the head of each branch to relay critical information from the main Seoul branch, but it maintained interpersonal relations within the individual branches themselves. An irreplaceable camaraderie came from breaking bread with fellow clan members.

“Perhaps you should consider holding off on more alcoholic beverages until dinnertime, Mr.
Yoo?” she said gently, not wanting to upset the omega but also trying to avoid trouble herself.

With the protrude of his lower lip, Kihyun glanced down at his half empty martini and set it on the table to his left. He supposed he would have to be on his best behavior for the dinner like a proper pet, right? Like a pet used only for the sole purpose of Hyunwoo’s entertainment, then hidden away in his room like the caged bird he was.

Kihyun sat up and eased onto his feet, lifting his sunglasses from his face. “Oh, my dear,” he started softly, “Just Kihyun is fine. Thank you for the reminder.”

The maid watched as Kihyun wobbled. She sighed nervously as she observed how incredibly intoxicated the omega was. In her periphery, she noticed the bartender shaking another martini in his silver shaker, and she turned and shook her head no at him. He understood and stopped.

Elise refocused her attention to Kihyun. “Sir, uh, Kihyun, why don’t we get you cleaned up for tonight’s dinner? It really is quite formal, after all. Mr. Son even sent us an outfit for you to wear tonight.”

With the taste of cherry blossom still on his lips, he was reminded of how the cool beverage helped cool the warmth of the sun on his body. Any drink would have sufficed, but he was a sucker for booze, loved the buzz it gave; it helped wash away his cares and worries. But ugh, he had been so hot the last couple of days. The pool water helped alleviate the heat a little, but it soon returned, hot like fire under his skin. Maybe it was just from the raging hangover he’d had for days.

“Fine, fine.” Kihyun acquiesced with slouched shoulders. “I’ll go clean up, shower—oh, can someone bring me a pack of smokes? I ran out.” He batted his eyelashes at the maid, pouting as cutely as his drunk self could manage.

“Please?”

Elise pursed her lips. The omega was sweet and tender-hearted, which was likely the reason he so easily became another one of Mr. Son’s brainwashed puppets, but his rewired interpretation of his predicament came with an unexpected personality trait: boldness.

Wanting a box of cigarettes was just one of the numerous items he requested on a daily basis. Elise was an empathetic woman who understood the need for creature comforts, and Kihyun really was a nice kid even if he was a drunk, so she gave the omega a smile and a nod.

“Right away, Kihyun. They will be on your bed when you return from the showers.” She glanced at the face of her wristwatch—oh dear, dinner was sooner than she thought. “Please do hurry, sir.”

“Thanks, Elise. You’re the best!” He gave the woman’s shoulder a few taps of appreciation before he sauntered away.

As one of the beta underlings who captured Yoo Kihyun that fateful night, Jaekwang took interest in the omega from the very start.

Omegas always appealed to him because of their sweet pheromones and passive personalities, and Kihyun was no different. Ever since Boss brought the omega into the house, the Jaekwang couldn’t tear his eyes off of him—like a drug, he was hooked from the very first time. In the first week, the sounds of pleasure and ecstasy vibrating through the penthouse had the beta pressing his ear against the wall, desperate to hear more of the omega’s sounds. Then, the pungent scent of their fucking saturated every room and hallway of the building, making the Jaekwang’s heart flutter and dick twitch. It was utter torture.
After the first week of the aggressive display of an alpha marking his territory as a warning to all others in the penthouse, the frequency of their fucking lessened. Concerns regarding the legal representation of the Gwangju jo-pok took precedence. Boss had to take care of loose ends in the city while keeping alert to police investigation. By midweek, Boss was called upon by the clan elder in Seoul and was away on a business trip for the better half of the week. As such, Kihyun was confined to the penthouse with only the attention of the help to keep him occupied.

Jaekwang saw this as an opportunity to introduce himself. On a number of occasions he tried to gather the gall, but failed. He had been caught staring at the omega on a number of occasions—sometimes by other beta staff, sometimes by Kihyun himself.

But tonight at the clan dinner would be different. Tonight he’d make his presence known. Tonight he wouldn’t look away when Kihyun caught him staring. Tonight, he’d take what he wanted.

When Jaekwang saw the drunken omega leave the pool and return to his guest suite, he followed behind inconspicuously, watching from a near yet hidden distance. As soon as Kihyun walked into the guest suite, the beta saw nothing.

In the large guest bathroom, Kihyun pulled off his tank top and tossed it on the pile with the other random clothes, undressed completely, and stepped into the shower. As the water cascaded down his body, he did what he always had in the shower: sang. His voice echoed in the large room. He loved to sing, but he never sang in front of anyone here. Only his mom, Minhyuk, and whoever came to the bar he sang at for extra cash had the pleasure of hearing him sing.

The omega missed it. Singing was one of his passions in life. He’d sing to his mom when she couldn’t sleep. He’d sing to Minhyuk when the beta was stressed. He sang to relieve his own anxiety. And he would never give it up, regardless if the maids heard him or not.

Against the outside bedroom wall, he talked himself out of leaving during the duration of Kihyun’s long shower. He could’ve swore he heard singing, too—was it coming from the guest bathroom? Jaekwang tensed. He couldn’t back out now. His heart raced when he heard the omega exit the shower, his wet footsteps splattering across the tile, before a momentary silence caused the beta to quirk a brow. Had Kihyun left somehow? He poked his head out from around the corner, heart racing faster when he saw Kihyun’s naked body in the the bedroom looking at the evening’s attire laid out on the bed.

Kihyun dried his hair and walked into the bedroom to see a new pack of cigarettes and an outfit displayed on the bed for him to wear, just as Elise said. Black dress pants and a dark blue button up dress shirt. Hyunwoo must really like the color blue. Kihyun pulled the shirt over his arms, but left it unbuttoned for the moment to put on the rest of the clothing.

The beta couldn’t stop himself from creepily watching the omega slowly dress himself. God, he was gorgeous—that skin, those collarbones, that jawline. Best of all, that sweet cherry scent. As Kihyun turned around to look for something, Jaekwang struck. He lunged forward into the guest suite, bruised hands used in street fights reaching out to grab Kihyun’s arm.

“You’re even more beautiful up close,” Jaekwang all but wheezed when Kihyun whirled around and yelped upon being unexpectedly touched. He stared Kihyun down like a piece of meat, breath heavy. “It’s been so long since I’ve seen you so near.”

“Uh, okay… thanks?” Kihyun replied, quirking his eyebrow at the otherwise strange beta in his room, his shirt still unbuttoned and hanging open. Hyunwoo had so many betas roaming the
premises, so Kihyun didn’t recognize the one in front of him gawking… surely the beta was merely a messenger there to tell Kihyun to hurry up for dinnertime. “...I’m almost done,” he added cautiously.

The beta needed to calm down, but when Kihyun acknowledged him with a response, he felt his pulse in his throat. His beady eyes darted to the omega’s bare chest underneath his unbuttoned blue shirt. “…No, stay just like that. That’s perfect,” Jaekwang blurted, eyes raking up and down the omega’s slender form.

With sharp, sporadic movement, Jaekwang reached out for Kihyun again, this time with both hands, his broad body encroaching the boy’s personal space. He grabbed the omega by the shoulders with sturdy, unwavering hands. Forcing the omega to fully face him. The beta’s chest noticeably expanded and contracted with his jagged breathing, and his Adam’s apple bobbed when he gulped down the lump in his throat.

“I understand why Boss keeps you locked up... with a body like that, I wouldn’t want to share either...”

Shit. Kihyun got a sense that the beta wasn’t a messenger, not when there were hands on him that weren’t Hyunwoo’s. Didn’t betas know to not touch what wasn’t theirs? He felt instantly uncomfortable with someone strange invading his personal bubble so overtly. “Can I... is there something you need?” The omega asked cautiously.

The beta’s lips twisted into a smile. “Yes, there is... you.”

With his strong grip on Kihyun’s shoulders, he shoved the omega back until he collided with the edge of the bed. He released his grip and roughly pushed the omega, causing his lithe body to flop onto the mattress ungracefully. Taking advantage of the omega’s broken guard, the beta crawled atop Kihyun’s fallen body with his legs on either side of the omega’s torso.

The beta grabbed at Kihyun’s wrists so he could pin them above the omega’s head, but the omega flailed and kicked and squirmed in a desperate attempt to avoid the beta’s hold.

What the hell was this man thinking? How he could just barge in and attack Kihyun like this? "Get off me!" Kihyun demanded, trying to worm his way out from under the beta.

Gritting his teeth, the beta constricted the muscles of his leather-clad thighs, squeezing the wriggling omega in place as he fought Kihyun’s flurry of hands. He just needed the omega to stay still, to cooperate, to succumb to his weak biology just as he had numerous times before to Hyunwoo.

“Stay still, you little bitch,” the beta snapped, irked at the amount of energy expended at restraining the omega. God dammit! Why was Kihyun putting up such a fight? This was supposed to be easy. Even with his black licorice beta scent permeating the guest suite, the omega seemed only slightly subdued.

When the beta was finally able to capture Kihyun’s wrists, he slammed them onto the mattress above Kihyun’s head, pinning them there with one hand with much struggle. If Kihyun were to kick or scratch or bite, the beta’s grip could easily break; he needed to act quickly while he had his strength, because the omega’s self-defense was draining his energy.

“No!” Kihyun rejected the beta’s advances, refusing to be still. He wriggled his torso even if his hands were bound by the beta. “Get off, you fucker,” he warned with venom in his voice.
Ignoring the omega’s protests, the beta acted on his raunchy impulses and planted sloppy kisses on Kihyun’s exposed chest, kissing over bruises and bitemarks placed there by Hyunwoo as if to claim the omega as his and not the alpha’s. He worked his way up Kihyun’s chest, over his collarbone to his neck, sucking the tasty flesh to a purplish red. His grip struggled as Kihyun protested and fought him, but in his haste he succumbed to his arousal and his grasp weakened.

A noise between a grunt and a gasp left Kihyun’s lips at the beta’s actions. He twisted his wrists to try to escape the beta’s hold, his exposed chest rising and falling with heavy pants. His heels dug into the mattress, bridging his back and lifting his torso off the bed. “S-stop! Get off! Get off!”

Again, the omega’s feeble attempts to stop him went ignored.

The beta’s lips pulled off Kihyun’s neck with a wet squelch. He smirked at the fresh hickey on the omega’s neck, a sense of pride and achievement boosting his confidence to carry out the rest of this assault. Before he progressed, he’d have to re-secure his restraint on Kihyun or else he’d risk the omega running away, so the beta shoved his palm into Kihyun’s bare sternum to pin him against the bed and hopefully cease the omega’s incessant squirming.

His other hand targeted Kihyun’s pants button—the pants didn’t have to be fully off, he just needed quick access at what he desired most. His fingers fumbled with the button and zipper, Kihyun’s struggling was complicating the process, his heart was pounding in his throat but his dick was aching to be inside the omega, and if everything could just go smoothly and according to plan it would all work out just fine, and—

“Jaekwang! What are you doing?!”

The beta, Jaekwang, froze in a panic. With wide, terrified eyes, he snapped around to see Elise, the foreign maid, trembling in the doorway with her hand covering her mouth in shock.
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes


Elise slowly backed away from the terrible scene knowing she was a witness, and knowing she unwittingly landed herself in danger. Her round, blue eyes were glossy from tears; Jaekwang’s face of shock mirrored back at him in the reflection of her horrified eyes.

Shit, he didn’t think of the maids! His entire body flushed with dread. He should’ve devised a better plan. The damn maid was going to tattle! If Boss ever found out about this, the beta was a dead man.

While Jaekwang was distracted and his defenses lowered, Kihyun took the opportunity to use any strength he had left in his arms to pry the offender off. With the flats of his palms against Jaekwang’s shoulders, he pushed. He pushed with all his might. “Get the fuck off!”

Jaekwang felt forceful palms stab into his shoulders until exasperated cursing filled his ears. Shit! Kihyun was trying to get away! If the omega fled, he’d tell Boss too. Jaekwang’s panic intensified. He really fucked up now.

Gritting his teeth, he spat venom at the omega. “Shut the fuck up, you slut! Just let me have this!” He figured he’d deal with Kihyun now and worry about Elise later. In his position, Kihyun was more of a threat than a weak maid.

Kihyun closed his eyes as he pooled all his anger to the front of his mind. He wanted to get a message across to Jaekwang—to let him know the omega was no push over, and a beta had no right to lay even one finger on him. A beta was not an alpha, and even an omega like Kihyun didn’t have to bow to a midlevel dynamic.

The omega opened his eyes, his eyebrows dipped, and his fingers curled into a tight fist. With one, swift motion his arm flew up, the ball of his closed hand colliding with the beta’s nose. Crack! Immense pain felt like fire on Jaekwang’s face after the omega struck him. Sick sounds of bone on bone alarmed Kihyun to the searing pain in his knuckles. Ouch! The contact hurt far more than he anticipated.

Seeing stars, the beta came to only to realize his grip on the omega was gone. Instinctively, he brought his hand to his throbbing nose; blood covered his hand in crimson—holy shit, his nose was broken! Did Kihyun do this? Weak little omega Kihyun?

Just who the fuck did the omega think he was?

Enraged but delirious from the adrenaline coursing through his veins, Jaekwang swatted the air for Kihyun, tactlessly hoping to subdue the omega once more. In the beta’s delirium, Kihyun freed himself by pulling his lower half out from under the beta.

His escape infuriated Jaekwang more. The pain on his face lit all the nerves in his body,
stimulating a powerful influx of adrenaline, but all neurons firing at once was overstimulating and overwhelming. That, mixed with anger, made his movements sloppy; that was the very reason Jaekwang was never promoted to a higher position in the jo-pok—he was a reactive, not proactive, fighter.

Kihyun scanned Jaekwang’s pained face and felt a sort of pride upon seeing his broken nose. Before Jaekwang could get his bloody hands on him again, Kihyun suddenly raised his leg, his shin slamming into the beta’s crotch. In his pained haze, Jaekwang didn’t see it coming. He grunted and immediately dropped to his knees, hands moving from his broken nose to his throbbing crotch.

Kihyun rolled off the bed, feet landing on the floor hard before busting out into a full sprint. He dashed out the door, adrenaline pulsing inside him. Running reminded him of just a week ago when he escaped Hyunwoo’s underlings and ran all the way from the suburbs to Minhyuk’s apartment in the city.

Running away from something was different than running to something, but sometimes they were the same thing.

The beta looked up in time to see Kihyun scampering out of the room and down the hallway. Blood trickling down his face, he screamed, “Get the fuck back here, omega!”

Kihyun heard Jaekwang’s call down the hall, but the demand didn’t stop him. Fear and panic struck him when he realized he didn’t know where was he running to. Unlike his first escape back at his uncle’s house, he didn’t have anywhere to run to.

All he knew was that he had to escape, had to get away.

A frantic, feminine voice echoed down the hallway from around the near corner. Elise! Kihyun ran towards the familiar voice, heart rapid in his chest.

“Sir! Sir! He’s in Mr. Yoo’s suite! He’s over here, please hurry!” Elise’s strained voice carried in from around the corner, her high heels scuffling across the marble floor. Slower, more sure-footed steps followed hers.

When she turned the corner down the hallway that lead directly to the guest suite, she instinctively dodged the incoming omega barreling down the strip. Her back forced against the wall, arms splayed on either side of her, her eyes wider than ever, she gasped out. “Oh! Mr. Son, watch ou—”

It was too late.

Hyunwoo stepped into the wide doorway of the hall only to have a frazzled omega, his omega, run right into him.

He grunted and stumbled backwards from the sudden force, arms rising up and encasing Kihyun to prevent them both from stumbling over each other as they regained balance. Kihyun’s breath was heavy and fast as he gawked at the alpha. The nostalgic, earthy bergamot scent somehow put the scared omega at ease. “H-Hyunwoo...”

Hyunwoo glanced down at Kihyun; the horrified look on his tear-streaked face struck a possessive nerve in the alpha. He caressed Kihyun’s jaw gently, then hooked a finger under the omega’s chin and tilted his face to the side only to see a fresh, reddish-purple hickey on his neck.

The scent of black licorice slithered into his nose like a poison. Jaekwang.
“Mr. Son, are you okay? I’m so sorry I didn’t warn you sooner. Please forgive me!” Elise apologized, fingers laced together in front of her in an apologetic gesture. Hyunwoo averted his attention to her and nodded his acceptance.

In the brief quiet of that moment, jagged breathing and heavy footsteps echoed from the other end of the hallway. Blood splattered on the white marble floor of the long hall. Black licorice filled the space between them and the huffing beta.

Upon hearing the haunted footsteps behind him, Kihyun gasped and ducked behind the alpha for protection, hiding from the claws of the disturbed beast. Deep inside, the omega wondered if Hyunwoo would protect him. Surely he would, right?

Someone else put their filthy hands and mouth on his property.

Kihyun grasped the sleeve of Hyunwoo’s Versace shirt, peeking out from behind the alpha to see his attacker down the hall. His neck throbbed where the beta left the hickey—a reminder of the events that took place not moments ago. He whimpered, emitting more distressed pheromones.

With the omega hiding behind him, Hyunwoo’s alpha protectiveness escalated. He flashed his fanged teeth at the offender and stared with hate in his eyes. “Elise, please see to the other guests in the dining room, won’t you?” Hyunwoo suggested calmly, but she knew it was a command.

“Yes, sir!” She gulped and bowed politely before quickly vanishing into another room.

Hyunwoo craned his neck to both sides, cracking his neck. Slowly and methodically he loosened the cufflinks of his white and gold baroque Versace blazer, all the while eying the bleeding beta on the other end of the long hallway. He worked at his buttons, popping them open in a cold, calculated manner. A silent but deadly aura surrounded the alpha as bergamot and citrus spiced the beta’s sweet licorice undertones. Feeling the omega quiver behind him, Hyunwoo’s ego inflated tenfold—Kihyun was his to touch, his to fuck, his to play with.

Kihyun felt the surge of pungent alpha pheromones attack his senses, spiralling his already fuzzy mind into a different state of high. His entire body felt incredibly hot again, just as it had at the pool. Being by Hyunwoo stoked the fire, but he welcomed the heat. He trembled, but he wasn’t afraid; not when Hyunwoo was there with him.

Jaekwang wiped the blood off his nose and shook off the excess, red splattering the floor like a horror scene. He panted, blinked excessively, and shifted body weight between feet, clearly affected by Hyunwoo’s pungent alpha hormones and the injuries he already sustained from Kihyun. The beta’s bushy eyebrows furrowed over his brown eyes as he convinced himself he could stand up to his Boss.

Boasting, Jaekwang shouted, “He’s real pretty. Makes nice noises. I see why you like him so much.”

Hyunwoo growled, angry flames dancing in his eyes. He slipped out of his Versace blazer and extended his hand to pass off the expensive jacket to the omega behind him. “Take this to Elise. It’s too nice to get stained,” the alpha said to Kihyun, his raging temper finally evident in his tone.

Obediently, Kihyun took the shirt from the alpha and held onto it. He knew Hyunwoo indirectly told him to leave, but he wanted to see how this would end. He hated the beta, mentally encouraging the alpha to kick the beta’s ass as he fled to the farthest side of the hall away from the angry beasts. He stayed out of bounds, clutching the blazer in his arms as he watched the alpha with concern.
The omega leaned against the wall, the pulse of his heart loud in his ears as alpha musk surrounded him. His knees almost buckled underneath him. Damn, he wasn’t still drunk, was he? Using the wall for leverage, unable to look away, Kihyun pondered something—when was his last heat?

Hardened eyes locked on target ahead. His presence chilling, Hyunwoo started down the long hallway towards his target. The first several buttons of his Cornici print Versace shirt were unbuttoned, revealing bronze skin underneath the cotton fabric. His gold cross necklace swayed atop his sternum as he walked towards his rogue underling. He rolled up his sleeves as he walked, cuffing them at the pit of his elbow. Scars littered his forearm; battle wounds from previous fights.

This wasn’t the first time a beta acted out. In fact, it was expected for a beta to challenge an alpha, and that was doubly true in organized crime syndicates. A clan was only as strong as its leader, the alpha—if the leader failed to rise to the challenge, the clan was devoured by superior clans.

Only dominant alphas prevailed. Only dominant alphas lived to see their clan rise to success.

Being a dominant alpha wasn’t just a birthright, it was an earned title. As a dominant alpha, Hyunwoo quickly learned how deep honor and integrity truly ran. In the hierarchy of the Gwangju branch, underlings who defied their leader had honor and integrity beaten into them.

Some cases were hopeless. Cases like Jaekwang’s.

Hyunwoo bared his alpha fangs at the beta as a display of intimidation. His alpha pheromones infiltrated the hall, snuffing out the beta’s weaker scent. Quietly he walked, cracking his knuckles and breathing shallowly as anger consumed him. Jaekwang braced himself, steeling his mind in preparation for a bloodbath, though his body faltered in confidence; caught somewhere between fight or flight, the beta rode the waves of his endorphin rush and relied on the feelings of false invincibility his body gave him.

Spiced bergamot burned his nostrils as the alpha approached him.

Panicking, Jaekwang reacted the only way he could. If he was going down, he was going down the way he wanted to. “What, you can’t come at me like a man? You afraid to lose in front of your little bitch? Afraid he’ll find out you’re all talk?”

*Smart mouth piece of shit beta.*

Hyunwoo charged at Jaekwang, who sidestepped into a parry and balled his fist, taking a wide, uncalculated swing at the alpha; he was too hasty, too predictable, and Hyunwoo countered the attack with the blunt of his forearm. The beta staggered back, feet shuffling to regain balance. Adrenaline was great at reducing the sensation of pain but poor at preserving motor skills.

Gritting his teeth, Jaekwang brought his arms up to defend himself as Hyunwoo pivoted on the balls of his feet and lunged at the beta. Hyunwoo outsmarted the beta by punching him in the tender underside of his jaw with a stiff uppercut, successfully breaking Jaekwang’s guard so he’d be vulnerable to direct damage. The alpha struck the beta’s cheekbone with his elbow, the bony point dragging across his face into his broken nose.

Cracking bone.

More blood. *So much blood.*

Kihyun watched the scene unfold in horror; the wicked bout was something he never thought he’d see. The omega froze as he witnessed Hyunwoo dishevel and maim the bloodied beta to a pulp. There was so much blood... The scent of Jaekwang’s blood seeped into Kihyun’s nose. The faintest
whiff of pure alpha pheromones tinged the blood. It twisted deep inside him, awakening something he had ignored all this time. Heat prickled his skin again.

In his desperation, Jaekwang clawed at Hyunwoo’s face, dull, jagged nails scratching skin, leaving red trails in their wake, fingertips gouging the alpha’s eye socket. Growling, Hyunwoo ripped Jaekwang’s hand away but kept his hold on the beta’s wrist.

Scratch marks dotted with blood and streaked across bronze skin.

He stepped back, whipped around, and yanked the beta’s arm, forcing the beta barreling forth with the sharp momentum of his turn. Jaekwang crashed into the white marble wall face-first, the harsh impact reverberating in his skull like a thunderstorm. Blood splattered on the wall from impact. Hyunwoo followed closely behind, twisting Jaekwang’s arm painfully behind his back and hiking it up between his shoulder blades. The beta cried out in pain, his head throbbing, his nose non-repairable. He desperately grabbed at the wall, the blood on his hand leaving red handprints on the white wall.

In his ear, Hyunwoo’s authoritative alpha tone haunted him. “What, you can’t come at me like a man? You useless piece of shit, you think you can take what’s mine? You think you can usurp me?” Hyunwoo wound his fist in Jaekwang’s hair and smashed his face into the marble. He smirked at the beta’s groan of pain. “You are weak. You are nothing. You will die knowing that.”

Jaekwang thrusted his elbow back, striking Hyunwoo in the same swollen eye the beta had gouged. He gasped as blood pooled under the conjunctiva of his eye, spreading across the white of his eye as a gross pink. Acting on reflex and explosive anger, the alpha slammed Jaekwang’s head into the marble again and again and again and again.

Even Hyunwoo’s strong spiced pheromones were masked by the putrid smell of blood.

The alpha dragged Jaekwang’s bloodied face against the marble wall as he walked down the hallway towards Kihyun, a trail of red smeared in a misshapen line across the white expanse.

“Guess we’ll have to make a show of this insubordinate, huh?” Hyunwoo hissed at Kihyun, and the omega froze in shock.

The beta flailed and pulled at any piece of Hyunwoo he could get his hands on, prying and yanking and staining his expensive Versace shirt. Hyunwoo’s blood-smeared chest billowed as he breathed. His body shook from the wild thrum of adrenaline provoking his every move. From Jaekwang’s grabbing, the alpha’s shirt had been ripped completely open, the few buttons previously holding the material together now dangling loosely by thread.

The omega timidly approached Hyunwoo, careful of the beta’s flailing arms, and eyed the way aggression consumed the alpha’s entire body. For some reason, he wanted to touch Hyunwoo and feel that aggression thrum under his skin. Cautiously, he raised his hand from holding onto Hyunwoo’s blazer a little too tightly and cupped the alpha’s cheek under his scratched, swollen eye. “You’re hurt...”

Glancing around Hyunwoo’s handsome face only made the hot coil inside him tighten. He inhaled when the alpha twitched, so he dragged his fingers down Hyunwoo’s jaw, feeling the smooth skin whilst his fingers ghosted downwards, tracing his collarbones and chest. Such definition shimmering with the gloss of someone else’s blood.

Hyunwoo’s sporadic breaths found a steady rhythm as he stared at the omega, and the tightness in his muscles from the endorphin rush relaxed slightly. Staring at Kihyun was calming him—he
could’ve sworn he smelled cherries over the raw copper of blood. When Kihyun touched him, he flinched, unsure of how to accept gentleness.

What was this? This sensation of compassion?

Of empathy?

Of affection?

Hyunwoo peered into the omega’s deep brown eyes. He was beautiful.

“It’s nothing...” the alpha finally replied, stirred back to reality by Jaekwang’s thrashing.

Kihyun hugged the alpha’s blazer against his chest. He was glad the alpha was okay, but knew deep down that Hyunwoo was only protecting what was his. Kihyun wasn’t a person to the alpha, he was a toy, branded as a thing, a belonging. Yet, if that meant being close to Hyunwoo then he was okay with it. Knowing Hyunwoo defended him gave Kihyun a feeling he never thought he’d feel again.

Hyunwoo clenched his teeth as conflicting feelings flared inside him. He found solace in Kihyun’s touch, but Jaekwang’s incessant thrashing was an ever-there reminder that his life was not as peaceful as when he looked in Kihyun’s eyes.

Quickly, he made the decision to tear away from the omega’s calming aura. The hand in the beta’s bloodstained hair tightened as he smashed Jaekwang’s skull into the wall once more to cull his energy. Blood splattered onto Hyunwoo’s Versace shirt from impact.

The alpha shoved past Kihyun as he dragged the beta down the hallway. When the wall ended and they turned the corner towards the main dining hall, Jaekwang ripped himself out of the alpha’s hold.

Blinded by a mask of blood, he attacked Hyunwoo with a flurry of punches that lacked power. He was desperate—no longer fighting to win but instead fighting to survive. The alpha thwarted the onslaught with the brunt of his forearm, taking a few stray punches to the temple until he hurled a heavy fist into the beta’s unprotected gut.

Jaekwang hunched over and wheezed as oxygen was expelled from his lungs, his arms instinctively wrapping around his injured stomach. He coughed and gasped for air, tiny bubbles of blood popping at the corner of his lips as air inflated the mask of blood. Dizzy, likely from a delayed onset concussion, he staggered back.

With enough distance between them, Hyunwoo lifted a leg and kicked the beta in the heart with his Italian leather Oxford boot. Jaekwang was propelled back-first into the double doors of the dining hall, crashing into the edge of the oak dining table from the inertia of the kick.

As men accustomed to jo-pok life, no one fled in fear; they knew what was happening. They remained sitting, no one shocked to see it was Jaekwang beaten to a bloody pulp by their Boss.

The maids, however, gasped and panicked; one was so startled she dropped her metal tray of alcoholic beverages onto the marble floor. Fragile glass shattered across the floor, the deep red of spilt merlot a dark parallelism of Jaekwang’s misfortune.

Hyunwoo stood tall in the center of the doorframe. Soaked in blood and reeking of aggressive pheromones, he intimidated even his most loyal underlings. He growled, pointy fangs bared as he peered into the hollow, bleeding shell of the beta before him.
Ruthless and merciless. Fearless and inhuman. A hot flame engulfed in deplorable actions that bled dominance and displayed insatiable alpha power. That was how Kihyun characterized Hyunwoo to be when he followed brawl into the dining room and gawked at the alpha in the doorframe. The heat under his skin roared into a scorching blaze.

From the doorway the alpha stalked his limp prey. “Gentlemen!” he bellowed, everyone jolting at the sheer power of his tone, “If you have complaints, say them now... Go on, speak. The truth shall set you free.”

No one spoke.

The alpha closed in on his prey.

“Do not touch what is not yours. Do not defy what is. Have you any honor? Let this serve as a reminder of the consequences of insubordination and thievery,” Hyunwoo hissed.

Watching Hyunwoo defend what was his Kihyun’s belly flutter. The thought of Hyunwoo defending his omega from a scum-of-the-Earth beta, who touched what wasn’t his, coursed another heated spark through Kihyun’s body. He released a heavy breath, eyes trained on the floor for a moment to gather his bearings. The marble wall felt cool against his body and dulled the unbearable heat.

Kihyun clung tighter to Hyunwoo’s Versace blazer in his arms—it smelled like the alpha, but the citrusy bergamot wasn’t as strong on the article of clothing as it was coming from the attractive alpha’s body not even ten feet away. He was hopelessly drawn to it.

It took all Kihyun had to resist what was building up inside him.

Draped over the table’s edge, Jaekwang absently watched Hyunwoo close in on him. His eyes rolled into his skull as the effects of his concussion finally took hold. In a last ditch effort, he attempted to climb atop the table. His movements were jerky and nonspecific, but he managed to lift himself up with the help of the dining table. As if the energy it took to do so drained him completely, he slumped onto the top of the table, his body plopping onto delicate porcelain plateware ungracefully.

Red stained the classy lavender table runner as the beta wiped the dribbling blood from his broken nose; his fingers trembled as he wiped his face. No longer was it adrenaline that compelled him, just the fear of his sure and imminent death.

Breath heavy and jagged, he stared hatefully at Hyunwoo. He hesitated to speak because he didn’t want the alpha or his jo-pok brothers to hear the tremble in his voice. If he was going to die, he wasn’t going to give the alpha the satisfaction of his surrender. Like hell he’d apologize or beg for his life.

Hyunwoo flexed his fingers to work the stiff soreness out of his joints. A wicked smirk found its way upon his split lips as he regarded the disobedient beta. “What’s the matter? Cat got your tongue?” Hyunwoo taunted, chuckling.

The room full of beta underlings remained awkward, quiet, still. The maids still cowered in the corner. Kihyun hesitated at the doorway, preoccupied with his own impending issue. Only Hyunwoo and Jaekwang’s labored breathing could be heard in the dining room.

The beta scowled then spat at Hyunwoo’s feet. “Fuck you.”

Kihyun had nothing but disgust for the beta. Jaekwang’s dirty intentions back in the bedroom had
been the beginning of his demise. He stared in anticipation when the beta cursed at the alpha—those were to be Jaekwang’s famous last words.

Amused, Hyunwoo tilted his head back to laugh at the beta’s final act of defiance. *How pathetic.*

As quickly as the haughty laughter came, rage replaced it.

The alpha charged towards the wounded beta, his large hand grabbing a fistful of Jaekwang’s bloody shirt whilst the other repeatedly collided with his face. The beta’s body flailed and surged in a disoriented quest of self-defense, knocking plateware off the table and sending it crashing to the floor. Shards of white porcelain turned pink in a bath of split merlot.

Underlings who sat at the end of the table closest to the action finally rose from their seats to avoid collateral damage, their wooden chairs scraping across tile with a terrible scuffing noise.

Consciousness escaped Jaekwang as his entire body fell limp, no surge of adrenaline or protective reflex surviving the merciless assault at Hyunwoo’s hands.

His hold on the beta secure, the alpha dragged Jaekwang’s wasted body down the center of the long dining table, more plateware shattering on the floor, more underlings rising out of harm’s way, more streaks of crimson, more copper and earthy citrus suffocating guests of the dining hall. Hyunwoo skirted the side of the table as he dragged the beta, broad form bumping into fallen chairs until his short temper forced him to kick them out of his way. They slammed into adjacent walls, some splintering upon impact.

When Jaekwang’s unconscious body reached the head of the table where Hyunwoo typically sat, the alpha released his grip. He positioned himself at the head of the table, palms planted on both corners as he leaned intimidatingly over the defiant beta’s limp body.

“From this night on, Yun Jaekwang is no longer a member of the Son Clan Gwangju jo-pok and, by extension, the main Bang Clan Seoul jo-pok.”

Hyunwoo grabbed the sharp dinner knife to the right of his dinner plate. He took a brief moment to feel the shape and weight of it in his palm. A maid in the corner gasped, knowing what was about to happen. The underlings remained silent.

Then, without hesitation or mercy, he lifted the knife high in the air and stabbed it into Jaekwang’s chest. He jerked the knife, tearing across the flesh of his chest, making a L-shape above his heart. Deep burgundy blood oozed from the slice and spilled over the cavity of his chest onto the table and floor. The sound of blood dripping onto the floor echoed amongst the stifling silence.

Hyunwoo inhaled deeply and sat at the chair at the table’s end. Relaxing into the seat, he watched the flow of blood with alarming detachment and coldness.

“All gentlemen, we have business to discuss.”

At the other end of the long dining table against the wall, Kihyun was in awe. His dignity was saved by his captor; the mighty alpha protected his damsel omega. Unlike the astonished betas, Kihyun didn’t see a monster. He saw his savior.

His heart swelled with so much admiration and affection and his knees wobbled as the very thing he desperately tried to stave off finally engulfed him in blazing hot heat.
Hyunwoo sat pensively in his private office as he stared at the emptiness of the penthouse courtyard through the opened blinds. It was as dark inside as it was outside—almost black—but slivers of light snuck in through the blinds, illuminating random features on the alpha’s face and chest. In the right light, the bloodstains almost blended into his bronze skin.

He faced away from his wooden desk, the back of his office chair pressed against the ornate edge. In his hand he swirled a glass of whiskey, the amber liquid coating the sides of the glass as it swished. The expensive, half-empty bottle of Irish whiskey on the desk behind him was a gift from his boss in Seoul—Boss Bang would scoff if he knew Hyunwoo nearly devoured the entire bottle after only a day. Next to the bottle, a crystal ashtray dirtied from fresh ash smoked with the dying embers of his most recent cigarette.

He must’ve had six in the past hour and thirteen minutes he’d been sitting in his office alone.

He came in after dinner, eager to quell the murderous itch in his hands after taking Jaekwang’s life. Killing wasn’t new to him, especially in his role as Gwangju clan head, and for the most part he thought nothing of it; but when it was one of his who died at his hands, it left him feeling something akin to remorse.

It had to be done. It was the jo-pok way. If word got out that the mighty Son Hyunwoo didn’t properly handle disobedience and infighting, it’d spread like wildfire. He’d be done for. Everything he slaved for ruined.

Yet, somehow more importantly, what if Jaekwang hurt Kihyun?

Hyunwoo grimaced at his stupid, irrational thoughts.

Why the fuck did he care what happened to the omega?

The omega was nothing but a toy at worst and a bargaining chip at best.

He stared blankly out the window again, irritated at himself for thinking the omega anything other than what he was: a tool. Suddenly, the calm view of the courtyard angered him—it was the first place he met Kihyun, and now it taunted the alpha with strange feelings and thoughts.

Scowling, Hyunwoo fished the last cigarette from the pack and pinned it between his lips. He lit the tip and inhaled, his overstimulated senses enveloped in a dense cloud of cherry-scented smoke. He tossed the empty pack over his shoulder onto the desk; in a slice of light, the label read ‘Cheyenne Premium Black Cherry Cigarettes’ in English.

He’d never admit he missed Kihyun’s cherry scent.

Suddenly, the office door opened. Kihyun sauntered in, unadulterated lust taking over as soon as he stepped in and was bombarded with alpha spice. He closed the door behind him with more strength than intended, causing a ruckus.

Hyunwoo stiffened the moment a noise was heard from the door. He didn’t bother turning toward the noise, but he sat upright when the synthetic cherry scent of his cigarette was overpowered by sweet, velvety cherry blossoms. Kihyun. Goosebumps prickled the alpha's skin, and the fire he attempted to diminish roared into a raving blaze.

Kihyun felt his breath leave him as he stared at the alpha with half-lidded eyes. The smell of smoke rattled his already fuzzy mind. He couldn’t hold back anymore, not when Hyunwoo was affecting him in more ways than one. When Hyunwoo’s gaze met Kihyun’s heavy-lidded eyes, every alpha instinct he had surged at him like a tsunami.
The omega smelled *too* good.

Kihyun felt a heated force eat him alive. The omega strolled over to the handsome alpha, hands gripping the front of his blue Gucci shirt and ripping it open with newfound strength, buttons popping from their places and falling to the floor with various clicks. His eyes never left the alpha’s, though he noticed Hyunwoo eyefuck his sweaty, naked torso marked in bites and scratches.

Kihyun’s omega pheromones filled the room and drove Hyunwoo crazy.

When the omega approached the dark alpha, he popped the button of his black dress pants and shamelessly straddled the alpha’s lap. Inhaling Hyunwoo’s scent roused his inner omega more—everything grew hotter the more confident he became.

Ah, fuck, he needed more. *Now.* He looped his arms over Hyunwoo’s shoulders and rolled his hips into the alpha’s crotch, whimpering for more friction.

The gluttonous desire for an alpha, for a knot, to be bred, possessed Kihyun…

*Oh shit, he was in heat.*
Chapter 12

In the smoky darkness of his secluded office, Hyunwoo instinctively grabbed Kihyun’s hips as he squirmed in his lap. He was gorgeous with a flushed face and grey strands damp at his hairline, thoroughly wrecked by his heat. Small moans and whimpers filled the room, testing what little willpower Hyunwoo still had when it came to Kihyun.

But the heat on the omega’s sweat-slick skin lit a fire in Hyunwoo, and he couldn’t refuse giving the boy exactly what he came for.

Hyunwoo wrapped his arms around Kihyun’s lithe body, their bodies shaped together like two complementary shapes. The tantalizing scent of spiced cherries fused as the dichotomy of alpha and omega came together.

Raw, leftover energy from his earlier fight pulsed in Hyunwoo’s veins as he gripped Kihyun’s hips a little too aggressively, a little too possessively, fingers bruising the soft skin. He captured Kihyun’s soft lips with his own, groaning as the flavor of artificial cherry cigarettes was replaced with authentic maraschino taste. His cock twitched from the pheromones rolling off Kihyun’s tongue.

Fuck, this wasn’t going to be a slow, deliberate affair; this was going to be quick and dirty.

The thought ripped a growl from Hyunwoo’s throat. “You smell so good, pet.”

The compliment fuelled Kihyun’s ego and he smirked, the palms of his hands caressing the alpha’s strong chest. His head lowered, lips buzzing from their electric kiss. He kissed down Hyunwoo’s neck with plush lips, peppering open-mouthed kisses under the alpha’s jaw. The skin of Hyunwoo’s neck burned from the heat of the omega’s hungry kisses.

Lust pounded inside him with every swivel of his hips, but Hyunwoo’s hands pressed into the flesh of his hips hindered him too much.

“As requested, the alpha eased his grip, but he kept his hands on the omega’s slender hips. He turned his head slightly, just enough for Kihyun to discern his low, raspy tone. “You can certainly try, but I won’t make any promises that I’ll behave.”

The omega hummed and softly nipped Hyunwoo’s neck. “Who said I wanted you to behave, big boy?” He asked, his hips grinding teasingly slow, his dick hardening from his own ministrations. Slick started to form, wet in his tight slacks.

God, he was too fucking hot. Something had to be done about this heat. Now.

Kihyun’s boldness riled up the alpha in ways he didn’t anticipate. Flashing a smirk, Hyunwoo
momentarily tightened his hold on Kihyun enough to lift him up off the alpha’s lap, and, while standing up and spinning around, threw the omega onto the surface of the wooden desk. Kihyun squeaked in surprise. He was so easily manhandled by the alpha; the thought sparked another heat wave inside him. He was already soaking wet, seeping through his thong and pants.

Hyunwoo kicked the swivel chair out of the way and moved in to take its place at the edge of the desk. With mischievous eyes he watched Kihyun and slipped between the omega’s legs, working at his belt buckle.

Kihyun raised his hips to slip his dress pants off, desperate for skin on skin action. He tried to recall when he last had a partner during his heat, but thinking of something other than alpha cock wasn’t going to happen. He managed to pull his pants to mid-thigh, too far gone in his lust to do it properly.

“Eager, are we?” Hyunwoo chuckled, amused at Kihyun’s lustful haste. “Or are you just desperate?”

This was the first time the omega had stripped himself, and damn did the alpha savor the erotic image of a hot, panting, half naked omega in heat leaking slick all over his work desk. He growled low in his throat and tore his black leather belt from its belt loops in one, fluid motion.

Folding the belt into a loop, he cracked the leather in his palm. “How ‘bout I tie you up? Play with you, watch you squirm, watch you beg and plead for my knot? I could leave you as a bitch in heat on this desk and you couldn’t do a damn thing about it, omega.”

The loud snap sent a chill up Kihyun’s spine. Accompanied by Hyunwoo’s cruel but sexy words, his dick twitched behind the emerald green lace of his thong.

Unafraid of the potential weapon in the alpha’s hold, Kihyun raised himself, sitting up with his legs dangling off the edge of the desk. He cupped Hyunwoo’s neck, his thumb traced over the alpha’s sharp jaw whilst his other hand found its way to Hyunwoo’s crotch, palming over the amazing bulge. Fuck, he needed it inside him, pounding into him over and over.

Hyunwoo watched every sultry movement Kihyun made, his breath lodged in his throat the moment the omega sat up and cupped his cock. The decadent smell of cherries enshrouded him, suffocating him in pure omega desire. Damn, Kihyun was so sexy all hot and bothered and confident like this.

Blown pupils scanned over Hyunwoo’s bruised, sexy body for a moment to take in just how ethereal the other man looked in the filtered light. His dark angel indeed.

“Please,” Kihyun whispered desperately. “It’s so hot, baby. I need you.”

It had been years since Hyunwoo fucked an omega in heat, and based on the passionate way Kihyun eyefucked him, he remembered why—fucking, quite literally, with omegas was a dangerous game.

The alpha had slipped once before in the climax of sex with Kihyun, biting and damn near marking him with his authoritative alpha bite while knotting him. He was lucky nothing bad happened as a result of his lapse in judgement. But shit, the heat in Kihyun’s greedy touch warped Hyunwoo’s twisted brain and convinced him that fucking, knotting, marking the omega was necessary.

Hell, he was begging for it like a good little omega slut anyway.

Growling, the alpha said, “Yeah, you need it? How badly do you need it?” He snapped the belt in
his palm once more. “Show me how bad you need it, slut.”

The crack echoed around the room and excited Kihyun more. He gave his plush lips a slow lick and leaned closer to the alpha, aiming for a kiss but stopping short, their lips mere centimetres away. “If you’re not inside me in the next few minutes, I’ll fucking push your alpha ass into your chair and ride the fuck out of you until your balls are wrung out and empty. I’ll suck every drop, bring you into a new high of sensitivity because my pussy just can’t get enough of you. I need to be full of your dick, filled to the brim with your seed, baby.”

Kihyun gave Hyunwoo’s cock another squeeze. Feeling an alpha cock against his hand was so vexing—it was so close but so far, almost like self-torture the way it radiated heat in Kihyun’s hand, driving him crazy.

_Christ, Kihyun in heat was hot._

Hyunwoo swore under his breath and threw the leather belt away, too persuaded by the filthy words coming out of the omega’s mouth. Smirking, he dipped his calloused hands under the waistband of his briefs and pulled his cock out. It hung heavy and hot, veins bulging, swollen head shiny from precum. His pants clung low on his hips, showing off the well-defined v-shape of his hips. Hair trailed from his navel to a dark nest at the base of his cock. He _looked_ and _smelled_ like the alpha male he was.

Hyunwoo shoved Kihyun back onto the desk and grabbed his thighs, roughly pulling the omega closer. When Kihyun’s pert ass met the front of the alpha’s thighs, the collision making a slapping noise, the head of Hyunwoo’s cock rubbed against the cleft of the omega’s ass.

Because Kihyun’s pants were mid-thigh, Hyunwoo didn’t bother pulling them the rest of the way off; instead, he hiked the omega’s knees up to his chest and pinned them there. Slick drenched Kihyun’s thong, and the smell assaulted Hyunwoo’s alpha nose. He groaned at the site, dick twitching to fuck Kihyun’s tight, wet little hole.

“Goddamn, pet, you’re so fucking wet. You this wet for me, huh? You this wet for my cock in your little omega pussy?”

The omega licked his lips—god, fuck, Hyunwoo had the best dick in the world. Truly his dark angel with defined features, a strong body, looming presence; everything so perfect, including the scars that marred his skin. The strong aroma assaulted his omega senses, feeding the fires of his heat in pit of his belly. He wanted it, needed it, yearned and _wished_ for it. He wanted to get lost in deep brown eyes and bergamot passion.

Kihyun wasn’t a hostage anymore, he was Hyunwoo’s ideal complement. He’d do anything for his alpha.

His thumbs hooked the straps of his thong and pushed the wet material off his hips. Even completely naked, the heat burned through his skin. He was unable to think properly. All he could focus on was Hyunwoo’s thick cock rubbing against him. It would surely drive him to the brink of insanity.

“Yes!” he moaned, feeling cool air tickle his wet rim. “Yes, I am so wet for you. I need you inside me, baby, please. Ruin me, wreck me, gape my pussy.” He was shameless, but didn’t give a fuck because all he needed was Hyunwoo to alleviate this scorching heat.

Hyunwoo didn’t even wait for Kihyun to finish begging for cock, he just grabbed his dick and rammed it in until his hips crashed into Kihyun’s ass. He groaned at the heat, the wetness, the
tighness, enveloping his cock. “Fuck, you feel so good, pet. So fucking perfect for me, omega.”

Omegas in heat, and in general, naturally loosened to accommodate cock, and goddamn did the alpha take advantage of that as he pounded into Kihyun without mercy. The harder, deeper Hyunwoo thrusted, the more he pushed Kihyun’s knees to his chest, exposing his hole to the alpha and thus plunging deeper into the omega.

Air was lost in Kihyun’s lungs as he was overtaken by a strong current of bliss that rendered him completely ravaged. Kihyun gripped the edge of the desk beside Hyunwoo’s hips to keep himself in place, his knuckles white as he gripped tightly. Shit, was Hyunwoo always this big?

It didn’t take long for Kihyun to become a hot mess on the desk, moaning, whimpering, cursing and panting. “Oh fu—ah!” His dick rubbed against his stomach, smearing precum on his sweaty skin. Hyunwoo’s cock brushed against his prostate, causing him to gush slick. “Fuck... ah, H-Hyunwoo I’m... I—shit, I’m going to cum all over y-your cock!” The stretch, the pleasure, the depth—goddamn alpha was driving him absolutely crazy.

"Fuck yeah," Hyunwoo groaned in response, voice low and breathy. "Cum all over my cock, slut."

Flesh slapping against flesh, the squelching of slick as he drilled into the omega, the hard thudding against the wooden desk from each powerful thrust; all of Hyunwoo’s senses were aroused by Kihyun’s very being. He couldn't tear his eyes away from the omega's supple, round ass; the pale skin was reddening from how hard Hyunwoo fucked into him.

Kihyun’s head lolled back, mouth open for high pitched moans to spill past his lips as his bliss peaked. A gush of liquid spilled from around Hyunwoo’s cock, dripping down his ass and falling like a small waterfall onto the desk and floor underneath. His muscles tensed, spasming and pushing against the cock inside him. “Oh fuck! Yes!” He trembled, feeling the juices of his heat orgasm dribble.

He had never creamed so much or hard before. It was incredible. He wanted more.

Goddamnit. Fuck this omega. He wasn't special, he wasn't, he couldn't be. He was just a tight, hot hole, right? So then why was the alpha so irritated at not being able to see Kihyun's face? Especially when he came like that.

Due to the bunched up clothing at the omega’s knees and his knees folded up against his chest, Hyunwoo was unable to see the pretty faces the omega made. The alpha growled, body alight with lust, and buried himself deep in Kihyun's heat; he forcibly ripped the omega's clothes the rest of the way off and threw them at the opposite wall in a fit. The air felt good on Kihyun’s heated skin, his grey hair stuck to his face as he floated in a high after his first heat orgasm.

Still buried inside, Hyunwoo grabbed the omega's smooth, pale thigh in his calloused palms and spread them wide apart, pressing the tops of Kihyun's thighs to his stomach to see the full, obscene picture before him—Hyunwoo's cock deep inside splitting the omega open, slick and cum dripping from his hole around the thick base of his dick. "Fuck, you're so wet, so hot. I want you to beg to cum on my cock again."

Kihyun whined, his legs burning at the new position. Hyunwoo’s cock pressed to his womb and, god, fucking hell, Hyunwoo was monster. “God you’re so deep.” He whimpered.

Fuck, he was still too hot. He needed a knot so bad.

“I don’t want to be a-able to walk tomorrow. Fuck me faster, Hyunwoo, harder. Please, I wanna
squirt all over your thick cock again, baby. I want and need your knot, alpha, please.” Kihyun didn’t care if he sounded like a whore, a breeding bitch; that’s what he wanted to be to Hyunwoo, to serve him like this. “I was born for your cock, alpha.”

"Fucking hell—" Hyunwoo cut himself off, his rasped words nothing but heavy panting as he thrusted into Kihyun slowly, just as deep, his hips rolling like ocean waves, ab muscles flexing with the sultry movement; he watched his cock disappear and reappear like some x rated porno shot.

His thrusting gradually picked up pace until his hips slapped into the underside of Kihyun's thighs. His dress slacks slipped off his hips and hung loosely just below his ass. The sparse lighting in the office accented the delicious muscular dip in his ass as he fucked Kihyun.

Hyunwoo leaned over the omega's body, Kihyun's leaking cock pinned between their stomaches, and captured his lips in a searing kiss; he moaned as the taste of cherries tingled his tastebuds.

The omega released his grip on the edge of the desk, finding purchase in the alpha’s dark locks of hair. Kihyun pressed his lips to Hyunwoo’s, the distinct taste of his last cigarette still fresh on the older man’s lips. Teasingly, Kihyun’s tongue came out to play, the wet muscle having a mind of its own as he licked at Hyunwoo’s lips, moaning at the tastes exploding in his mouth.

There it was again—the overwhelming, insatiable urge to claim the moaning omega beneath him. It would be so simple just to sink his alpha fangs into the nape of Kihyun’s neck.

He’d be indentured to Hyunwoo forever, but the alpha would also be trapped. Except this time, his rational mind wasn’t as scrutinizing of biting Kihyun; Hyunwoo’s alpha possessiveness was more genuine this time, as the desire to protect overshadowed petty jealousy. He hated that his feelings towards the omega were becoming something more, and he hated that he always came to these conclusions in the middle of sex.

The alpha deepened the kiss, his tongue licking into Kihyun’s mouth. He groaned as he snapped his hips sharply. He snaked a hand up Kihyun’s body and pinned both his hands above his head, rendering the omega completely helpless as Hyunwoo kissed him with a heated passion.

Shit, heat sex was always elevated because pheromones were in tune with sensations to create perfect harmony. Hyunwoo was losing control. From the looks of it, Kihyun was too. His muscles tightened around Hyunwoo’s dick, assaulting his sweet spot over and over.

From the slap of skin against skin to the feel of Hyunwoo’s hands pinning him down, the saliva on Kihyun’s lips, the relentless thrusting, his throbbing pussy, the alpha’s huge cock, Kihyun loved it all. Fuck, this man was satisfying his every omega need.

His fingers curled around Hyunwoo’s hand, moans escalating in tempo and pitch the closer he got to another heat orgasm. Hyunwoo groaned in the omega’s mouth, his body alight with the heat radiating off of Kihyun. The alpha broke the kiss and buried his nose in the side of Kihyun’s neck, inhaling all his pungent omega pheromones. The desire to bite and claim grew stronger.

Kihyun craned his neck slightly to the side, anticipating what the alpha would do to as his moans got breathier. “Hyunwoo—” he mewled, clinging to the alpha. “Knot me, fuck... please! Cum inside me, alpha.”

Kihyun needed to feel alpha cum inside him, to feel that hot, thick seed pour into his womb. Fuck, he needed it; needed Hyunwoo’s knot locking them together. Heat sex warped his mind, urging him to succumb to his biology: to be bred. With that thought in his mind, his body quivered, the
pleasure indescribable, building deep within the omega in sharp bursts of electrifying ecstasy.

“Put a baby in me, Hyunwoo.”

No red blooded alpha could deny such a delicious request from a beautiful, impassioned omega in heat. Again, logic and his better judgement scolded Hyunwoo for caving to the whims of his biology, but goddamnit his cock was aching and throbbing, and Kihyun was so wet and tight.

He couldn’t shake the fresh smell of cherries when he was away in Seoul, and now in the climax of their heat sex, he wanted to drown in cherry blossom euphoria.

“Fuck, what are you doing to me?”

A deep moan ripped through him and his body tensed. His thrusts were sporadic. His balls drew up tight and his orgasm raged inside of him like a wicked storm. He rode out each wave of his release with slow, deep thrusts as he licked the salty skin of Kihyun’s neck. Nose buried in omega musk, Hyunwoo’s alpha fangs poked out from his kiss-swollen lips and grazed the well of skin near Kihyun’s collarbone. His hips ceased as the base of his cock started to knot.

The curve of Kihyun’s nails pressed into the backs of Hyunwoo’s hands, denting the beautiful skin with crescent shapes. His toes curled, his moans wanton. The feel of an alpha release was something Kihyun could never explain. It pushed him over the edge. With a loud, high pitched moan of bliss, Kihyun’s cock painted his chest and abdomen in pearly white. His hole tightened more, quivering with the intensity of his orgasm.

Hot spurts of Kihyun’s orgasm coated their stomaches as Hyunwoo’s knot stretched and anchored him to the omega. They were closer and more vulnerable than ever in these moments when Hyunwoo foolishly caved in to his biology and knotted Kihyun.

Last time, he ruined the moment and lashed out by sucker punching the omega for no good reason. This time, though the emotions and hormones were high, Hyunwoo didn’t fight his instincts. In fact, he wanted to hold and protect the omega, and he’d fight anyone who stopped him from doing just that.

Kihyun was his. His. Not Jaekwang’s, not the Seoul branch’s, not anyone’s but Hyunwoo’s.

The alpha clenched his teeth and balled his fists.

Shit, what was he doing?

As the alpha battled himself mentally, Kihyun was on Cloud Nine. His chest rose and fell with heavy, worn out breaths. Hyunwoo’s fangs against his neck made him smile lazily, accepting the action as affectionate intimacy. He still felt so full with Hyunwoo’s knot inside him. What a wonderful sensation of being one with a handsome, strong, dominant alpha like Hyunwoo.

He turned his head to the side, whispering, “Mm, Hyunwoo... that tickles.”

The softness in Kihyun’s tone soothed Hyunwoo in ways he didn’t want to accept, but nevertheless he eased his tension and retracted his fangs. Instead, he focused on the rush of oxytocin that came from their shared post-orgasmic bliss.

Hyunwoo’s knot was still growing, serving as an ever-present sensation as it stretched Kihyun. That was when—Oh, shit... When was the last time he took his birth control pill? A slight raise in panic made his stomach drop, but burning in his gut reminded him that he was still very much in heat.
Just then, a spark of heat ignited a new flame of desire.

“Hyunwoo...” Kihyun keened. “Fuck me in the shower.”
Chapter 13

Every attempt to sate Kihyun’s heat proved only one thing—Kihyun in heat was insatiable.

The demand to satisfy the omega delayed Hyunwoo’s deliverance of business, resulting in majority of collections and arranged meet-ups to be carried out by trusted underlings. He figured it was good to lay low at home and avoid crossing paths with snooping policemen anyway, given the extremely high profile car chase a week and half prior. He was still for the imminent repercussions of that incident from both the law and Boss Bang.

As long as Hyunwoo could vaguely justify it as a benefit to his jo-pok reputation, he conducted business at the penthouse—that was, until Kihyun sauntered in for his daily dicking.

Over the crazy, sex-filled four day span, they fucked in almost every room of the penthouse in almost every position; every time, it ended with Kihyun begging for Hyunwoo’s knot and Hyunwoo struggling not to bite and claim the flustered omega.

It was especially hard, though, when the pretty omega snuck into Hyunwoo’s room at sunrise with glazed over eyes panting for the alpha to fill him up. It was a bit much for early morning, but what a way to wake up. The sun was young as it shined bright tangerine light into Hyunwoo’s bedroom, forming to the curves of Kihyun’s body as he swiveled his hips on the alpha’s lap. The bed creaked with movement and thin sheets cascaded down the side of the mattress like a cotton waterfall.

The omega on top, Hyunwoo sat back with his arms folded behind his head and a lit cigarette hanging off his lips. “Where’d you learn to ride dick so well, pet?”

Kihyun smirked as his hips rolled. “I told you...you aren’t the only alpha I’ve been with.” None of them were as good as Hyunwoo, but he wasn’t going to feed the alpha’s ego.

Caught up in the thrill of it, Kihyun’s orgasm snuck up on him. His back arched deliciously as he came; a pathetic puddle formed on Hyunwoo’s abdomen as Kihyun quivered amidst a breathless moan. The clenching around Hyunwoo’s cock forced the alpha over the edge. Pleasure rippled from his toes up, his cock throbbing inside the panting omega as he came in thick, hot spurts. A familiar pressure at the base of his dick signified the start of his knot; he groaned as the knot stretched the omega's wet hole, adding post-orgasmic pleasure to his dick.

In that time, he managed to suck down most of his cigarette, leaving it as a short butt simmering in the ashtray at bedside. He eyed Kihyun with a fondness he developed over the past four days of the omega’s heat.

Around the second day of the omega’s heat, the alpha's rut was triggered from the sudden dramatic increase in hormones. Though Kihyun was reaching the end of his heat cycle, Hyunwoo was still in the climax of his rut. Ruts made alphas more intense—aggressive, horny, protective, and combative in higher, prolonged doses than usual. Due to increased alpha tendencies, Hyunwoo struggled to suppress his newfound feelings for the omega.

Caressing Kihyun's thigh, Hyunwoo asked, "Your heat seems to have gone down."

The sensual touch on Kihyun’s skin earned Hyunwoo a smile. “Seems to be, but I don’t think we are done quite yet,” he commented, referring to Hyunwoo’s rut. Since Hyunwoo’s return four days ago, the alpha had been smoking a different brand that Kihyun wasn’t familiar with nor seen
before. They smelled familiar, but he couldn’t pinpoint the exact scent. Curiosity got the better of him. “By the way... have you always smoked those cigarettes?”

“Huh?” Hyunwoo’s gaze flickered from Kihyun’s face to the dying cigarette in the ashtray. On the nightstand by the ashtray was a facedown box of cigarettes—a cherry blossom emblem and some Japanese kanji adorned the back. A half-smile appeared on the alpha’s lips. “They’re new. Picked them up in Seoul...” he paused, carrying his gaze back to Kihyun. “…I like cherry blossoms.”

It wasn’t what he said that was different, but the way he said it. An intricate cherry blossom tattoo adorned his shoulder and pec, but his softer tone implied he wasn’t referring to his tattoo. The way he stared at Kihyun, his eyes seemed to glimmer.

Kihyun glanced at the box before his gaze met Hyunwoo’s. The look in the alpha’s eyes was something he hadn’t seen before. He flushed pink and looked away bashfully. “Y-yeah, I see that... Um, could I have one?”

Hyunwoo hummed and reached for the box with a long, outstretched arm. Kihyun was heavy on his hips since they were still knotted together, but the weight was welcome. He plucked a stick from the box and pinned it between his lips, then pulled another for Kihyun.

Lighting the tip with a fancy, engraved zippo, he sucked in the smoke as he handed off the cigarette and lighter to the omega atop him. Tucking his arm behind his head again, Hyunwoo observed Kihyun quietly as he exhaled smoke through his nose. Mischief in his eyes, he rolled his hips slightly just to see how the omega would react.

Kihyun held the stick between his finger and thumb, but before it reached his lips, he felt friction inside his tender and oversensitive body and dropped the lighter. A current of heated pleasure spiked up his spine. He whimpered a small ‘fuck’ whilst his fists pressed into Hyunwoo’s strong chest for balance.

“What’s the matter, pet? Something wrong?” Hyunwoo teased, free arm outstretched to lazily tap the ashen tip of his cigarette into the ashtray.

The muscles of his abdomen flexed as he rolled his hips against the weight of Kihyun’s body. The morning light had deepened, now accenting the omega’s naked body in sky blue sunshine. His skin glittered with marks of red and purple from Hyunwoo’s possessive touch.

Kihyun tilted his head as he locked gazes with Hyunwoo momentarily. After staring into those dazzling deep brown eyes, the omega picked the lighter up and lit the end of his cigarette.

So the alpha wanted to tease, huh? Two could play that game.

Kihyun dropped the lighter to the side, inhaled deeply, and exhaled smoke as he spoke. “I’m not as full as you are of yourself.” A smirk made its way across his red, puffy lips.

Hyunwoo smirked at the omega's comment. He wasn't wrong, because really, the alpha had every reason to be full of himself. He lived a thrilling, extravagant life. Instead of replying, he reacted with his hips, grinding them up into Kihyun, cock pressing deeper into Kihyun's velvety heat. Judging by the way the omega looked so flustered, Hyunwoo was teasing the last bit of Kihyun's heat from his spent body.

The omega’s back arched, body tensing in more pleasure than it could handle. His walls were so full yet so sore; a painful pleasure that rubbed against his prostate. Kihyun tightened around Hyunwoo’s cock more, adding pressure to the both of them, the feeling awakening the last little bit
of his heat.

“If... if you keep doing that...” the omega stuttered, looking at Hyunwoo with half-blown pupils. The cigarette between his fingers burned, casting smoke into the open air. He mewled at the alpha as the stick slowly withered away.

“If I keep doing what?” Hyunwoo rocked his hips into Kihyun, determined to drain every last ounce of energy from him. The girth of his knot slowly reduced to normal size, allowing ease of movement as he continued to torment the panting omega.

The constant assault against his prostate was almost, almost, too much for Kihyun. “F-fuck, Hyunwoo!” Kihyun squirmed, eyes closed, lips parted, eyebrows dipped. His dick pulsed with his dry orgasm; cock too worn out and empty to produce any substance.

A smirk crept across Hyunwoo’s lips as he milked a dry orgasm out of Kihyun. He couldn’t help but tease the omega, especially since he was the reason Hyunwoo’s rut was triggered sooner than usual. He liked, too, that he held so much biological power over the other that he could control the omega’s pleasure.

“That’s a nice face you’re making,” the alpha cooed, smoke escaping from his lips as he formed the words. He flicked the tip of his cigarette into the ashtray and opened his mouth to say something else when a frantic knock on his bedroom door cut him off. Instantly, his nonchalant attitude was soured.

Who the hell was bothering him this early in the morning?

Choosing to ignore the knock, he drew the cigarette to his lips only to be annoyed by another barrage of hard knocks. Wrinkles hardened his face when he growled. “What the fuck do you want?”

A labored sigh, then the sound of a throat clearing. “Boss... the police are outside. They have the building surrounded.”

*Cops? Outside?* Kihyun bit his lip. Did they come to save him from imprisonment? Was it Hyunwoo’s illicit activity in the jo-pok? Either way, the omega tried his best to collect his bearings and shoved what was remaining of his cigarette between his lips, stress smoking with a shaky hand.

“What the fuck do you mean the cops are outside? How did they get behind the gate?” It was Hyunwoo’s knee-jerk response, but he knew the answer already. He should’ve known better than to go to a public place like McDonald’s with Kihyun, or to react stupidly to police arrival with a car chase through town. Good thing he had that shitty fast food joint burned to the ground.

He knew law enforcement had been investigating him for some time. Hell, Boss Bang even warned him about it when he was in Seoul. It wasn’t uncommon for police to dig up anything they could on a gangster as a means of skirting around the anti-defamation agreement and making legal arrests, thus taking a sizeable chunk out of the jo-pok’s black market power and tipping social scales in favor of law enforcement.

Unfortunately for Son Hyunwoo, two high profile cases coincided to create the perfect storm—Yoo Kihyun’s abduction and the alpha’s documented involvement therein.

“Fuck*ing* cocksuckers.” Hyunwoo snarled and mashed his cigarette in the ashtray, sitting up and shoving Kihyun off of him. Kihyun toppled backwards onto his back, bewildered from the sudden rough act. Just when he thought he had gotten through to the alpha, there was a situation he didn’t
see coming. So much for peaceful intimacy.

“Quickly, get yourself cleaned up. You have a role to play, omega.”

Hyunwoo stood and vanished into the connecting bathroom. Kihyun put his cigarette out in the tray and pulled up his sweats to his hips and scowled at the alpha as he walked away. He hated being called by his second identity instead of his first name, but he opted to say nothing after noticing the alpha’s abrupt shift in temperament. He plucked a random shirt from his nesting pile and pulled what he assumed to be Hyunwoo’s shirt over his head. A spray of water was briefly heard before Hyunwoo returned to dress.

“Boss, what do you want us to do?” the underling’s voice asked from behind the door.

Hyunwoo stood calm, commanding his subordinate as he hooked his holster around his waist. “Stand guard but do not act. If we handle this with violence, we’ll be giving them exactly what they want. You’re jo-pok, be a man and represent your honor without fear.”

“Yes, Sir!” the underling replied, his voice followed by leaving footsteps.

The alpha pulled a pistol from a dresser drawer and checked the barrel for bullets. Opening another drawer, he grabbed a box and dumped the contents atop the dresser, bullets scattering on the wood. He loaded the pistol, clicked the safety, and wedged it in the leather holster at his hip. The omega stood by the door obediently with his eyes glued to Hyunwoo’s hands working the gun so skillfully. He wanted to say something but he knew better by now.

Hyunwoo looked at the omega for a split second, tone solemn. “We go out together. They’re here for you.” He steeled his features, masking himself with the face everyone knew him to have. The four day reprieve was pleasant, but now was the time to remember who he was again—a rotten gangster with a rotten reputation.

Kihyun noticed the shift and swallowed hard. That Hyunwoo was back. Whatever transpired next, the omega knew he had to make it look like he wasn’t held here against his will. He just had to. Because he wasn’t… at least not anymore, right?

The alpha didn’t bother to look Kihyun in the eyes when he walked past him and pushed through the door. He swaggered through the marble hallway and barked orders to underlings as he approached the front of the penthouse. At the front door, he hesitated, realizing it would appear more favorable to have Kihyun walk out first, casting the illusion that he truly was there by choice.

He waited for the omega to be next to him at the door before explaining the situation. "If they ask you any questions, you say you're here by choice. You want to be here, understand?" he said sternly, staring at the colorful shapes in the stained glass door instead of Kihyun.

Kihyun stood like the obedient bitch he was, hands clasped nervously in front of him as he nodded. Even if his mind was still foggy from his heat, he knew he wanted to be here. He knew Hyunwoo was protecting him and keeping him safe from the dangers that may lay ahead, all under the guise of paying off his late uncle’s debt.

“Yes, I…” Kihyun didn’t want to be anywhere else, not without Hyunwoo. Not without his strong, ruggedly handsome alpha; his protector and guardian. “I want to be here,” he confirmed with how own voice, speaking the truth.

His true debt to Hyunwoo was gratitude for giving the traditional life he always wanted—the life his mom always wanted for him. With an alpha.
“Good.” Hyunwoo smirked, satisfied with the omega’s compliance. Kihyun was the perfect shield to deflect police involvement; the cops couldn’t do anything if Kihyun denied all their claims against the alpha. That could prove quite useful in the future. “Chin up, pet. Show them that smile, yeah?” he said as he opened the door for Kihyun to step out.

Kihyun didn’t hesitate. His lips stretched into a smile.

He couldn’t help it anyway, not when Hyunwoo asked with words that were easy on his ears for once. He brushed a hand through his hair and took a deep breath in. He wanted to be here. He was here by choice, his own choice; his own free will; his own choosing. Hyunwoo’s hospitality was friendly and kind to him as he paid his debt.

There was no going back as he walked out the door.

The morning sun shined down on him, his ash grey hair almost glistening under the rays. As he looked out, he shielded his eyes from the brightness. Hyunwoo did the same when he followed the omega out.

The alpha was pleased to see his underlings surrounding the inner parameter of the wide penthouse courtyard. Two lesser alpha enforcers regarded Kihyun, the residual smell of his heat lingering in their noses as he walked by them. Hyunwoo shot them a warning glare before focusing his attention on the horde of police officers on his property. He studied the shape they formed as a unit, then swept his gaze across the full span, realizing they indeed surrounded the whole building.

Kihyun blanked. Overwhelmed and intimidated, he stepped back.

Hyunwoo clicked his tongue when he was in earshot of the commanding officer. “Seems excessive, wouldn’t you agree officer?” With Kihyun in front of him, he placed a reassuring hand on the boy’s shoulder.

Kihyun didn’t expect all this. Actually, he really didn’t know what to expect. The reassuring hand on his shoulder made him turn to Hyunwoo, to his protector. The rays of the sun made the alpha’s skin shimmer. He glowed a brilliant bronze, and there was happiness inside of Kihyun from somewhere deep within—a sense of belonging that was truly profound.

"We're just taking precaution, Mr. Son," the head policeman replied matter of factly. He looked from Hyunwoo to Kihyun, studying the omega’s lithe body for evidence of abuse. Unfortunately, the sun was too bright and the omega was too far; the officer couldn't discern anything. "Why don't you come closer so we can have a discussion man to man, Mr. Son?"

Hyunwoo smirked. "Why don't you tell your men to put their guns down? Kihyun here isn't used to being around so many weapons. You're frightening him." He squeezed the spot he was holding on the omega’s shoulder as if to cue him to act out everything the alpha said.

The pressure on his shoulder was a subliminal message that became clear. Kihyun looked at the cops and feigned fear as he curled his body into Hyunwoo’s, acting wary of all the guns displayed in hands and holsters. He looked down submissively, trying to make himself look smaller—even smaller than he was next to a large man like the alpha. Hyunwoo hummed approvingly at Kihyun’s submissive body language.

The policeman cracked his neck and peered at Hyunwoo with hardened features. He had heard plenty about the manipulative games Son Hyunwoo played. He stared at young Yoo Kihyun, victim of kidnapping by the alpha suspect beside him, not for evidence of physical abuse or false imprisonment but now for signs of gaslighting.
Finally after several moments, the cop spoke up. “We have reason to suspect you and your men are carrying firearms. If you surrender your weapons, we can put ours down too. We can have ourselves a civil conversation. What do you say, Mr. Son?”

Hyunwoo grinned from ear to ear. There was no use pretending gangsters weren’t carrying guns on their person, so the alpha didn’t fight the accusation. “Of course. Men.” He motioned for his men to place their concealed weapons on the ground. They obeyed, and the scraping sound of metal sliding on concrete was heard.

Still in character, Kihyun flinched when he heard the scrape of metal. He frowned and hugged Hyunwoo’s waist tighter. He clung to the alpha to show the police he didn’t want to be separated from him. Besides, he knew Hyunwoo liked being clung to; it made him feel powerful.

Looking at cop, the alpha said, “Now you, officer.”

The head policeman maintained suspicion of Mr. Son but ordered his men to stop aiming their weapons. They did not drop their weapons to the ground like Hyunwoo’s men did, but the neutral gesture was enough for the alpha. Despite the increased defensive pheromones of his underlings, the grin on Hyunwoo’s face widened, showing off his signature fangs.

He patted Kihyun on the shoulder and extended an arm to again instruct the omega to lead the way towards the cops. “Go ahead. Show them you’re here because you want to be, pet.”

The omega relaxed his grasp on Hyunwoo, and timidly eyed the squad of policemen. Hesitantly, he walked to the edge of the balcony that overlooked the cops. He never was good at talking in front of a large group of people. Addressing at the mass, he cleared his throat, “To what do we owe the pleasure, gentlemen?”

The head officer smiled gently at the omega. “Hello Kihyun. How are you? We’re here to see you. To check on you. Why don’t you come down here and talk with us?”

Kihyun was reluctant, but Hyunwoo pushed at the small of the omega’s back to usher him down the stairs towards the officer. If they were going to have a convincing conversation, it needed to be face to face. Cautiously, Kihyun walked down the stairs to the courtyard. Instantly he felt the looming presence of the entire police force around him. It made him self-conscious of his heat to have so many betas and alphas smelling him.

Sun in his eyes, he couldn’t look straight ahead until he was directly in front of the policeman. He couldn’t detect a comforting scent, just an average beta scent masked by strong cologne. It felt strange to stand in front of an authority figure of good after weeks with one of evil. “H-hello.”

“Well, if you must know… I’m sure you’ve observed that he’s an omega.” Hyunwoo leaned in and sniffed the nape of Kihyun’s neck. “Mmm. Smells so sweet, doesn’t he? He came here because his heat was soon and he knew he needed a dominant alpha like me to satisfy him.” He observed how uncomfortable Kihyun was. “Oh, sorry, he’s not as open about that as I am. It is private information, after all.”

The officer was not amused. “I didn’t ask you, Mr. Son. I asked Mr. Yoo. If you continue to speak when not spoken to, I will ask you to leave your own property. You don’t want us to do that, do you?”

Hyunwoo was not amused either. He may’ve been a filthy gangster, but he was an educated one.
“You don’t have authority to do that unless you can prove I’ve done something illegal.”

The officer did not reciprocate Hyunwoo’s shitting-eating grin.

“Mr. Yoo, may we speak to you in confidence?” the cop asked, averting his attention to the omega. Hyunwoo clenched his jaw to stop himself from lashing out.

Listening to the two authority figures argue didn’t help calm Kihyun’s nerves. Fresh off his heat, he was hypersensitive to the pheromones around him, especially strong pheromones of anger. Nevertheless, he set his worries aside and met the cop’s eyes. If he declined the cop’s offer, it could potentially alarm them that something was up. He only had one choice, one that wouldn’t cause suspicion—he had to agree.

The omega put on a soft smile, acknowledging the beta in uniform. “By all means, sir. Shall we talk somewhere comfortable?” he asked, gesturing to the building behind him. “Say… the study?”

“That’s quite alright. No need to stray too far. Just have a few questions for you. How about we go over there?” The policeman offered as he motioned towards a cluster of police cars with red and blue flashing lights. “It’ll only be a moment. We won’t take much of your time.”

As the cop walked to the area, Hyunwoo watched him with hate in his eyes. Kihyun briefly glanced at the alpha as he stared down the cop. He placed a reassuring hand on Hyunwoo’s shoulder, and the corner of his lips lifted into a smile. His touch lingered as he followed the policeman, hand sliding down Hyunwoo’s bicep and falling to his side when he was too far away.

Hyunwoo didn’t react to the omega’s gentle reassurance. He probably should’ve played up the affection to add to their false display of intimacy, but he wasn’t used to that kind of behavior.

The morning breeze shook the trees as it danced by and roused flower buds to begin their daily blossom. Ironically, it was a peaceful morning despite the swarm of riot police and gangsters pretending to be friendly to one another. Yet even as it danced over Hyunwoo’s skin, not even it’s smooth caress could soothe his intensity.

Even far away, the alpha couldn’t peel his eyes away from them. What if Kihyun was confessing everything and Hyunwoo was exposed? The fucking cops would finally have evidence to lock him away for life. Furious, Hyunwoo clenched his fists at his sides. That rotten little snitch Kihyun, he’d kill him. As he stewed in his disquiet, he watched the policeman tip the brim of his hat and grin. Slimy bastard.

The cop analyzed Kihyun’s behavior for warning signs. “Thank you for agreeing to answer questions. We apologize for the subject of our discussion, but it is very important you answer honestly. How do you know Mr. Son?”

The first question almost caught Kihyun off guard. Almost.

“Oh, he and my uncle were acquainted…” It wasn’t a lie, technically. Kihyun knew his uncle was involved with Hyunwoo, who was a failsafe for his alleged failing café.

“Your uncle who passed away?” The cop asked as he scribbled information in a small notebook he pulled from his breast pocket. There was plenty of information on file to suspect Hyunwoo was related to events leading to Mr. Yoo’s death. Maybe he could use Kihyun to gather more clues on the subject. “And what was their relationship?”

Kihyun sighed and lowered his head. Even if he and his uncle weren’t close, the death of the old man weighed heavily on his heart. Despite that, he knew the beta was searching for evidence
anywhere he could find it, so he even had to be careful how he talked about his uncle. “Yeah, um...” he rubbed the back of his head, “Work buddies? All I know is Hyunwoo helped the café my uncle owned. That’s where I met Hyunwoo.”

Pencil scribbling quickly on lined paper, the cop paused to write before continuing. “What is your relationship with Mr. Son?” he asked, keeping the topics basic for now.

Off in the near distance, Hyunwoo still observed them, their surroundings, every motion made by anyone near them. Even the soft rustling of leaves had him on edge.

Kihyun licked his lips. “Uh, well, we...” A slight flush tinted his cheeks at the question. “We’re, um... okay, at the moment we’re fuck buddies... He helped me through my heat this week.”

The cop cleared his throat and did his best to hide the instinctual urge to groan at an omega in heat. He cleared his throat again and tried to compose himself. He found it challenging, though, to meet the omega’s gaze, and he was fairly certain it had a lot to do with the sweet pheromones rolling off of Kihyun in gentle waves. “I see. This arrangement... is it a recurring event during your heat?”

Kihyun crossed his arms over his chest and rubbed his shoulders. “This is the first heat I’ve been with him,” the omega replied, bashful talking to the cop about such an private, intimate subject.

“So this arrangement is new?” The cop said, but it looked like he was simply thinking out loud. After a long pause, he spoke, “Mr. Yoo, I’m going to be upfront with you. There’s a missing person report filed under your name. We have been looking for you for some time. A week ago, we received an anonymous call describing a male omega covered in bruises at a McDonald’s who matches your profile. The caller said the omega was with a large alpha identified as Son Hyunwoo...”

At the cop’s words, Kihyun became acutely aware of the hickeys and love bites on his neck given by suspected kidnapper Hyunwoo. He casually attempted to cover them with his hands, but he knew the beta already saw them.

The policeman regarded Kihyun carefully. “We have reason to suspect you are kept here against your will, Mr. Yoo. Is this true? Please, we are only trying to help you.”

There was countless information that suggested Hyunwoo’s guilt, such as security camera footage from a drugstore and discovery of a lime green Lamborghini involved in a car chase that occurred the same night as the witness’s report. It was all there—everything they needed except hard evidence. But everyone was too afraid to confess, and Son Hyunwoo kept his business tight and orderly. Kihyun was their only hope; they needed his admission of truth.

“Missing? Against my will? No...” he denied, feigning surprise. “No, the only thing that has kept me hostage here all week has been my heat. I can’t get very far, as you can imagine.”

The beta hummed low on his throat, disappointed in the omega’s response. He knew he was being lied to. Perhaps with a little persuasive nudging, he could draw out the truth. “The missing person report was filed three days prior to the anonymous caller by one Mr. Lee Minhyuk. Do you know a beta by that name?”

Kihyun perked up at the mention of his best friend and nodded his head. “Yeah, Min’s my best friend.” God, he missed the blond beta so much. “My phone broke, so he probably panicked because I wasn’t answering his calls or texts...”

Before the cop could speak, his radio buzzed with a raspy, almost indistinguishable voice. He
pulled it from his clip and pressed the side button to respond: “Yes, send him out.” As he clipped
the radio back to his belt, the back passenger door of the nearest police vehicle opened. Kihyun
followed the sound of movement with his eyes.

As quick as the door opened came the person from within—a familiar flash of blond and the aroma
of fresh mint.
Chapter 14

Joy surged through Kihyun as he immediately recognized the person as his best friend. “Min?!” he gasped and dashed towards the beta, eyes moistening with oncoming tears. “Minhyuk!”

The instant Minhyuk set his sights on the omega, his eyes welled with tears and he ran over.

He wrapped his arms tight around his best friend and buried his face in his neck, sweet cherry peace soothing his rapidly beating heart. Kihyun clung to the beta, too; his fingers disappearing into blond hair as he cradled the older man against him. The familiar scent of mint soaked into his being, and tears of happiness trickled down his cheeks.

Minhyuk sobbed into the crook of Kihyun’s shoulder, heart heavy. “I’m so glad you’re safe, Ki,” he muttered, tone a blend of relief and stress. “I thought he was going to kill you. I thought...” He was so emotional, he couldn’t even finish his sentence. “I-I miss you so, so much.”

The words stung Kihyun’s heart. Minhyuk must’ve worried himself sick. Of course he did, any sane person would. “Oh, Min... I’m here. I-I’m okay.” His voice cracked amidst their embrace. “I miss you too. God, I can’t believe you’re here.”

Minhyuk withdrew from their embrace suddenly, and, grasping Kihyun by the shoulders, he stared at his best friend with glossy eyes. “Did he hurt you?” he asked pointedly.

Then he saw it. The flushed skin, the dazzling gaze, the ethereal aura—Kihyun was in heat. Thinking of Kihyun around an alpha like Hyunwoo during such a time, Minhyuk felt like puking. “Damn it Kihyun, did he...” The beta swallowed hard, uncomfortable finishing his thought aloud. “Did he help you through it?” Minhyuk’s words were a low whisper that burned his lips as he spoke them.

Kihyun gazed into Minhyuk’s brown eyes, still lost in the clean scent of mint. Those eyes held so much concern, Kihyun couldn’t bear to see them wetter, not when they were already so glossy with unfallen tears. He wiped his wet cheeks with his wrist and nodded, sniffing. “Y-yeah... I’m still not completely over it, but I’m okay. I’m in one piece...”

Minhyuk’s heart shattered into a million pieces. Rage ignited within him and all he could see was red. Ignoring his instincts to yield to a dominant alpha like Hyunwoo, Minhyuk stepped past Kihyun and charged towards him. “You sick motherfucker. I’ll fucking kill you. I’ll—”

The beta was immediately seized by a swarm of cops. He jerked and pulled from their restraint, kicking and screaming profanities at the alpha on the other side of the courtyard. “You fucking raped him, didn’t you? You fucking monster!”

Hyunwoo cracked a haughty grin. He grabbed his dick through his pants and replied, “I didn’t rape him. He begged for every fucking inch of this cock.”

Several cops side-eyed Hyunwoo’s vulgarity. It was extremely apparent to everyone that Hyunwoo didn’t give a fuck about anyone’s opinions of him, but that only provoked Minhyuk more. He thrashed against the cops’ grip, shouting and writhing and causing a scene. Kihyun hurried towards the commotion, pushing past cops and stepping in front of Minhyuk in an attempt to mitigate the drama.

“Min, love, look at me.” Kihyun pressed the palm of his hand to Minhyuk’s cheek; the beta
flinched but stopped resisting the cops’ hold on him. “He didn’t rape me, okay? I promise.” Hyunwoo’s insensitivity pissed him off and damaged his dignity, but right now he was more concerned about consoling his best friend than the alpha. “Please, calm down.”

Minhyuk tried to pacify himself once he realized that he disrupted the fake, diplomatic etiquette everyone displayed; it was about maintaining an image, not serving justice. He couldn’t help his anger, though. He knew the alpha was a filthy liar, but worst of all, he knew when his best friend was lying too. Frustration welled up again, threatening to pour over the edge.

“He’s a liar. How are you all just standing by when a criminal like him is walking free?” Minhyuk shouted, voice strained. Tears fell down his heated cheeks from the sheer frustration he felt. Never had he felt so hopeless. The law failed. Evil won. The cycle repeated, as always.

The head policeman ignored the statement. Instead, he repeatedly scolded Minhyuk for his rash behavior. An affiliate of the law held himself with decorum… just like a gangster in the jo-pok. It was all the same front of fraud and scheming. After, as if realizing the truth of Minhyuk’s words but too swept up in the hypocrisy, the cop told the beta to quiet down. He kept a wary eye on Hyunwoo, but the alpha simply stood and watched Minhyuk make a fool of himself in front of everyone with a wry grin. Hyunwoo didn’t have to do anything—Minhyuk played himself.

Defeated, Minhyuk turned to the omega. “You can be free… Why are you still here? Why are you lying to everyone?” he asked in the smallest, saddest tone the omega had ever heard.

Kihyun hated this. He despised seeing his best friend like this. Seeing Minhyuk’s tears broke his heart, pained him like a thousand needles in his soul. “Min…” He only wanted to hold the beta until all his troubles disappeared. “I’m… it’s… well…” His mind was jumbled, but there were no reassuring words to say anyway.

Hyunwoo noticed Kihyun’s struggle. It was crucial to maintain their image, and though the beta’s insolence inadvertently helped the facade, the omega was very quickly crumbling under pressure. It was a smart albeit slimy move to involve Minhyuk on the police’s part; they knew it would be a powerful breakthrough tool, and for the most part they were right.

“He freely chooses to be here,” explained Hyunwoo as he approached the crowd of people with a cocky stroll. Kihyun’s stare met the ground as the alpha once again came to Kihyun’s rescue, even when it wasn’t requested. He bit his tongue, however, and let the alpha manipulate his puppet strings.

Defensive, Minhyuk snarled. “If he freely chooses to be here, then he can freely choose to visit me, isn’t that right?”

All police attention shot to Hyunwoo. How he answered that question determined a great deal. He placed a hand around Kihyun’s back and held him by the waist. To keep up the appearance, Kihyun didn’t push Hyunwoo’s hand away, but his eyes were on Minhyuk like the alpha wasn’t there. To deny he had freedom would mean trouble—Kihyun knew Hyunwoo was capable of heinous acts of punishment, he saw it with his own eyes—but his omega instincts couldn’t bear to leave the alpha either, especially after his heat, especially after he found purpose in Hyunwoo’s love.

The police, eyes glued to the pair, waited on baited breath to catch Hyunwoo slipping. The motherfuckers would wait for eternity.

The alpha smirked, unphased. “Why don’t you ask him? He makes his own choices.”
“You motherfucker!” Minhyuk hissed, potent pheromones of anger affecting the betas in uniform. Hyunwoo was deceiving everyone. He was terrible and cruel and emotionally manipulating his best friend in the whole fucking world. Why did no one but him seem to care? He felt like breaking down, but instead he tried one last time to get through to the omega. “Kihyun, you’ll visit, won’t you? I miss you so fucking much… even if you choose to be with him, I miss your company and your smile and… just, everything…”

Kihyun smiled at Minhyuk as if nothing was wrong, as if there was no need to be so sad. “Of course, love, I’ll come visit. I miss you too.” It was true, he did miss Minhyuk—that was real, even if his and Hyunwoo’s relationship was a complicated act to fool those none-the-wiser, including himself.

The alpha’s jaw clenched as he watched the exchange between the omega and his friend. Beneath his calm facade, he was seething. Regardless of all the lies and deceit, the omega was indeed a prisoner in the alpha’s custody. He was trapped like a rat in a cage. Yet with the mere presence of that meddling beta at the hand of the police, Kihyun’s escape was granted to him. A key. The cage doors were unlocked. With everything that happened in the past week and a half, Kihyun would be stupid to deny foul play and stay. Worst of all, Hyunwoo couldn’t do a damn thing to prevent it or else he’d finally succumb to the law.

Nevertheless, Kihyun closed the cage doors on himself and chose to stay like the good little omega bitch he was.

“Well, there you have it. Your heat is over, go visit your friend,” Hyunwoo said to Kihyun with fake affection. He whipped his attention to the head cop. “I think we’re done here. Now get off my property.”

The cop narrowed his eyes at Hyunwoo. None of this seemed legitimate, but if the alleged victim claimed he was in fact not a victim, even when confronted with emotionally compelling tactics, then legally there was no ground on which to stand. “Pack up, boys. We’re heading back to the station,” he declared, and all the cops followed the order.

Stubborn, Minhyuk refused to leave Kihyun’s side. He couldn’t leave him, not again, not after everything, but the head policeman forced him to leave with the others. He had no choice but to go. Before he left, he gave Kihyun one last hug. Kihyun held Minhyuk tight, longer than before when they hugged. Minhyuk whispered, “I’ll see you soon. I promise.”

And Kihyun fought back more tears.

The policeman himself remained in place, solemnly staring at Hyunwoo until the very last minute. “Let it be known that I do not trust you, Son Hyunwoo. One day, we’ll get you.”

The alpha stood straight and craned his neck, peering at the cop with cruel intentions. A soft breeze danced around him as morning gave way to noon. Kihyun felt the cop’s eyes on him, but he turned the other cheek, replaying the last few hours in his head like a horror sequence.

“Sorry for the trouble,” said the cop to Kihyun before he too walked away.

Kihyun already missed his best friend, but he knew this was a victory for Hyunwoo. They fooled the cops, maybe not well, but enough to let them know Kihyun wasn’t in any danger. He hoped he made the alpha proud, but Hyunwoo said nothing.

They waited until the last vehicle left the driveway and the wrought iron gates closed with a loud clunk. Then, Hyunwoo roughly seized Kihyun by the arm and pulled him along. “Come on, get
He dragged the omega up the entryway steps until they reached the door. Elise kindly opened the door for her master and his underlings, but found it difficult to look at anyone other than Kihyun. She gave the omega a soft, sad smile, like she already knew everything that happened without words needing to be spoken.

Once they both were inside, Hyunwoo tossed Kihyun against the hard wall. The omega gritted his teeth when his shoulder met marble. He glared with intense abhor over his shoulder, eyes trained on the pacing alpha. Elise stayed by the door, knowing better than to get involved.

“That bullshit with the beta stops now,” Hyunwoo hissed, irate and jealous. He didn’t want to share his omega with a lowly beta. “The fucking cops will be breathing down my neck expecting you to visit that piece of trash... We’ll give them what they want, but make no mistake I’m not doing this for you.”

The alpha paced in short rows, his anger building quicker and quicker as the effects of his rut that he painfully suppressed in the cops’ presence finally came to a full boil. “You don’t have any goddamn freedom, you understand me? You only go with one of my men. They will follow you everywhere like a fucking shadow.”

And there it was, pure villainous intent.

Kihyun rubbed the tender area of his shoulder, spitting foul words at Hyunwoo in his mind but in reality, he stayed silent. Mouthing off to the gangster would earn Kihyun another black eye when his other one had finally healed just days ago.

“You hear you me? You understand what I am telling you? You are here to pay a debt to me, not fuck around with someone else,” he growled, jealousy provoking him again. He was there for the omega in heat. He gave him a beautiful penthouse to stay in. He gave him all things lavish and expensive. Kihyun was just an ungrateful brat. “Elise, escort him to his room. Get him out of my sight.”

The maid who had remained uncomfortably by the door frowned but nodded obediently.

The alpha stormed off to chain-smoke his bitter jealousy away.

+ 

Ten days ago the police stormed Son Hyunwoo’s penthouse with handguns and wild accusations, but the two of them played their roles well—Hyunwoo the liar with everything to lose, and Kihyun the pawn who sold the lie.

Everything went smoothly until an unexpected variable threw everything off course: Minhyuk, the omega’s best friend. Hyunwoo had warned him to stay out of business that didn’t concern him, but he blatantly ignored it. And now, the alpha was ready to retaliate the jo-pok way, with loaded guns and brass knuckles. Unfortunately, Minhyuk’s involvement with the police complicated that option too. Hyunwoo had no choice but to play the goody-goody games of the law.

As such, the alpha carried out business as usual, ensuring tight workflow and tighter cleanup—this was no time to have loose ends. Over the ten day span, he held meeting after meeting with other jo-pok branches of nearby territories. Correspondence from all were reported back to Boss Bang for the final verdict pertaining to operation of illicit jo-pok activity and trade. Luckily, Hyunwoo’s business savvy granted him redemption, albeit temporarily.
The pressure to stay in Boss Bang’s good graces embedded in his subconscious, serving as a constant reminder never to allow the id to overcome the superego. He couldn’t fuck up, not again, not anymore; he had an empire and reputation to uphold. In his cruel world, one more fuck up could cost him his life.

To stay on up and up, Hyunwoo used his weakness—Kihyun—as his strength. A typical branch meeting saw the likes of dominant alphas, so Hyunwoo found it easier to persuade compliance and amiability from other bosses with an omega’s presence. He took Kihyun along because his sweet cherry scent was exquisite on discriminating alpha palates, and Hyunwoo wasn’t opposed to sharing if it meant closing the deal anyway.

And that was exactly the tactic of tonight’s meeting.

Though it was the last meeting organized by Hyunwoo in an effort to rectify his high profile mishaps, it was doubly important in terms of financial benefit. If he could connect Gwangju to other territories, it would extend the reach of his products to potential buyers. It was self-gain disguised as collaboration for retribution.

At ten o’clock at night, Hyunwoo and his pretty omega arrived at the evening’s agreed upon location: an expensive, neon-lit sushi restaurant in a wealthy district of town. They had reserved a special room to indulge in jo-pok festivities and discuss business privately, but the storefront was teeming with commonfolk.

Parked in an equally special private valet lot were all the vehicles of Korea’s jo-pok branch bosses. Naturally, as was the case with rich alphas with inflated egos, every boss drove designer vehicles to the restaurant. Hyunwoo was no exception, of course. He chose the McLaren from his garage collection for the evening—the rich matte gold one that accented Kihyun’s attire.

In the garage above the restaurant, Hyunwoo tossed half a cigarette onto the cement and crushed it with his boot as he stepped out of the McLaren. A loose strand of his otherwise gelled hair fell over an eye as he slammed shut the door. Even just the pheromone-laden air outside the building was evidence enough of the presence of powerful alphas within. He smirked.

Rounding the car, he opened the passenger door for Kihyun like the gentleman he pretended to be. As the omega exited, the v-neck of his shirt came down far, exposing the skin of his chest and the curve of his pecs. A black blazer gave him the look of luxury, held together by a gold button across his stomach. Black jeans fit his body like a second skin, ripped along the front to reveal smooth skin from calf to thigh.

Diamond earrings dangled from his ears like small glittering jewels twinkling in the moonlight. A diamond studded collar wrapped around his neck, matching the bracelet against his wrist. Designer shoes gave him a slight lift in height. Transparent brownish-purple nail polish gave his fingers their own lavish look, as if the array of rings on each finger wasn’t enough.

Eyes shadowed with makeup, skin shimmering with highlighter, and lips glistening with a clear lip gloss—the perfect look to play the part of an omega bitch at his alpha’s every beck and call.

Kihyun truly was drop dead gorgeous. Coupled with his delectable scent, no wonder Hyunwoo had to have him.

Slowly, Hyunwoo closed the door, dark eyes still eyefucking the omega. He was shameless and confident and knew exactly what he wanted. All the naughty thoughts that raced into his mind made his lips curl into a perverted grin. His fangs glinting under garage spotlights, he closed in on Kihyun, pressing a kiss to his jugular, nipping his pierced lobe where diamond earrings dangled.
“You look delicious, pet.”

A shiver ran up Kihyun’s spine at the sensual actions against his skin. Hyunwoo was bold; unafraid of showing the world that the alluring omega was his. The omega sighed, affected by the flirting alpha and his confidence. “Do you want to eat me up?” he whispered, playing his role for the handsome alpha.

“I just might,” Hyunwoo growled, bergamot citrus pheromones oozing from his body, enveloping the omega. He only meant to scent mark the omega so the other alphas would know who he belonged to, but there was something about Kihyun recently that he just couldn’t get enough.

The alpha tapped a finger under Kihyun’s chin and pushed it up, dipping low to kiss the omega’s sweet lips. It wasn’t an innocent kiss, it was sensual and passionate—it was meant to get Kihyun hot and bothered so he’d look extra pretty for Hyunwoo’s branch partners. A small noise escaped the omega’s lips, a shocked but content whine barely audible to anyone but Hyunwoo.

Alpha pheromones tickled Kihyun’s nose and soaked into his body, masking cherry blossoms with spice. Hyunwoo smiled when he pulled away from the kiss, pleased at what he’d done. In a gentle tone that he reserved for special occasions, he said, “Let’s go in, pet. The others don’t like to be kept waiting.”

His Ferragamo shoes were strong on the cement as he walked across it to the restaurant entrance. He spoke with the hostess at the podium, who quickly directed him through the restaurant. Kihyun observed the interior, taking in the lavish designs that piqued his aesthetic. Finally, they came upon a backroom separated from the main building by an elaborate, silk curtain and a long hallway. The hostess remained quiet the entire time and never made eye contact as she motioned for them to pass.

When they entered the special room, she stopped short of a raised wooden platform, bowed politely, and left. The wooden platform was closed off by wood and opaque paper walls decorated with traditional Korean paintings. The edge of the platform was lined with expensive men’s shoes and women’s platform pumps. Tobacco and marijuana smoke fumed out the top and enshrouded the exterior like settling fog. Uproarious laughter and drunken, brazen male voices juxtaposed the otherwise serene ambiance.

Hunwoo removed his shoes and placed them neatly at the edge. “This is an important night. You will do anything it takes to close the deal, understand?”

The acrid mix of strong alpha scents hit Kihyun like a freight train. His stomach churned, rolling sourly the more scents he inhaled. The effect was too substantial all at once—shit, he felt sick. His throat tightened as bile threatened to force its way up. He willed it down, but the acidic gurgle burned his throat.

Nevertheless, he was quick to remove his shoes as well and set them beside Hyunwoo’s. “Yes, my lord. Speak and I’ll follow,” he said, curling his arms around Hyunwoo like an escort, twinkling blue contacts gazing up at the boss with interest. “Anything.”

Hyunwoo’s alpha ego swelled at the unexpected but accurate name Kihyun have him. His ego swelled doubly when the omega latched onto him like cherry arm candy.

Together they entered the room, revealing authoritative alpha men of various influences and omegas in barely any clothing sitting on their laps. More smoke filled the room than escaped,
casting a haze over the entire scene. The room positively reeked of alcohol, weed, and cheap perfume that gave Kihyun more to be sick about, but again he ignored it.

Once Hyunwoo made his appearance in the entryway, they were welcomed with boisterous intoxication and distasteful jo-pok jargon that immediately delivered Hyunwoo into a hypermasculinized, hyper-alpha headspace. He shit-talked with the best of them as he navigated Kihyun to their designated spot. They were to sit the head because Hyunwoo was hosting the meeting in his territory of Gwangju.

The alpha spread his legs wide and tapped his thigh with a jeweled finger, a cue for Kihyun to sit. Kihyun was a well disciplined doll that followed his owner’s every wicked whim, which was why he didn’t hesitate when Hyunwoo beckoned, the action simple but powerful. The alpha was dominant by definition, a king amongst peasants; he had to show off in front of others. The omega smiled flirtatiously, knowing others were staring, their eyes raking over his petite form not so subtly, yet his attention was only on Hyunwoo.

He sat on the alpha’s thigh and leaned into the muscular man. His hand found its way to Hyunwoo’s chest, decorated fingers rubbing across tan skin of the alpha’s chest peeking out from his shirt. The omega, as shy as he was, kept his eyes downcast. He felt self-conscious, thinking the other omegas in little clothing were much more to look at than himself.

Even with pretty things in their laps, all the alphas focused on the fresh meat sitting in Hyunwoo’s lap. They had heard rumors of Son Hyunwoo, Boss of Gwangju, keeping company with a lowly omega. No one knew the cruel bastard to be sweet on one person for so long. In their line of work, getting involved with someone was unwise—it was viewed as a weakness to be strategically exploited for power. There was no mistaking that the alpha was in fact emotionally attached, too; overprotectiveness and jealousy radiated from him like heat from the sun.

Hyunwoo wrapped an arm around the small of Kihyun’s back and drew him closer, like a child showing off his prized toy. Kihyun’s legs crossed as his fingers played with small hairs on the back of Hyunwoo’s neck; a simple display of affection to assist the image. The alpha’s posture wide and manly, he looked overconfident and important at the head of the table. “Gentlemen, there’s much business to discuss, but I am your host after all, and I want to welcome you with Gwangju hospitality.”

A fanged grin and a snap of his fingers called in the hospitable surprise from behind the wooden doors—a naked omega woman covered in colorful raw fish and seaweeds. Kihyun’s eyes followed the sound of motion, landing them on the woman. Just like that, he felt queasy again.

Pungent alpha pheromones further tainted the air as the primal instinct to devour the naked omega before them took over. As she was laid on the dining table by the gingerly hands of a team of servants, guests sat upright and ogled the appetizing display before them. The other scantily-dressed omegas pouted at the sudden lack of attention, and soon even the jealous aroma of omega pheromones snuffed out the smell of smoke.

“By all means, eat. Eat ‘til you’re full. We’ll discuss business on a full stomach.”

As the others dug in, Kihyun eyed the woman. He was thankful it wasn’t him on display like some fancy piece of fine china. The more he observed her, how she lay motionless and exposed, the more he psyched himself out. The smells, the people, the atmosphere was paralyzing, nauseating. His head spun. His stomach flipped.
He swallowed thickly and turned towards Hyunwoo with a timid demeanour. “May I... please be excused for a few moments?” He asked quietly, fidgeting with the rings around his middle finger.

Hynnwo clenched his jaw and ignored the pathetic request. “No. You sit, and you sit quietly,” the alpha hissed in a low voice. “Shut your mouth and play your role.”

Not wanting to make a scene, the omega silently begged the nausea to disappear. Sighing, he mumbled, “Yes, sir.”

Luckily it didn’t seem to bother the others as they plucked the freshest sashimi Gwangju had to offer off the woman’s tan skin. Unaffected, they cracked crass jokes and passed around a fat joint as they ate; alcohol and marijuana knocked down their inhibitions and made them more easygoing and cooperative. The sounds of their revelry echoed through the halls, letting everyone outside hear the hedonistic nature of gangsters.

As everyone continued to eat and smoke and drink and grope their hormone-crazed omega pets, Hyunwoo leaned back in his seat and pulled a pack of cherry cigarettes from his suit jacket pocket. His eyes scanned over the belligerent fucks he called his jo-pok brothers as he pinned a cig between his lips. With a smirk, he handed Kihyun his rose gold zippo lighter and commanded the omega to light his cigarette with the snap of his fingers.

Kihyun obediently took the lighter, wondering if his distressed pheromones were even noticeable to the alpha he sat on. Nevertheless, he flicked the lighter on and held the flame under the tip of the cigarette, watching it flicker and turn orange.

The alphas marveled at how well-trained Hyunwoo’s omega was. “When are you going to share your omega to sweeten the deal?” shouted the Ulsan boss, pointing to the pair with chopsticks.

Cigarette in his mouth, Hyunwoo replied, “When you accept my fucking deal.”

The others cackled louder than ever, but Kihyun tensed. Would the alpha actually share him? Who was he kidding. Of course he would.

Hyunwoo inhaled and exhaled smoke as he observed the chaos he entertained. He flicked the ash tip of the cigarette into an empty shot glass and held it between his fingers. And, for the second time since they arrived, he finally acknowledged the omega sitting on his lap.

“You should eat,” he said casually, more like a suggestion and less like a command, but he seemed bothered to even tell the omega. “I spent more money on the meal than I did on the whores, you know.”

Kihyun blinked his sparkly eyes at the alpha, too paranoid and scared to tell Hyunwoo he felt ill… Well, one little piece of food couldn’t hurt, right? He reached with chopsticks for the most appealing, most simple piece of food on the woman. He dabbed the roll into a small bowl of sauce, fending the need to gag. He slid the sashimi into his mouth, chewing gingerly. The taste melted into his tongue, churning his stomach more than ever.

Hyunwoo hummed in approval, pleased.

When everyone’s hunger seemed sated, a beta server delivered an expensive bottle of aged, foreign whiskey and poured a round of shots for only the alphas at the table. The woman with raw fish on her body was now entirely naked, the most delectable parts of her exposed for wandering eyes. Generally, it was against the rules to touch the woman inappropriately, but this restaurant owed
lot of money to Hyunwoo, so the alpha made his own rules.

Jealous at once again losing attention, the omega whores vied for their alpha’s attention again, kissing necks and nipping earlobes, desperate to be the cute little pet they take home for the night. Besides, who didn’t want to fuck a rich gangster? They always tipped so well.

“I hope the meal was to your liking, gentlemen.”

Muttered agreement filled the room. Hyunwoo lifted a shot glass in the air, cuing the others to mimic the gesture. Once they did, he slammed back the shot and, again, they followed.

“Now, let’s discuss what we’re all here for—Boss Bang has requested all branch powers produce a functional business plan to allow efficient movement of firearms through all territories. It is my understanding a working system is in place in Daegu and Busan. A route connecting southern territories to Seoul is needed... and Gwangju is the missing piece, isn’t it?”

The alphas muttered amongst themselves again.

“I control a strategic location in the Honam region that connects both the south to the north in terms of transport, as well as numerous ports. The only problem is that I do not push weapons, as you all know, but I can easily move firearms with drug or human shipments... for the right deal.”

The men talked among themselves as Hyunwoo sat quietly and patiently. Whether Son Hyunwoo would get involved in the distribution and black market sale of weapons was not up for consideration prior to this meeting. The very idea of it spurred a lot of mixed feedback from the other bosses, as some jumped at the opportunity to reach more buyers and others refused to work with the alpha at all.

Tempers and egos ignited explosive arguments, but Hyunwoo observed the chaos without speaking. He knew what he was doing—he knew he was a strategic asset and powerful ally... and an even worse enemy.

Kihyun sat quietly as the alphas argued. So much was being said, information he knew could put away these men for life. No doubt all these men had done wrong at some point in their dangerous lives with the kind of work they do with jo-pok. Even sitting in their presence was chilling.

After several moments, someone spoke up.

“We believe your drug and sex trafficking empire will see a loss of movement and profit if you partake in the arms race,” explained the Ulsan boss, speaking on behalf of the others. “Boss Bang would not approve of such a significant blow to jo-pok economy, don’t you think?”

Hyunwoo’s jaw clenched. “I don’t do sloppy business.”

Another boss piped up, “You've drawn excessive police attention in the last month. I’d call that very sloppy.”

Mention of the police automatically made Kihyun know it was because of him. Guilt settled alongside the sourness in his gut, reminding him he was a liability to Hyunwoo. He dared not glance over at the alpha in this moment.

Hyunwoo’s knee-jerk impulse was to launch over the table and retaliate, but he needed this deal as badly as the others did. They were absolutely right, but hearing it from them left a bitter taste in his mouth.
“Affairs have been dealt with directly and are no longer a problem,” replied Hyunwoo with much restraint. “You know I have offered you all a good deal. All I’m asking for is something good in turn. Say… quarter share of profit to cover costs of my plentiful resources.”

The Incheon boss slammed his fists on the table. “Outrage!” He growled, fangs bared, “Who the fuck do you think you’re talking to! I’m not your underling, boy—”

Hyunwoo promptly cut him off. “Then you have the wisdom to understand supply and demand is generated from resources that create and sustain it.”

Silence.

“Maybe with some persuasion…” the Busan boss cooed, eying Kihyun, “…we’ll be more willing to compromise.”

Kihyun’s innocent eyes looked towards the last man who spoke, understanding his intentions. Each passing day the omega was with Hyunwoo, his innocence dissolved into the dark depths of the wicked jo-pok world. As repulsive as the thought to entertain these sinister brutes was, he was an obedient omega who promised his alpha he’d do anything to help close the deal.

Despite the looming scent of spiced bergamot triggered by Hyunwoo’s possessiveness of his omega, he knew Kihyun’s value as an omega—a lamb in the midst of wolves.

He took a long, deep drag of his cigarette, letting the cherry smoke linger in his lungs before exhaling a dense smoke cloud. Then, he regarded the omega in his lap with nothing but a steeled stare into warm, gentle eyes.

“By all means...”
Kihyun fought the urge to be shocked at Hyunwoo’s willingness to share him. He knew this was coming. Meetings always panned out this way. This was the first time, however, that he was in the presence of so many dominant alphas. He was beyond intimidated; he was petrified.

Nevertheless, Kihyun understood the command and nodded in acknowledgment.

The omega leaned over the table for a shot glass, sure to flash a bit of skin as he did; just a tease at most. He downed the shot of whatever contents were inside before licking the smeared gloss around his lips. He felt the sting of alcohol on his tastebuds, souring his stomach, but he ignored the discomfort. As a well behaved puppet, he had to do his best not to disappoint the sleazy men at the table, or his alpha.

Inhibitions slightly clearing, Kihyun gathered enough confidence to act. He crawled onto the table in front of everyone, going from Hyunwoo’s lap to the table in seconds. Nerves eating away at him, he was too intimidated to entertain an alpha first. So, naturally, he chose the most comfortable option presented to him—he slithered to the naked woman on display, the one he had tried to ignore earlier to give decency to. His moves were sultry as he crawled atop her, resembling a tiger stalking its prey, full of carnal appetite.

With his knees on either side of her hips, the omega peered down at her look of surprise. She was a beautiful Japanese woman with straight, black hair and honey-brown eyes. Her cheeks painted pink from the sudden salacious mood Kihyun thrust upon her. Inhaling her enticing omega scent of chocolate as he hovered over her, he winked at her; an innocent and friendly gesture far from what he was about to do.

Balancing on one arm, ass sticking out, body language submissive, Kihyun posed for alpha eyes. He pressed a finger to her chin and tilted it up, pleased at the way she seemed to understand the situation. This was all merely for show. To entertain. He cupped her jaw, keeping her still as he pressed his lips to hers. He delighted in the way she snaked her arms around his waist, remains of uneaten sashimi falling from her naked body. Their kiss turned heated, glossy lips moving against bare plush ones as the two omegas made out. Kihyun’s eyelids fell as he felt himself melt into the foreign taste of her tongue in his mouth.

The aroma of cherry chocolate hung in the air like the sweetest dessert, sending the alphas into a frenzy. They basked in the erotic display in front of them—two omegas, one of them entirely naked, making out just for them.

They cat-called and made inappropriate remarks as they guzzled alcohol and chain-smoked. There was no decorum, and practicing patience was an understatement. Each alpha willed down their innate desire to claim and dominate, to intervene in the delicate display. The two omegas were sensual and gorgeous, but they were passive to one another—it was the alpha way to take charge and command the omega. But this was a room of high ranking bosses who carved their own path in the jo-pok world. Not all rewards were earned by haste. They revelled in the show, tantalized by the languidness.

All the strong, dominant alpha pheromones in the room effected Kihyun. He didn’t expect to feel so hot and bothered by his exhibition, but he learned he quite liked their eyes on him. He bit his bottom lip at the realization that every alpha could probably smell how wet their attention made him. But before he could get too aroused, he leaned away from the woman and sat back, licking his lips and mewling at the taste of her stained on his tongue.
Kihyun glanced down at her, mouthing ‘thanks.’ He earned a small, shy smile in return. He then crawled backwards, flushing at the dirty talk by the room of gangsters. They regarded him like the slut he was, and it made so much wetter. He glanced at Hyunwoo, looking for any sign of approval or encouragement… or perhaps he just wanted to get the alpha hot and bothered too.

Hyunwoo locked gazes with the omega. It was intense and strangely intimate. Hell, the alpha didn’t want the omega to stop his performance. Just like all the other alphas in the smoky room, he too was turned on by the seduction. The woman Kihyun had kissed was beautiful, her scent divine, her naked body soft and curvy, but he couldn’t tear his lustful gaze from the omega—his omega.

And, no matter what the omega did next, Hyunwoo knew it was all for him. The omega was a good little puppet.

Kihyun slid off the table and swayed his hips as he walked, bright eyes targeted on a particular alpha, the Busan boss. He was older than Hyunwoo by the look of grey hair and deep wrinkles on his face; his image forged of a long life of corruption and twisted ideals. With a smirk, he leaned back in his chair and savored the omega’s saunter.

A gorgeous omega prostitute with pinkish hair and hardly any clothing was noticeably agitated at Kihyun as he approached her company. A margarita between her fingers, her drunken eyes examined Kihyun curiously, but her jealous aura was as green and sour as the fruit she smelled like—limes were meant for tequila, after all, not bitter bitches.

Kihyun had plans for her, however.

With a smile, he sat on the man’s lap. He took the cigarette from between the old man’s fingers and placed it between his own glossy lips. Inhaling a deep breath, he cupped the other omega’s flushed cheek and connected their lips, exhaling the smoke into her mouth. Smoke seeped out of the corners of their mouths as they made out, casting a smoky aura around them. Kihyun’s blue eyes darted to Hyunwoo just as he bit her full lower lip, and she moaned as if it were the plan all along.

Hyunwoo leaned back in his chair, the deep plunge of his burgundy button-up revealing his broad chest. His cock was half hard in his pants as he watched Kihyun’s show, alpha instincts provoked with each sensual touch of another Kihyun made. As much as it irritated him to share, the boy was doing well. The other bosses were enthralled and bewitched, alpha palates salivating like dogs for a bone.

Kihyun smoked the rest of the Busan boss’s cigarette, blowing out his last breath as he wedged the butt of the cig into a pile of wasabi on the man’s plate. As he stood up, he winked at the prostitute before eying his next target—the Ulsan boss: a younger man, probably in his mid-forties, who had a fat cigar shoved in his mouth.

Kihyun rounded the table with a saucy sway of his hips. His newfound confidence skyrocketed from the attention he received from hungry eyes around the room. When the omega reached the Incheon boss, he outright straddled the man’s pinstripe-clad thighs. Cologne overpowered his alpha musk, rendering his mysterious energy difficult to read. The bulge in his pants was obvious, though; no doubt from watching Kihyun’s performance.

That fuelled the omega’s ego more, encouraging his slutty behavior and encouraging his desire to impress Hyunwoo.

Running his hands down the man’s chest, their faces dangerously close to one another, Kihyun wanted to say something racy to provoke the Incheon alpha. He knew better, though. Good omegas
were seen, not heard. So he expressed physically everything he couldn’t say verbally. Wrapping his arms around the boss’s neck, he rolled his hips on the man’s lap, soft moans pouring from his glossy lips. Fuck, he was so wet.

“I see your omega is very... giving. I understand why you keep him around now,” said the alpha with a mouthful of cigar and a lapful of Kihyun. “He’s so...” He ran a knuckle along the omega’s jaw, up to his ears where his diamond earrings dazzled. “Supple.” He rolled his hips into Kihyun’s, cock hardening beneath the omega’s plush ass on his crotch.

The other alphas stiffened, ready to pounce and devour. They all wanted a piece for themselves. The atmosphere in the room was risqué and tense—everyone wanted to pin Kihyun against a wall and fuck his brains out whilst others watched and waited for their turn.

And—oh, shit, a sudden wave of nausea ripped Kihyun from his horny, hormonal haze. A gross shiver ran up his spine. He felt dirty. He no longer wanted to seduce or make eye contact with the alpha he sat on. It felt wrong to be this close to an alpha that wasn’t Hyunwoo, who didn’t smell of bergamot, who didn’t touch him in all the ways he liked. This man’s touch made Kihyun’s skin crawl. Wrong. It was wrong.

The omega needed to escape. He wriggled uncomfortably, trying to push his way off the alpha’s lap, accidentally grinding on the man’s cock. His stomach rolled in disgust; bile bubbled in his throat as the consequences of ingesting raw fish, cigarettes, and alcohol surfaced. Fuck, he needed to leave now.

Abruptly, as if sensing Kihyun’s distress, Hyunwoo slammed his fist on the table. Porcelain plates rattled and glasses clanked. All attention shot to him. “Do we have a deal?” he snapped, having a more difficult time suppressing his jealousy and overprotectiveness than originally thought.

“I don’t see a reason why we all can’t share.” It was a pointed stab by the Incheon boss at both Kihyun whoring himself out and the business proposal in question. Hyunwoo growled, everwatchful of Kihyun’s struggling.

The bosses gave each other a look and a nod. Just like before, a boss spoke up to represent the whole: “Yes, we have a deal. Status of the decision is provisional pending Boss Bang’s final verdict, but we look forward to connecting Gwangju to our network. Welcome to the Korean arms race, Boss Son Hyunwoo.”

Momentarily shifting out of his biological impulse to protect, Hyunwoo felt relief in his bones at the success of his proposal. Boss Bang would be pleased to receive this news for such a critical alliance of all Korean territories—they didn’t have to share business ideology, but they were all jo-pok, and they all served the dark underbelly of society.

“Excellence news, gentlemen.” Hyunwoo grinned and lit the tip of his third cigarette. True celebration of such a momentous occasion was in order back at the penthouse, but for now the alpha wanted his omega back as the biological impulse returned. “Omega, come.”

Kihyun barely managed to climb off the man’s lap before he lost all control, unable to hide his nausea any longer. He threw up with force, vomiting all over the alpha boss before him, and staining the older man’s luxurious suit. Hyunwoo shot up, cigarette falling to the ground, pensive of the other alpha’s reaction.

Just when the other bosses were finally convinced to agree to the deal, Kihyun ruined everything again.
“What the fuck!” The Ulsan boss stood up, a slew of profanities coming from his mouth like a curse, like he was hexing the omega for ruining his designer suit and his honor. Several servers darted into the room, frantically wiping at the alpha’s suit with damp cloth. His face was red from anger, his pheromones so prominent they snuffed out everything else.

The omega stumbled back against the table, coughing and hacking, catching himself from falling from the sudden fatigue that spewing his stomach gave him. He wiped his mouth as he caught his breath. Then, a sensation of doom befell him—what had he done? His eyes widened, afraid of the sure retaliation.

“You fucking disgusting omega, what the fuck is your problem? Do you know who I am? I’ll fucking kill you right where you stand!” The boss aggressively seized Kihyun by the collar of his blazer. He lifted a firm hand and smacked the back of it across the omega’s pretty face, bony knuckles blunt against soft cheek. The backhand knocked Kihyun over. He fell to the floor where he vomited again, stomach spitting out everything left that made him sick.

On his hands and knees, the omega sniffled as tears stung his eyes as the Ulsan kept yelling and screaming, provoking the other alphas to engage in violent outrage. Kihyun felt awful, both from the evil threats and the fact that he had just ruined so many things for his alpha. With fear in his movements, he grabbed the edge of the table and weakly pulled himself up.

“I’m s-so sorry,” he stuttered to the boss he had just been sick on. He had half a mind to drop back to his knees and apologize with a deep bow, but the Ulsan boss grabbed at Kihyun’s collar once more, ready to strike the boy again.

A very distinct, very familiar clicking noise, however, garnered his attention to its source—Hyunwoo stood at the head of the table with a loaded pistol pointed directly between the Ulsan boss’s eyes.

Kihyun stumbled back, heart stopping. All the omega whores, the sushi model, and all the servers either fled the area or huddled as far away from the gun as possible together in fear. The other alphas didn’t move from their locations at the table, but the turn of events sobered them from their intoxicated stupors. Pulling a weapon on another territory boss was a serious offense Hyunwoo knew he’d atone for later, but right now he was protecting his property.

The Ulsan boss roughly released Kihyun and directed his full attention to Hyunwoo. “You pull a gun on me…?” The boss trailed off, shocked at Hyunwoo’s overt display of disrespect. No doubt he’d suffer the utmost punishment for this.

“How do you forget where you are? You’re in Gwangju, motherfucker. I do what the fuck I want in my territory. You overstepped your bounds, and I am correcting your misjudgment,” Hyunwoo roared, contempt oozing from his pores. “The deal has been made, now get the fuck out of my territory.”

His finger was itching to pull the trigger, but he held back when the Ulsan boss stood down from his defiance and, remarkably, left. As several pairs of alpha eyes fixated on him, Hyunwoo knew he’d gone too far.

With desolation and self loathing, the omega looked at Hyunwoo, hoping he could explain.

The moon was a tiny sliver of white against black, but the glow was magnificent as it befell the city of Gwangju. The best view was from the pool deck of Hyunwoo’s penthouse—the city truly was breathtaking; a sparkling utopia all on its own.
Even though Hyunwoo was sitting in a reclined pool chair, he sat upright and tense, cupping the tip of a cherry cigarette and lighting it with an unsteady hand. Ironically, he hoped the smoke would clear his mind until morning.

It wasn’t common for Hyunwoo to find time for quiet reflection. Oftentimes, he planned a course of action in the heat of the moment, relying on his quick wit and analytical brain to manipulate others to do his dirty work. But lately, he found himself to be more impulsive and reactionary, ignoring rational thought in exchange for innate urges; it was fucking up everything he spent years painstakingly calculating. The worst part was he knew exactly the reason why he was becoming so sloppy, but even the cold-hearted Son Hyunwoo couldn’t dig himself out of the grave he dug for himself. He knew he’d have to atone for his sins with blood.

Disrupting his quiet isolation, Hyunwoo heard footsteps behind him. He didn’t turn to look. He didn’t have to. The scent of cherries gave away the person’s identity. A faint smile played on the alpha’s lips, but the omega couldn’t see it—he just stopped mere feet from the chair Hyunwoo sat on, admiring the alpha’s handsome silhouette from afar. And even though he was there, Kihyun was afraid to speak.

They hadn’t spoken since the incident at the restaurant. The car drive home was long and awkward, and most uncharacteristically for the alpha, it was silent. Even now, no words were said. Kihyun swallowed hard and debated what to do. The incident weighed heavily on his mind. He played the way the meeting went over and over in his head. He expected to be reprimanded, punished for his otherwise unavoidable action, but there were no harsh words, no degrading, no raised and angry voice. There was nothing... just like now.

Hyunwoo took a deep drag of his cigarette and exhaled slowly, taking his time before finally acknowledging the omega with a hum. He heard Kihyun shift in response but both remained wordless. The alpha just couldn’t find the words to say. He should’ve been mad, fuming, violent and abusive, but he couldn’t find the hate to do so.

But then, finally, he said something. “Most of the time you’re more trouble than you’re worth.” He sucked smoke out of his cigarette and exhaled again. “Other times... I don’t know.”

Kihyun quirked a curious brow. Oddly, the alpha didn’t sound angered or irritated at him. Yet he didn’t trust the moment, and the alpha’s strange demeanor threw him off entirely. So many questions swirled deep in his mind, but the omega dared not ask what Hyunwoo meant. Instead, he cleared his throat and rubbed his hand over his bicep shyly. “I... I wanted to apologize.” In reality, he had given warnings, foreshadowed feeling ill even during his erotic display, but he hid it all from uncaring eyes. “I’m sorry for what happened at the restaurant...”

The alpha didn’t turn, didn’t look, didn’t dignify the omega’s apology with a response. Just as Kihyun ignored the alpha’s statement, he ignored the omega’s. They were just two strangers having two different conversations. Conversations with themselves.

Hyunwoo kept smoking in silence, not bothering to flick the ash accumulating at the red hot tip. He watched the city thrive below. His city. Cars looked like hundreds of fireflies on a fixed grid, existing in organized chaos. “I’m going to Seoul for two days... leaving tomorrow,” he finally said.

Kihyun hated that Hyunwoo always did this, made him feel wanted and loved and hated and used all at once. He hated feeling confused and conflicted. Especially because he didn’t want the alpha to leave and he wasn’t sure why. Maybe it was because last time the alpha left, the omega was almost taken advantage of by Jaekwang. The paranoia was enough to make him ask: “Am I staying
Hyunwoo stiffened, suddenly stricken by the unexpected question. His heart raced. How did such a stupid question make him feel so validated? Did the omega want to go with him to see Boss Bang? That would be suicide… Yet the alpha didn’t want to leave Kihyun alone. What if he escaped back to the blonde beta for good? That would be the karma Hyunwoo deserved.

He was conflicted in his own mind; the chaos of it all was too unpredictable. He felt frustration rattle his bones, and the all too familiar sensation of anger boiled his veins—a defense mechanism to avoid accepting softness into his soul.

“I would never bring you to the Boss, omega,” Hyunwoo said firmly. “You will stay here. Elise will tend to your… illness.”

Kihyun figured that would be the best option, too, seeing as how his reason for being sick was unknown even to him. He had his suspicions, but goddamn he hoped it wasn’t true. “Yes sir, I understand.” His tone wasn’t meant to sound so downhearted, but it came out that way and now the alpha probably thought Kihyun was just like any other needy omega.

But Hyunwoo never considered that, just like Kihyun never considered the alpha’s anger at taking Boss Bang lightly. Two strangers, two conversations.

Anger was familiarity for Hyunwoo. Anger was something he could wrap his hands around and feel. He’d rather feel it than the contemplative uncertainty that formed a hollow chasm in his chest. So he clung to the fleeting rush of anger like a lost child.

He finally turned to look at the omega. Kihyun looked so vulnerable and disappointed, truly as sorry as his apology, but the alpha didn’t care. “No, you don’t understand. You don’t understand any of this. This is my world, and you’re fucking everything up.”

He stood suddenly and grabbed the omega, yanking him close until their bodies collided. He was seething, spiced citrus strong in the air, and he was ready to berate Kihyun for all the problems he had caused. But he couldn’t. Those eyes, that calming omega scent—it pacified him.

“If I’m such a fuck up…” Kihyun started, gazing up into the dark eyes of the dark angel. “Then why keep me around?” His tone hinted curiosity, quietly like the skulking sickness inside him.

Hyunwoo flinched at the unexpected question—that was two times in less than two minutes the omega made him second guess himself. How fucking dare he? Hyunwoo knew what game he was playing; never would he show vulnerability. A vicious snarl crept upon his lips and his brows lowered. His face inches away from Kihyun’s, he spat, “To use your body for my satisfaction. To wring you of every ounce you can give me. To pay a debt.”

Their proximity made the alpha’s head spin, dizzy with cherry blossoms and nicotine. The anger, the ambrosia, it made him crave the omega more. And for Kihyun, being reminded of his purpose there, of the debt he owed Hyunwoo, brought the tingling realization back to life that he was only a toy for the Boss to play with. Someone he could empty his balls into.

Maybe his love wasn’t reciprocated… Or maybe he could make the alpha love him back.

Without thinking of the consequences, Kihyun whispered, “Then use me.”

The alpha didn’t hesitate.
He drew Kihyun in for a searing kiss, hand cupping his jaw and body pressed tight against the other’s lithe form. A keen of pleasant surprise muffled against Hyunwoo’s lips as the alpha overtook the omega easily. The unsweet taste of Hyunwoo’s cigarette, smelling the fumes mixed with strong bergamot citrus, hefty limbs clinging to him like twisted vines—Kihyun was in heaven.

As Hyunwoo snaked his other hand around the small of the omega’s back, he groaned at being enveloped in pure omega essence. He couldn’t get enough of that sweet, sweet scent. It drove him wild. It haunted him in his sleep. It played in his head, in his heart, over and over and over like a twisted lullaby, a wretched love song.

Kihyun’s eyes closed with the aesthetic glow of the moon against Hyunwoo’s skin imprinted on his mind, and the deep thrum of his heart in his ears. He melted into an ocean and drowned in the alpha’s intense touch and kiss. He sunk deeper under the motion of the waves, letting himself fall into deeper waters, away from the surface.

For if he swam and reached the surface, the sharp knife of reality would stab at the illusion.

It took everything Hyunwoo had to withdraw from the passionate liplock. When he did, he still held Kihyun close to him. Their heartbeats thrummed in sync; they were more connected than either probably cared to admit. A heavy sigh left the alpha’s kiss-swollen lips as he studied Kihyun’s face. Lately, every time he looked at the omega, he couldn’t resist his glowing beauty—he was as magnificent as the moon above.

Eventually Hyunwoo moved away, decided not to say anything, and simply threw his cigarette into the pool before walking off.

The streets of Seoul weren’t like the streets of Gwangju. They were perhaps more urban, corroded by endless anonymous footsteps, but lacking the triumphant underdog spirit of Hyunwoo’s territory. Fuck a bias, these were facts... Or maybe he was just bitter because he was only in Seoul to atone.

It felt like every time he visited the god forsaken capital as of late, he was lashing himself for the negative attention placed upon the Gwangju branch at his hands. He had groveled enough at Boss Bang from the sanctity of his penthouse, but his most recent offense of pulling a gun on another branch boss, a serious offense worthy of sparking infighting and turf wars, required his physical presence—and his bloody sacrifice.

Such was the way of the jo-pok, a collective of savages pretending to exist under the honorable customs of gentlemen. It wasn’t a perfect world, and there wasn’t a perfect system, but the streets of Gwangju, the jo-pok, and Boss Bang gave Hyunwoo a close to perfect life. Boss Bang may’ve been a heartless bastard, but he gave Hyunwoo an identity in a world so careless to the struggles of discarded children growing up on the streets.

Hyunwoo owed this sacrifice to Boss Bang.

With a deep sigh, Hyunwoo knelt on his knees before the South Korean jo-pok family godfather. “Bang Yongguk seonbae-nim, forgive me. I have brought shame upon the jo-pok with my insolence. I have not carried myself as a man.”

In a floor-length, black and red robe made of heavy silk embroidered with gold thread, dominant alpha and South Korean jo-pok godfather Bang Yongguk stood noble. The robe was opened across his chest, revealing the stories of his jo-pok youth—no inch of skin on his arms or abdomen was
void of ink. Traditional patterns and designs symbolizing criminal acts, years endured in prison, and status symbols hardened his dark, refined image. The tattoos disappeared into his waistline, where loose silk pants cuffed at the ankles completed the look of careless luxury.

His features were unmoving as he peered down at Hyunwoo and emitted pungent pinot noir scented pheromones that even Hyunwoo’s alpha hormones submitted to. No smirk, no sneer. He was terrifying and calm, observant and intelligent; extraordinarily disturbing in his confident, powerful solitude.

“Then what have you done to become one?” Boss Bang asked with deep timbre.

Actions spoke louder than words. Silently, Hyunwoo knelt and pressed his forehead to the tiled floor, apologizing to his superior with a deep sebae bow. Placed in front of him was a neatly folded white cloth presented as an offering. After several moments of respectful bowing, Hyunwoo raised slightly to grab the folded cloth with both hands. He unfolded the top layer to reveal a knife with a long, straight blade and a handle carved of silver that shined in the light. Boss Bang tilted his chin up, understanding the situation immediately.

Hyunwoo continued by carefully unwrapping the rest of the cloth, sure to keep his head bowed respectfully. In the center of the cloth was the severed tip of his left pinky finger stained pink from its own blood. Hyunwoo then opened his hand palm-up, showing Boss Bang that it was indeed a piece of his finger inside—the tip of his pinky finger, now centimeters shorter, was wrapped in a gauze bandage.

Cold, unfeeling, Boss Bang simply said, “It is done, then.”

Hyunwoo felt the pain of dismissed empathy but was no stranger to the callous treatment. His pain was his own to shoulder.

“Join me. We have business to discuss.” Boss Bang turned away, walking leisurely to another room of his mansion, leaving Hyunwoo to pick up the pieces of his shattered ego.
Chapter Notes

So sorry for the late update!

**Trigger warning:** Illicit drug use, alcohol and drug consumption as unhealthy coping mechanisms

Boss Bang was ominously powerful—it was evident in the sophisticated way he carried himself—but his drug addiction rendered him a belligerent corpse. Discussion of business over a cup of oolong was ruined by the unwelcomed addition of heroin and cocaine. On the streets they called it *speedball,* and it just so happened to be Boss Bang’s vice of choice.

Speedball was a dangerous cocktail more potent than the sum of its parts that instilled false invincibility in any fool who injected it. Good thing Boss Bang’s arms were decorated in tattoos, else the graveyard of collapsed veins would be extremely apparent.

As a pretty beta servant in a gold and lilac hanbok presented a lacquered tray of drugs and syringes to Boss Bang, he grabbed a syringe and prepared it for injection. Uneasy, Hyunwoo knew there was nothing he could do to prevent this situation from happening. It wasn’t the drugs that worried him, it was the way in which the chairman uncharacteristically avoided confrontation about business.

Maybe Hyunwoo had run out of second chances. Maybe this was the end.

Disguising the reluctance in his movements, Hyunwoo grabbed the other syringe from the platter. He glanced at Boss Bang as the elder tied a makeshift tourniquet of cloth above his elbow, popped off the cap of the syringe, flicked the nose to disrupt trapped air bubbles, and flexed his arm to strain his veins. As Boss injected the drug, Hyunwoo hurried to repeat the same process... lest Boss Bang grew suspicious.

Memories of the rest of that night and much of the following day were a blank spot in Hyunwoo’s mind. He could have murdered someone with his bare hands and had zero recollection of doing it. Everything in his consciousness flowed in slow motion, like the lackadaisical movement of water in a gently flowing stream. His body, however, surged like an explosive volcano full of red hot intensity.

He was a paradox; his mind and body disconnected fragments of a whole being.

“Like this, you’re inhibitory to your impulses as an alpha. Detached from your ego, you become wise,” Boss Bang lectured as he sat with grace upon the red velvet cushion of his chair in the jo-pok headquarters office, the birthplace of the current commanding family of the Korean jo-pok. He motioned for Hyunwoo to sit. “Now, with wisdom we discuss business.”

Both men unfiltered from re-upped speedball, honorifics were dropped to cut to the heart of the matter. Boss Bang’s verdict in favor of the unification of all branches in their endeavor to deal arms, and of Hyunwoo pulling a gun on a fellow territory boss was unexpected but wholly accepted. Boss Bang supported Hyunwoo’s claim that it was defense of his territory when another
high rank jo-pok boss was out of line. And, since Hyunwoo was willing to negotiate terms more 
specific to Boss Bang’s preference without sacrificing much of his original criteria for involvement 
in black market weapons, in addition to maintaining routes for trafficking drugs and humans, Son 
Hyunwoo was bestowed a great amount of trust and respect from the jo-pok chairman—exactly the 
motivation he needed to refocus.

His departure from Seoul was abrupt, but Hyunwoo felt larger than life as he returned to his hillside 
penthouse in Gwangju.

Riding the high of a job well done, he celebrated the momentous occasion with a jo-pok only party 
in honor of his accomplishment. Upwards of fifty gangsters and accompanying callgirls attended, 
filling the spacious penthouse until it felt small in comparison to its occupancy. A border of drunks 
around the frame of the pool brought the party outside. It wasn’t long before people were stripping 
naked and jumping into the crystal clear water, playing rowdy games in one corner while others 
made out and fucked in the other.

With a seemingly endless supply of illegal goods, overindulgence brought out the revelrous spirits 
of the attendees. Prostitutes, drugs, violence—no one supplied it better than Hyunwoo did.

The boisterous music hummed through thick walls and disturbed a resting Kihyun. He had heard 
commotion earlier and promptly isolated himself from whatever was supposed to occur. Since 
Hyunwoo left him that night at the pool after a passionate kiss, the illness he felt only worsened. 
The past two days were hell for the omega more than ever, as he was unable to keep anything 
down at all. He craved comfort and attention, anything to distract him from the nausea and the 
loneliness.

At least Kihyun wasn’t totally alone, not when Elise was there to care for his needs. He was so 
thankful for her, now and always, as she was the only person to ever show him any compassion in 
the penthouse. But when all her attempts to alleviate Kihyun’s sickness failed, the omega had a 
sobering suspicion.

During Elise’s errand run, Kihyun requested a few items to be picked up at the pharmacy. When 
she returned, the omega took the items into his room and anxiously ripped open several boxes from 
the bag. Staring at seven test sticks splayed out on his bed, a feeling of dread made him hesitate. 
Was not knowing better than knowing? No. He had to know.

And an hour later, alone in the bathroom, the omega stared at the row of test sticks laid out on the 
countertop in a perfect line. He sunk to the floor, overwhelmed by his emotions.

He was pregnant.

Kihyun regained control over himself after swallowing down the initial shock. He couldn’t be a 
nervous wreck when Hyunwoo arrived. He had to be good like the omega Hyunwoo expected him 
to be. And for the most part, it went well until the raucous in the penthouse on the second day 
jarred him from his peace.

Did the partying mean the alpha had returned?

The omega paced around his room. If Hyunwoo was back, he had not come to greet the omega. 
Perhaps he was just preoccupied with entertaining his party guests? Guess he’d have to go out and 
check. God, he was so eager to tell Hyunwoo the news. There was another life growing inside of 
him, and the alpha needed to know.

Kihyun cautiously ventured out into the halls and joined the party, noting the onslaught of mixed
scents from mixed dynamics that attacked his sensitive nose. The added smells of alcohol, smoke, and heavy drugs wafted through him; he could already feel himself getting nauseous. He had to persist, had to find his alpha. As he searched the penthouse for Hyunwoo, he put together words to say, playing the scenario over and over in his head. His excitement grew—he only hoped Hyunwoo would feel at least some joy from this.

When he reached the sliding glass doors that lead to the outside pool deck, the smell of spiced citrus took over any and all other scents. His alpha was near. He wove through clusters of people until his eyes eventually fell on Hyunwoo. He smiled for a brief moment until he saw the company the alpha was surrounded by—sitting on the tropical patterned patio furniture among a gaggle of topless omega whores, Hyunwoo puffed a fat cigar. One omega in a holographic micro bikini crawled onto his lap, flirting shamelessly with her pretty eyelashes and glossy, pink lips. The alpha grabbed her ass and rocked her closer to him, and she giggled so loud Kihyun’s stomach flipped.

All the omega’s thrill, his joy, came crashing down, breaking into a million pieces. Hyunwoo was so immersed in another omega. His chest tightened with a dreadful pang. The alpha didn’t even care, did he? Distraught, Kihyun backed away whilst resisting the urge to cry.

Even the short distance between them didn’t weaken the pungent aroma of cherries as it traveled through barriers of people to reach Hyunwoo, but it was too late. His eyes scanned the area for Kihyun, but the omega wasn’t within sight. Then, the sensual grind of the omega on his lap reeled him back to the present moment, and his alpha instincts to indulge came over him. He loved the way the women fawned over him like he was a king, leaving Kihyun as nothing more than a fleeting thought.

Kihyun turned away completely. His eyes stung as his legs carried him further away from the immoral scene of Hyunwoo and some slut who probably smelled like cheap perfume. He bumped into a bunch of people on his exit, flustering him more. When he got to his bedroom, he leaned against the outer wall, using it as a crutch for his wavering mind.

One of Hyunwoo’s beta underlings walked by, sketched out by Kihyun’s weird energy but ignored it as he past. When the lanky underling was out of sight, the omega turned into his room and closed the door with a click, immediately wiping his eyes with the back of his wrist. He fell onto his bed and clung to Minhyuk’s sweater—the one thing that had kept him sane from the very start.

Then, like an epiphany, he recalled he was able to actually visit his best friend. A deal had been worked out and damnit, he was going to capitalize on it. Without another thought, he leapt out of bed and hurried out the door. One way or another, he would see Minhyuk tonight.

Fuck that self-righteous asshole of an alpha, Kihyun was leaving.

“Whoa, whoa. Where do you think you’re going?” said a calm voice in a cool, unbothered tone. Walking in from a side hallway was a tall, lean beta with whitish-silver hair that seemed to adopt the color of the environment around him. The red mood lighting weeping into the hall from the lounge down the hall gave his hair a pinkish hue. With his slender hands in his denim pockets, he leaned against the marble wall directly in front of the flighty omega. “You look like you’re in a hurry, Kihyun.”

The new voice startled Kihyun. He turned, recognizing the beta as the one who walked by earlier. He didn’t know the underling’s name, but the underling clearly knew who the omega was. Honestly, it didn’t surprise Kihyun that the beta knew. In fact, he would be surprised if someone didn’t know who he was around here. He’d been Hyunwoo’s toy for weeks now.
“Who are you?” he asked, hugging Minhyuk’s minty sweater against his chest.

The beta had watched Kihyun from afar the whole night. Actually, he had been watching the omega the full duration of Hyunwoo’s absence, but only now was making his presence known required. He had a very specific job distinctly different from other underlings, one that best utilized his unique set of skills.

A bright smile stretched the beta’s face as he answered, “Your babysitter.”

Kihyun scoffed. He wanted nothing more than to reject the beta, but he remembered Hyunwoo’s words, rather his command. The omega sighed, fighting the urge to tell the beta to fuck off. “What’s your name?” he specified, irritated.

“I’m Hyungwon,” said the beta, still sporting a handsome smile. He noticed the omega’s trepidation and sighed. “Look, I’m not a gunslinger underling trying to rise up the ranks, okay? My job is to make sure you come back to Boss in one piece, but I don’t give a shit what you do otherwise.”

Hyungwon smelled another beta’s musk on the clothing Kihyun clutched tight. He peered over his shoulder to his left, then right, surveying the area for anyone cognizant enough to hear him. When the coast was determined to be clear, he said, “...If you leave now, I can get you back before Boss even misses you.”

The foreign scent of saltwater splashed over Kihyun like a serene wave relaxing his most troubled emotions. He studied Hyungwon’s laidback aura and came to the conclusion that he was probably his best shot at getting to Minhyuk. “I don’t care about getting back right now. I just need to leave... please?” He needed familiarity and his best friend was the only one who could help the dismal feelings vanish.

Hyungwon knew he probably should’ve argued Kihyun’s unwillingness to return, but he didn’t have to energy for it. That was tomorrow’s problem. “Yeah, alright.”

Kihyun sighed in relief and let his defense down. He relaxed his shoulders, giving Hyungwon his trust. He would do anything to get to Minhyuk… Do anything to smell and bask in fresh mint... Do anything to feel safe.

Hyungwon pulled up to a nondescript house and parked in front of the cracking driveway. The matte black Mercedes all underlings drove was not supposed to stand out and draw the eye of the public, but it clearly stuck out from the rest of the vehicles in the neighborhood. He glanced at himself in the rearview mirror, chuckling at himself for also looking too expensive for the surroundings.

“Well, we’re here. You have until sunrise.”

“Thanks,” Kihyun replied distractedly, closing the door behind him. As he walked up the steps leading to the house, he hoped to god Minhyuk was even home. He pressed the doorbell, then stuffed his hands in the front pockets of the hoodie as he waited with eagerness.

He needed this; to feel someone’s care and empathy—to feel like he was wanted.
As Kihyun waited at the door, Hyungwon noticed two undercover cop cars surveilling the immediate vicinity. One was parked in the driveway two houses down, the other parked curbside on the opposite side of the road. It wasn’t that they were obvious, it was just that Hyungwon was exceptionally vigilant. That was why Hyunwoo entrusted him with Kihyun, after all. He waited until the front door opened before driving down the road to find his own spot to spy from.

Call it intuition, call it coincidence, call it best friend synergy, but Minhyuk knew Kihyun was on the other side of the door before he even heard the doorbell. He practically leapt off the couch to answer the door, and the second he did, he caught a head rush from the sudden influx of happiness upon seeing his best friend’s face.

“Kihyun! Oh my god, Ki!” he cried as he embraced his best friend.

The sudden intake of mint accompanied by a tight embrace had Kihyun tear up. He hugged Minhyuk tighter, burying his head in his neck and fighting back the knot in his throat. At last, he was with the one person he felt comfortable with.

“You’re free, right? Fuck, please tell me you’re free from that monster,” Minhyuk said, voice shaky like it was during their first reunion at the penthouse. The tightness of his embrace never faltered as he spoke. He didn’t want to pull away for fear that Kihyun would leave again. And, just like before, tears spilled from his eyes and soaked into the sweater—his sweater—on the omega’s small frame.

Kihyun sighed into Minhyuk’s neck, lost in sweet mint. He leaned away, using the curve of his wrist to wipe away the stray tears and smeared his eyeliner. “Not exactly, um...” he sniffled, trying to collect himself again. “I have a shadow following me... that asshole doesn’t trust me so now I have a designated babysitter.”

Minhyuk swallowed the dry lump in his throat. “I’m so sorry,” he whispered. “I’m so sorry I couldn’t save you. I tried so hard.”

"Min, love, I’m here to forget that right now.” Kihyun said softly, glossy eyes expressing how badly he needed an escape.

“Uh, yeah, yeah... I have some alcohol if you want that?” Minhyuk offered, recalling memories of days past when they handled their problems with temporary fixes. When Kihyun faintly smiled and nodded, the beta sighed in relief and frustration.

He had so much more to say. He wanted to get everything off his chest. He wanted to apologize a million times for failing. But the somber look on the omega’s face told him Kihyun wasn’t here for long, and he wasn’t here to vent. He needed comfort and good company. “Come in?” he asked with a faint smile.

Minhyuk ventured into the kitchen where he pulled a half empty bottle of vodka from the cupboard. Kihyun followed him into the kitchen they once shared and sat down. “ Shots or mixed?” asked the beta.

“Mixed, please.”

Minhyuk nodded and fetched two cups from another cupboard. Just when he grabbed the vodka bottle, he remembered he didn’t have much of anything in the fridge. He wasn’t good at keeping a well stocked fridge, and ever since Kihyun was abducted Minhyuk lost his appetite entirely.
“Uh, I have...” The beta leaned on the refrigerator door once he opened it, assessing the nearly barren space. “Looks like I have some orange juice and a bottle of Coke that’s probably flat by now...”

Kihyun watched the blond beta with fondness in his eyes. “Either is fine, Min. Surprise me. I’m willing to take anything right now.” His dismal tone gave away his mood—even though he didn’t want to think about anything, the image of Hyunwoo with someone else on his lap bothered Kihyun a great deal. Why? Why did seeing such a display of emotionless touching give him such an uncomfortable twist inside?

“O-okay,” Minhyuk replied, mostly because he didn’t know how else to comfort his friend.

He felt useless. All the beta wanted to talk about was how to keep Kihyun away from that savage alpha, how he could keep him safe from harm, how he was an ally of the police and could help the omega lock Son Hyunwoo away for life. All his thoughts were screaming at him, stirring chaos in his mind. On the outside, though, he quietly mixed orange juice and vodka into two glass cups.

Minhyuk bit his bottom lip as he mulled over what to say, but nothing good came to mind. It felt weird to talk about pop culture or sports or fashion. Those topics were too shallow for the very obvious elephant in the room that only Minhyuk seemed to want to address.

As he took a seat beside Kihyun and gave the omega his drink, Minhyuk simply offered a small smile again.

“Thank you, Min.” His fingers curled around the cup awkwardly. “Um, do you have weed? If not, can I steal a cigarette from you?” He hated to ask all of this of Minhyuk, but the beta was the only source of any kind of friendship he had.

“Uh, yeah, but it’s really shitty stuff,” Minhyuk rubbed the back of his neck and laughed awkwardly, “but if your tolerance is low it’s probably hella good.”

The beta got up and retreated into his bedroom. Rustling was heard before he finally emerged with a small bong dirtied by blackish resin and a dimebag of weed. When Minhyuk came back with the bong in hand, something in the back of Kihyun’s mind told him this wasn’t a good idea, that he was pregnant, but his mind was fractured.

“I’m sorry I dropped by out of nowhere at this hour.” The omega dragged his finger along the rim of his cup, watching the liquid remnants glide along his thumb. He took a sip, fingers drumming along the sides of the glass.

Minhyuk downed half his drink when Kihyun took a sip of his, hoping desperately that the alcohol would stop the noise in his head. “It’s okay, Ki. You know I’m happy to see you. You’re welcome here anytime... I just...” A heavy sigh left his lips before he all but blurted what was on his mind. “I don’t understand why it took so long. It’s been ten days since I saw you, Kihyun. Ten days. You could’ve left with me that day. Why did you lie to the police?”

As soon as it left his lips, he regretted it. He didn’t mean to cause trouble, but goddamn it he deserved an explanation. Hurriedly, he downed the rest of his drink.

Kihyun sighed and rubbed his forehead. The beta was right, he had to confront his feelings sooner or later. Everything his best friend had said so far made sense; it was logical and correct, but the omega’s mind was so conflicted. He finally found an alpha to care for him, to complement him, to be with him forever as alpha and omega... but something was off. Kihyun had blinded himself to
the reality everyone else clearly saw.

If Hyunwoo loved him, why was he so cruel? Why was he fucking someone else when Kihyun was carrying his child? What was real and what wasn’t?

After taking another gulp of his drink, the omega attempted to reply but tears rushed down his cheeks, halting his facade with a long overdue breakdown. The knot from before made its way up. He let out a strangled sob and buried his face in his hands as his heart shattered. He felt so weak, vulnerable, and lost.

Fuck. Minhyuk felt awful. It was never his intention to make his best friend cry. God, he felt like shit. Kihyun told him he didn’t want to talk about it and yet the beta still pushed it. He reached out to hug the sobbing omega, wrapping his arms around him and encasing him with calm, comforting mint. “I’m so sorry, Ki. I didn’t mean to make you cry…”

Kihyun let his tears fall freely. He had let Hyunwoo in… let that monster destroy his sanity. And now he was trapped further by the lifeforce he nourished inside.

Finding closure in Minhyuk’s warm embrace, his quivering gradually ceased from the tranquil scent of mint. It was gratifying to feel like he was important and not just a tool for sex; he was so much more than a fuck toy for one wicked alpha. “It’s not you, Minhyuk. I’m just... it’s... Fuck, I’m a mess.”

Minhyuk hugged the omega tighter in a sorry attempt to soothe the shaking sobbing of his best friend. “Ssh, no, no. You’re not a mess, Ki.” Damnit, he did this. He made Kihyun feel this way simply because he couldn’t leave well enough alone. He felt selfish for demanding an explanation instead of consoling someone who clearly had been deprived of that feeling. “I know there’s nothing I can say to make all your pain go away, but please tell me what I can do to help you.”

Kihyun sighed against Minhyuk’s shirt. In all honesty, he didn’t know what there was to say or do to help him forget how broken he felt, how used and tossed aside the alpha made him feel. He’d just have to revert to methods of escapism once more, at least he was familiar with that. So he pulled away from Minhyuk and leaned back in the chair with his cup in hand. Taking a quick chug of his drink, he said, “There is something, I guess… pass the bong?”

Minhyuk cracked a smile and nodded. He grabbed the glass bong from the counter beside him and inspected the stem for weed. It was still packed from the morning’s wake and bake session, albeit a little dried out. If they needed more, he’d repack it.

Handing over the bong and the lighter to Kihyun, the beta just basked in his friend’s company for the first time in too long. The omega pressed the stem to his lips and inhaled as the bud burned at the tip of his lighter, and when smoke filled his lungs he released his lips and exhaled. A tickle crept up and he coughed, passing the bong to Minhyuk. “Smooth,” he joked, still coughing.

Minhyuk grabbed it and took a hit of his own. He didn’t cough as much as the omega because he was quite the accomplished stoner. He figured the effects would hit Kihyun harder and quicker than him because his tolerance was high, but the slight burn in the back of his throat told him his weed wasn’t as bad as he originally thought.

Kihyun finished his drink after a few more large gulps, smacking his lips at the sting of vodka. He felt lighter already. “Do you mind if I mix another drink?” He asked with the shake of his empty cup.

“Of course not. What’s mine is yours. This used to be your place too.” Minhyuk took another hit
off the bong, held the smoke, and exhaled slowly. His eyes were already getting glossy, and the sense of urgency clawing at him regarding Kihyun and the alpha settled slightly.

Kihyun stood up with a slight wobble in his balance. “I should have knew better.” He mumbled whilst mixing himself another drink. “But it is what it is and I’m stuck with an egotistical, selfish asshole alpha whose pride is bigger than any goddamn ocean!” He ranted, raising his voice at the mere thought of Hyunwoo. “It would kill him to be nice, the brute fucker.”

Minhyuk’s brows furrowed and his fists clenched and unclenched in his lap. The marijuana-induced calm he was sinking into was disrupted the instant Kihyun mentioned the alpha. His eyes followed the omega as he walked back to his seat and plopped down with a scowl. Seeing Kihyun this way made his heart beat fast in his chest as the desire to roast the alpha returned.

“You’re not stuck, though. You’re here with me right now. You escaped. Don’t you get it? He’s just manipulating you...” The beta’s voice cracked at the end, causing him to pause. Swallowing thickly, he abruptly stood up and pointed to the front door. “We can leave right now. Go to the police and confess everything. We can lock him up for good!”

Kihyun’s gaze was hard, eyes focused on his best friend as he talked. Exasperated, he huffed out a breath and shook his head, put off at the mere mention of going to the cops right now. “I can’t... I can’t do that, Min.”

The beta was so angry, and fuck, now he was regretting drinking and smoking because he was kind of dizzy from standing up so fast. And then when Kihyun rejected his offer to do the right thing again, the beta thought he was going to lose his mind. “What the fuck, Kihyun! Why?”

“Because I love him!” There, Kihyun said it, blurted out what was troubling him so tremendously. “I didn’t plan to. I thought... I thought I loved him, anyway. I was... I am blind, stupid, naïve, and now...” He curled his arm around his stomach, recalling the fact he was carrying Hyunwoo’s child. Tears fell down his cheeks again; his simple world ruptured by the shadow games of the jo-pok.

Minhyuk’s heart plummeted to the floor and shattered into millions of unfixable pieces. If he was dizzy before, it was nothing compared to now. His alcohol-stained lips parted for words to escape but only fragments of sounds spilled out. Sucking in a big breath, he paused to will down his impending vertigo.

Then, finally, after several moments of studying Kihyun, the beta realized how far down the rabbit hole Son Hyunwoo threw his best fucking friend.

“Ki...” His hands trembled as he reached out for the omega. “Now what?”

Kihyun released a shaky breath and wiped his tears, conjuring the courage to meet Minhyuk in the eyes. “Now I drink and smoke with my best friend while that fuckwad bangs however many whores. I don’t care. I just want to forget about him and get high with you.”

“No...” Minhyuk muttered, as if to only himself at first. “No, you can’t just come here and say that to me. I’ve cried myself to sleep thinking you were dead. I begged on my hands and knees for the police to not give up on you!” Tears spilled from the beta’s eyes as his voice carried the frustration and despair he harbored inside. His voice cracked and he wiped his tears, “And you’re telling me you love that asshole? Why? Why?” More tears poured from his glossy, brown eyes. His body shook from the intensity of his cries. Cheeks red, he shouted louder, “If you only knew... what I...”

The last thing Kihyun expected was for his best friend to burst at the seams. He never thought much about how badly Minhyuk had been taking this. He knew the beta was troubled, but as to the
depth of his ocean of worry, he didn’t know. Watching his best friend cry broke Kihyun’s heart all over again. “Min... I am so sorry for making you worry, really, I...”

The beta swallowed hard. He didn’t mean to explode, but he couldn’t bear the idea that his best friend was in love with, well… anyone else.

“Kihyun, I...” He sniffled and moved closer, his energy simmering down as he cupped the omega’s cheek with the tenderest of touches. Kihyun had grown used to having close to no affection with Hyunwoo, so when Minhyuk’s hand graced his moist cheek he couldn’t resist leaning into the touch. Taking a few seconds to get lost in Kihyun’s beautiful gaze, Minhyuk finally mustered up the courage to finish his sentence.

“I love you, Ki. So much. I have loved you for so many years... and when you were taken, I knew I’d never be able to tell you how much you mean to me.”

Kihyun repeated Minhyuk’s words in his head like a broken record. His best friend was in love with him. He sighed out his nose in with incertitude, his already fragile state of mind lost in confusion and despair over his situation and being pregnant with another man’s child. Shit! He couldn’t do this. Not like this. Not now. “Minhyuk, I... I’m...”

But he couldn’t bring himself to finish his sentence. Seeing the love in Minhyuk’s eyes made Kihyun melt into a puddle. Memories of happiness flooded back; warmth surrounded him. All remembrance of a particular alpha were forgotten when Kihyun placed his hand over Minhyuk’s on his cheek. Maybe this could be the escape he so desperate sought, if only for the night…

Kihyun’s eyelids fluttered as he whispered, “Kiss me.”

And Minhyuk knew it wasn’t the alcohol or the weed that made Kihyun glow in all his angelic omega radiance. He truly was magnificent—he knew it the first day they met. God, it was love at first sight, but back then he was too much of a coward to confess. He almost lost Kihyun once, but goddamnit he wouldn’t lose him again.

Tonight, he’d claim the omega as his, restore every bit of self-love Son Hyunwoo raped from him, pepper his skin with kisses of adoration and devotion.

Minhyuk didn’t think twice about Kihyun’s request.

Minhyuk kissed Kihyun with the balanced desire of a beta. He snaked his free hand through ashen hair, reeling Kihyun in closer. A groan of pleasure escaped his lips as the taste of weed, vodka, and cherry ousted away all his anguish. Kihyun found himself craving more; he wanted to drown in Minhyuk’s refreshing scent. He broke the kiss only to kiss the beta back again and again, melding his lips against the soft ones that tasted like the screwdriver they had drank.

Kissing the omega lit something carnal within, but Minhyuk knew the alpha must’ve treated Kihyun impatiently, aggressively. A beta was unhurried, took his time as he unraveled his lover slowly. Minhyuk wanted to take his time, too; fuck the omega languidly with the confidence of patience.

He wasn’t a hormone-crazed animal like an alpha, this was how a beta made love.

Carefully, Minhyuk ushered Kihyun backwards until a wall stopped them and pressed chaste kisses against his lips the whole distance. He took a brief moment to appreciate the beauty of his best friend, to bask in his scent. “You have no idea how much I’ve missed the smell of you all over me.”
Gazing into glazed-over eyes, Kihyun nodded. “And I want you all over me…” His arms coiled around Minhyuk’s shoulders and tangled in luscious blond hair. “Take me, Minhyuk.”

Minhyuk caressed the bare skin underneath the fabric of the omega’s top, all the while trailing kisses down his jaw, neck, to the expanse of his collarbone. Chaste kisses became open mouthed kisses as the beta got greedy for more sweet cherry on his lips, his tongue, until he was nipping the skin and moaning at its flavor.

“The bedroom?” He asked against skin. Kihyun felt his skin prickle with goosebumps.
Hey everyone! Check out the aesthetic character thread we've created for this story!

“Yes,” Kihyun replied breathlessly, already fisting the sleeves of Minhyuk’s shirt; a silent plea to remove it. The beta smiled against Kihyun’s lips and backed away slowly, kissing the omega as long as physically possible before he had to pull away to oblige the request.

Minhyuk knew he was overdoing it with the kissing, but he couldn’t help it—he waited what felt like eons to taste Kihyun’s lips, ever-curious to discover if they tasted as delicious as he smelled.

Before their lips touched once more, Kihyun pulled off his shirt and dropped it to the floor, hungry eyes on Minhyuk. He pressed his back against the wall behind him and poked out his hips, enticing his best friend to come touch, taste. “You smell so fucking good.”

Minhyuk groaned deep in his throat. He couldn’t think of anything to say back to the omega; Kihyun seemed to possess a new confidence the beta had never known him to have. Could it be that the alpha... No, fuck that asshole. He wasn’t going to get to Minhyuk, especially not in this moment, not when Kihyun was looking like that.

He grabbed Kihyun by the hips and kissed down the stretch of pale skin littered with bruises and scratches. While rooming together, he had seen Kihyun shirtless countless times and admired his lithe form from afar, from the safe distance of a best friend, but now he could touch it any way he wanted to. And he did.

Minhyuk dropped to his knees, pressing kisses to each and every bruise on his descent. Kihyun’s body heated from the simple kisses; every bite, scratch, and bruise Minhyuk kissed made his body sizzle with yearning. The beta made Kihyun’s heart swell from the affectionate gestures that brought siege to all haste Hyunwoo marred into his skin.

Minhyuk tilted his head as he looked up and made short work of Kihyun’s button and fly. Gauging Kihyun’s reaction, he hooked his fingers through the omega’s belt loops with a sudden force. Silk, plum purple briefs formed elegantly around Kihyun’s hips, but the beta could only stare at the bulge tempting him. Lips parted slightly, breath heavy, Minhyuk didn’t expect the rush of intimacy that nearly drowned him in the depths of Kihyun’s eyes. Slowly, sensually, Minhyuk pulled the material off the omega’s thin hips and down his legs, kissing spots of skin from the v of his hips down to his thighs.

Kihyun watched the beta with half-lidded, glazed over eyes as he returned to his hips, sucking and biting the flesh along the waistband of his silk briefs, mouthing over the noticeable bulge. Minhyuk moaned at the musky scent of cherry in his nose, on his tongue, enticing him. He reminded himself to be patient, however, and continued to tease his best friend. God, it took all Kihyun could muster not to push Minhyuk to the kitchen floor and pounce on him, but he secretly enjoyed the rhapsodic simplicity of his best friend’s touches.

“You like to tease, hm?” he asked, combing his fingers through Minhyuk’s blond hair.
“Uh...” Minhyuk’s cheeks turned a pale shade of pink. He wasn’t expecting the dirty talk, however mild it may be. His body certainly liked it—his cock surged in his pants—but it made him suddenly shy. He slid his hands down the sides of the omega’s thighs, trying to hide the obvious nervous tremble. Clearing his throat, he answered, “I just... wanted to take my time... treat you right.”

Kihyun’s lips curled into a fond smile as he sensed a falter in Minhyuk’s movements. He found it sweet because being nervous meant his best friend really did mean what he said. “Why don’t you take me to bed and we can treat each other right?” he suggested, releasing pheromones of desire—desire to have Minhyuk’s naked body against his, feel those hands hold him, mold him into a plethora of intimate positions.

A soft moan left Minhyuk’s lips at Kihyun’s suggestion. He couldn’t, wouldn’t, protest such an appealing notion. A smile happened upon his face, but as quick as it came it left, replaced by a nervous gulp as he stood up. He pressed his forehead against the omega’s, secretly enjoying the height difference, then pointed his chin in the direction of his bedroom. “Lead the way.”

Kihyun locked their fingers together and was quick to steal another kiss. He lead the beta to his own room and was immediately assaulted by mint; he almost lost his balance from the dizzying intensity that enveloped him. Flashing Minhyuk a smouldering look, he guided the taller male backwards until the backs of his legs collided with the edge of his bed. Confidence fuelling every action, Kihyun pushed Minhyuk’s chest. Minhyuk panted shallowly as his body fell back onto the bed and bounced on the plush mattress.

With a flirtatious smirk, Kihyun climbed onto his friend. “What do you like, Min baby?” His voice dropped, dripping sultry gold.

Every fiber in the beta’s body reacted to Kihyun. He fisted forest green bedsheets in his palms as the weight of the omega on his crotch spurred a sea of emotions and pleasure and pure bliss. He bit his bottom lip as he stared up at Kihyun. “I like... you on top, like this... and I like your lips...” Minhyuk trailed off, mesmerized by Kihyun’s kiss-swollen, marijuana tainted lips.

He was bold enough to reach out and touch the omega’s supple lips with the pad of his thumb. Kihyun hummed deep in his throat, his plush lips curling around the tip of the thumb. Minhyuk groaned as the omega sucked sensually. He rolled his hips up into his friend, slightly at first but then with embarrassing urgency. He established a slow grind that left him aching as he watched Kihyun.

The omega pulled off with a pop as his tongue slowly slid over his lips, eyes falling to the swell in his best friend’s pants. “Do you maybe want my lips... somewhere else?” he asked with the cute tilt of his head.

Minhyuk nodded and breathily whispered, “Yeah.”

All he could think of was those amazing lips around his dick, his fingers threaded through silver-grey hair, Kihyun’s glossy eyes half-lidded looking up at him. Shit, he was so hard.

Balancing on one hand, Kihyun’s right hand found purchase against the bulge in Minhyuk’s pants and palmed it languidly. He almost drooled at the heat radiating from the beta’s pants. “Where do you want my lips, baby?” He questioned, teasing the beta more.

Lust-filled eyes stared at Kihyun with pure adoration. How did Minhyuk go from crying himself to sleep thinking his best friend was murdered at the hands of some gangster to making love to him as of nothing ever happened? He moaned at the omega’s sensual touches and sighed out.
“I want your lips on my dick,” he mumbled, wanting even the thin material of his basketball shorts to go away so he could feel everything Kihyun did to him.

Kihyun smiled and snaked his fingers past the band of Minhyuk’s shorts with both hands and pulled the clothing down slowly, sensually. He could feel his body thrum with eagerness, something he hadn’t felt in a long time. The beta’s cock sprung free and flopped onto his chest, revealing rather vulgarly to the omega that he wasn’t wearing boxers. Precum leaked onto his lower belly and soaked into the thin happy trail below his navel. He shifted his hips slightly to shimmy off the shorts the rest of the way, kicking them off with his feet when they were low enough.

Oddly, Minhyuk felt more self-conscious of the whale tattoo he had recently gotten on his thigh than he did having his throbbing cock on display for his best friend. Kihyun gazed at the ink forever on his best friend’s thigh, surprised.

“When did you get this?” the omega asked, trailing a finger over the whale with admiration.

“Like three weeks ago... to cover the scar above my knee from that surgery a few years ago, remember?” Minhyuk replied, enthusiastic to talk about it but also dying to have Kihyun’s lips wrapped around his cock. The longer Kihyun stared at him with beautiful brown eyes, regarding the beta with a composure much cooler than Minhyuk’s panting, groaning mess of one, the hornier he got.

“I remember you talking about getting it covered,” he said softly as he admired the line work on soft skin. “It’s beautiful.” His fingers dragged from the tattoo, skimming across Minhyuk’s skin towards his dick. “And sexy,” he added before taking his friend’s cock into his hand.

Minhyuk’s breath hitched in his throat at the sudden contact. His hips rolled into the tender touch, but he craved more. Urgently. “You’re sexy,” he countered, voice impatient, hips increasingly impatient, fresh mint pungent in the air. “Ki, I... I want to fuck you so bad.” The more his hips moved, causing his cock to slide slightly in Kihyun’s grasp, the more desperate he became.

Hearing the sensual plea in Minhyuk’s voice roused Kihyun more than he thought. He pushed off the bed, and the beta swallowed hard and propped himself up on his elbows as Kihyun stripped, baring all for him. His mouth went dry at the sight of the omega’s dick, hard and hot and cute all at once. His own dick twitched at the visual, making him evermore eager to fuck the pretty omega. “Fuck, Ki—” Before he could finish, the omega was back on top, perfect ass coating Minhyuk’s cock with cherry blossom slick.

With a heated glint in his eyes, the omega replied, “Let’s save the blowjob for another day because I want you to fuck me, now.”

It took a second for him to catch his breath, but when he did Minhyuk asked, “Uh, I can prep you, or... are you okay?” He had slept with omegas before, but sometimes production of slick didn’t mean they could, for lack of a better word, accommodate.

Kihyun sighed, loving the thought of Minhyuk’s perfect and slim fingers inside him. He pressed his hands on Minhyuk’s chest, rubbing over the muscles of his chest with a soft and flirty smile. “You want to feel how wet I am for you? Go ahead, love. Tell me how you want me.”

Just when Minhyuk found his bearings and was confident enough to embrace how he felt and ask for it, Kihyun blindsided him with even filthier dirty talk. His cock ached to be buried inside Kihyun’s wet heat, but the image of the omega sitting on his face, juices dripping down his chin,
moaning and panting above him, was the exact stuff of Minhyuk’s wet dreams for the past several years.

Nipping his lower lip, he ignored his bashfulness and answered. “Sit on my face?”

Fuck! Kihyun inhaled a sharp breath at Minhyuk’s saucy request; it threw him off in the best of ways. His confidence around someone he was close to was noticeable, but this particular act was a curveball he had yet to brace himself for. His body was on fire at the idea. “Min...” he panted, almost climaxing right then and there. “Lay back…”

Minhyuk did as told without question while internally squealing that his wet dreams were finally coming true. His chest rose and fell with anticipation. He salivated at the thought that he’d get to taste that cherry flavored slick. Kihyun maneuvered himself over Minhyuk’s face and regarded the beta’s naked body. He wiggled his hips to tease the beta, and Minhyuk stared at the cute jiggle of Kihyun’s ass like a treat that beckoned him. But it wasn’t until the dribble of slick down the omega’s thigh that he indulged himself.

He grabbed the flesh of Kihyun’s thighs with each palm and turned his head to the side, licking the drop of sweet slick with one swipe of his tongue. A fervent moan left his lips—he had to taste more. Without meaning to be as tough as he was, Minhyuk pulled Kihyun down until the globes of his ass enveloped his face. He lapped eagerly at the omega’s wet hole, moaning and tonguefucking, hips rutting into nothingness as he completely unraveled.

Kihyun’s fingers curled inward on Minhyuk's chest, his nails scratching skin and leaving a trail of white in their wake. His heart raced; he felt like he was going to cum right there. No matter what, he did he couldn’t stop the mewls and curses slipping past his lips. “Fuck baby…” he moaned, resisting the urge to grind his hips down into that wet muscle to get it deeper.

Minhyuk’s cock was hard against his lower abdomen, leaking precum into the faint lines of his sinewy muscles and pooling in his navel. He felt Kihyun touch it and he keened, motivated to give Kihyun all the pleasure he deserved. He buried his face deeper into cherry bliss, fucking as deep as his mouth would allow, coating the muscle with omega essence. The beta wasn’t even self-conscious about being on display for Kihyun’s hungry eyes anymore, especially not now as the omega took his cock into his mouth.

He bucked his hips into the wetness, enraptured. But having just the tip in the omega’s mouth was such a tease; he wanted it deeper, wetter. Like a game of sorts, Minhyuk tonguefucked Kihyun’s dripping hole deeper to get the omega to swallow more of his cock. The ultimate sixty-nine.

The game worked. Kihyun took Minhyuk all the way in, bobbing up and down until the urge to moan vibrated up the length and provoked the beta more. He wiggled his ass on Minhyuk’s face, upping the ante. The beta was lightheaded from the lack of airflow but surprisingly aroused by the inadvertent asphyxiation—nevertheless, minty cherry sex pheromones saturated the room so thoroughly Minhyuk could still be intoxicated by its sheer potency.

A string of profanities would leave Minhyuk’s mouth if he could only breath or speak. For now, he’d settle with expressing himself physically, thrusting his cock into the omega’s amazing mouth and smothering himself with a face full of ass. Every whimper and moan the omega made had Minhyuk reeling. He wanted nothing but pleasure for his best friend because he doubted that son of bitch alpha treated him to any at all.

“Min—ah, Minhyuk, hold on... I’m going to cum,” Kihyun moaned hurriedly, wiping saliva and precum off his lips.
Minhyuk never let up. He was damn near out of breath and high off the last minuscule bit of oxygen left, determined to make Kihyun cum all over his face. Fuck, this was even better than all the times he fantasized about it before. The beta wasn’t sure how much longer he’d last himself, but he couldn’t blow it now, not before finally making love with his best friend.

Kihyun’s hips jerked, desperate to obtain that last bit of friction to reach high fulfilment. His hand fisted the sheet beside Minhyuk’s hip as his hole contracted and his head dropped, hand loosely gripping the beta’s cock. His voice broke off into a high pitched moan as he came all over his best friend’s face. Minhyuk eagerly lapped at cherry euphoria on his tastebuds, dripping down his chin, coating his lips. He never ceased pleasuring the omega until the last sexy quiver left his gorgeous body.

Fuck, the way Kihyun’s voice sounded when he cried out in pleasure echoed in the beta’s skull, coaxing him to join the omega in orgasmic bliss. But he couldn’t, not yet. Kihyun lifted off Minhyuk’s face and rolled onto the bed, gazing at the popcorn ceiling and chest rising and falling with heavy breaths. Minhyuk panted heavily to get fresh air back into his lungs. Not that he was complaining—hell, Kihyun could sit on his face all night and he’d love it—but air was necessary after all. As they laid next to each other, the beta wiped his face best he could of any residual cum and bit his lip. He was grinning like an idiot.

“So uh, that was fun...” he muttered, partly for comedic effect, partly because he was awkward as hell. The tidal wave of pheromones the omega released onto Minhyuk seeped into his core, driving his mind wild with pure sex, sex, sex. He couldn’t think straight.

“Hah, I’ll show you fun.” Kihyun shot up and straddled his friend again. Minhyuk moaned at Kihyun’s brazen action, not expecting the sudden assertiveness. It was as if the orgasm surged him to life.

Minhyuk perked up, focus entirely on the weight of Kihyun’s body on him, wetness adding delicious pressure to his aching cock. He sucked in a breath to remind himself to breath in the presence of such a beautiful person; the man he loved.

He caught himself staring for perhaps too long, then spoke up, “Oh, uh, let me get a condom.” He leaned towards the nightstand to retrieve a condom from the top drawer.

Kihyun swiftly reached out and encircled Minhyuk’s wrist, stopping him. “No,” He whispered, locking their fingers together. “I want to feel you... all of you.”

Minhyuk thought licking Kihyun’s ass was the pinnacle of his life, but nope. It was this. Swallowing hard, he asked, “A-Are you sure?” He immediately regretted uttering those words; what a buzzkill. “I mean... Okay. Yes. Fuck yes!”

A huge smile on his face, he sat up and wrapped his arms around Kihyun’s lower back. He admired the way the omega looked all sweaty and breathless and pretty. He couldn’t help but steal a kiss. Kihyun looped his arms around Minhyuk’s neck, dragging his fingers through blond hair. He held the kiss, affectionate pheromones seeping from his body from being so close to Minhyuk like this. Their mouths moved together sensually, tongues dancing, swallowing each other’s breaths. Minhyuk rutted against the omega’s sexy hip movements as they worked each other up.

Impatiently, Minhyuk slid a hand down over the swell of Kihyun’s ass, squeezing the flesh momentarily before slipping his hand between them. He grabbed his dick and rolled his hips back
enough to be able to guide his cock to the omega’s entrance. In one motion, he thrusted all the way in.

Kihyun’s breath hitched from the sudden pleasure. He dragged his nails down Minhyuk’s scalp, nape, back as he squeezed around the beta. “Fuck,” he groaned out against Minhyuk’s lips, feeling how deep inside the blond’s dick reached. “Jesus, Minhyuk...”

“Ah, I’m sorry! I... couldn’t help it, you’re so pretty...” The beta replied through a groan. Shit, Kihyun was so warm and wet and tight. He thrusted into the warmth as his hands slid down the smooth muscles of Kihyun’s back to the delicious swell of his ass. Minhyuk kneaded the soft flesh, inadvertently rocking the omega’s hips against his cock.

Every thrust stretched Kihyun just right as he grinded on Minhyuk’s lap. He could taste himself on his friend’s skillful tongue, sinful but delicious. His cock squished between them, leaking precum on their sweating bodies. He gripped Minhyuk’s shoulders and took control; his hips rolled on their own accord, sparking a hot fire that coiled within. He cupped Minhyuk’s jaw in his hands as he stared into his best friend’s eyes.

“Do you know how long I’ve wanted to do this?” Minhyuk asked breathlessly against Kihyun’s lips. Their faces, their bodies were so close they shared pleasant warmth. The beta’s long legs bent at the knees, heels digging into the mattress to add more force to his thrusts. The angle wasn’t ideal to thrust fast, but he was so fucking deep inside the omega he thought he died and went to heaven.

“Do you know h-how deep you are?” Kihyun grunted, ready to take more. “Not deep enough.”

He lifted up and dropped back down on Minhyuk’s cock, bouncing faster once he found a rhythm. Eyes glazed over with marijuana and lust, Minhyuk released his grasp on Kihyun’s ass and leaned back, holding himself up to watch the omega work his sexy magic. The way Kihyun worked the beta’s cock was unreal—he kept a delicious pace as flesh smacking against flesh accompanied the noise of the bed creaking. Minhyuk marveled at the omega’s cock as it bounced with his movements, provoking the beta to reach out and tease the leaking tip.

Pale face tinged pink, lips shiny and parted, Kihyun moaned, “Fuck, baby. God, you’re so deep.”

Biting his bottom lip, the beta flashed Kihyun a sinister look and shot up. “I can go deeper, beautiful.”

He grabbed the omega by the waist and twisted, flipping them over so that the omega was now on the bottom looking pretty against spearmint bedsheets. He thrusted deep as he could and moaned, overcome with pleasure. A slew of swears and moans left Kihyun’s lips; he was more aroused at Minhyuk’s show of dominance than he would have cared to admit. A shiver ran up the omega’s body as Minhyuk licked sweat off his neck, then kissed a trail down the length of his collarbone to his shoulder. Slowing his fervent pace, he focused solely on fucking Kihyun nice and deep.

The beta couldn’t resist looking down at Kihyun and not kissing his sweet lips. So he did, slow and sensual like the way he made love to the omega. Sweaty bodies left the dark green sheets damp and the air smelled of pheromones and sex. Everything was perfect, but Minhyuk knew it wasn’t going to last. He knew Kihyun wasn’t his, that this night would remain as a memory in time, but he cherished it with every fiber of his being.

“Ki... I love you,” Minhyuk muttered against the omega’s lips. “You’re so perfect.”

Kihyun’s arms winded around Minhyuk’s lower back, pressing the pads of his fingers into the soft skin above Minhyuk’s ass. Yet another confession made Kihyun’s chest flutter. “Min...” he
moaned as his body started to tense from a building orgasm. “Oh, Min! I’m so close…”

Minhyuk wasn't going to last much longer and the omega's adorable moans in his ear pulled him closer and closer to the edge. "Shit, me too," he moaned weakly, caught between fucking Kihyun to a second orgasm and staving off his own.

Threading his fingers through the omega's ashen hair, he tried to kiss his pretty mouth but ended up kissing clumsily around it. Fuck, he wasn't sure if he could give Kihyun more but he was so willing to give his best friend everything he had.

Kihyun panted harder and faster, breaths accompanied by mewls of pleasure. Minhyuk was treating him so sweetly, his body went into overdrive. The intensity had him lost in it all. His body writhed, his mind swam, and he blurted out words without thinking. “Oh god, oh fuck—knot me! Please just fucking knot me!” He clung to Minhyuk’s body, fingernails digging into the beta’s shoulder blades. Before his empty wish could be fulfilled, his back arched, cock pulsing as cum spurted between their bodies in thick ribbons of white.

Kihyun was in heaven, but Minhyuk had fallen in the midst of his ascent.

The beta’s heart shattered into a million pieces at the utterance of those two words: ‘Knot me.’

He felt like crying. All pleasure was gutted from him. His tender affection spoiled, soft kisses disintegrated into an alienated frown. His best friend in the entire universe wasn’t thinking of him during sex, he was thinking of his sick bastard of a captor. An alpha.

And, to add insult to injury, his body ignored his mental distress, reacting only to the physical stimulation of Kihyun writhing beneath him as he too reached orgasm. Minhyuk came from the seeming endless convulsing around him, but no euphoria followed.

Bitterly, Minhyuk pulled away from Kihyun in silence and took a moment to recover from the rapture of their love making because he physically had to, but the bliss of it was ruined emotionally. However, still high from his orgasm, the omega felt so warm and happy. He felt so much more than he ever felt with Hyunwoo. Minhyuk made him feel important and appreciated.

The omega cupped Minhyuk’s cheek, his head foggy still as he smiled up at the beta. However, there was a foreign look on his best friend’s face that confused him. Did Minhyuk not feel the same way?

“Min...?” His voice cracked, breathless and just as wrecked as he was.

Minhyuk turned away from the omega. He moved off his friend and sat on the edge of the bed facing away. His head slumped low in his lap, his hands covered his face as he sighed out all the pain he felt. Tears pricked his eyes but he wouldn’t show them to Kihyun. After several silent moments, Minhyuk rasped out, “Sorry I’m not him.”

The beta stood and walked in to the bathroom, closing shut the door to isolate himself.

Left in a state of bewilderment, Kihyun sat up on his elbows to watch his best friend walk away and shut him out. He repeated Minhyuk’s words in his mind—Sorry he wasn’t who? What did Kihyun do or say to ruin the mood? He felt abandoned yet concerned because his best friend looked absolutely distraught. Pulling on his briefs, he headed to the bathroom. “Min? Love, what’s wrong?”

“What’s wrong? What’s wrong is you coming here, making me think you finally escaped, and fucking me only to compare me to that asshole!” Minhyuk shouted from the other side of the door.
He stood in front of the sink staring at himself in the streaky mirror. Clenching his jaw, he stared at himself in self-pity. God, he was an idiot to think any shred of his best friend would remain after being kidnapped and manipulated by a terrible gangster. “Did he send you here just to fuck with me?” he asked spitefully.

Kihyun frowned. “Compare? When did I ever compare you to anyone?” He asked, keeping his voice as relaxed as he could. Fighting with his best friend was the last thing he needed or wanted. “And no, I came here on my own whim...” he added, trailing off, disheartened.

Minhyuk swallowed hard, realizing the omega was oblivious to the entire ordeal. Did he not realize what he moaned out in the climax of their love making? “Kihyun... you know damn well a beta cannot knot anyone.”

Hearing the words spoken aloud only dug the knife in deeper.

Pressing the side of his head against the door, Kihyun’s frown transformed into shock. Had he... had he asked Minhyuk to knot him?! “Oh my god...” He banged the back of his head against the door, then turned to lean against the wood, disappointed at his relapse of logic in the heat of the moment. “Min, did I—God, I... I am so sorry. I didn’t even realize I...”

He really fucked up. Dread swept over him when recalled moaning out raucy words before orgasm; guilt settled like a festering sore in his gut. “I’ve only been with alphas... I... it just slipped out. Please, understand I didn’t do that on purpose, love... Please, I am so sorry,” the omega rambled, unable to imagine the feelings going through the beta on the other side of the door.

For some reason, Kihyun’s words, no matter how logical the beta knew them to be after rooming with the omega for years, didn’t console him at all. As the other’s words oozed through the door, Minhyuk splashed cold water on his face to calm down and sober up. He simply let the water drip from his face as he stared down at the drain in the sink, letting silent fall over them once more.

“Tell me, Kihyun. I told you exactly I feel about you, but you never told me how you felt...” He turned to the door and spoke to the wooden frame as of it were the omega. “I risked everything to save you, but you stayed. And now what? You’re here because he didn’t want you anymore? I’m just a convenient getaway, aren’t I?”

Kihyun sighed out a hefty breath through his nose. Minhyuk didn’t understand. How could he? The beta had been in the dark for the last ten days since they last saw one another at the penthouse.

“I... I said it before. I thought I loved him, I thought he had some feelings for me.” His voice sounded too full of emotion as he stared at the floor. He felt fragile like the thinnest piece of glass; anything could set him off. “But... there was something I needed to tell him. I went to him after he came back from his trip and found some tramp dryhumping him at his party, and I... I came straight here. Asshole didn’t even tell me he came back...” Kihyun rolled to his left against the wooden barrier between him and Minhyuk. “I’m confused about many things right now, Min... for a very good reason. Please don’t hide from me, I need you right now...”

Minhyuk closed his eyes and ousted the concept of Kihyun being in love with Son Hyunwoo from his memory. He knew the omega was stressed out, but his tale of woe didn’t make the beta feel better. It didn’t answer any of his questions, it just reaffirmed that Kihyun thought of his best friend as a last resort. He didn’t need Minhyuk at all. “He’s a fucking gangster, Kihyun. He doesn’t care about you at all, don’t you understand that? What’s there to be confused about?”

Minhyuk’s words stung, but Kihyun was coming to the conclusion that he really was just some fuck up that Hyunwoo emptied his balls into. The truth hurt; it always hurt. “I know now that he
doesn’t care. He calls me a fuck up. He’s rude, egotistical, merciless... yet I still...” Kihyun pressed his palm to the door, wishing there was no door separating them. “I’m confused because...” God, he was nervous, almost shaking. “I’m pregnant, Minhyuk.”

Immediately the bathroom door clicked open and Minhyuk stared at Kihyun with concern. “Holy shit, Ki...” he muttered, clearly stunned by the news. He wasn’t sure how to proceed, but he knew he had to comfort his friend. He noticed the omega’s shakiness and didn’t hesitate to pull him into a tight embrace. “Oh my god...”

Kihyun curled into the beta and finally let himself be vulnerable to someone who wouldn’t abuse the privilege.
“I found out this morning. Hyunwoo, he... he doesn’t know. You’re the first person I’ve told,” Kihyun sobbed into the crook of Minhyuk’s shoulder as they hugged. He didn’t exactly plan to confess, especially under the circumstances, but he couldn’t harbor any more secrets; he was already being eaten alive by his emotions.

Worse yet, Kihyun was carrying Hyunwoo’s child and the alpha had no idea. On top of that, the first person the omega told was his best friend and the man Hyunwoo reviled. The saddest fact of all was that Minhyuk cared more about the shocking news than the alpha seemed to care about anything related to Kihyun at all…

Would Hyunwoo even care about his unborn child?

“What are you, um… Are you going to keep it?” Minhyuk was awestruck. He was always bad at masking his emotions, and now more than ever he was beating himself up for being so flagrant about his shock. Fortunately, Kihyun didn’t seem bothered by it—he clearly had his own turmoil to cope through.

Shit, the beta felt like such an asshole for being so hard on Kihyun before. All this time the omega was holding a deep, dark secret. The best thing Minhyuk could do for his friend was be there for him, to be a shoulder to cry on. He hugged his best friend tighter as the omega sobbed.

“I... I don’t know. I haven’t thought about it…” Kihyun replied between cries. Would Hyunwoo even want the bastard child anyway? He felt fresh tears spill as he clung to Minhyuk. “Min, what am I going to do?” he asked, voice straining by the tightness in his throat.

“I don't know, but I'll support whatever you choose to do...” Minhyuk said as he slowly withdrew from the hug to stare into Kihyun's gorgeous, teary eyes. A breath hitched in his throat as he dared to touch the skin of the omega's stomach. "You won't go through this alone, I promise. I'll do anything I can to make sure you're okay," he reassured with a small smile, hiding the apprehension and fear in his voice for Kihyun's sake.

The omega returned the smile with one of his own and wiped away the smeared liner under his eyes. “At this point, I really do feel like a fuck up...” he mumbled with a humorous-less laugh.

“You're not a fuck up... This is just... Shit fucking happens. You can make it through this.”

Minhyuk tried to remain hopeful and to inspire hope in his friend, but inside he was dying—the child growing inside Kihyun was half of the person he hated most. Nevertheless, he threw on another smile and wiped a tear from Kihyun's cheek with the pad of his thumb. The omega grabbed Minhyuk’s wrist and nuzzled into his hand, causing the worry lines on Minhyuk’s face to soften.

The beta took a deep breath. "For now, you only have to focus on this night... with me. C'mon, I'll repack the bong and—oh, uh, should you be smoking?"

“Min, love, I’ve been drinking too... I just... I want to get high while I can, but I won’t drink anymore, okay? Not while…” Kihyun sighed and patted his lower abdomen, “Not while I’m sharing my body.”

The beta nodded. “Okay, um... yeah, okay, that’s good.” He didn’t really know what to say. No part of life ever prepared him for this specific moment. But Kihyun’s delicate affection and reassuring smile made all the negativity disappear into the background. “Then I’ll repack. You just
Minhyuk pressed a chaste kiss to the omega’s forehead before leaving to retrieve the bong and weed from the kitchen counter. Kihyun couldn’t help but smile at Minhyuk’s show of affection as the sound of footsteps faded away from the bedroom. He returned to the bed and laid against a pillow, smelling sex pheromones heavy on the green sheets. He sighed, feeling cathartic; the beta took the news better than he thought...

Out in the kitchen Minhyuk had already collected the bong, lighter, and weed when his emotions finally got the better of him and he couldn’t fight them off any longer. Tears fell down his cheeks as he sobbed quietly into the crook of his elbow, sure to not alarm Kihyun. His body shook with the intensity of his sadness.

Everything was so fucked up and he didn’t know how to fix it.

After several minutes, he wiped the wetness from his cheeks and took a few deep breaths in, sighing out the anguish in audible huffs. His eyes were a little red and glossy, but he could blame the marijuana. The beta cleared his throat and recomposed himself before grabbing the items and returning to the bedroom.

“There’s actually a lot left... I guess we didn’t have a lot,” he said playfully like nothing happened.

Kihyun sat up and patted the empty side of the bed with a welcoming smile. “I don’t want to smoke all your stash, love. Got to leave you some for when you need it.”

Minhyuk laughed, expertly hiding his sadness like before, “Nah, it’s alright. I should probably find more productive uses for my downtime...”

He sat down on the bed beside Kihyun, lit the stem of the bong, and took a huge hit. Holding in the smoke for a few seconds, he playfully winked at the omega before exhaling into a minor coughing fit. As he did so, he offered the bong and lighter to Kihyun and laid down with his head on the omega’s bare stomach. Kihyun grasped the bong and lighter, laughing in amusement at Minhyuk’s antics.

“I don’t know, smoking is pretty hot,” the omega replied, feeding off Minhyuk’s light-hearted attitude. He lit the bud, curled his lips around the top, and inhaled deeply, pleased by the smoke entering his lungs.

The beta stared up at the ceiling as Kihyun coughed through the exhale. For some reason, it amused him. But it didn’t take long for the effects of the drug to kick in again, and soon his mind filled with unanswered thoughts. He clicked his tongue, debating whether he should mention anything about what the omega cried out in the throes of passion. Curiosity got the better of him.

“I would if I could, you know... Knot you.”

“I know,” Kihyun muttered. The topic caused a barrage of emotions to explode in his chest. Guilt was heavy on his mind. “I’m really sorry, Min. That wasn’t fair to you. I acted on what I was used to, what would have been familiar for me, but I want you to know that you don’t need a knot to please me...” Maybe a topic shift would bring back the light-hearted mood; he flushed a dark shade of pink and cleared his throat. “Your dick... th-the curve is really convenient.”

The beta was solemn as Kihyun’s words passed through his ears, but he wasn’t expecting the confession to result in complimenting his dick.

Eyes wide and a silly grin on his lips, Minhyuk lollled his head to look at Kihyun. “Oh yeah? You
like my dick?” He waggled his eyebrows, then returned his gaze to the ceiling. “That’s awesome ‘cause I like it too.” Brown eyes glanced down upon realizing talking about his dick had him half mast. He laughed at himself. “I mean... we could fuck again and you could really get a feel for the curve.”

Kihyun quickly took a hit from the bong to hide his blush. Truth be told, he wanted to atone for his mistake and turn this night into a memory he would cherish. He pulled back from the bong and spoke, smoke drifting from his mouth, “Yeah, I really want to make it up to you…” He paused to finish blowing out the rest, “Because I do in fact really like your dick.”

Minhyuk smirked. “I like yours too.”

He flashed Kihyun a devious look and snaked his hand over the omega’s sharp hipbones. Biting his bottom lip, he tugged at the plum briefs and curled his hand around Kihyun’s dick, working it in slow, short strokes to get the boy riled up again.

Spearmint pheromones radiated off of Minhyuk in waves as he jerked. The tease sparked throughout Kihyun’s body like an aphrodisiac, and he keened at the unhurried touch. Mint in his nose felt like home. As he leaned back on his elbows, his legs spread wider whilst his eyelids fluttered closed.

“Come on, Min baby,” the omega purred with the sensual curve of his finger, “Give it to me.”

The break of dawn had yet to peak through the windows, yet Kihyun awoke to an urgent, uncomfortable feeling in the pit of his stomach. He opened his heavy eyes to a dark room, and he blinked several times as his body and mind groggily woke from a deep sleep. His head hurt. His stomach was sour. He needed a bathroom, quick.

The omega pulled the blankets from his body, gently slipped out of Minhyuk’s lazy hold, and hurried to the bathroom. He closed the door behind him and barely made it to the toilet before vomiting into the ceramic bowl.

He coughed and gagged. His head pounded with each rough hack. Just when he thought he could relax, his stomach lurches and he puked again. Over and over. His throat felt raw and sore from the abuse. He didn’t know much time had passed, but he only just realized the ache in his knees after a few moments of stillness. Then another round hit him.

Fuck. Was it really going to be like this for the next nine months?

Back in the bedroom, Minhyuk awoke from the loss of body warmth tucked against him. After noticing Kihyun was gone, he feared the worst. He blinked around the room in an attempt to see the omega. Without his glasses, however, it was a fruitless endeavor, so he reluctantly peeled the blanket from himself and followed the strip of light coming from the bathroom.

Last thing he remembered was falling asleep with Kihyun in his arms after going a second round and a brief shower. He couldn’t recall what time they had actually fallen asleep but it was well into the hours of early morning.

What time was it now? Something like 5am? Why was Kihyun up?

The closer to the light the beta got, the more he squinted. Soon it wasn’t just light that lead him to Kihyun, it was the distinct noise of vomiting. Just outside the bathroom door, he rubbed the sleep from his eyes and stifled a yawn before pushing open the door. He instantly understood the
“Oh god, Ki. Morning sickness already? I’m sorry,” he said with a frown. “Are you okay? Do you want some water?”

Groaning, Kihyun spat into the toilet bowl and flushed, using the counter to lift himself up off the floor. He weakly held himself up as he regarded Minhyuk. “I’ll be okay, thanks love. Did I wake you?” he asked, fond of the beta’s concern for his well being.

Minhyuk rubbed the back of his neck. “Well yeah... but it’s okay. Honestly, I didn’t think you were gonna be here when I woke up. I’m really happy you are.” He grinned. “Hey, I’ll make us breakfast. How do pancakes sound? Oh, wait, no. Do you have any weird food cravings yet? I’ll make you whatever,” the beta said excitedly as he approached Kihyun and kissed him on the nose.

“No, not yet.” Kihyun felt his lips spread into a smile. The domesticity was needed in his chaotic life, and he appreciated everything Minhyuk was willing to do for him, but honestly, he wasn’t even sure he was done puking. “I’m not really hungry right now, but you’re more than welcome to cook.”

Minhyuk opened his mouth to speak, but—knock, kock, knock!!—a loud myriad of knocks interrupted him. Kihyun’s shoulders fell as reality struck; so much for pleasant domesticity. The beta shot Kihyun a confused glance but Kihyun remained unphased. Hardly anything surprised him anymore.

“The hell? Isn’t it like 5 in the morning?” Minhyuk hissed, annoyed. He grabbed his glasses from the counter and put them on, then grimaced when the fierce knocking grew louder.

“Min...” the omega said softly, placing a hand on Minhyuk’s shoulder. “I have to go...”

Kihyun wanted to ignore the knocks because he knew they were for him. He wanted so badly to tell Minhyuk to disregard them. He didn’t want to leave. Every fibre of his being told him to stay where it was safe, where it wouldn’t stress out his pregnant body, but for his and Minhyuk’s sake he had to. Sadly, the consequences of ignoring the knocking would be on not only him but Minhyuk as well.

Minhyuk tried to hide his disappointment. Kihyun sounded so resolute, like he knew it was futile to resist the inevitable. It made the beta angrier knowing the alpha forced that compliance in his best friend.

Ugh, enough was enough. This was bullshit.

What good was so-called freedom if it was nothing more than an illusion?

“No, I won’t let them take you!” Minhyuk snapped, turning a heel and darting out of the bedroom towards the living room. The omega frowned at Minhyuk’s denial, but promptly followed after him. He had to catch the beta before he opened the door—this wasn’t his mess to clean.

“Let me answer it, Minhyuk. It’s for me anyway.”

The beta knew it was nonsensical to protest. Kihyun knew what he was doing. This was the circumstance and there was no avoiding it, and if the omega wanted to handle it then who was Minhyuk to stop him?

Noticing how Minhyuk’s face fell, Kihyun quickly thought of something to other-direct his best friend; something sentimental and meaningful. “Please, would you let me borrow another
Minhyuk couldn’t suppress the sorrow in his smile. “Of course, Kihyun,” he replied softly.

As he turned back into the bedroom, he couldn’t help but ponder if the omega would still be there when he came back.

When the beta disappeared, Kihyun braced himself to confront the person behind the door. His heart was as loud as the obnoxious knocking from outside, but he persisted. He begrudgingly opened the door, intentionally leaving only a few inches of space to peek out. The precaution was fleeting, however, as Gwangju branch designated babysitter Hyungwon shoved open the door the rest of the way and grinned at Kihyun with a half-smoked cigarette in his mouth.

“Morning, princess. Did ya miss me?”

Kihyun scowled at the pet name. “Do you really have to be here so early?”

Just as Hyungwon went to reply, Minhyuk rushed over with a fresh sweater in hand. He had nearly dropped the clothing on the floor when he saw Kihyun talking to the expensively-dressed beta, and the first thing that came to mind was to intrude on their conversation like the other had rudely intruded on them.

Minhyuk slapped a palm on the door and tried to slam shut the door. Hyungwon, however, stuck out a hand and stopped it just in time. He cringed at the crunch on his arm but shoved the door open with force and stepped over the threshold to prevent such a move from happening again. With a tired sigh, he simply said, “Time to go.”

“No, it’s not,” Minhyuk hissed. He didn’t remember seeing the other at Hyunwoo’s penthouse. But based on his absolute discourtesy of disturbing a private home at 5am, the other beta was definitely one of Son Hyunwoo’s boys.

Hyungwon rolled his eyes, clearly bored with the situation. “No, no, I insist...” He pushed open his leather jacket to flash the mahogany handle of his pistol secured at his hip. Minhyuk’s eyes followed the movement and he gulped, fear wracking him. “It really is.”

“There’s no need to hurt him, Hyungwon. I’ll be right there…” The omega sighed and gave the taller beta a pleading look. “Just give me a sec, please?”

Hyungwon glanced at his designer wrist watch and shrugged. “Whatever. You have four minutes.” He didn’t care what Kihyun did, if he fucked the blond beta that smelled of mint, if he was hungover—none of that was his business. What was his business was ensuring Kihyun’s prompt return to Boss’s penthouse by curfew.

Kihyun softened slightly. “Thank you, Hyungwon, I—”

“Just let him stay. Why do you have to do this?” Minhyuk griped, still very irked by the early morning intrusion. The omega wanted to face palm at his friend’s relentless protests. Poor thing didn’t realize everything was hopeless.

Hyungwon rolled his eyes again. “Just doing my job, man.”

Minhyuk scoffed, “You call being a criminal a job?”

Hyungwon stiffened his posture and checked his watch again. He regarded Minhyuk with disinterest. “Pays the bills. You got bills, right? You understand the hustle, yeah?”
“Ahem.” Kihyun quirked his brow towards his so-called babysitter. “Can we have that four minutes in privacy, or are you going to stand there like a shadow?”

“I’m going to stand here like a shadow...” Hyungwon replied to Kihyun, then directed his attention to Minhyuk for the rest of the sentence, “Because that’s what he pays me for.” He punctuated his words with a handsome smile. Lifting his jacket sleeve, he checked his watch again. “Oh, two minutes four seconds. Better make it quick, princess.”

Kihyun rolled his eyes as he turned his full attention to Minhyuk, back facing Hyungwon. Minhyuk eyed the other beta cautiously as Kihyun began to speak. Needing to make this moment about them and only them, the omega said, “Min, thank you for being here when I needed you. And thank you for everything else.”

Kihyun’s words made Minhyuk realize these were literally the last two minutes and four seconds he’d have with his best friend for God knew how long. He swallowed hard. “Of course. You know I’m always here for you. I’m never going to stop fighting that asshole until you’re free, I promise.”

The omega smiled as he curled his arms around Minhyuk’s neck, holding the beta tightly. In their tender moment, he banished all feelings of sadness and guilt and basked in the safety of Minhyuk while he could. Tears welled up. “Kiss me?”

Just like all the other times Kihyun asked to kiss him, Minhyuk reacted without hesitation. He kissed the omega like a spouse sending their lover off to war. Carding his fingers through Kihyun’s hair, he breathed in maraschino cherry and smiled against the omega’s lips. It was peaceful, serene, until Hyungwon rudely interrupted with: “Cute. Time is up.”

Kihyun slipped into the sweater Minhyuk gave him, then cupped his cheeks and gave him a quick kiss goodbye. “Take care of yourself, love. I’ll see you again, I promise. And... keep taking care of her too, please?”

“Okay, Ki.” Minhyuk nodded, understanding what Kihyun’s final words meant.

He couldn’t imagine how hard it was for Kihyun being in this terrible situation while his sick mother was fighting for her life in the hospital. The beta visited her as often as he could to remind her that her son was okay, that he was just extremely busy but okay.

Hyungwon fished car keys from the pocket of his leather jacket and jingled them obnoxiously. “I wonder what the consequences will be for your tardiness?” He pondered aloud, seemingly amused at the new variable to a tired routine.

Kihyun rolled his eyes. “Bye, Min. Thank you again.” He kissed Minhyuk’s cheek, and with a heavy heart he quickly turned away from his best friend, from the safety of familiar surroundings. “Let’s go,” he mumbled out to Hyungwon as he pushed past the taller man and walked into the dewy air of early morning.

Minhyuk watched as his best friend walked down the driveway beside a mysterious man paid to violate Kihyun’s privacy and return him to a maniacal monster who disrespected him.

He hated everything about this. He hated that the omega was pregnant with his captor's pup. He hated that Kihyun lied to the police about his situation. He hated that his confession of love was unreciprocated.

Worst of all, he hated that he couldn't do anything about any of it.
The drive back was spent in silence, as seemed to be customary anytime Kihyun shared a vehicle with jo-pok. It was fine, it didn’t matter; he would rather lose himself in thought reminiscing his night spent with Minhyuk. The affectionate touches, passionate kisses, soft whispers and moans made in the safety of familiarity—memories to keep him sane.

He needed sanity. He had lost too much of it trying to rationalize his kidnapping as an act of adoration, of an alpha capturing his ideal omega under the guise of paying monetary debt with his body. He was foolish and innocent as he convinced himself that was okay—that it was love. And fuck, did he really convince himself. Embraced a life of omega servitude and domesticity as Hyunwoo, the mighty alpha, offered him stability and protection. Worse of all, he managed to convince himself his mother, his fucking mother, would want this for him as some sort of dying wish.

What Kihyun felt for Hyunwoo, what he thought he felt, wasn’t love. It never was. It was a psychological mechanism triggered by the brain—an innate survival strategy for victims of abduction to cope through their trauma by endearing themselves to their cruel captor. His omega biology once again assumed the inferior role for preservation of life, and he hated it.

Minhyuk’s caring nature, his affection, friendship—that was love.

Kihyun was so fucking naïve for falling for the villain.

He was a goddamn cliche no matter how hard he wanted to break his omega chains.

As the car stopped in front of Hyunwoo’s penthouse, Kihyun wiped tears he didn’t realize fell. He said nothing to Hyungwon as he promptly left, too tired and bitter to acknowledge the lesser alpha enforcers standing guard at the front doors.

The smell of last night’s gathering was still heavy in the air. And, just as it did last night, smoke and alcohol mixed with a dozen other scents triggered Kihyun’s nausea. He staggered down the marble floor to his suite, trying to be quiet at almost 6 in the morning. Hyunwoo probably never realized he was gone, so maybe he’d be able to slip quietly into bed and wake up to a normal day.

Unfortunately for him, after Hyungwon dropped Kihyun off at the penthouse, he dialed Boss to report back. Some would call it a snitch, and it was; that was exactly what paid the bills. In all honesty, his loyalty wasn’t with the jo-pok or Boss Hyunwoo, it was with money. It wasn’t personal.

Hyunwoo woke to Hyungwon’s call. Only speaking for a few minutes, he acted quickly after ending the call. He was careful as he slid out of his massive bed filled with two naked omega and beta women.

The beta stirred as he made quite the clamor finding a pair of briefs from the floor. “W-where are you going, handsome?” she muttered sleepily, her hair messy in her face.

“Shut up,” replied the alpha as he slipped into the black briefs and stormed out of the bedroom.

Nothing on but briefs and a gold chain around his neck, dark hair tousled, hickies littering his bronze skin, Hyunwoo ventured into the halls. His alpha nose followed the trail of sweet, sweet cherry—he was going to find his omega.

Pungent cherry lead Hyunwoo directly to the guest suite the omega had been staying in. The closer he got to the source of the luscious scent, the harder it was to will down his biological instinct to
hunt. However, when he reached for the door handle, he hesitated but ultimately decided to barge in.

There, half asleep and cozy in bed, was the omega, his omega, reeking of mint from that piece of shit beta Hyunwoo absolutely despised. He flipped on the light switch, startling Kihyun.

He smelled fear.

He grinned.

“Welcome back. Did you have fun keeping up appearances?”
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

**Trigger warning:** Graphic depictions of physical, verbal, and emotional abuse.

It was early, he had gotten minimal sleep, his stomach was twisting inside out, he had to leave his best friend in the whole world, and now he had to handle an egotistical alpha having a tantrum because his pet ran away—needless to say, Kihyun was *not* in a good mood. He was, simply put, out of fucks to give.

“Did you have fun keeping your dick wet?” The omega shot back at the angry alpha, alarming him to his testy mood. What was the worst thing Hyunwoo could do? Hit him? How predictable.

Hyunwoo quirked an eyebrow, intrigued by the omega’s feisty attitude. “I always have fun keeping my dick wet,” he chuckled, moving closer to Kihyun like a haunting shadow in the dark. “Does that beta make you like this, or is *this* who you really are?”

Kihyun pulled the blankets over him in bed and rolled over, making it clear that he intended to ignore the alpha’s childish games and sleep. “No. You don’t know who I really am. Now leave me alone.”

“Oh, too bad, just when you were getting interesting,” Hyunwoo hissed as he reached out and snatched the blanket from off of Kihyun, exposing his body to the bedroom air. His eyes scanned the omega’s body, disappointed to find it bare without his marks. Then, the aroma of fresh mint wafted into his nose, igniting every alpha fiber within him in a sudden blaze of jealousy. “You smell fucking disgusting.”

The omega sat up, annoyed, and glared at Hyunwoo. “For your information, yeah, I went to Minhyuk’s. I’m still not feeling well—not that you care—and I needed his mother’s soup recipe… It wasn’t the best excuse, but it was at least worth a try. Besides, he didn’t owe Hyunwoo the truth. “I fell asleep on the couch and was *enjoying* it until your errand boy came for me."

Hyunwoo rolled his eyes. “You stupid bitch, you know I’m in the business of lying and hustling. You think you can play me with that sorry ass excuse? You reek of that beta... he’s all over you.”

It was Kihyun’s turn to roll his eyes. Again, he turned away from the alpha, but Hyunwoo lurched forth and grabbed him by the arm, manhandling him out of the bed using strength leftover from his cocaine binge in Seoul and the party. He hurled the omega into the corner by the bathroom ensuite. Kihyun crashed into the wall with a loud thump, but whipped around to defend himself.

The alpha snarled. "Go fucking clean yourself up, you whore."

This time, instead of cowering like a helpless omega, Kihyun decided to fight back; he had something, *someone*, to protect this time. His eyes narrowed as he stared daggers into the alpha. “*No,*” he said firmly, curling his hands into fists at his side. “A little hypocritical, aren’t we? At least I slept with only one person, but you... How many people are in your bed right now, hm? Two? Three?” His newfound confidence would surely get him into trouble, but he couldn’t give a shit. He was sick and tired of Hyunwoo’s rotten attitude. “Seems like I’m not the only whore in this
Hyunwoo’s head lolled back in laughter. Oooh, was the omega jealous too? The alpha really liked that. What else could he coax out of Kihyun? He seemed so easily provoked, Hyunwoo wanted to see how far he could push it. He spread out his arms arrogantly, signature grin on his face. “It’s true. Who wouldn’t want to fuck me? I’m rich, I’m powerful; I own this fucking city and everyone in it. I’m a fucking god.”

Kihyun gagged. “Yeah, too bad your dick isn’t as big as your ego,” he commented under his breath, permeating the air with angered pheromones.

“We both know that’s not true, pet,” Hyunwoo cooed, amused at Kihyun’s remark. Hell, all of this amused him, challenged him, excited him—all the yelling and hatred reminded him who he was, and pulled him farther and farther away from the feelings for Kihyun he buried deep down… or so he told himself.

Kihyun pushed out of the corner and stood defiantly. “So go back to your throne of shit with your sluts and money. Leave me alone.”

Noticing Kihyun’s guard, the alpha closed in on him in the corner, planting a large palm on his chest and shoving him into the wall. Slamming his hand against the wall beside Kihyun’s head, Hyunwoo closed the distance between them, aroused by the angry pheromones rolling off the omega. Bergamot clung to the air as the alpha scented Kihyun, his scent killing the scent of mint.

“I’d rather be on my throne with my queen beside me,” Hyunwoo whispered as he caressed the omega’s jaw, but Kihyun smacked his hand away from his face.

Was Hyunwoo really getting off on this? So fucking sick and twisted.

Kihyun was angrier than he’d ever been; the alpha’s abuse fuelled the omega’s fire of hatred evermore. “Fuck off!” he snarled and pressed the palms of his hands to the alpha’s chest, pushing Hyunwoo away with force.

Hyunwoo stumbled back and took a second to process the fact that the omega actually struck him back. A lowly omega challenged him physically? Under normal circumstances, he’d retaliate sevenfold, but this was his omega; this was Kihyun. Instead of fanning the fire in his veins, the adrenaline thundered through his body and turned him on.

“Damn baby, I like it when you touch me like that,” he groaned, reaching out and curling a hand around Kihyun’s slender neck. He reeled the omega to him again, craning his neck to the side to nip at the skin of Kihyun’s bare collarbone. The beast’s hunger was always insatiable; the cruel touch made Kihyun’s skin crawl.

“Get the fuck off me!” Kihyun all but growled, retaliating once more by raising his leg and kicking Hyunwoo in the crotch. The alpha hunched forward and cupped his balls with his hand, a winded groan flying out of his lips at the pain shooting through him. Kihyun felt power when he saw the alpha succumb.

“Fuck!” Gritting his teeth, Hyunwoo rode through the throbbing and fleeting dizziness that came with getting kicked in the balls. “What’s gotten into you, omega? Got some dick and now you’re feeling inspired?” he hissed.

“Wouldn’t you like to know,” Kihyun scoffed in reply. He sidestepped to escape and pushed past Hyunwoo, ready to flee.
Though residual cocaine in Hyunwoo’s system dulled him to much of the pain he felt—some wounds, some extremely fresh wounds—persisted. Throbbing in his pinky finger where he severed the tip caused him to instinctively hide his weakness in the middle of their heated argument. He hid behind mean words instead.

“Yeah, I fucking would,” the alpha shouted, irritated that Kihyun was trying to walk out on their conversation like the cowardly omega he was. When the pain in his groin subsided, he whipped around to grab Kihyun by the wrist in his futile attempt to leave. “Don’t you walk away from me, omega. I’m fucking talking to you.”

Kihyun grew impatient with Hyunwoo’s constant badgering, clinging to him like a child to its mother. The anger that had been bubbling inside finally exploded. Kihyun whirled around, using everything he had in his next attack—the smack of his hand against Hyunwoo’s cheek echoed loudly, and his palm pulsed from the might of the assault. “I said, get the fuck off of me! Is your head that fucking thick that simple demands don’t process? Are the damn drugs melting your brain?”

Hyunwoo’s head stayed turned in the direction Kihyun slapped him, the searing burn of a handprint on his cheek stoking the fire inside. His large chest billowed as the fire grew bigger, more intense, until it burned anything compassionate left in him. His dark eyes locked on Kihyun first before he physically rotated his head.

“You lay a hand a me?” His fangs poked out from his vile snarl.

Abruptly, he clutched the omega by the throat, his grip harsh and tight as he threw Kihyun into the side of the bed. The omega coughed several times to regain airflow after he fell to the floor, instinctively clutching his abdomen to protect that which was so precious. Instantly, Hyunwoo recoiled as pain shot up his arm from his hand, eyes catching the sudden appearance of crimson soaking through the bandage wrapped around his finger and dripping down the length of his forearm.

“That’s the pot calling the kettle black, don’t you think?” Kihyun said as he sat up and rose to his feet. He wasn’t going to stay down this time. “You’re an abusive assho—” He caught sight of red, stopping himself in the middle of his sentence. Hyunwoo’s finger was bleeding through a bandage he hadn’t noticed until now. His blood boiled with rage but his compassionate nature pierced through the anger. If Hyunwoo was bleeding, something major must’ve happened.

“...what did you do?” Kihyun asked cautiously.

Rage turned to childish defensiveness as the omega not only noticed Hyunwoo’s wound but mentioned it, drew attention to it with a soft voice that woke the embers of the alpha’s dead feelings. Hyunwoo turned away subtly, pretending to be indifferent to Kihyun’s empathy, and remained quiet.

Seeing the blood reminded him of what he did and why he did it—how he was yelling and abusing the very person he was bleeding for.

“I did this for you,” Hyunwoo finally said, back still turned from Kihyun. He didn’t have anywhere to wipe the blood, so red droplets left red rivers on his arm before crashing to the floor.

Kihyun frowned. What did Hyunwoo mean by that? What exactly did he do?

“For me?” Kihyun repeated in confusion. “Hyunwoo, what did you do?” He placed a hand on the alpha’s back, worried. He was guarded and careful, and he expected Hyunwoo to pull away from
the touch, but he didn’t.

“It’s the jo-pok way. Atone through sacrifice... a sign of respect...” Hyunwoo explained in a careful tone. “I had a lot atone for because of you, but I—” The alpha’s breath hitched in his throat as he tightened the bandage around his pinky. He paused, aware of Kihyun’s touch, softening a little at the hint of cherry in the air. “I didn’t want Boss to take you from me.”

Kihyun’s shoulders dropped when he realized what Hyunwoo meant—because of Kihyun’s fuck-ups, the alpha took the blame. He figured Hyunwoo would have done anything to keep his toy within reach, but to what severity?

He walked around the alpha, avoiding the blood oozing onto the floor. “Hyunwoo, I...” What could he say to show he was sorry? Maybe his actions would speak louder. “Let me change your bandage. Can’t have you bleeding out on the floor, right?”

The alpha watched as more blood dropped from his wound, unaffected at the sight. A smile almost happened upon his lips at Kihyun’s kindness, but he stopped himself. He hated what he became in the omega’s presence; Kihyun would be the alpha’s downfall in the end.

“No. I did this to myself. I’ll accept responsibility.”

Kihyun held out his hand, palm facing up. “Please... just let me help.” If Hyunwoo denied him then so be it; he wouldn’t want to fight anymore anyway. “Come on, there’s bandages in the bathroom.”

Hyunwoo looked at the hand presented to him. He wasn’t going to take it, but he wasn’t going to deny that he didn’t want Kihyun’s help either. Deep down, he liked that the omega was concerned and doting. “Okay,” he agreed in a gruff voice.

Kihyun grasped the alpha’s clean hand, petite fingers curled around a thick wrist as the omega turned towards the bathroom, pulling Hyunwoo along with him. He mentally prepared himself for the sight of the wound, however gruesome it was. “Does it hurt?”

The alpha was reluctant to tell the truth, but he did it anyway. “Yeah.”

Maybe it was because he was vulnerable and in pain, but he found it endearing that the omega, even after their yelling and fighting, became tender and caring. Why? Why was he so forgiving?

Why did he let Hyunwoo do the things he did to him and still be nice?

Why was Hyunwoo such a monster?

Kihyun pulled the first aid kit out and set it on the counter. He took out a roll of bandages and scissors. He wasn’t ready to see the damage, and he wasn’t sure if he could stomach it either, but for Hyunwoo, he’d try. The omega carefully unwound the bandage, wary of the dripping blood as he pulled the material away. Hyunwoo flinched as the bandage was peeled off. Kihyun froze at what he saw. The tip of Hyunwoo’s finger was gone—literally gone. How could the jo-pok be so cruel? To cause someone to cut off a part of them?

Without the tight pressure around the injury, blood and pus flowed from the cracked scab that had barely formed over the past few days. From his negligence in Seoul, Hyunwoo didn’t properly care for his wound and now it was infected. Even the slightest pressure of Kihyun’s hand stung, and Hyunwoo gritted his teeth as he endured the pain.

Kihyun ignored his queasiness to grab a damp wipe from the kit to clean blood from around the
wound. “Hyunwoo... I’m sorry.”

Without him, Hyunwoo would still have what he had lost.

“Why are you sorry? You didn’t do this.”

“But you did it for me. That’s what you said...” Kihyun cleaned what he could and grabbed an antiseptic spray to help the wound heal. “Was it because of all my mistak—”

“They were mistakes I was accountable for... They were my oversights. What’s done is done.”

Kihyun decided to leave well enough alone and continue his work; Hyunwoo watched the omega dress his wounds for the second time in the short while they’d been together. He seemed less bothered than the first time, but it felt just as intimate. The alpha’s stare was intense. He remained quiet, feeling oddly guilty for reacting explosively towards the omega when he initially saw him.

The omega uncapped the spray. “This will sting,” he warned before giving the nozzle a few pumps, the medicine coming out in a pulse of mist over the wound. Hyunwoo flinched and hissed at the sting of the antiseptic spray, then hissed again at the application of a fresh bandage as Kihyun wrapped around his finger.

The silence in the small bathroom space made the alpha acutely aware of the loud thumping in his chest. Kihyun was so pretty. He hated that the beta laid a hand on his omega. “I hate that you smell like him,” he said out of the blue in a soft voice.

Kihyun all but scoffed as he continued to loop gauze around the alpha’s pinky. “Funny... he said the same thing.”

He was aware Hyunwoo and Minhyuk greatly disliked one another—more like passionately loathed one another—and that each male hated that Kihyun was touched by the other in intimate scenarios, but he had his own problems. Hyunwoo, however, actively hated the beta.

He hated Minhyuk’s relationship with Kihyun. He hated his role in all of this—the saboteur of the alpha’s relationship with the omega. Unfortunately, the beta was a necessary and strategic buffer between Hyunwoo and the police, which was a connection heavily strained by prior events he just severed a finger for. Hyunwoo sighed, the jealousy in his alpha biology causing him to emit spiced bergamot unintentionally.

Kihyun released his soft grasp on Hyunwoo’s hand and stepped back upon sensing alpha pheromones. “There, you’re done.” He turned on the tap to wash blood from his hands. “Have me or one of the maids change the bandage again tonight.”

Hyunwoo’s lips curved into a half smile. “Understood, nurse.” He held out his hand to inspect the craftsmanship of the bandage, then raised an eyebrow at how well done it was. “You’re getting good at this.”

Kihyun chuckled as he dried his hands with a rag. “What, stitching you up? That seems to be the theme.” He dropped the rag, using his foot to clean up blood splatters on the floor. Mending Hyunwoo was part of his job, wasn’t it? Other than being used for his body...

Kihyun’s foot stopped moving when a certain question surfaced. He knew he was nothing more than a toy, a punching bag for Hyunwoo’s words and lust, but was there a name for what he was?

“Hyunwoo, what...” The omega looked up to meet the alpha’s brown eyes. “What am I to you?”
After everything he went through for the alpha, what he was carrying inside him, he deserved to
know the truth. Even if Hyunwoo kept telling him he was only toy to be used for his delight, it felt
like more. He demanded an explanation.

Upon hearing the omega’s thought-provoking question, Hyunwoo’s eyes trailed down from
Kihyun’s eyes to his lips, then back up again. He leaned in close, relishing the omega’s enticing
aura. “I already told you... you’re my queen.”

Being called a queen wasn’t what Kihyun had in mind. What did being the alpha’s even queen
mean? What was his real purpose to Hyunwoo? And to think he was bearing this man’s pup…
How would the alpha react to Kihyun’s pregnancy? Would he regard his child the same way he
regarded the omega? Would he belittle his child for being an omega if they presented as one?
Kihyun opened his mouth but quickly closed it, opting not to tell Hyunwoo of his pregnancy.

He’d have his own dirty little secret; finally some type of power over Hyunwoo.

“What does being your queen mean?” Kihyun asked, playing dumb.

“Come with me on some of my runs, see what I do... see the empire I’ve created... see the empire
we can reign over together.” Hyunwoo was dizzy off the poignancy of the omega’s pheromones.
Was he going into heat soon? He smelled sweeter, creamier, smoother. The alpha leaned in, face a
short distance from Kihyun’s. “My queen will have it all, doesn’t that sound nice?”

“Me? Go on runs? What if I fuck up again? What if something goes awry or there’s an accident? I
—” Kihyun sighed, hands gripping the edge of the counter. “I can’t see you get hurt again on my
account.”

As much as Hyunwoo wanted Kihyun to want to accompany him on low risk runs, the omega was
going to do it whether he wanted to or not; he was a powerful bargaining chip. But right now he
wanted to erase every trace of beta mint on his omega and replace it with bergamot and citrus.

“Then don’t fuck up, pet,” Hyunwoo whispered playfully as his large hands grabbed the omega by
the hips. He leaned in and kissed the side of Kihyun’s neck, nose full of omega scent, and a low
growl left his throat. “Make it up to me...”

Alpha pheromones entered Kihyun’s nose and released a shuddering breath at the simple touch of
Hyunwoo’s lips against his neck. Making up mistakes meant would probably result in Kihyun
ending up naked and sprawled out on some type of surface around the penthouse. Hyunwoo
groaned as he nipped Kihyun’s neck, drawn as always to the nape of the omega’s neck where his
scent gland was.

“Why do you smell sweeter?” He grabbed Kihyun by his sharp hipbones and squeezed. “Are you
in heat soon?” His calloused hands slid behind the omega’s thighs and hoisted him up onto the
granite countertop.

“No… it’s just because of you, my king.” Kihyun lied as he bit his lower lip, already assuming his
role as queen.
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

**Trigger Warning:** Graphic depictions of blood, trauma, & major angst.

A month had past with much of the same happenings—Hyunwoo continued shaking up businesses in the city for collections in addition to ensuring smooth acquisition of weapons for the introduction of Gwangju to the arms trade. For some of the low risk runs, the alpha’s queen, Kihyun, tagged along; his amiable omega presence often steering circumstances out of the path of violence.

The initial friction between Hyunwoo and his omega didn’t vanish, but the natural push and pull of their biologies always lead them back to one another in inexplicable ways. Whenever they fought, they fucked, or the omega would scamper off to his best friend, infuriating Hyunwoo when he returned reeking of mint.

Trapped by the visitation deal spearheaded by the police force, Hyunwoo was forced to retaliate in covert ways, often employing the expertise of Hyungwon or other private eye types to tamper with the beta in ways untraceable to Hyunwoo. The alpha reassured himself his retaliation was out of protection of his image instead of petulance and jealousy.

Against all odds, Hyunwoo was drawn closer to Kihyun’s omega charms. It affected him in ways he despised and resisted with all his might. Yet still, he invited the omega to share his bed, to be with him in his most intimate and vulnerable hours. He didn’t despite it as much as he let on, and he certainly wouldn’t reveal that the happiness on Kihyun’s face from the new development made him inexplicably happy, too.

In a way, letting the omega in introduced a lot of confidence to Hyunwoo in areas he never nourished, never acknowledged. Whether he cared to admit it or not, Kihyun was leaving a positive effect on him as a *human being*. Like the first breath of air after holding his breath for too long, the alpha felt invigorated by fresh air; he felt a change and it was *good*.

Each day passed with less resistance. Each night passed with the warm embrace of lovers.

Kihyun, however, awoke restlessly more often than not, ripped from pillowy dreams by the haunting reality of his pregnancy. Things were finally okay, so he kept Hyunwoo in the dark, literally.

A nightly routine, the omega’s heavy eyelids opened to read the time on the blue glare of Hyunwoo’s alarm clock at half passed three in the morning. He just couldn’t get any sleep anymore, even when finally sleeping in the same bed as the alpha. Of course, he knew why but that didn’t mean it didn’t absolutely *suck*.

The omega sighed bitterly as he stared up at the ceiling. The sickness, the tiredness, the lack of tiredness—pregnancy was rough; how was he supposed to endure eight more months of it?

Frustrated, Kihyun pulled the sheets back and escaped the warmth of the large bed at the alpha’s side. Perhaps a breath of fresh air would help clear his mind? Begrudgingly, he resisted the urge to
rifle through Hyunwoo’s things for a pack of cigarettes. He was trying to be better about that, especially for his unborn pup.

Kihyun padded out of the room and into the darkness of the halls, finding his way to the balcony outside where took a seat on the patio furniture. He inhaled deeply, then exhaled just as deep. Surrounded by blackness, he let his thoughts wander as a form of catharsis. He had been at the penthouse for several months now and experienced a whirlwind of highs and lows, and though he had changed as a person as a result, he felt the same exile here as he did in his regular, undebted life.

No matter how many jo-pok related runs Hyunwoo had taken him on, how many times he had to act the part of Hyunwoo’s pampered queen, he felt out of place. He didn’t belong here and he knew it, and he knew others knew it too.

Absentmindedly, Kihyun ghosted a hand over his abdomen. He had done well keeping his secret hidden from everyone and struggling with symptoms all on his own. In an effort to maintain appearances and avoid suspicion, he drank alcohol if necessary but in small sips and took the occasional puff of a cigarette when offered. Hyunwoo had noticed a new sweetness to the omega’s scent but was otherwise stupidly clueless. Good thing, too, because Kihyun’s hormones hurled him into a vortex of flighty moods, provoking anger and sparking idiotic fights with Hyunwoo only to inevitably be locked together in sexual bliss hours later.

Eventually, Elise confessed that she had found the seven positive pregnancy tests Kihyun had hastily thrown away. Before the omega could form the words to defend himself, the maid simply smiled sweetly and promised she’d never tell a soul. Kihyun cried in her arms that night, overwhelmed by the motherly compassion he so desperately missed from his own mother. He didn’t want to go through this alone, and now he didn’t have to.

He felt a little less out of place whenever Elise was near. But right now, as was the case every night, she retired into the maid’s corridors, and Kihyun was on the balcony troubled by too many things for one person to be troubled by.

The soft breeze rustled the cherry blossom tree, the same one he admired that fateful morning Hyunwoo crushed his cellphone, and carried stray petals in its invisible flow. Scattered blossoms fell like soft snow. Kihyun caught one in his palm. He smiled at the pink petals before releasing the flower back into the wind. Relaxing into the patio chair, he hummed a tune to distract himself from himself.

In bed back in the main suite, Hyunwoo reached over to pull the sleeping omega towards him but grabbed nothing but air. He groaned at the loss and his eyes fluttered open to see that Kihyun wasn’t there. His spot on the bed was still warm and the sheets smelled faintly of cherries; he mustn’t have left too long ago. Had he fled to Minhyuk again?

Hyunwoo fought the clench on his heart and rolled out of bed to assess the area. After pulling on a pair of sweats, he walked out of the bedroom. He didn’t explore long before he spotted Kihyun outside staring blissfully at the massive cherry blossom tree rustling the night wind. He went outside, but stopped as the breeze carried a soft, melodic hum to his ears. He remained quiet at a distance, entranced by the lullaby.

Kihyun’s humming transitioned into words, carrying his voice effortlessly to the melody he sang. Fallen cherry blossoms whirled on the floor, dancing as if inspired by the angelic song he sang. After a few moments of serenity with his voice, a particular inhale through his nose brought with it a familiar aroma. He stopped singing and turned his head turned—standing there in the moonlight was none other than the dark angel himself.
“Um... how long have you been standing there?” he asked, flustered, standing up from his seat to face Hyunwoo.

“Not long.” Hyunwoo approached the omega with a slow walk across the balcony, eyes eagerly drinking in the breathtaking scenery until he eventually brought his attention back to Kihyun. “Didn’t know you could sing...”

The way he said it implied he was endeared to discover something new about his omega. Kihyun wasn’t sure how he felt about that.

“I told you I worked and sang at a bar. Suppose that meant I had a somewhat of a voice, right?” the omega replied shyly, still embarrassed that Hyunwoo, of all people, caught him at one of his vulnerable moments.

Hyunwoo chuckled. “Not always... you’d be surprised how many starlings run bars out of business.”

The grin that followed the alpha’s words hinted at the cruelty of his involvement with those same failing businesses; Kihyun opted not to unpack that conversation. “Did I wake you?”

“No really...” Hyunwoo cleared his throat and looked out at the slopes and hills in the dark distance. “Just, uh... bed felt empty... Why’re you up?”

The omega sighed and looked towards the cityscape too. “ Couldn’t sleep,” he mumbled as he approached the balcony railing and leaned against it. “Tossing and turning wasn’t doing me much so I thought some fresh air would help.”

The alpha quirked a brow at the omega. “You come out here and don’t bring a pack of smokes? Shit...” He bit his bottom lip. “That view is worth at least one, you know.” He was being as tender as he could allow himself to be, but maybe Kihyun didn’t feel the same fondness for the city that he did.

The omega gazed at the plethora of colors along the dark horizon and smiled faintly, forlorn. “Nah, not tonight,” he said softly, feeling the gentle breeze blow his bangs over his face.

The wind carried the omega’s scent to Hyunwoo, and once again the alpha was entranced by Kihyun. Each passing day the omega smelled sweeter, creamier, and it rewired Hyunwoo’s very biology. He once again felt himself changing and he couldn’t resist it—it must’ve been the omega’s potent hormones playing the alpha’s cells like a skilled pianist.

“I keep asking, but is your heat soon? Is that what kept you up?” Hyunwoo panted shallowly, aroused by the omega’s mere presence; he was just as weak to his biology as Kihyun was to the alpha.

The omega pursed his lips. If any time was opportune, it was now to tell Hyunwoo the truth. Why Kihyun was smelling so sweet, why he spent all hours of the morning and random times of the day in the bathroom, why he was so moody. But as he pulled away from the railing and looked at the ruggedly handsome alpha illuminated by the stars above, Kihyun couldn’t speak the truth. Every fibre of his being told him to—just two words and he could come down from his hellevator—but no, not yet. It didn’t feel right.

“No, um...” Kihyun muttered, defeated by his instincts to keep his secret a mystery. “Just... omega stuff... Don’t want to gross you out...”
Hyunwoo hummed low in his throat but said nothing. He cast his gaze to the cherry blossom tree, inspired by its great swaying branches, then pulled an empty chair over and sat in it. He sat in silence, simply enjoying the peaceful company of the night and of Kihyun. His cherry blossom tattoo stood out on his bare torso, glimmering under the starry sky.

Kihyun felt a shift in the atmosphere that was different from other times. There were no mean and degrading words, no forcing one another into actions based on instinct. This was a moment where Kihyun could actually breathe without having to walk on eggshells around the alpha. The omega’s eyes landed on Hyunwoo, a visually striking alpha with an ego bigger than his dick, and yet there could be moments like this.

This was a workable situation.

Kihyun faced the alpha and stepped closer, straddling Hyunwoo’s thighs, back to the city. “Maybe it’s you who should have the cigarette... A king overlooking his kingdom should bask in it with the company of not only his queen but a good smoke at most,” he suggested, fingers tracing along the alpha’s sharp collarbones.

Hyunwoo’s lips parted for a moment as he marveled at the newfound spunk in Kihyun. He snaked his hands around the omega’s lithe hips and grinned at the peculiar comment. “Oh yeah? My mouth is craving nicotine... Or maybe it’s the taste of cherries I’m pining for?”

The alpha’s comment made the beauty mark on the side of Kihyun’s lip shift as he smiled. “Mmm, maybe I can help you with that?”

The pad of his finger traced along the heavy pattern of Hyunwoo’s cherry blossom tattoo, following the bold lines and distinct contrasts against his bronzed skin under the moonlight. Hyunwoo watched the motion of Kihyun’s fingertips on his skin and bit his bottom lip. He was utterly entranced. Those calming omega pheromones neutralized every high strung nerve in his body with the application of simple touches. When Kihyun glided his finger up to the alpha’s jawline, he pressed a gentle kiss to his lips, at which Hyunwoo groaned and pulled Kihyun closer, putty in the omega’s hands.

Flush against Hyunwoo’s body, Kihyun keened as his hands traveled up the alpha’s neck and cupped his jaw. He pulled his lips away, leaving a few inches of space between them, “Had your cherry fix yet?”

A deep breath left Hyunwoo’s lips. “Never,” he all but groaned as he rubbed the dimples of Kihyun’s low back with his thumbs and initiated another kiss, “I always need my fix of you.”

Kihyun’s skin rippled with goosebumps courtesy of Hyunwoo’s touch. “I should hope so. A king can’t go far without a queen,” he whispered against the alpha’s lips. Hyunwoo held him tighter, possessive; the omega moaned at the treatment.

It was times like this that Hyunwoo realized Kihyun was his and not Minhyuk’s, that the beta wasn’t his competition at all because an omega was meant to be with an alpha. They were designed to be together.

“Our, I wanted to ask you if... if you would bring me along on bigger runs?” Kihyun looked up at the alpha with a confident gaze. “Let me come with you, my king, just on the less risky ones?”

The alpha was caught by surprise. Kihyun was reluctant to accompany him initially, and now he
**wanted** to tag along on bigger, more important runs? Was he taking a liking to the life of a gangster? Perhaps he accepted it as an inevitable facet of his purpose here beyond paying a debt? Shit, who was Hyunwoo kidding, the omega had paid his debt and then some, but he didn’t want him to leave, so he smirked to mask his skepticism.

“Feeling more daring? What, you’re not satisfied with the business you’ve seen me do on current runs?”

Kihyun shifted on Hyunwoo’s lap and peppered kisses along Hyunwoo’s neck where spicy bergamot permeated the alpha’s skin. “I want to be by your side more than waiting for you to come home,” he admitted, hoping to get closer to the alpha and be a true queen.

“I love to hear that, pet, but…” he peered at the cherry blossom tree and paused momentarily, “Some business isn’t for you to see. It’s too dangerous. I won’t risk it.”

Kihyun pursed out his lips as he leaned away, fingers roaming the elastic of Hyunwoo’s underwear. “Not even if I say please?” he pouted, partly flattered the alpha didn’t want to risk his omega’s safety. “Or do something that would persuade you?”

Kihyun watched Hyunwoo’s lips form a smirk, and he wondered how many people witnessed that smirk before meeting their maker. It wouldn’t be him, however, because he played the alpha like a fiddle with his mere touch. It was working, too, judging by the way Hyunwoo raked his eyes over the pretty omega in his lap. Without realizing, bergamot essence oozed from his pores, giving away his inner desires. God, he couldn’t help it with how delectable Kihyun smelled.

“Persuade me? What do you have in mind, pet?”

Without a hint of hesitation from past fears from past scenarios, Kihyun pulled at the band snug around Hyunwoo’s hips, guiding it down as if following the sexy trail of hair. “My lips…” he started, cupping a hand gently over the alpha’s crotch. “Down here... sucking, licking...”

“Mmm…” The alpha sighed as Kihyun seduced him, mind dizzied by surging hormones and well-placed touches. The change in demeanor he noticed from the omega, how bold he was in asking—no, telling—Hyunwoo what he wanted and how he wanted to get it, was revitalizing. He knew Kihyun was a keeper, the ideal queen to their rotten empire.

Hyunwoo leaned back in his chair and tucked his arms behind his head. His view was spectacular—gorgeous Kihyun straddled atop his lap, elegant cherry blossom tree waving behind him so picturesque it seemed symbolic of his beauty, former innocence, and perseverance. My, how the alpha changed him.

“In that case, I believe we can reach an agreement…”

The omega grinned; Hyunwoo’s acceptance was music to his ears. He figured the alpha couldn’t deny an offer as free, easy, and willing as a blowjob.

Kihyun climbed off Hyunwoo’s muscular thighs and lowered to his knees. Slithering his hand into the alpha’s underwear, a tickle of hair brushed his knuckles and he inwardly groaned. Eyes following Kihyun’s hands, Hyunwoo groaned as the omega wasted no time. Nimble fingers circled around the alpha’s hot, heavy dick and the omega licked his lips as he pulled it out of Hyunwoo’s sweats.

Pure alpha essence wafted to Kihyun’s nose, serenading his palates to ready them for a taste. “Just relax, my king,” he purred.
Fuck, the omega knew exactly what to say to stroke Hyunwoo’s massive ego—he was a fucking king, ruler of Gwangju, who could do anything he wanted in his domain. He liked, too, that Kihyun understood the expansive spectrum of his power and wanted it. What a formidable queen he had made from an innocent, babbling debtor.

The tips of Hyunwoo’s fangs flashed from his lips as he urged the omega to taste the hardening dick in his palm with the roll of his hips. The omega obliged as he took Hyunwoo’s cock inside his mouth. He curled his lips around the head, tongue swirling against the slit slowly, breathless as he pleased his alpha.

Hyunwoo stretched his head back and groaned as Kihyun’s mouth enveloped him. He threaded a large hand in the omega’s gray hair, then pushed him down deeper on his cock and groaned louder at the wet heat. “Don’t tease. You know what I want.”

Kihyun had grown familiar to the flavor of Hyunwoo in his mouth, the hot weight on his tongue, and the stretch of his throat; hell, he had grown to crave it. Especially when the alpha was so sinfully arrogant about what he wanted from Kihyun. Obediently, the omega hummed as Hyunwoo’s cock slid to the back of his throat, relaxing the muscles until he couldn’t take any more. He bobbed back and forth, working his lips to make the alpha feel good.

Hyunwoo moaned low in his throat. Fuck, he wished he had a cigarette now more than ever—tobacco and nicotine blackening his lungs, exhaled into the night air, mushrooming around Kihyun’s bobbing form like a smoky veil. The alpha relaxed into the chair as he eased his grip on the omega’s head, allowing the boy some freedom and curious what he’d do with it.

As Gwangju twinkled through the thinly bloomed branches of the cherry blossom tree, Kihyun hollowed his cheeks and relaxed his throat as he swallowed Hyunwoo’s dick. The alpha’s hand pulsed between grabbing and relaxing in Kihyun’s hair as the omega worked him. He was pleased at the direction the omega went—choking himself on the alpha’s dick until he gagged and groaned—but the breathless noises Kihyun made spurred Hyunwoo’s ego. He loved it when the omega looked a mess, teary eyed and panting, and god dammit he was going to make that happen. Rolling his hips into the omega’s mouth, the alpha tightened his grip once more and held Kihyun down all the way until he felt his nose buried into spiced citrus pubic hair.

The action caused Kihyun to grunt around the alpha’s cock, making it harder to breathe along with the tickle of hair in his nostrils. Drool seeped from his gaping mouth, lewdly soaking into Hyunwoo’s pubic hairs, but Kihyun took it, letting his airflow lessen to give the hedonist what he wanted. However, it only could only last so long before Kihyun started to squirm. Moaning around Hyunwoo, his nails scratched at the alpha’s hips from the slight asphyxiation.

Seeing Kihyun starved for oxygen and desperate to breath made Hyunwoo’s cock surge. Fuck, he loved it. A raspy breath left his throat as he pulled the omega off so he could breathe. However, he waited only a few short seconds before flashing a devious smirk and forcing Kihyun down again.

“That’s right, pet, take the whole thing.”

Groaning, the alpha rolled his hips to get Kihyun to gag again, to feel the muscles of his throat constrict around his cock so well. “Yeah, baby, that’s real fucking good,” he rasped as he watched the omega with half-lidded eyes. Again, he pulled Kihyun up to breath, then forced him down once more, repeating the process several times.

On the last pull up, Hyunwoo held Kihyun’s face in his palm to admire the wreck he had made. Kihyun all but panted, lips slick and puffed from abuse, cheeks flushed under teary eyes. The taste of Hyunwoo’s precum stained his tongue. The omega licked his swollen lips and gazed into the
alpha’s dark eyes. “How close are you?” he panted.

“Not close enough...” Hyunwoo brushed his thumb over Kihyun’s spit-covered bottom lip, then dipped the tip into the omega’s mouth. Bergamot and citrus encased them as his enormous ego reared its ugly head. “You look so fucking good like this, pet. Fucking wrecked. And mine, all mine, yeah? Tell me you’re mine, baby.”

Kihyun closed his lips around Hyunwoo’s thumb before replying obediently for his king, boosting his ego. “I’m yours, Hyunwoo.” He grasped Hyunwoo’s cock, hand wet with spit. “Yours to wreck, to use, anything you want...”

“Put it in your mouth and suck it... Make it look real pretty...” Hyunwoo moaned, eyes locked on the masterpiece before him. Shit, Kihyun had no idea how much power he held over the alpha when he looked that, talked like that; he was so perfect. The longer he stared into those glossy, brown eyes, the deeper he fell in.

Taking Hyunwoo halfway, Kihyun curled his lips against his hard cock and sucked as he was told to do. He wanted so badly Hyunwoo’s approval to accompany him on bigger runs, and he’d do anything to ensure that happened; he needed it to. He stroked the shaft and swirled his tongue, working the alpha just the way he liked.

And shit, Hyunwoo couldn’t take it any longer, not with how good Kihyun treated him. In their short time together, the omega melded to the alpha’s needs so seamlessly Hyunwoo almost felt remorse for all the wrong he had done to the boy. The perfect pet, and now the ideal queen.

“Fuck, you know just what I like, pet,” the alpha groaned, fingers clenching in the omega’s hair and his hips rolling until a moan ripped through him and pleasure crashed over him. He came in the omega’s mouth in hot spurts. The omega swallowed every drop, then pulled off with a pop and a string of spit connecting his bottom lip and Hyunwoo’s cockhead. Mouth empty, Kihyun licked his lips and grinned knowingly at the alpha.

The carnal alpha within screamed at Hyunwoo to grab the omega and fuck him right here, right now against the railing of the balcony with only city lights and the cherry blossom tree as witnesses—damn, Kihyun looked stunning.

How could Hyunwoo deny a face like that? Especially when he asked so sweetly, doubly when he sucked him off so fucking well. Perhaps his presence would be beneficial like it was for meetings and other networking events. Maybe with Kihyun around, the alpha would be less violent and more rational? Have him think twice before drawing his gun or bloodying his fists, and instead encourage him to be the methodical, refined alpha Boss Bang was—the alpha he always strived to be.

Son Hyunwoo was great, but with his omega at his side, he was greatness.

“It’s dangerous, you know...” Was all Hyunwoo said after a long pause.

Kihyun grinned. “You’ll protect me though, won’t you?”

Staring down at Kihyun, he looked so small and vulnerable. And when he asked such an innocent question, Hyunwoo’s black heart skipped a beat. He couldn’t hide the small smile on his lips. “I would never let anything bad happen to you,” the alpha replied as he carded a hand through the omega’s hair affectionately.

Kihyun wasn’t expecting such a reply, but hearing it affected him more than he thought it would.
Sometimes it seemed like Hyunwoo actually did care… His dark secret hung on the tip of his tongue; just two words that sealed their fate together forever; ‘I’m pregnant’. Still, he remained silent, and simply leaned into the alpha’s soft touch. “Let me come with you. Let your queen accompany you... be at your beck and call, and make everyone jealous of us...”

Hyunwoo smirked at the omega’s words. The boy knew just the right thing to say to stir up the alpha. “They’re already jealous... Alright, you can come along on some, but I won’t let you get involved with certain people. You’re not ready to see how evil people can really be.” His conviction wavered at the end, almost as if picturing Kihyun in the darkest depths of human depravity made even him uncomfortable—only one of them deserved that personal hell.

“As long as I’m with you,” Kihyun said softly, leaning forward to kiss Hyunwoo’s cheek.

The omega felt the soft night breeze once more, calming him as cherry blossom petals swirled and swayed in their silent dance. Everything was going to be okay.

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Movement of firearms from Gwangju into parts of Japan was a request on behalf of Boss Bang. He handled the politics involved with such a trade, dodging notorious yakuza tactics such as blackmail and other acts of defamation, and now all that was left was legwork. Naturally, the burden fell to his subordinates, including Hyunwoo. He had to oversee shipments at the port to ensure no goods were tampered with, to guarantee Boss Bang and the Korean jo-pok honored their commitments.

Bad blood always existed between jo-pok and yakuza stemming back to Japanese occupation of Korea, but both organizations were unified by the vile underworld of crime. Japanese or Korean, they were still gangsters—Hyunwoo trusted none of them. He especially didn’t trust them with Kihyun, which was why he fought tooth and nail for the omega to remain at the penthouse.

Ever since their conversation two weeks ago on the balcony, Kihyun insisted he accompany Hyunwoo on larger, more pressing business more critical than standard collection runs and general intimidation tactics. If he was to be the alpha’s queen, he had to be wise to the wicked games of Hyunwoo’s domain. But not all business was for the omega to witness or experience; bloody violence and cruel torture wasn’t educational, it was just an unfortunate necessity.

Rape, infighting and war, deadly drugs, weapon and human trafficking, bullet holes, prostitution, blood and broken bone, torture and split skin, begging on bruised knees to live—life to a civilian like Kihyun was free of all the horrific things Hyunwoo was raised around. He didn’t romanticize the cruel things he did; he accepted them as part of the job. Evil always existed and it always will; for the tender-hearted, ignorance was bliss. The way Kihyun stared at him in horror the first few weeks they were together was nothing compared to the things the alpha had not only seen, but done. He didn’t think the was omega ready to bear witness.

No matter how insistent Kihyun was, the dull flame of hope within Hyunwoo wanted to protect the omega from everything.

Regardless of how incredibly alluring and persuasive the omega was, Hyunwoo didn’t expose him to everything, only small pieces pertaining to Boss Bang’s request to be digested in reasonable increments. Nothing at the warehouse by the port, nothing about packaging and shipment of the illegally acquired firearms, and certainly none of the bloody knuckles and broken noses from heated, racially-charged negotiations between yakuza and jo-pok.

Nothing like what he was currently doing, either. He wasn’t sure how the omega would fare witnessing how much physical damage the human body could sustain before it slipped into
unconsciousness. Adrenaline was a two-edged blade; pain hurt, but pain was the body’s defense mechanism for self-preservation. Without it, death was that much closer.

Likewise for Hyunwoo, too, who didn’t realize how fucked up his fists were from punching bone against bone. He only relented when he felt the ache. Releasing his hold on the victim’s jacket collar, he stood up and worked the kinks and aches from his limbs. Looking around, he honestly couldn’t remember what started the fight to begin with. Probably something to do with some punk ass kid in a wannabe street gang meddling with jo-pok supplies at the warehouse.

Kihyun would be upset to discover all the new bruises and cuts on his body, but he liked that the omega was concerned for him. He’d be sure to show them off when he returned to the penthouse to see his queen.

+ 

The queen of a mighty empire, Kihyun took to the role well. He bathed in luxury and indulged in all things lavish and divine, reveling in the razzle dazzle he could only ever dream of as a younger omega. He felt important, too, after accompanying Hyunwoo on official business. He felt like less of a prisoner and more of a force to be reckoned with now that he aligned himself with the Gwangju branch boss in a position of power. He was playing his cards exactly the way he intended from the very beginning. And with his secret pregnancy, he secured his spot.

Kihyun didn’t mind being pregnant, save for the morning sickness that didn’t just happen in the morning, and the exhaustion throughout the day. The terrible symptoms were worth the struggle, though. Despite the circumstances by which he became pregnant, he was doing everything to create a good life for his unborn babe.

While Hyunwoo was out, he lounged around the penthouse. He was caught up in a good movie when a strange hunger craving struck. He left the study to head to the kitchen, preparing to fix himself lunch when he remembered his shadow was surely around. “Hyungwon?” he called as he pulled out a pot from a cupboard. “Want lunch?”

Hyungwon chuckled to himself. After weeks of stalking Boss’s prized possession, Hyungwon and Kihyun’s relationship developed a friendly note. As such, almost like the omega had willed him into existence, Hyungwon materialized in the kitchen upon hearing his name. His stomach growled at the mention of lunch. “Yeah, I could eat,” he replied as he rounded the island counter in the center of the grand kitchen to sit at a barstool on the other side. He stretched his arms over the speckled granite countertops as he looked at Kihyun. “Whatcha gonna make? Please say shrimp... oh, or sashimi?”

Kihyun filled the pot with water and gazed at the beta. “It was just going to be noodles... but I can add shrimp too. No biggie,” he said as he set the pot on the stove and pulled a bowl from the stack in a nearby cupboard. “Garlic shrimp or just plain?”

“Garlic shrimp? Hell yes!” Hyungwon’s eyebrows shot into his hairline. He had learned a lot about the omega from observing him—that he liked to sing and had a great voice, that he spent a lot of time at the pool, that he and Elise had a mother/son type of relationship that made the beta question Kihyun’s relationship with his birth mother—but he hadn’t pegged the boy to be a glorified amateur chef. “Didn’t know you could cook, princess.”

Kihyun scoffed and pointed an accusatory finger at the beta. “That’s Queen to you, peasant,” he insisted, growing fond of having someone to playfully bicker with like he used to do with Minhyuk. “And I’m not as incompetent as everyone thinks I am. I did have a life before all this.”
Hyungwon’s grin faltered slightly. “I know you did…” His instinct was to empathize, but he remained quiet. After all, if Kihyun weren’t here in this predicament, Hyungwon wouldn’t have a job. When it came down to it, he favored a paycheck over friendship. Always. “So garlic shrimp noodles?”

“Oh hell yeah.” The omega smirked at Hyungwon. “If you want, I can make them entirely separate?”

“Nah, do whatever you gotta do,” Hyungwon replied as he inspected his nails. He was glad Kihyun stayed home from tagging along with Boss. He wasn’t really feeling playing the lowkey stalker guy; today, he wanted to be lazy. “Because when we’re done, I’m gonna beat your ass on Super Smash Bros.”

“Oh, you’re on, but your ass is the one who is going to be beat, dear Hyungwon.” Kihyun accepted the challenge confidently, grabbing a bowl to defrost the shrimp in. As he turned, a sudden, sharp pain made him gasp and the bowl slipped from his grasp. The glass bowl shattered on the floor, scattering in pieces amongst the marble floor. His hand clung to his abdomen as panic formed inside. He’d cramped before but this felt different; it felt too painful; it felt too wrong. “Excuse me…” The omega muttered, paying no mind to the broken shards laying on the floor as he briskly exited.

Hyungwon knew something was wrong before the omega dropped the glass bowl on the floor. He promptly stood to check on Kihyun but the omega left before Hyungwon could reach him. The urgency with which he fled made the beta think he wanted to be alone, so he sat pensively, debating whether he should get involved or leave the omega alone.

The omega barricaded himself in the bathroom of his bedroom, quickly shutting the door as more pain coiled in his body. He pressed his back to the door as he rubbed his lower abdomen, taking deep breaths in hopes the pain would pass. The pads of his fingers pressed into the mound of flesh over his low abdomen, attempting to soothe it with gentle, rotating motions.

“Okay, bean,” Kihyun whispered, tears in his eyes. “It’s okay…”

The throbbing escalated, causing the expecting omega’s anxiety to double. He felt sick, stomach sour with the immense discomfort his body experienced. Dread and fear followed another agonizing stab that brought him to his knees with a pained cry. With one hand on the cold floor and one pressed to his belly, warmth spread down his thighs; tickling his skin with a fluttering touch. Breath shaky and hand quivering, he pushed past the waistband of his shorts, gasping when his fingers came into contact with moisture. Tears poured from his eyes; he was too scared to see if his suspicion was true.

“Please, no…” he whimpered as he pulled his hand from between his legs and saw red. He smelled the nauseating scent of copper and his heart broke; blood dripped down his fingers and onto the floor. “God, no... No!” Kihyun cried out, breath hitching from the most painful stab thus far.

The shaking wouldn’t stop. His heart raced. His head was dizzy. Panic halted his breath. Horror and pain overwhelmed him with immense stress, blackening his vision as his body collapsed to the tiled floor.

In marble hallway outside Kihyun’s suite door, Hyungwon paced. He wasn’t sure what to do until he spotted Elise carrying a load of fresh laundry into a nearby guest room. “Hey, Elise—” he paused as the pungent stench of distress pheromones assaulted his nose, immediately alarming him
to the severity of Kihyun’s isolation. “Fuck, Elise! Something is wrong with Kihyun!”

Elise’s eyes widened in fear. Last time something dire happened to Kihyun, he was almost raped by a rogue underling. Elise was there to witness that horror, and she was here for this one too. Except this time, she had a sinking feeling—*the baby.*

Tears pricked Elise’s eyes as she ran to Kihyun’s suite. Pushing past Hyungwon, her heart shattered into a million pieces when the smell of blood and stress pheromones hit her. She stopped at the door and knocked with urgency, “Kihyun, sweetheart, are you okay? Kihyun? Kihyun, are you okay? Oh my goodness—” Her breath quickened and tears spilled down her cheeks; her fear worsened when the omega never answered.

Clenching her jaw, she opened the door and nearly collapsed against the wall upon the terrible sight—Kihyun limp on the floor in a small pool of his own blood. She screamed and Hyungwon rushed in, only to stagger at the door upon witnessing the horrific scene himself. Elise dropped to her knees and sobbed as she reached out to touch Kihyun to see if he was okay. She repeated his name over and over like an mantra, trying to wake him.

Hyungwon stepped out into the bedroom and took a deep, shaky breath. He ran a hand through his hair, troubled and conflicted. Eventually, swayed by the depth of Elise’s tears, he grabbed his phone and called Hyunwoo.
Chapter 21

Noise, there was noise... Beeping? Loud, loud beeping. Was it an alarm?

Comfort surrounded Kihyun from material made of the most exquisitely soft fabric, like a blanket of serenity he could float away in, but something felt wrong, horribly wrong. His eyes opened and focused on an unfamiliar ceiling and unfamiliar walls. A clean yet nostalgic smell made itself known as his mind forcibly shifted into a more conscious state... Where was he? What happened? Visions played in his mind, all tainted in red; a crimson nightmare; blood and pain.

_Fuck!_ Kihyun bolted up, the beeping in his ears now rapid. Panic tightened his chest. Tenderness bloomed in his lower belly, and his hand instantly cupped his abdomen. _His baby..._

Alarmed by the heart rate monitor, a nurse who smelled as clean and sterile as the environment turned to Kihyun, “Oh, Mr. Yoo, you’re awake. Let me get the doctor.” She quickly adjusted the drip speed of the IV in Kihyun’s arm before leaving the room.

Kihyun clenched the bedsheets beside him, scared when he heard the word ‘doctor’ and realized he was at the hospital. He hadn’t fully come to until he watched the nurse return with another woman in a white lab coat behind her. While the nurse checked the bedridden omega’s vitals, the doctor stood bedside and greeted Kihyun with a soft, empathetic smile.

“Hello Mr. Yoo, how are you feeling?” The lack of an alpha tone in her voice coupled with her calming, lavender scent immediately identified her as an omega.

Kihyun gazed at the doctor with pleading, wet eyes, her gentle aroma calming the panic inside him down slightly. “M-My baby...” he stuttered, fear getting the better of him.

The doctor looked saddened by her patient’s trauma. Unfortunately, there was only so much she could do. Once a miscarriage happened, nothing could be done to stop it. Since the omega had lost so much blood, much of the physical distress he felt was due to a moderate case of hypovolemic shock; a common side effect experienced by male omegas during miscarriages. The IV in his arm pumped fluids into his system to restore homeostasis, as well as a mild painkiller to combat pain. However, medical symptoms aside, the psychological trauma of losing an unborn child couldn’t simply be treated with medication.

“I am sorry, Mr. Yoo... You suffered an emergency miscarriage and were rushed here as soon as possible. Your body went into shock and you’re currently on fluids,” she paused to take a breath after reporting her doctorly speech; now she could be more empathetic.

She rested a comforting hand on Kihyun’s shoulder as tears flowed down his cheeks. That was the most heartbreaking news he had received in his entire life—one word made his world shatter. He stared at the end of the bed in disbelief. This couldn’t be happening... Even though he kept it secret, he had already started to love the life that was, _had been_, growing inside of him. What he had never met but loved nonetheless was now gone.

The doctor spoke in a tender tone, “There are guests outside to see you. Would you like to see them or would you like to be alone?”

“S-Send them in, p-please,” Kihyun’s voice cracked as he silently cried, wanting to refuse to believe his baby was gone. There would never be photos to capture memories, songs sang at the top of their voices, birthday parties, hugs and kisses—all now an empty future where Kihyun
would never carry his pup in his arms.

The doctor nodded and signaled for the nurse to welcome in Kihyun’s guests. “They’ll be right in. I am very sorry, Mr. Yoo, I did everything I could. You will recover and be okay... You have the option to stay here as pregnancy tissue passes, or you may go home and grieve in privacy.” She paused and tossed a glance over her shoulder as two guests entered the room. “I will give you some time to think about it,” she added before walking away to leave Kihyun alone with his guests.

The nurse lead the guests, Elise and Hyungwon, into the hospital room. “Mr. Yoo, Ms. Proulx and Mr. Chae are here to see you.”

As Elise rushed forward and cupped Kihyun’s hand, the nurse offered a parting smile and left the room after the doctor. Hyungwon stood awkwardly at the foot of the hospital bed, hands in his pockets as he asked, “How are you feeling?”

Kihyun sobbed into his hand at the question, his chest aching and vision blurry from free-falling tears. “I l-lost it...” he choked out, squeezing Elise’s hand in his as he looked at the woman beside him; she was the only one in the penthouse who knew his condition, she was the only one who could feel his pain. “I lost m-my baby.”

Hyungwon froze in shock. Did he just hear Kihyun mention a baby? Fuck, was the omega pregnant? Judging by the way Elise wasn’t phased by the statement meant she must’ve known... Explained why she acted so mournful upon walking in on Kihyun in the bathroom. Did she know all along? God, what other of Kihyun’s secrets did she know? Hyungwon was as white as ghost as fear washed over him. All this time, Kihyun was pregnant and Hyungwon completely missed it? How? Boss would kill him if Kihyun died, especially from something like this—shit, did Boss even know?

While Hyungwon inwardly panicked at the news, Elise hugged the omega as tears streamed down her face. She looked exhausted from hours of worrying, and now her beautiful face contorted in anguish. “Oh, my sweet boy, I am so sorry.”

Kihyun curled into the woman, finding comfort in her scent as he cried into her clothing. The fact that he would never hold his baby, never see their face broke Kihyun. Hell, he didn’t even know the sex; that alone was enough to make him cry louder, mourning what he would never get to hold. Elise cradled him in her arms, lovingly rocking back and forth as he helped him through the sadness.

Eventually, the omega sniffled as he pulled away, keeping an arm around Elise and turning his attention to Hyungwon. He needed more comfort: his best friend. “Minhyuk. Hyungwon, go get Minhyuk, please?” he pleaded. “Please!”

Hyungwon’s brows furrowed. He only just now heard that Kihyun was pregnant, which left him gobsmacked, and now the omega was shouting for his best friend and the man Boss declared a pest and an inconvenience. He was torn; witnessing Kihyun’s distress, hearing the incessant beeping of the heart monitor, tears staining hospital bedsheets, the beta wanted to give the omega at least one comfort, especially because they had formed a friendship over the past two months... But his loyalty was to Boss Hyunwoo.

He swallowed hard. “I can’t do that, Kihyun. Boss will be here any minute. He won’t want to see Minhyuk.”

What? How could Hyungwon say no? Denial of Kihyun’s emotional request added to the
onslaught of pure, merciless distress—his breathing turned into laboured pants, his knuckles turned white against the bedding in his tight grip, his head throbbed from pressure. Kihyun needed his best friend more than ever in his most dire time, and the jo-pok rejected even that.

Fucking monsters. All of them.

Worked up and emotional, the beeping grew louder and erratic. It felt like Kihyun couldn’t breathe; choking like his airway had abruptly been cut off. He extended an arm and reached out to Hyungwon, begging for Minhyuk. “P-please—” he plead until his breath was stolen by an imminent panic attack.

Elise eased off of the omega and gently patted him on the back, whispering reassurances like only a mother could. “It’s okay, Kihyun, you’ll be okay. Just breathe. Take a deep breath, okay? Just one at a time, sweetheart,” she repeated in an urgent yet calm voice.

Hyungwon stood awkwardly, stuck in a weird place between morality and money. His head hurt from the tension building in his temples, and the blend of omega pheromones in the small room worsened the ache. Shit, he needed to leave, but the frantic beeping on the heart monitor alarmed the nurse to rush into the room. They almost crashed into one another, but the nurse expertly sidestepped and carried on her duty.

Hyungwon took the opportunity to dip. He couldn’t handle it anymore. He didn’t want to feel like the bad guy, but he definitely felt like one with the image of Kihyun reaching out to him burned into his memory.

Inside the room, the nurse’s eyes widened upon realizing the omega was having a panic attack. As his guest, Elise, comforted him, the nurse acted swiftly. She fetched a cup of cold water and carefully placed it on the table at bedside. She then rounded the bed to the IV drip and administered a dilute benzodiazepine to the fluid bag. On a slow drip, the omega’s anxiety and panic would subside soon, especially with Elise’s gentle soothing.

Even though Kihyun’s breathing came out in slowing wheezes, the omega’s tears didn’t stop cascading down in silence. He hated the disarray his mental state was forming into. If it wasn’t for Elise, he would feel utterly alone.

As the medicine entered his bloodstream, the panic dwindled. He felt the tension in his chest ease as his breathing came back to him. Anxiety artificially left him but grief remained, and that grief would forever be with him. He relaxed in Elise’s arms, just wanting to be held, wanting to feel like his life wasn’t an absolute catastrophe.

After Hyungwon left the room and paced outside, he didn’t expect to witness Hyunwoo shouting at nurses, doctors, and other hospital personnel across the hall. His voice was so loud it alerted passersby to his warped temperament, so they avoided eye contact and kept to themselves as they navigated the white hospital maze. Hyungwon stayed put, unwilling to poke the bear but knowing he eventually had to.

In the lobby, the alpha was fuming. He had rushed to the hospital after receiving Hyungwon’s call only to discover that Kihyun had been put in general population. Through jo-pok efforts, he helped financially resurrect the hospital, and in turn him and his men were to receive the best care in the best rooms. That was the agreement, but that was not the treatment his omega received.

His alpha tone rumbled through the hallways. “After everything I do for this fucking establishment, he’s in a small room on a public floo—”
“Mr. Son, please, it was the only available room!” explained a nurse as several hospital personnel confirmed the statement. The outrage Hyunwoo caused inadvertently formed a small assembly of people, partially blocking the path for on-duty staff.

“Why is he in general population? This is unacceptable. My men deserve better than this. Move him to a better location. Kick someone else out, I don’t give a fuck, but you better fucking upgrade him!” Hyunwoo yelled, large body towering over the frightened nurse.

“Mr. Son, please do not use profanity, there are children in this hospital...”

“Fuck them and fuck you—” the alpha growled, his emotions overcoming him. Hypersensitive, he felt his heart speed up as cherries and the faint, repetitive echo of a heart rate monitor stole his attention completely. Kihyun. He scanned the area for any sign of the omega; instead, he spotted Hyungwon across the hall, who immediately avoided eye contact. He charged after the beta.

Grabbing Hyungwon by the collar of his leather jacket, Hyunwoo rammed him into the wall with great force. The beta grimaced as he collided with the wall, but threw his hands up in a truce. “Hey, hey, hey! I don’t want any troub—"

“Where is he?” Hyunwoo rasped, voice nearly cracking.

And Hyungwon actually saw worry in his Boss’s eyes.

“Room 12C…” He stared somberly at the alpha. “He’s alright, Boss.”

Hyunwoo ignored the note of empathy the beta offered him and grabbed the handle to the room. Opening the door, his heated demeanor weakened the moment he saw his omega so broken on a hospital bed. Kihyun didn’t need to look up to see who was at the door, not when earthy alpha pheromones wafted into the room.

As much as he wanted Minhyuk, needed him, Kihyun had to come to realization Hyunwoo came first before anyone else. Still grief-stricken, the sorrowful omega gently pulled away from Elise and squeezed her hand, knowing the alpha wanted to talk.

Hyunwoo looked at Kihyun like a lost puppy. He looked so vulnerable and sad and frustrated and scared, and in that moment the alpha knew he failed his omega; he didn’t protect him.

Swallowing the lump in his throat, he approached Kihyun’s bed cautiously. He felt like a bull in a china shop, fussy and large in a delicate situation. “Elise, thank you for being here with him. Will you give us time alone?” asked Hyunwoo, and the maid nodded and pressed a gentle kiss to the back of Kihyun’s hand before backing away and leaving.

Just an alpha and an omega in a room, crushed by unspoken words in a fragile situation. No matter how hard they tried to be the people their biologies made them to be, they were still strangers having different conversations.

The alpha reached out to grasp Kihyun’s hand. He sighed. “I’m glad you’re okay...”

Hyunwoo’s words made Kihyun scoff. “Okay? You think I’m okay?” He gawked at the alpha, using his wrist to wipe away his fallen tears under his eyes. “I’m not okay, Hyunwoo. I’m far from it...” His voice wavered and cracked.
“I-I…” Hyunwoo cleared his throat to mask the apprehension in his voice. He rubbed the back of his neck nervously. “I thought you were dead…” He released a shaky breath. “What happened? Did anyone touch you? I’ll kill them, I promise.”

“No! You don’t need to kill anyone. I’m sick of—” Kihyun closed his eyes and tried to calm himself. Obviously Hyunwoo didn’t know the situation and was reacting the only way he knew how. Jo-pok solved problems with more problems. Truthfully, the omega figured someone would’ve notified the alpha of Kihyun’s situation by now, but it was clear Hyunwoo was still clueless. His chest ached from the reminder of heartbreak. “No, um…” he sniffled as he laid against the pillows behind him and curled up on his side facing Hyunwoo. He sighed, tears rolling down his face. “I had a miscarriage…”

Hyunwoo flinched.


He stood stiff and silent. All those times he asked Kihyun why he smelled sweeter… Why Kihyun behaved differently than before… The news struck the alpha like a metal bat to the skull; the aftereffects were dizzying. With just four words in a simple sentence, Hyunwoo learned his omega was pregnant with his pup and that he never told him.

The spark of hope he initially felt was snuffed by fear, knowing his way of life was no environment for a child to grow up in, knowing it would be rejected by his superiors, and yet any fatherly thought was ripped from him seeing Kihyun grieving the loss of what could’ve been. Just like that, his future was decided for him by the cruel hands of fate.

Finally, Hyunwoo spoke in a soft voice, “I didn’t know you were pregnant…” He wanted to scream at the omega for never telling him, but his heart ached too badly. He reached out to touch Kihyun’s hand. “Do you know what happened? What caused the…”

Kihyun didn’t know what he was expecting when he told Hyunwoo about their dead offspring. Maybe it was an angry voice loud and menacing, or harsh words reprimanding his every whim, but gentleness was the last thing Kihyun expected. It seemed was Hyunwoo was human after all.

A weight lifted off his mind having finally told the alpha about his secret. “No, no I don’t. I just know that I’ll n-never get to ho-ho—” He couldn’t finish his sentence as it broke off into another sob, hand cupping his mouth as his eyes squeezed shut, releasing more tears that soaked into his pillow. He cried, expression contorting into anguish, but he spoke with a quivering lip. “I didn’t even kn-know the sex.”

“Kihyun…” The alpha closed his eyes as he forcibly internalized his emotional struggle. Kihyun may not have known the sex, but Hyunwoo knew nothing of it at all. Why did the omega keep such an important thing from him? He would’ve found out eventually...

He knew he was rough around the edges, distrusting, emotionally damaged, amongst other terrible things; his self-hatred disguised as alpha bravado caused him to push away and hurt the one person he felt something for. Hyunwoo never learned how to treat a human being as just that—he learned people skills from gangsters. No wonder Kihyun kept this from him. He was shit and undeserving of a child.

“Kihyun, I… I’m sorry…” Hyunwoo struggled to continue but did nevertheless, “…for the way I treat you. You deserve better. You don’t deserve this,” he said with alarmingly strange sincerity. “You would’ve been a great father… better than I would’ve been.”
Upon hearing his name, it occurred to Kihyun how foreign it sounded coming from Hyunwoo. He was only ever addressed with pet names; his own name sounded strange rolling off the alpha’s tongue. In a way, it felt like Hyunwoo was finally being genuine with him.

The omega curled his hand into a fist, knuckles caressing his cheeks to smear away the moisture, and he opened his watery eyes to look at Hyunwoo. Was the alpha really apologizing for mistreating him? Perhaps this was all a dream, or maybe just an elaborate, cruel nightmare. Kihyun sighed, calming himself down enough to sound coherent. “Thank you...” He swallowed the knot, guilt pushing him to continue. “I’m sorry I never told you...”

Hyunwoo didn’t answer the omega, he just took a deep breath and cleared his throat. If he was going to show Kihyun this side of him, the side he kept locked away from even himself, he might as well be fully honest. He looked the omega in the eyes. “For what it’s worth, I... I fell for you a long time ago. Just never had the balls to tell you,” he finally confessed, a pitiful laugh in his voice. Standing up straight, he physically removed himself from the moment, realizing that grief belonged only to those who deserved the blessing to begin with. He looked down and clenched his fists at his sides. Taking a deep breath, he finally spoke his truth. “I love you... Your debt to me is paid...” he said as he turned and left, hesitating at the door with his back facing Kihyun before adding, “Get all the care you need. I’ll pay the bill, don’t worry.”

Time slowed around them. Frozen in place, Kihyun watched Hyunwoo turn away, speechless at the sudden confession. His mind was a stuttering mess yet no words were spoken and no voice replied. He was more stunned by the confession of love than by the fact his freedom had been returned to him. He was simultaneously numb to and enlightened by the feelings the jo-pok boss had been keeping to himself. Anything and everything he could possibly feel in this moment was nullified by the sorrow of a miscarriage and IV painkillers.

But one thing was very clear: they both had harbored dark secrets they didn’t want the other to know until the wounds were too deep to hide.

The heart monitor picked up a multitude of emotions running through the bedridden omega, whose eyes were wide and boring into Hyunwoo’s broad back until the alpha wasn’t lingering in the doorway anymore. And just like that, Kihyun was alone again.

He had wanted to reach out, to block and push away the loneliness to feel comfort and sympathy. He wanted to stop Hyunwoo, but the omega remained still. Maybe he shouldn’t anyway… Perhaps Hyunwoo, too, wanted to be alone and grieve for something he didn’t know existed until today.

Kihyun sighed, feeling drained. He looked around to distract himself. The temperature in the hospital room felt chilly, nostalgic with its distinct smells and noises that haunted Kihyun and reminded him of his mother. All the constant visits after she became ill, learning the sickness had consumed her lungs and forced her to stay in bed with assisted help to breathe.

He felt himself finally, fully succumb to the medication in his bloodstream, all trauma fading into the background as he thought of his mother…

Flashback
A week after the incident with his ex, Kihyun’s mother took a turn for the worse when he came home from work and found her laying on the kitchen floor, eyes affixed to the small puddle of blood under her blonde hair. What happened? How long had she been laying there? He had never been more afraid and anxious in his life; to come home and see his mother unconscious and barely breathing, terrorized his very soul.

She was rushed to the hospital and treated for a small cut on her head, then was admitted to be monitored for a suspected diagnosis. There in the hospital Kihyun stayed with her, afraid to leave her again. After several moments of pained solitude, Kihyun was visited by her doctor.

“I’m sorry to say, but with your mother’s condition, she’s prone to infection...” The beta woman gave Kihyun a look of sympathy. “Kihyun, your mother has pneumonia. It’s common in people with this stage of lung cancer. I suggest keeping her here for the duration of her treatment. Here she is in a clean and safe environment where she has help if and when needed.”

Kihyun picked at the loose string on his sleeve, a nervous habit, as he listened to the doctor. It was no question if she was to receive treatment, just a matter of how. He could already feel stress rise as he thought of the financial burden; the money he needed to oversee her treatment was abundant, and the young omega was already working long hours just to keep them afloat since his mother was unable to do strenuous activities. “I understand,” he uttered melancholically. “Thank you, Doctor Cha.”

Seeing a young omega and son shoulder such a large responsibility made the doctor’s inner beta empathize. She rested her hand reassuringly on Kihyun’s shoulder. “Don’t worry, Kihyun. We will take excellent care of her. Chaeyoung is a fighter.”

Kihyun looked at the doctor and offered a smile.

Once the she left and a nurse checked his mother’s vitals, the omega sat alone with her with his hand in hers, his face wearing his woe. Even in pieces, his mother was still the most beautiful woman. Destiny was cruel, but health didn’t care—illness was always a merciless endeavour.

“Ki, baby,” Chaeyoung pulled her breathing mask down. Even in physical agony, she still managed to smile. “Don’t worry.” Her voice was hoarse and quiet, weak like the grip on his hand. “We will figure it out.”

Kihyun ran his hand through his black hair and sighed out deeply. His mom was indeed strong, keeping a positive mental attitude. “I know. I’ll have to look into your insurance and what it covers, but you don’t worry, mom. Rest.”

The omega on the bed gave her son a look of love and admiration. “You’re a good son. Too good. So sweet and caring. I’m happy you’re not with Dongho anymore.”

The mention of his ex made Kihyun’s skin crawl with an uncomfortable tightness in his chest. The utter hatred he felt for alphas was growing like his mother’s disease; wicked and ill intended. His teeth grounded together as he seethed. “I swear mom, I will never let any alpha harm us again. We don’t need a toxic asshole to live a fulfilling life. I promise.”

“I trust you, my darling.” The woman coughed, then lifted the face mask back over her mouth and nose. The rhythmic beeps of the heart monitor and her heavy breathing were the only noises inside the room. He clung tight to her frail hand.

Kihyun felt determined. He was going to help his mother. He was going to pay her back for everything she had done for him. He was tired of feeling useless, tired of betrayals from alphas he
had once loved. His trust in the category of higher status diminished and hatred for them turned smoking embers into a raging fire. He couldn’t rely on anyone but himself to take care of his sick mother.

The omega ignored the dastardly stereotype that his kind were weak and vulnerable—easily pushed into submission. So he put endless hours into building traits that would protect his mom and himself; he moved closer to the city and went to trade school, learned skills, and mastered classes to prepare and become the only reliable man his mother could depend on.

They didn’t need an alpha when Kihyun was capable of filling that trope for the both of them.

Never again would an alpha harm them. He’d make sure of that.

End Flashback

Outside the hospital, Hyunwoo threw his sixth cigarette on the asphalt and stuffed a seventh between his lips. Despite the light rain sprinkling down on him, he cupped the stick and lit the tip with a shaky hand. He couldn't shake the shock from his body. He didn’t know how to. His skin itched for cocaine and his mind supported it, and in his fragile mental state he caved and ransacked the Mercedes for a bag of white powder. He’d never forgive Boss Bang for causing a relapse in his cocaine addiction, but right the addict in him pinned for the high.

It’d take away all this hurt.

Halfway done with the cigarette in a matter of a minute, he spiked it on the damp asphalt and scooped a finger into the baggie. The tip of his intact little finger coated in pearlescent power, he shoved it into his nose and snorted. He grunted at the sting but rejoiced when the effects quickly kicked in. Fuck yeah, how he could handle things in a way he knew.

Hyunwoo leaned against the exterior of the Mercedes, rain falling onto his heated, tattooed skin. His fingers twitched as he stared at people jogging across the parking lot in pursuit of shelter from the gradually increasing rain. He wasn’t sure if anyone saw him snort cocaine, but he didn’t care either. Nothing really mattered anymore.


The alpha pulled his phone from his back pocket and dialed Boss Bang. After two rings, the superior alpha answered. “Hello, Son…”

“That big assignment you asked me to do? I’ll do it, Boss,” Hyunwoo blurted.

“...Excellent.”
Hyungwon knew nothing other than the few curt words Boss told him. He was given an order. He didn’t ask questions. He was to escort Kihyun elsewhere, and to keep an eye on the omega for a couple days. He thought the situation odd, but he wasn’t paid to push issues, especially after the current chain of events.

On the third day of Kihyun’s hospital stay, Hyungwon helped check the omega out of the hospital. As promised, Boss handled all payments, Hyungwon just had to carry out the process in person. After, he waited in the cold lobby with the troubled loved ones of sick patients until Kihyun emerged from the room he’d been staying in alongside a nurse. With the nurse’s help, Hyungwon helped the omega to the Mercedes he had parked right outside the hospital doors.

The back of the matte black vehicle was loaded with Kihyun’s clothing, expertly packed into expensive, leather baggage with Elise’s aid. The omega originally thought he was being escorted back to Hyunwoo’s penthouse, but all the clothing in the back proved otherwise—was he leaving for good? Hyunwoo was serious when he said the debt was paid?

Kihyun wanted to ask so many questions, wanted to know how the alpha was doing after finding out about the pregnancy and it’s untimely termination all in one day, wanted to thank Elise, wanted to ask why his belongings were packed, and why he was being hauled away by his so-called babysitter. However, words never left his lips. Perhaps it was best he didn’t ask.

Perhaps he should just be grateful he was free.

Without further ado, Hyungwon drove out of the hospital lot and ramped onto the highway to his assigned destination. They’d been entirely wordless to each other since Kihyun was picked up. Hyungwon seemed tense, but he was good at seeming unaffected—something the omega fully realized when he cried out for his best friend to Hyungwon in the climax of a panic attack, to which the gangster remained neutral and professional, cold and distant, unempathetic to Kihyun’s anguish. Well, that was how the omega viewed it. He didn’t know the internal struggle Hyungwon felt on the inside, just as he didn’t know the multitude of questions on Hyungwon’s mind currently as they drove in silence on the freeway.

Kihyun cradled Minhyuk’s colorblock sweater in his hands. It was on the passenger side seat when he had gotten into the Mercedes. He was thankful it hadn’t been thrown away. Clutching the material in his hands, he breathed in the faint scent of lingering mint to calm himself before resting his cheek against the window.

His heart was heavy. No one warned him of the heartbreak that followed a miscarriage, how broken he’d feel, or about the lack motivation for simple tasks. And how could they? The depression that accompanied the trauma sucked all energy, mental and physical, from Kihyun. He felt like an empty shell, even with the tidal wave of validation from Hyunwoo.

The day Hyunwoo discovered the omega’s miscarried pregnancy and confessed his love weighed heavily on Kihyun’s mind. The alpha’s words played over and over like a haunting mantra, terrorizing him. The Kihyun from a few months ago, lovesick and brainwashed, would’ve swelled with joy over reciprocated love; the Kihyun now, broken and wiser, felt broody and burdened. As
if that wasn’t enough to stress over, Hyunwoo released the omega of his invisible shackles—at long last, his freedom was granted and his uncle’s debt had been paid. No longer was he tormented by a heartless monster from the inside of a lonely cage.

Except the damage had been done. It echoed like ripples in the waters of what could have been and what would never be.

Kihyun had talked to psychiatrists at the hospital about his feelings, asked questions about potentially harming himself or others, but all he wanted was to rest and be with someone he knew would look after him as he coped with his tragedy. He squeezed the sweater in his grasp; he needed Minhyuk.

Hyungwon kept quiet as he wove through slow-moving cars on the highway. He didn’t disclose where they were going, but after several passed exits he assumed the familiar scenery gave it away. The way Kihyun’s body language shifted tipped him off that the omega now understood where the beta was taking him—he was finally going to see Minhyuk. Shit, he wondered if anyone told Minhyuk about the miscarriage; given Hyunwoo’s hatred for the beta, something told Kihyun that his best friend was oblivious to the whole situation. The omega mentally prepared himself to tell Minhyuk the unfortunate news, knowing it would add to his heartbreak.

Car radio didn’t drone out the thoughts that threatened to spill off Hyungwon’s tongue. “You look better,” said the beta, glancing briefly at Kihyun through dark Ray Bans. “I’m sorry about what happened.”

Sympathetic words from the beta was appreciated, but Kihyun didn’t know what to say back. What could he say? His wounds were still fresh. He wiped his eyes with his sleeve, and with a deep exhale, the omega watched the world go by as a blur through glass. “Thank you... for being here,” he replied.

Hyungwon looked ahead as he drove down the long stretch of highway. “No problem.” Honest but short. He sensed that the omega wasn’t in a chatty mood, and the beta felt like he was imposing on something that didn’t concern him anymore. But honestly, Kihyun was glad Hyungwon was here, even if it wasn’t actually by choice.

When the beta ramped off the highway, he kept right and followed the familiar route to Kihyun’s best friend’s house; he knew the map by heart at this point. The concrete jungle transitioned into well-groomed trees and shrubs as Hyungwon turned into Minhyuk’s neighborhood. As the Mercedes pulled into the driveway, Kihyun felt anxious as he stared at the house. It was late in the morning, almost lunch time, but the other beta was usually home at this time on Thursdays.

After turning off the engine, Hyungwon said, “Let me help you with your things.” He exited the vehicle and popped the trunk with the key fob.

Kihyun left Minhyuk’s sweater on the seat as he exited. “Um, I’ll be right back,” he said to Hyungwon without removing his haze from the front door.

Hyungwon faltered as he lifted a bag of heavy luggage from the trunk. All he did was simply nod at the omega’s comment, figuring the omega wanted to reach out to Minhyuk before barging in with tons of his belongings. The omega hurriedly walked up the steps of the home and knocked softly on the door. His anxiousness built steadily as he waited.

Inside, Minhyuk heard knocking on the door and quirked his head. Who could that be? He wasn’t expecting anyone... For the briefest of moments, his heart jumped hoping it was Kihyun on the
other side of the door, but he knew he wasn’t going to see his best friend in a long, long time. With
a sigh, the beta walked to the door and opened it, floored when he saw who it was.

“Kihyun...”

The omega didn’t hesitate to attach himself to Minhyuk with a tight hug the second that door
opened. Eyes wide and heart stopped, Minhyuk was floored when Kihyun embraced him so
suddenly. Instinctively, his arms wrapped around the omega. Sweet mint radiated off of him,
bringing so much relief to Kihyun that he almost started crying. No doubt he inevitably would
when he explained the situation to the beta, but for now, Minhyuk’s warm body in his arms was all
he cared about.

Minhyuk turned his head to the side to breath in his favorite scent in the whole world on the nape
of Kihyun’s neck. “I’m so glad you’re here.”

Kihyun exhaled a shaky breath, relieved he was in Minhyuk’s arms again. After a brief moment,
pulled away and gestured to the driveway. “Um, can you help me and Hyungwon with my bags
please?” he asked nervously, dragging his hand down Minhyuk’s arm and gripping his hand.

Minhyuk glanced out to the driveway and saw the lanky beta from before awkwardly waving back
at him. Ugh. He never wanted to see any gangsters ever again, especially one who threatened to
pull a gun on him, and yet here he was. “Sure,” he said as he stepped outside and closed the door
before strutting down the driveway to the expensive car.

Kihyun followed like a silent shadow, confused that his best friend didn’t inquire about anything
going on. “I’m sorry I can’t help,” he apologized. His body still felt heavy and weak, but that was
to be expected since he was healing inside and grieving his loss. He stood out of the way so the
two betas could tend to his bags. “I’m not supposed to do heavy lifting yet...”

Minhyuk cocked a brow. Kihyun wasn’t supposed to do heavy lifting? What did that mean? He
paused from unloading the trunk and purposely ignored any reaction Hyungwon had because he
wanted to hear it from Kihyun himself. “No heavy lifting? What happened?”

Kihyun rubbed the back of his neck and avoided eye contact with the blond. “I, um... We should
talk inside.”

Minhyuk’s immediate reaction was to look at Hyungwon and point blame. He took a breath, paused
to reset himself, and regarded Kihyun with gentleness. “Okay... Is everything okay? Did something
happen...?”

“Just go inside with him, I’ll get the rest,” Hyungwon interjected, impatient with Minhyuk’s
annoying skepticism.

The omega gave Hyungwon’s shoulder a small rub of appreciation. “Thank you, Hyungwon. Don’t
you think about leaving before saying goodbye either,” Kihyun said with a firm tone. With a quick
turn, he grasped Minhyuk’s hand with tenderness, like was afraid he’d break it if he gripped any
tighter. “Come on, love. You’re going to want to be sitting...”

Minhyuk wasn’t sure how to react to any of this, but dammit he was trying to make sense of it. He
learned from their last midnight rendezvous not to ask questions as to why Kihyun showed up at
his door. It pained him, but he accepted the moment for what it was because he knew it was
ultimately temporary. That was why he didn’t question Kihyun’s sudden appearance or that the
omega asked him to unload baggage from the other beta’s car—he wasn’t going to get his hopes up because he knew how the story ended.

He took a seat on the sofa and sat upright and uncomfortable, his body language revealing how on edge he was. Kihyun shifted nervously beside the beta on his couch, slouching forward. So many words could he could start with, but he wouldn’t keep Minhyuk in suspense any longer.

“Two days ago, maybe three, I was taken to the hospital… I was just released today… I, um, miscarried.” He could already feel the cracks in his heart fracture deeper. Saying those words would never be easy. A tear slipped down his face, his fresh wounds stinging. “Hyunwoo, he… he came to the hospital and found out.” Kihyun looked over to Minhyuk. “Min, he... he confessed he loved me then told me I was free… then he just left.”

It felt like a javelin to the chest; so sudden, so swift; a one shot kill shot from the uttering of one sentence. The beta felt lightheaded, and it was only after an emptiness in his lungs that he realized he had stopped breathing. He took a deep breath and felt the rush of air into his lungs.

“Shit, Kihyun...” Minhyuk was unsure if he was sad or happy or relieved, or maybe all of it plus guilt. He was at a total loss for words.

The omega leaned back against the couch. “I was asked if I needed to talk to someone, a psych or something, or if they needed to watch over me in case I did something harmful to myself or others.” He twirled the string of his hoodie around his finger, a nervous mannerism, a distraction. “I said no, and then they told me I should be with people who would be there and support me, so...” Slowly, Kihyun’s hand made its way to Minhyuk’s thigh and settled just above the beta’s whale tattoo. “Here I am.”

Here for closure, for empathy, to mourn, to overcome; to get better and refocus. He was going to prevail even if it killed him, or else what had any of this been for?

Minhyuk couldn’t stand to see and hear the despair of his best friend. He knew Kihyun well, knew how much he loved children and wanted a family, and it was clear that despite the unfortunate circumstances by which he became pregnant, he was ready to cherish that child with his entire being. Secondhand heartbreak squeezed Minhyuk’s heart. He pulled Kihyun in for a hug, tighter than ever, and didn’t let go for anything.

Being pulled into a hug, surrounded by sweet mint and warmth, gave Kihyun that little push and he cried again. He felt comfortable in Minhyuk’s arms. All he wanted was to be held like this until the hurt was gone… until the sorrow ran its course. His tears soaked into Minhyuk’s shirt, body shaking with his heartbroken tears.

“Ki... I’m so sorry. I mean, shit, I know sorry means nothing, but... You’re free now, and we can be together like old times... I’ll never hurt you, and I-I’ll give you anything you need or want...” The beta felt the pressure of unfallen tears on his eyes as he worked himself up confessing his emotions in covert bursts of dialogue.

Kihyun pulled away from Minhyuk’s embrace to reach over the coffee table where he plucked a tissue from the box and blew his nose. With a shuddered breath and wet cheeks, he gave Minhyuk a loving and appreciative look. “I know, love. That’s why I came to you instead of him.” Believe it or not, the omega felt guilty for keeping secrets from the alpha, and how Hyunwoo could be processes the grief himself, but he needed this time for himself. “I know you’d care for me the way I need it.”
Minhyuk smiled weakly. He was more than willing to be the shoulder Kihyun needed to lean on. He’d help rehab his friend, not Hyunwoo. He was who the omega turned to for support and comfort, not Hyunwoo. He treated Kihyun like a human being. He cleared his throat and rubbed the back of his neck. “Uh... we should probably tell that Hyungwon guy to bring the stuff inside, huh?”

Kihyun wiped his nose again, taking deep breaths to regulate his sudden crying episode. “Yeah. I’m sorry to come over and dump all of this on you all at once.”

“No, no, please don’t apologize. I’m so glad you came to me,” Minhyuk reassured as he rubbed small circles into Kihyun’s shoulder. “Everything will be alright, I promise. You’re doing great, this is just a minor setback...”

Just then, an awkward set of knocks against the front door confirmed Hyungwon’s lingering presence. Minhyuk stood up and answered the door, greeted by Hyungwon’s neutral face.

“Sorry, got a call from Boss and gotta get going. I’ll just leave these here...?” Hyungwon’s comment lilted up into a question at the end, to which Minhyuk nodded at the pile of luggage at his doorstep.

Regardless of the tender circumstances by which he and Kihyun came to Minhyuk, the beta was not going to invite the gangster into his house. Knowing everything he did, he’d never ever trust one of Hyunwoo’s men. “Yeah, that’s fine. I’ll take care of the rest. Goodbye...” Minhyuk stopped when he saw Hyungwon peer into his house at his best friend inside. He looked like he wanted to say his own goodbyes, and as much as he wanted to protest the formality, he didn’t have the heart to prevent it. “Ki... He’s leaving,” he called out, hoping the omega would come over so he wouldn’t have to invite the gangster in.

Kihyun approached Hyungwon without hesitation and hugged the tall beta’s waist. Even if it was short and brief, he had grown to admire Hyungwon’s ocean scent and already missed their playful banter. In captivity, Hyungwon became his friend; he understood Hyungwon’s alignment with the jo-pok, but he also knew the beta had a soft spot for the omega. “Don’t be a stranger,” he mumbled.

Hyungwon smiled inwardly at the omega’s affection. It was interesting to be given appreciation with physical affection like a hug. It was also interesting that Kihyun thought so much of the beta to give him a proper goodbye. “Don’t worry, princess. I’ll be around.”

Minhyuk shifted awkwardly on the balls of his feet. It was tough to understand why Kihyun would offer any kindness to people like Hyungwon and Hyunwoo. Perhaps it was his own bad character trait of holding grudges, but he didn’t like it one bit. Clearing his throat, he said, “Better head out, huh?”

Hyungwon half-laughed and released from Kihyun’s hug. “Sure thing, man.” He smiled at Kihyun and met Minhyuk’s gaze one more time before turning down the driveway and getting into the Mercedes.

As he eventually backed out and left, Minhyuk sighed in relief and started collecting luggage in his hands. “I’m so happy you’re here. Let’s get you settled in, okay?” he said as he pressed a kiss to Kihyun’s cheek.

Kihyun timidly nodded, finding the kiss to be unexpected but the show of affection was greatly
appreciated. “I feel bad for imposing so suddenly with all this.”

Minhyuk dropped the luggage in his hands and faced the omega. Grabbing him by the shoulders, the beta looked him dead in the eyes and said, “You are not imposing. You have nothing to feel guilty about. I love that you’re here. I want you to stay here for as long as you need.”

Kihyun could never return Minhyuk’s kindness or find the right way to express his gratitude. Where Hyunwoo was a dark angel who brought disaster and mayhem with him, Minhyuk was a heaven-sent angel who always made Kihyun happy and never asked for anything in return.

The omega nodded and said, “Thank you for everything, Min.”

Upon waking, Kihyun burrowed himself in the warm, soft sheets of mint. He rubbed the remainders of sleep from his eyes and gazed at the sleeping man beside him. Even in the early light of morning peeking through the curtains, Minhyuk looked angelic. Kihyun smiled sleepily, adoring his best friends gentle, sleeping face that beckoned for affection. The omega carefully brushed a stray blond hair from the beta’s face just to admire his facial features more.

Minhyuk had been so kind and caring, giving Kihyun the attention he needed for his broken heart the past week. Nightmares, haunting cries of an infant that ripped him out of sleep in hysterics—only when Minhyuk held him and whispered sweet, comforting words did Kihyun fall back asleep.

The first few days were hell. Kihyun felt guilty for making Minhyuk put up with his sorrow, yet no matter how many times he woke in the night with tears, Minhyuk made sure he ate, bathed, and slept. It took a few days for pregnancy symptoms to leave his body, and Minhyuk was there hold him and calm him with minty pheromones.

With quiet and careful movements, Kihyun snuck out of bed in his shorts and loose t-shirt. He lightly padded out of the room, found a pack of smokes and a lighter on the counter, and stepped outside for a quick smoke. Now that it was safe, smoking helped calm his influx of emotions. After closing the door, the nip of early morning air kissed his bare legs. He lit the cigarette, exhaling smoke that oddly smelled like beach waves… then it hit him.

“I know you’re there,” Kihyun said aloud, amused.

From out of a rose bush just beginning to bloom in the morning sun popped the one and only beta that smelled of ocean waves, Hyungwon.

Hands buried in the pockets of his dark grey designer jeans, head down to hide the amused smirk on his lips, he strolled casually over to Kihyun. How did the omega know he was lurking? He thought for sure he parked the Mercedes in a discreet location. As he approached, he looked up. “You know me so well, princess.”

Kihyun grinned upon seeing a familiar face and offered the pack of ThisPlus cigarettes to the beta. “You don’t have to call me that. I’m just a regular civilian now.” He tried not to think about Hyunwoo or the life he had for the past few months; he needed to heal; he needed to return to who he was before everything happened.

Hyungwon’s grin wavered. “That’s my name for you, not anyone else’s,” he explained as he plucked a cigarette from the pack Kihyun offered him. Pinning it between his lips, he walked a circle around the omega as he pulled a lighter from his jacket pocket and lit the tip of the stick. “How’ve you been?”
Kihyun blew out a puff of smoke and ran his hand through his hair. “It’s been hard, you know? No one ever tells you about the grief, or warns you about… just…” The omega leaned against the side railing of the quaint porch on the face of the house, sadness creeping its way into his emotions.

Hyungwon leaned to the side as he observed Kihyun. Even trapped in his situation at Hyunwoo’s penthouse, the omega didn’t look as downtrodden as this. He was clearly going through the motions of grief, among other emotions the beta couldn’t quite place his finger on; in addition, Kihyun’s ashen hair was now a deep brown, which gave him a completely different aura. “Your hair looks nice…”

“Huh? Oh, thanks.” The omega flicked the ash off the end of his cigarette onto the concrete. “Needed a change, you know?”

He dyed it on a whim, picking it up at the pharmacy near Minhyuk’s where Hyunwoo had kidnapped him. Strolling those aisles triggered stressful flashbacks, which reminded him of the baby they’d lost, and it took him everything to not break down in the middle of the store.

Hyungwon nodded and exhaled smoke from his nose. He wasn’t the type to console people well. He kept his distance and was awkward with people who wore their heart on their sleeve. He genuinely developed a liking to the omega, but he kept the conversation shallow. After all, he was only creeping because Boss told him to keep an eye on Kihyun, make sure he wasn’t getting targeted or harassed by other jo-pok or even the police, and most importantly that he was doing okay.

He flicked the tip of his cig and puffed in. “How’s it been with lover boy?”

Kihyun quirked a brow at the beta. “Minhyuk has been respectful and patient and caring,” he replied matter-of-factly. “He’s always picked me up when I needed it, and that doesn’t always include using his dick.”

“Ah, you see, I’m conflicted, you know?” Hyungwon stopped circling the omega and looked at him directly. He pulled the cigarette from his mouth and exhaled. “On one hand, I can’t report something like that back to Boss… and on the other hand, I’m really glad he’s treating you right.” He squinted as the morning light grew brighter as it ascended the blue sky. A tiny flock of blue jays flew overhead. “The dude hates me, but he’s not bad for a goody-goody. Too bad he doesn’t realize how far in the friendzone he is, but that’s none of my business…” Hyungwon turned away and placed the cigarette between his lips once more.

“It’s not really your Boss’s business either…” Kihyun shot back as he took one last drag of his cigarette, and bent down to squish the finished stick into the plastic ashtray on the top step. “Not anymore anyway.”

“True,” Hyungwon replied as he took a final puff of his cigarette and extinguished it in the same ashtray Kihyun had. “For what it’s worth, Boss misses you… Hasn’t said it, but he’s been going hard on some top level assignment Boss Bang gave him. Without you around, he’s off the rails, man.”

Kihyun’s eyebrows raised, surprised at Hyungwon’s slip of information… or was it a slip at all? “The king misses his queen, huh?” The omega shook his head and laughed. “I don’t know if you know, but at the hospital he told me he loved me then walked out… Maybe he was telling the truth after all…” He pretended the validation didn’t cut deep. “But he doesn’t need me, I was nothing but a fuck up to him.”
Hyungwon’s head was spinning from all the things he wanted to respond back with, but he settled for a sigh and a piercing stare. “Yeah, Boss is an asshole, and I’m not saying he’s a good guy, and I’m definitely not saying you should go back, I’m just passing along info because that’s what I do.” He debated asking the omega if he could bum another cigarette, but it was probably better if he kept their conversation quick. “And you’re not a fuck up, Kihyun. I liked having you around,” the beta confessed, breaking his neutral alignment in a moment of truth.

Kihyun smiled at Hyungwon, crossing his arms over his chest. “Even if I kicked your ass on Super Smash Bros?” The brunet said smugly, feeling a little at ease from Hyungwon’s confession of enjoying his company.

The beta snickered, “You definitely didn’t, but whatever makes you happy.” He made a weird karate chop motion, adding, “I am undefeated as Ryu!” A genuine laugh spilled from his lips, but a rattle at the front door snapped him back to where he has—Minhyuk’s house, a place he was not welcome.

“Ki?” The blond beta stepped outside and squinted. Using his hand as a visor from the sun, his eyes eventually focused on the omega and the jo-pok pest. Immediately, his heart raced and he sped down the steps to stand between Kihyun and the other beta, protective and vigilant. “The hell is he doing here?” he snarled at Kihyun as he stared at Hyungwon.

Kihyun clicked his tongue, setting a hand on Minhyuk’s shoulder. “Min, he’s just here to check up on me. Hyungwon was actually the one to take me to the hospital last week. I might not be here without him, so…” Kihyun’s voice grew softer as his hand pressed harder. “Cut him some slack, please, love.” He knew Minhyuk was just being protective. “Hyungwon is my friend, and he would never hurt me.”

The betas stood a small distance apart in what looked like a one-sided standoff. Minhyuk’s blood boiled at anything remotely associated with the jo-pok, and Hyungwon was laidback about most everything. The taller beta stepped back when mint pheromones wafted at him, irritating his nose. “I’m not your enemy, bro.”

Minhyuk didn’t say anything. He took Hyungwon in with healthy skepticism. He wanted to shake his head and throttle Kihyun, ask him why he was generous to the people who captured him, but he’d sound like a broken record at this point; he felt like the only sane person in the entire narrative.

Kihyun released his grip on Minhyuk’s shoulder with a sullen look. His best friend was dead set on hating everyone from the dark side of Kihyun’s life. Even the generous ones. Bravely, he pushed passed Minhyuk on the steps and turned to face the blond beta with a serious gaze. “Relax, Minhyuk. Hyungwon is harmless, there’s no reason for you to be this alert. I trust him.” If his best friend could see past his anger, he would understand, but Kihyun didn’t know how to make Minhyuk see it.

Minhyuk’s body language remained tense. With a sigh, he replied, “I trust you.” It was true, he did, but he wasn’t going to be part of this behavior; Kihyun was a grown man, he could make his own choices. Without acknowledging the other beta, Minhyuk jogged up the steps and walked back into the house. Kihyun watched the beta leave with a defeated sigh and plucked another cigarette from the pack.

Hyungwon casually stretched his arms out wide. “You know, I’m starting to get the impression he doesn’t like me,” he joked, amused. “He’s right, though. I work for the bad guys. I’d hate me
too...” He pushed up the sleeve of his jacket to glance at his Rolex watch. “Speaking of the bad
guys, I gotta head to my next job. It was good catching up... Glad you’re healing alright.”

“He is just cautious. He knows how much I’ve been hurt before, and he’s just... concerned about
everything and everyone that comes into my life.” He lit the end of the cigarette and inhaled
deply, drowning in the nicotine and numbing his anxiety. “Thanks for coming by. Even if it was
just to spy on me for him.” He offered the pack of cigarettes to Hyungwon again. “For the road?”

Hyungwon shook his head. “Nah. See you around... you know where to find me.” He laughed and
turned away, walking down the length of the driveway before stopping where the pavement met
the asphalt. “Consider what I said about Boss. Just as, you know, food for thought.”

“For you, I’ll consider it,” Kihyun replied through a smoky exhale. No matter how many times he
tried to forget Hyunwoo, he couldn’t. Part of him loved that the alpha was suffering without him,
the other part wanted to run back to him, console him, tell him they could start again—no, he
wouldn’t crawl back to Hyunwoo in his weakest hours, not even if the alpha needed him.

He wouldn’t. He couldn’t. He had Minhyuk.

That was enough, right?

Right?

Chapter End Notes

The authors are holding a Q&A for this fic! Ask us questions on Twitter or Tumblr!
Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

Check out the playlist we made for this story!

“Where do you want the rest stacked, Boss?”

“Fucking anywhere, just do it neatly,” Hyunwoo snapped as he lit the tip of his cocaine-laced cigarette. It had been forty minutes since his high had peaked and the comedown was harsh—he was irritable and eager to reup. “And don’t fucking break anything.”

“Of course, Boss.” The underling stared daggers into the back of the alpha’s skull after he stormed away. Gritting his teeth, he lifted the precious crate product with both hands and carried it to the mountain of other large, wooden others.

There were easily hundreds of them stacked tall and vast like an impenetrable barrier garrisoned by jo-pok underlings in the cement and steel fortress of a warehouse by the docks. Underlings swarmed the crates like exhausted worker bees around the goldmine hive as the leader supervised with scrutiny. Morale was the lowest it had ever been; all work and no play was good for no one.

Cocaine ceased being enjoyable when the alpha used it as an emotional crutch, instead employing its effects for productivity in the wake of Boss Bang’s big assignment. As a result, Hyunwoo bought dozens of warehouses along the Yeongsan River with the intent to fill them all to the brim with trafficked goods, fostering stockpiles of massive criminal proportions. The alpha would wait until Boss Bang gave the signal before commencing further.

Part of the dangerous assignment he had undertaken, the alpha was to gather a surplus of supplies while nurturing business with international sects affiliated with the international weapons and drug trade. While majority of buyers and traders were involved in organized crime, plenty of involvement was military or government. Because the latter had catastrophically more to lose in the event of exposure, association with the international black market was extremely dangerous. In addition, other crime organizations did not take kindly to trespassing, whether it be territorially or monetarily—cocaine helped with numbing that nagging worry.

It had only been two weeks since Hyunwoo’s fateful phone call to his boss. Two weeks was a lot of time in the fast paced world of crime. Two weeks changed people. Two weeks was fourteen days of relapse for an emotionally unstable addict. Not even a hundred tiny cuts in his nose from cocaine crystals burned away the scent of sweet, cherry bliss. And, try as he might, his work couldn’t even distract him from the loss of everything he pushed away anyway.

Pungent smoke billowed from the alpha’s nostrils as he exhaled. He was outside on the wooden dock that jutted out into the river, entranced at the way small waves lapped against the deteriorating wood, the way the lack of sunlight behind rain-dense clouds darkened the river to a deep sapphire. The air was heavy with humidity and unfallen rain, and though he couldn’t see lightning crack through the grey sky just yet, low rumbles of thunder were melodic in his ears. The cocaine high picked up from his previous low point, his nerves alive with false invincibility, and anger pulsed through him.
Why did he let Kihyun go?

*Why the fuck did he let Kihyun go?*

Why did he accept Boss Bang’s offer for such a perilous assignment? Fuck, he’d die before he’d ever see the omega’s pretty brown eyes again… Perhaps it was better that way. Maybe this was his poetic end.

But if Hyunwoo succeeded, if he managed to pull this incredibly impractical traffick off, Boss Bang promised to step down and retire as jo-pok family godfather. Hyunwoo would become the rightful successor. Ever since he was a punk on the streets, taken in and mentored by the elder alpha, he wanted to be as powerful and rich and wise as the wise Bang Yongguk. To command so omnipotently at his level—Hyunwoo thought him a god. If the alpha could pull this off, he’d finally build his empire fit for his cherry queen…

The roar of a phone vibrated in his Balenciaga jeans. The screen was bright in the sky’s overcast. Boss Bang was calling. Fuck. Clearing his throat, Hyunwoo accepted the call. “Boss…”

“Hyunwoo… I trust inventory is well-stocked, yeah?” Cryptic and untelling as always, Boss Bang used professional, non-suspicious words, but he sounded like he was in the climax of a nasty speedball high.

The younger alpha kept it short. “Yes.”

“And stockholders?”

*Shit.* He hadn’t really been focusing efforts on affiliations, as coordinating physical merchandise had taken top priority in preparation for movement of goods. He had only talked to stakeholders of minor influence in the country. “Cautious, standoffish. I’m sure they want to be bribed.”

“Then give them what they want. Allies, as I’m sure you’ve come to understand, hold the key to success… and survival,” Boss Bang growled. He was angry; threatening. Hyunwoo felt his boss’s biting tone in the pit of his stomach.

“Yes, Boss,” he replied.

+ +

It had only been three weeks since Kihyun showed up at Minhyuk’s house, but it already felt like old times. The omega was free from the heavy shackles of the jo-pok and existed as he did prior to the depravity, but he wore the emotional scars like a heavy cloak. Like a knight in shining armor, Minhyuk was there to soothe the pain. He was here to erase everything about the vile alpha gangster from his best friend, stopping at nothing to restore the omega’s sense of self-worth. Kihyun was *everything* to the beta, and he needed to know that.

To surprise Kihyun, Minhyuk planned a relaxing evening for the omega to unwind. He filled the bathtub with hot water and rose petals, coconut milk and aloe bath bombs coloring the water a soft teal. Candles lined the rim of the tub, illuminating the display under otherwise dim light. The air smelled creamy and fresh, enticing and delicate. A silver tray stationed a bottle of aged rosé and long stemmed wine glasses next to a small bowl of chocolate covered cherries.

Nervously, the beta closed the bathroom door and walked out into the living room where Kihyun sat on the couch watching TV. The program playing was just background noise to Kihyun; his mind was elsewhere. Coping with his miscarriage and processing his leave from Hyunwoo drained
him. He honestly didn’t know what he’d do without Minhyuk’s gentle support.

When Minhyuk stopped beside him, he smiled and turned off the TV. “Hey, Min, what’s up?”

Minhyuk cleared his throat and slicked back his blond hair before replying. “Hey… Um, can I show you something?”

“Yeah, sure.” The omega stood up off the couch. “What is it?” he asked curiously, looking at his best friend with a puzzled look, eyebrow quirked.

“Follow me and find out,” Minhyuk replied cryptically, a smile stretched across his lips that made it obvious he had something planned. He beckoned for his friend to come, then turned and disappeared into his bedroom.

No lights were on in the bedroom, but flickering, yellow light from under the bathroom door drew the eye. Minhyuk waited for Kihyun by the door, but the latter rested his hands on his hips and sighed. “Is the bathroom light out again?”

Minhyuk couldn’t help but crack up in laughter. “Ah, no, it’s nothing like that. I, uh…” His jovial mood went serious, nervous. “I wanted to do something nice for you... You deserve something nice.” The beta took a deep breath and grabbed the door knob, moving to the side as he slowly opened the door to reveal the dreamy atmosphere inside. “Go on, check it out.”

As the door opened, Kihyun peeked inside, surprised by the smells and sight of such a romantic-looking setting. “Min...” The omega gawked, almost in shock. “You set all this up for me?”

The beta nodded as he followed Kihyun into the small room. “Yeah. Do you like it?” he asked sheepishly, not wanting to overwhelm the omega. “It’s all for you to relax and forget about everything else, just for a moment at least.”

Kihyun didn’t know where to look, it all looked so appealing. He felt tears brim his eyes. Nobody had ever done something like this for him, and he didn’t know how to properly react or what to say. “It’s...” Kihyun set his hand over his mouth, still taking in the relaxing aesthetic before turning to give Minhyuk a tight hug. “It’s wonderful, love. Thank you.”

Minhyuk’s nervousness dissipated in Kihyun’s tight embrace. A small smile found its way on his lips. “You’re welcome, Ki,” he whispered before kissing the omega’s temple. He withdrew from the hug and looked down at his feet. “I’ll, uh, leave you to enjoy it, then...”

Minhyuk secretly hoped the omega wanted him to stay. His original intention was for them to enjoy the romantic ambiance together, but he got too in his own head and convinced himself Kihyun wanted to be alone. After all, the omega had more stress to decompress from than the beta did.

Kihyun looked towards the tub and saw the bottle of wine, speaking without thinking. “Why don’t you stay?” The brunet flushed and looked at the beta. “I can’t drink all the wine alone.” He gazed at the beta, hoping he would stay and relax with him. “Plus, you deserve some R&R after the past few weeks too...”

Minhyuk smiled in relief—if Kihyun wanted him here, he was here in a heartbeat. Smiling, he tried to mask the excitement in his tone but failed. “I would love to, Ki.” He stepped closer to the omega, a medley of cherry blossoms and coconut aloe seeping into him, and caressed Kihyun’s jaw with the back of a finger. “I meant what I said. You deserve something nice, and I’ll do my
best to always give you that.”

Minhyuk looked nervous; it felt like he was confessing his love for his best friend all over again.

Kihyun smirked. “So get in the tub?” He grabbed the bottom of his shirt and pulled it over his head, dropping it to the floor.

Taking a deep breath, Minhyuk couldn’t peel his eyes away from Kihyun. Ever since his love confession however many months ago, seeing the omega like this made his heart race and body sweat. Perhaps now it was because his years-long crush was known, and he could openly admire the man he always had before. “I, uh, wouldn’t mind watching you go first...” he muttered, eyes downcast and a blush on his cheeks.

“Min, love, you don’t have to be so shy. It’s just me,” the omega assured as he pushed his shorts down to his ankles and stepped out of them. He wore a pair of designer boxers Hyunwoo had bought him months ago that hugged his ass just right. The beta couldn’t help but appreciate the delicious view in front of him by staring.

It wasn’t that Minhyuk was shy—well, maybe it was a little—but he also couldn’t shake the arousal he felt as he stared at the omega. Mint pheromones seeped from his pores, giving away his lust. Damnit, this was supposed to be about Kihyun, not Minhyuk fending off a raging boner.

So as to not feel any more awkward, the beta pulled his t-shirt up and over his head, tossing it on the floor beside Kihyun’s. The sudden scent of sweet mint made Kihyun’s insides flutter. Realizing it was his turn to strip, the omega inhaled minty pheromones and peeled off his briefs. Nearly breathless, Minhyuk ogled Kihyun’s bare ass as he turned, and with a coy grin, the omega stepped into the bathwater and eased himself down, sighing out as the hot water washed away his woes. A moat of rose petals surrounded him, making him look heavenly.

Minhyuk’s heart pattered in his chest as he too slipped out of his shorts and boxers. Dipping a toe in the hot water, he instantly melted in its relaxing allure. With a smile, he got into the bath opposite of Kihyun. After situating himself, he stared across the small mountains of bubbles and rose petals to the omega. Next to the candlelight, Kihyun’s beauty was ethereal.

“You’re beautiful,” said Minhyuk as he reached over and grabbed the omega’s hand and placed a soft kiss between his knuckles, never breaking eye contact.

Kihyun’s cheeks were ablaze at Minhyuk’s lips against his wet hand. Shyly, he looked away, eyes downcast to a rose petal gently floating over his thigh. “The candlelight is playing tricks,” he muttered, refusing to think of himself as beautiful; he didn’t feel physically attractive, not since the miscarriage.

Minhyuk shook his head. “No, it’s not. You’ve always been beautiful.” The beta kissed up Kihyun’s hand, arm, with slow and modest and well-placed affection. Subconsciously, he scooted closer to the omega, wanting to touch him more just to show him how much he meant to the beta. Kihyun bit his lip as he watched his best friend shower him with affection.

The kisses stopped short of Kihyun’s jaw, then Minhyuk reached over to grab the wine glasses from the tray. “Want some? I, uh... I’m not good at picking out wine but the lady at the store said it was good...” He was nervous and rambling but his body was singing for intimacy. Maybe a glass of wine would help them both to relax.

“Yeah, I would love some.” Kihyun glanced at the cherries and plucked one from its spot. “You remembered cherries are my favourite,” he added before biting into it. His lips curled around the
chocolate treat and he pulled the stem off, mouth alive with the taste. Licking chocolate from the corner of his mouth, he found himself unintentionally teasing the beta. And Minhyuk tried not to be distracted, he really did.

Rosé bottle in hand, the beta grabbed the corkscrew opener from the tray, cut the foil seal, and pierced the cork with the corkscrew. With minimal effort, the cork popped loose. First, the beta poured Kihyun a glass and handed it to him before pouring a glass of his own. He swirled the pink fluid in the glass to get a smell of its fruity, aged flavor before lifting the glass slightly in the air. “To you,” Minhyuk said, toasting with a genuine smile, “And your freedom.”

Kihyun held the glass delicately in his grasp, smelling the aroma inside as he held the glass to his lips. “And to you,” he added in an airy tone. The sincerity in his words were never heard by a certain alpha. He was a different person for each man—had to be. With Minhyuk, however, he could be himself for as long as he could be. “You, who has always been there for me when I needed it. You deserve this toast as much as I, love.”

Shy with compliments, Minhyuk muttered ‘thank you’ and clanked his glass to the omega’s before taking a sip. The alcohol was soft and distinct on his tongue, and he liked it so much he took another few sips. With the simple tilt of his wrist, Kihyun sipped on the beverage for a quick taste. When he found the flavour to be quite delicious, he drank more. His mouth danced in pleasure, tongue tickling with the intricate tang, no doubt would it heighten with a cherry. And so Kihyun set the stem of the previous fruit down and picked up another.

Still holding the wine glass in one hand, Minhyuk grabbed a chocolate-covered cherry from the dish and placed it between his lips. The flavor instantly took him back to last time he and the omega had sex, how he tasted Kihyun’s delicious flavor with his tongue, lapping and moaning and fingerfucking and—Minhyuk moaned softly, barely audible, as he bit the cherry and made bedroom eyes at Kihyun.

“This is delicious,” the omega commented, meeting Minhyuk’s ardor-filled eyes, almost missing the sensual noise emitted from him. He quirked a brow, eyes falling to Minhyuk’s lips where the cherry entered. Reminding himself that his scent was that of the very fruit they were eating urged him to speak. “You look like you want to dip me in chocolate and eat me instead.”

It wasn’t that the beta didn’t know he was being so overt, it was that he was embarrassed that he was. He couldn’t help it. His dick was half hard underwater and with each passing second lust utterly consumed him; Kihyun’s dirty words were the trigger that fired Minhyuk up.

“I would love to...” the beta replied breathily. He sipped his wine until he finished the glass he’d poured for himself, then plucked a stem off a cherry and placed it between his lips once more.

He leaned close to the omega, wanting to share the cherry and taste Kihyun’s lips. The brunet grinned as he raised his glass to his lips, finishing off what was left in his glass. Leaning close, Kihyun was eager to indulge in Minhyuk’s playful gesture. Hyunwoo never wooed him like this; it was a pleasure and curtesy he never realized he craved until it was given to him.

Closing his teeth around the chocolate cherry, Kihyun pressed his lips to Minhyuk’s. Now that they were so close, he could smell pheromones of mint flirting with his own. Minhyuk groaned at the touch of Kihyun’s lips, and groaned even louder when the omega’s proximity enshrouded him in maraschino cherry scent. The omega smelled even sweeter than the cherry between their lips.

The beta bit off his piece of the fruit and chewed, swallowing in time to chase the flavor with Kihyun’s lips. He kissed the omega sensually, conveying the slow, almost agonizing lust the beta had for his best friend. The chocolate cherry carried with it a taste of mint, enticing Kihyun further.
He followed the unrushed rhythm of their liplock, but before it escalate, he pulled away slowly, eyeing the blond beta for a moment with sentiment. Minhyuk didn’t realize he was pouting, but Kihyun pressed a finger to the other’s lips to quell him.

Kihyun turned and situated himself between his friend’s long legs, back against Minhyuk’s chest, needing the affectionate shroud of mint against his skin in this new, intimate position. He laid his head back on the beta’s shoulder. “Sorry, I just wanted to feel you like this…”

Minhyuk bit his cherry-tainted bottom lip as the omega’s pert ass pressed against his cock, simultaneously aroused and swooned by Kihyun’s change of position. He instinctively wrapped his arms around the omega’s lithe form, hands coming together around Kihyun’s navel, daring to explore the bath’s depths with groping fingertips. The scent of a nearby candle didn’t oust Kihyun’s delectable scent, and Minhyuk found himself nuzzling against the nape of the omega’s neck for more of that sweet, potent smell. Noticing the patch of skin to be bare, the beta was relieved to find that the asshole alpha hadn’t marked and bonded with his best friend. “This is nice... You, like this, it’s nice...”

The omega grinned and hummed in agreement. “It’s all nice.” He lifted up his empty wine glass and gave it a small shake. “More wine please.”

The beta grabbed the wine bottle and poured them both a second glass of rosé, but when he went to return the half-empty bottle to the tray he accidentally spilled a little on Kihyun’s shoulder and into the bath water. “Shit, sorry,” Minhyuk mumbled, carefully placing the bottle on the tray this time before his eyes caught the tantalizing drip of wine down the omega’s collarbone.

The cool trickle down his warm skin caused Kihyun to shudder, and goosebumps travelled across his body. Without thinking, the beta flicked his tongue out and lapped the wine off the omega’s skin, humming in his throat as he couldn’t resist kissing the length of the clavicle. As he did, his hands sunk further, fingertips teasing the tops of Kihyun’s thighs as he nipped at the skin of his neck.

“Min...” Kihyun whispered, cheeks hot and thighs closing, suddenly self-conscious of the arousal building inside him from the mere attention his collarbone and neck were getting. Since the miscarriage, he felt like a butterfly without his wings; Minhyuk touching him like this made him acutely aware of his failure. But Minhyuk withdrew his hand from the omega’s lower half the instant Kihyun clammed up. They returned to a respectful place by the omega’s navel.

His lips, however, continued peppering Kihyun with affection. “Relax, Ki, I just want to treat you right,” the beta whispered against the shell of the omega’s ear.

“You don’t find me... unattractive, you know, since...” How would anyone find the omega remotely sexy after all the trouble he’d caused, the sorrowful mess he had been for the past few weeks; the ugly sobbing in the late hours of the night; being soothed back to sleep. How could Minhyuk still want him sexually after all that.

“Of course I do. You’re still the same Kihyun I’ve always known and loved... You’re gorgeous...” Minhyuk kissed the omega’s cheek, then tapped a finger on Kihyun’s chin and turned it to look at him. “And smart and talented and lovely...” The beta pressed his lips to Kihyun’s and kissed him softly, sensually.

Minhyuk’s hands stroked the omega’s abdomen lovingly, gently coaxing Kihyun’s legs open, relaxing him until his eyelids fell closed as he kissed the beta back. Minhyuk’s sweet words and lips eased his anxiety as mint surrounded him, replacing bleak thoughts with desire, to be touched, to be shown genuine affection.
As Minhyuk kissed the omega, his hands dipped low between Kihyun’s legs. He pulled the other’s lithe body closer to him, cock pinned between their bodies. He moaned against Kihyun’s sweet lips as he palmed him beneath the warm water. Breaking the kiss, the beta whispered endless compliments against Kihyun’s dewy skin. “You’re so amazing. You’re perfect. I’ll do anything to make sure you know that… anything…”

Kihyun’s cock pulsed in the beta’s large hand, blood rushing through his veins. The attention on his skin, the bites, the kisses heated his body twentyfold—the physical affection seduced his body, but the spoken, impassioned words enticed his heartbeat. And when Minhyuk bit the juncture of muscle between neck and shoulder, he kissed a trail over the omega’s shoulder blade up his spine to the scent gland behind his neck. That sweet cherry smell was most potent here, and it rattled his beta brain with pure, uninhibited omega essence. At its most poignant, omega pheromones could dramatically, albeit temporarily, effect betas the way they did alphas—Minhyuk groaned loudly and pumped Kihyun’s dick in his hand. “I want you so bad, Ki. I want to worship you… show you how fucking perfect you are.”

“Mmm... Minhyuk,” the omega groaned, voice breathy, husky. Water surrounding them didn’t match the warmth radiating from behind him, especially the pressure on his lower back. All he could smell was aroused mint.

Kihyun’s head resting in the crook of the beta’s shoulder, Minhyuk kissed his temple. The beta’s hips grinded agonizingly slow, slower than the desperate pace with which he stroked the omega. Groaning into his ear, Minhyuk trailed his other hand up the omega’s body, knuckles grazing over the ridges of his ribs, pinching a pert nipple between his fingers as he licked a stripe up Kihyun’s jugular. Kihyun’s back arched as he whimpered softly, shivering in pleasure as the beta played with his nipples.

The beta whispered, “Your nipples are so cute. Small, pink. Pretty like you. I wanna lick and bite them, see how you react.”

“They’re—mmm, still sensitive…” Kihyun keened. Even though his nipples were still tender, the bliss surged to his dick. “But, I... ah! I w-want you to touch…”

Omega pheromones toying with his brain, Minhyuk was drunk off Kihyun. He squeezed the hard cock in his hand and pinched the other nipple, relishing the arch in the omega’s back and the sexy whimper from his wine-stained lips. “Your dick is so good, hard and throbbing in my hand. I love that I make you this hard. You feel how hard I am? God, I can’t stop thinking about you.” Hand ghosting over the damp skin of the omega’s chest to his stomach where the baby once was, Minhyuk rubbed the skin with the pad of his thumb. “I want to treat you well. Taste every inch of skin. Make love to you, make you mine.”

Kihyun’s hand shot out of the tub to the edge of the ceramic with a thud and a breathy moan. He gripped the surface, teeth clenched and hips rocking. The bathwater swayed, swirling around his knees and pelvis. “Oh, Min...” Minhyuk’s words and the soft splash of water went straight to his cock. He wasn’t sure how much longer he could last.

Sensing how close Kihyun was, Minhyuk nibbled the omega’s earlobe before asking, “Can I make love to you, Ki? I want to give you all the pleasure you deserve.” The beta wanted to feel how wet Kihyun was, wanted to feel the bliss he felt last time they made love, wanted to heal him the most intimate way he could possibly offer.

“Mmm—keep talking like that—ah, that and I’ll—” Kihyun’s lips parted, jaw slack. The pleasure
building inside was about to burst. “Cum! Min, I’m gonna cum.” His breath came out faster, cock twitching as he tried to resist thrusting into Minhyuk’s hand, but fuck he couldn’t help the jerks his pelvis made.

Minhyuk didn’t relent as he moaned into Kihyun’s ear, “You’re so beautiful, Ki. I want to watch you cum... I want to hear more of your sexy sounds.” The omega’s chocolate cherry pheromones affected him more intensely with each passing moment. His cock ached for attention, but tonight wasn’t about him. The beta pinched and flicked Kihyun’s nipples and sunk his teeth into the flesh of his shoulder. “I bet you’re so wet. Fuck, you tasted so good on my tongue that night...”

Kihyun didn’t know what part of Minhyuk’s erotic actions pushed him over the edge. It could have been the bite that resided in his list of kinks, or the abuse on his tender nipples. It could have been the beta’s dirty talk—hell, maybe all of it. The way Kihyun’s cock pulsed and twitched as he came so hard that his body quivered had him seeing stars. The room echoed back his loud moans and his limbs tensed as he rode out the pleasure.

“Fuck yeah,” Minhyuk moaned, so turned on by his best friend’s orgasm. He pumped him a few more times, just to see his body react to the overstimulation on his cock, then pinched the omega’s chin and turned it to plant a sloppy kiss to his lips.

He knew if he kissed him too long he’d want to milk another orgasm from him, so he stopped himself before it got heavy to finally grab his wine glass and drink the contents in eager sips. “I can’t stop thinking about you riding me,” he confessed as he finished the glass.

Kihyun slumped against the beta, panting whilst his mind was floating in a blissful high. He chuckled breathily, head turned and lips moving against Minhyuk’s neck as he spoke. “You’re more perverted than I thought.” His fingers skimmed along the blond’s knee, sneaking to the inside of the thigh where Minhyuk’s tattoo was. An idea sparked in his mind and he grinned.

“I'll ride you, babe. Here and now... but in reverse. Would you like that? Watch my ass take your cock?”

Minhyuk shivered at the thought of Kihyun on top, slim hips atop his own, watching the sinewy muscles of his back flex as he bounced his ass on the beta’s cock. His mouth went dry. “I’d love that,” he groaned as he was suddenly hyperaware of Kihyun’s hand on his thigh.

“I know you would,” Kihyun whispered, nipping lightly at the skin on Minhyuk’s neck. “I can feel how hard you are, how much you want to be inside me.”

The omega knew he was supposed to wait to have sex, as his miscarriage was only three weeks ago, but he wanted to feel a intimate connection; to feel something other than sorrow—he wanted this. He wanted to be that beautiful butterfly once more.

His chest buzzed with anticipation as he leaned forward, placing his palms on the edge of the tub for support as he pulled the drain. Minhyuk watched as the omega jigged his ass as if to tempt the beta. He couldn’t help himself, he had to touch the supple curves. With both hands he grabbed a handful and squeezed, groaning as he kneaded the soft flesh in his palms. Maybe it was his mind playing tricks, but he could’ve swore Kihyun’s scent was more potent in his nose the more he yearned to taste and fuck him.

With the pad of his thumb, he spread apart the omega’s ass and rubbed the slick rim. His cock surged as he bit his bottom lip and toyed with Kihyun’s pretty hole. The omega bit his lip—Minhyuk was so sexy when he was confident and took initiative.
Kihyun lowered his torso, chest dipped and back arched as the beta teased him. “I like that,” he said in a husky voice.

Minhyuk’s gaze flicked from Kihyun’s hole to his own cock hard against his belly. “Yeah?” He asked, feeling more and more confident in himself with each noise the omega made. He dipped the tip of his thumb inside and groaned at the wet heat, unable to stop himself from slowly pushing in one finger, then two, amazed at how Kihyun’s ass seemed to swallow them.

The omega’s hand slipped off the nozzles, accidentally turning them on; hot water poured down the drain with the remains of their precious bath water. “Oh shit…” he groaned, cock hardening.

“You look so hot like this, Ki,” the beta said breathlessly, stunned at the masterpiece before him. As he fucked two fingers inside, his other hand raked up the slight curve of Kihyun’s back.

“Oh fuck, yes…” Kihyun reached behind with both hands, spreading himself further open for the beta, fingers digging into his skin. He couldn’t help but be so vulgar; Hyunwoo made him like that, and the omega secretly liked being that person.

“Shit, Kihyun—” Minhyuk huffed, the obscene view making him eager and impatient. He wanted to take his time, but fuck the omega was making it difficult. Especially when water sprayed from the shower head above them onto Kihyun’s body like a mini waterfall, cascading down the slope of his spine and dripping down the parted divide of his delicious ass.

As he scissored his fingers to make sure his best friend was good and stretched, Minhyuk moaned, “Ki, shit, I can’t wait any more.”

“Guide me, love, I can’t wait either. I need you inside me right fucking now,” Kihyun moaned, lowering himself on top of the beta.

Minhyuk practically grunted his enthusiasm and grabbed ahold of Kihyun’s hip with one hand and his throbbing dick in the other, slowly guiding Kihyun down until his cock poked the omega’s tight rim. Impatient, the beta bucked his hips as he pushed Kihyun down the rest of the way, burning his dick full hilt into the delicious, cherry heat. But Kihyun whimpered as he was penetrated, but it wasn’t from pleasure. Minhyuk entered him roughly, it hurt, and the omega instinctively tightened around the beta.

“Fuck, Min... be gentle with me, please,” he said, dropping his head. He didn’t know it would hurt, and he should have waited to have sex, but the desire to forget his sorrow and loss was tremendous. As he took deep breaths to help relax, he loosened around Minhyuk as the other caressed him patiently, soothingly, in a way the alpha never treated him.

After a few moments, pain diminished to rumblings of pleasure. With his feet beside Minhyuk’s hips, knees parted just right, Kihyun raised himself up. He felt the beta’s cock slide out and stopped until the head was almost out, then sank back down slowly. He moaned softly, repeating the action in an unhurried rhythm. “Mmm...”

Moaning, Minhyuk relaxed into the tub as Kihyun rode him at a slow and tantalizing pace. He couldn’t tear his eyes away from the view before him—the delicious curve of the omega’s spine down to the cute dimples of his low back to the slap of his ass on the beta’s wet lap. The potent cherry of the omega’s slick made Minhyuk’s head spin.

“Ki, you’re so gorgeous... so perfect... you feel so fucking good.”
Kihyun chuckled breathily. “You mean my ass is gorgeous?” he teased, emphasizing his question by sitting on Minhyuk, cock buried deep. The beta laughed at Kihyun’s spunkiness, only to be quickly shushed when the omega worked his hips in a delicious pattern.

“All of you,” the beta groaned, hands finding their way to Kihyun’s hips and gripping tight, yet yielding to the breathtaking movements of his hips.

Warm water spraying from the shower dampened Minhyuk’s blond hair, turning it light brown and sticking to his forehead. Droplets speckled his bare chest and rolled down the dips of his abs into the v of his hips as he slightly rocked his hips up into Kihyun. But the omega did most of the work, and fuck he was good at it. Lolling his head back against the tub, Minhyuk watched Kihyun with half-lidded eyes, his hips lazily rutting as he was lost in the omega’s mesmerizing movements. His breath hitched as pleasure bubbled within.

“Ki, I’m so close...” the beta moaned, wanting so bad to make his best friend cum a second time. “You?”

“Yeah,” Kihyun whimpered, lifting up where he gripped Minhyuk’s knees to balance and moaned at how fucking deep Minhyuk was.

Shower water spilled over his head and neck, dripping down his back and chest. Newly-dyed hair clung to his forehead, tainting the water a soft brown. Riding that high to another orgasm, he bounced up and down, relishing the way Minhyuk responded so well to his movements. It made him feel so powerful, so sexy, to command his best friend with his hips; to make someone else rely so much on what he did to him.

Was this the rush Hyunwoo felt?

Shit, Minhyuk couldn’t take it anymore. It was all so much, so good. Quickly, he sat up best he could and wrapped his arms around Kihyun, one clinging low at the omega’s hip and the other draped across his water-speckled collarbone to stabilize them both.

“You’re so amazing. So sexy and—shit, so good at this... You make me, ah... so happy...” he moaned against the damp skin of Kihyun’s neck; he was desperate and wracked with pleasure, heart on his sleeve. “I love yo—” he blurted in a loud groan as all his muscles clenched and unclenched with his powerful, sudden release.

“Min…” Kihyun’s movements slowed before he could properly process the blond’s words, and he shuddered at the sensation of his best friend’s release inside him. He tensed, head dropping back as his orgasm ripped through him. Oxytocin already kicking in, Minhyuk peppered kisses along Kihyun’s cheekbone as the omega moaned through his final wave of pleasure.

“You’re the best,” the beta said boyishly. He squeezed his best friend tight in his embrace one more time before reeling back and letting the shower wash the remnants of sex from their bodies.

Hunching forward, Kihyun ran a hand through his wet hair. “Why? Cause I can ride dick?”

“N-no...” Minhyuk stuttered. “Because you’re my best friend and I love you...” His toffee brown eyes followed Kihyun’s movements as the omega rose up. After quickly washing cum off himself, the beta affectionately rubbed the side of Kihyun’s leg. “That’s why you’re the best...”

A soft sigh escaped Kihyun’s lips as he swivelled around in the tub. He took each of Minhyuk’s hands into his and intertwined their fingers. Minhyuk knew something was wrong based on body
language alone. Kihyun had been emotionally isolating himself from his best friend. Even his calming omega scent smelled off. And when he looked into the beta’s soul with those deep, sad eyes, he knew it was all over before it ever started.

“I love you,” Kihyun started nervously, throat tight as he continued, “but not in the way you love me... I care about you, Min, a lot, but I’m not ready for love, not yet...” He couldn’t bear to break Minhyuk’s heart, not after such a meaningful and appreciated night, but he had to be clear with his intent and the status of their relationship. This had gone on too long, and the omega couldn’t help but feel responsible for being so irresponsible.

Minhyuk never stood a chance with the omega to begin with.

“I...” Even though Minhyuk wasn’t surprised, he was heartbroken. Tears welled in his eyes. Of all the times to reject him, was now the best time? After they just made love? After the beta peppered Kihyun in praise and affection? Dread overcame him and his heart raced. He wasn’t enough for Kihyun. He’d never be enough.

He wanted to shout his anguish, blame Kihyun for leading him on and making him feel like he actually stood a chance. But despite everything, the beta knew Kihyun was warring with poisonous emotions and thoughts, and he didn’t have the heart to feel anything except sorry for himself. What a fucking sucker he was.

Kihyun felt so, so guilty. A panicked tightness formed in his chest as his eyebrows knitted. “Oh god. Oh my god I—” His fingers curled tighter around the beta’s hand. “I just ruined everything, our friendship... I fucked up. Min... Minhyuk, love, I am sorry. I am so sorry...” He searched the blond’s attractive face, for even in heartbreak the beta was stunning. “Min, say something... please...”

Minhyuk shrugged defeatedly. “Don’t be sorry... You can’t make yourself love me, and I wouldn’t want that for either of us anyway.” He couldn’t look Kihyun in the eyes, so he looked down, tears dripping off his chin into the tub. “It’s just... bad timing...” he confessed, feeling used.

Worst of all, he couldn’t help but ask the question nagging at his soul. “So you do love him...”

Kihyun opened his mouth only to feel words catch in his throat. He, too, dropped his head as if it weighed as heavily as it felt. Heartbreak was a heavy blanket in the air. He felt his own eyes tear up, but he couldn’t lie anymore, to himself or Minhyuk. “He... He was the father of my baby after all...”

Fate, the cruel mistress, had other plans for them; Kihyun didn’t know if telling Minhyuk that would ease his broken heart. Where Minhyuk had what he needed, Hyunwoo had what he wanted.

“Min, if things had been any different—”

“No!” Minhyuk shook his head dismissively at the start of Kihyun’s lament. He stood and stepped out of the bathtub, quickly grabbing a towel and wrapping it around himself so as to not feel so naked and exposed in front of the omega. He didn’t want to be seen like this, intimate and vulnerable, in front of someone who expressly didn’t want him that way.

“I’m going to bed,” he said, leaving.

And just like that, Kihyun had harmed someone so dear to him, someone who only wanted the best for him.
Kihyun stood up and watched his best friend walk out. Candlelight flickered around him. He wanted to call out, but he knew it was pointless. “Min, I’m sorry…” he whispered.
With every fiber of his being, Minhyuk didn’t want to get out of bed. He didn’t want to face the harsh reality that his best friend didn’t love him back.

His best friend had lead him on for months, instilled within him false hope, and stabbed him in the heart with rejection moments after making love. Worse yet, he wasn’t even sure that Kihyun was his best friend anymore; to him, it seemed the omega had become just as wretched and cruel as the abusive, deceitful, alpha bastard that took, abused, and wrecked his innocence.

Minhyuk grumbled as he forced himself to sit up in bed. It was nearly ten o’clock and his stomach was growling for food. With a heavy sigh, he got out of bed and slipped into a pair of basketball shorts. Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, his nose caught a whiff of a bittersweet aroma—coffee, his favorite beverage. He knew Kihyun had gotten up before him, but he wasn’t sure when that was; apparently the omega had taken to an early start.

The beta slumped his shoulders as he realized he couldn’t avoid Kihyun forever. What a shame that his best friend was the very person he now wanted to avoid.

Turning the corner, Minhyuk saw Kihyun in the kitchen. He swallowed his pride and walked in, wanting to just grab some coffee and go, but as he neared the kitchenette he spotted luggage. As the beta approached, Kihyun stood from the barstool, already fully dressed for the day in dark jeans and a simple black t-shirt. He stared at the blond, demeanour timid as he twirled his ring around his finger nervously. He wasn’t sure what to say, or if anything would really help the situation.

Minhyuk’s gaze flickered from the coffee pot to Kihyun to the luggage back to Kihyun. “Are you leaving?” he asked, simultaneously disappointed and relieved.

Kihyun slumped his shoulders and sighed. After Minhyuk had left him in the tub last night, the omega sat in the water until it turned cold. Never had he felt so cruel. His wrongdoing gave his anxiety a reason to stick around, and even long after Minhyuk went to bed, Kihyun remained in the bathroom. Once he finally decided to remove himself from the water, fingers pruned and skin prickled with goosebumps, he cleaned up the leftovers of their short, romantic night with a heavy heart. Tears fell from his eyes as he blew out the candles.

Just when he thought the woe of losing his baby subsided, darkness returned; he was afraid he’d lose his best friend. He understood, Minhyuk had every reason to hate him. Kihyun had found comfort in the beta, admitting to even himself that he took advantage of his best friend—Minhyuk was the only one who could care for Kihyun the way he needed it.

But all good things eventually came to an end and this was no different. He couldn’t keep lying to himself and his best friend like this. He owed a lot of people the truth.

After cleaning, Kihyun took to the couch instead of Minhyuk’s bed. He hardly slept, and once he did the sun peeking in through the curtains stirred him awake in early morning. His guilty conscience stayed with him as he tended to his morning routine. It wasn’t until he stared at himself in the smudged bathroom mirror that he decided to confront his nagging thoughts and pack up his belongings.

Quietly, he brewed coffee in the kitchen and waited patiently, anxiously, for Minhyuk to wake up. And when he did, and he walked into the kitchen with wandering eyes, and he asked Kihyun if he
was leaving, the omega swallowed thickly and looked away from his best friend. “I figured you didn’t want me here, and you’d be too nice to tell me. I’ve overstayed my welcome too, so...”

Minhyuk wasn’t sure how to respond. He had a right to feel this way. So, he momentarily avoided the topic as he crossed in front of the omega to the coffee pot on the counter. Grabbing a mug from the cupboard, he poured himself a cup. The liquid was still hot. He didn’t bother with cream and just dumped a teaspoon of sugar in before whirling a spoon in the mug to mix.

After, he turned around to face Kihyun, back against the edge of the counter. He took a sip and sighed. “Kihyun, you’ve known me long enough to know that’s not true. I told you to stay here as long as you need...” He took another sip of coffee, then stared directly into Kihyun’s deep brown eyes. “And it seems you don’t need me anymore.”

“That’s not true. Min, I always need you. I need you in my life. Love, you’re my best friend. You don’t think I feel like the lowest piece of scum for hurting you? I couldn’t sleep, and when I could it was because I cried myself to sleep. When I needed to feel something, I came to you without thinking about how it made you feel. I was so caught up in my world that it didn’t occur to me how it was affecting yours. I never intended to lead you on like I did. I never wanted to make you feel used,” Kihyun explained as he pressed his hand to his chest.

Minhyuk gripped the coffee mug tight as he averted his gaze from Kihyun. Tension rose in his body and formed pressure behind his eyes, and when he closed his eyes tears streamed down his cheeks. He cried quietly as the omega spoke, each sentence another stab. He wanted to hate Kihyun so bad, but he couldn’t—the omega wasn’t wrong for how he felt, or how he didn’t feel, and though his treatment of Minhyuk was unfair, it wasn’t intentional. They were both human and they made mistakes; best friends were no exception to that fault.

The beta’s breath was shaky as he exhaled and tried to collect himself. He had a long way to go to until the heartbreak diminished, but he could at least act mature about his rejection. After all, Kihyun was being mature about the situation by confronting it.

Kihyun forced down his nerves. “I care about you, Minhyuk. I love you, and in another life we would be together, but I... there’s something I have to do...” he paused, eyes trained on Minhyuk’s handsome face. “For her.”

At the mention of Kihyun’s mother, Minhyuk finally met Kihyun’s eyes again. It made sense. Kihyun needed Minhyuk to heal from Hyunwoo, and though he wasn’t the one, he was pivotal in resetting Kihyun’s motivation to help his sick mother. Everyone had a different purpose in others’ lives, and the beta understood his in this moment—and he was perfectly okay with supporting his best friend in this way.

“I... Looking at you hurts me right now, but I am so happy you are in my life, and that you’re okay... and I’m not going to stop you from what you feel you need to do.”

Kihyun’s muscles relaxed as tension dispersed. He had been so worried that Minhyuk would be furious to a point where he’d never want to see Kihyun again. But this was Minhyuk, not Hyunwoo. With splintered emotions, the omega felt a tear roll down his cheek, and he wiped it away before it could reach his chin. “I was so afraid,” he admitted with a hoarse tone. “I’ve almost lost my mom, I lost my baby... I couldn’t bear to lose you, too... Thank you, Minhyuk. You were here for me when I needed it. Even though things turned out this way, you helped me in more ways than you know. One day I hope to repay you for everything I put you through. If you’d let me?”

Minhyuk nodded quietly, almost resolutely with how stoic he looked, and tucked away the hurt to be unpacked at a later time, privately. He wasn’t sure what Kihyun was going on about, about
relying him somehow, but he absentmindedly agreed to it with a hum of acknowledgement.

Kihyun sighed out loud to calm his wavering, composing himself before he made a fool of himself. “Really, Minhyuk. Thank you for everything you’ve done. You’re an amazing person and I wish things had been different, but I have to do something…”

“I understand…” The beta looked at Kihyun’s designer luggage and felt another stab in the chest.

If the omega was leaving, was he waiting for someone? Was the other beta who smelled of ocean waves going to knock on his door any minute to whisk Kihyun away? Minhyuk clenched his fist; he wasn’t sure if he’d be able to see any of those jo-pok assholes without wanting to punch them in the face.

Swallowing thickly, Minhyuk set the coffee mug on the counter. Birds chirped outside as morning befell the world, sunny and upbeat; unfitting of the mood in his tiny kitchen. Kihyun knew Minhyuk, by no means, wanted anything from him in this moment, yet he didn’t want to leave without at least a hug.

He opened his arms and circled them around Minhyuk’s waist, inhaling soft mint and exhaling into Minhyuk’s shoulder. The beta just stood there quietly as Kihyun hugged him, arms hesitant to wrap around his best friend. But the omega’s steady breathing pattern against his chest reminded him that he couldn’t push away someone who he cared about and loved, especially when it clearly affected him just as badly. Eventually, Minhyuk hugged Kihyun back, tighter and tighter when he remembered the omega was leaving.

Was Kihyun going to stay with his mother at the hospital? Would he return to the suburban home his uncle left for him in the will? How long would he be gone before Minhyuk saw him again? If he returned to that crazy alpha gangster, would he ever see his best friend again?

“I’m sorry…” the omega whispered. Feeling the pressure of Minhyuk hug him back, Kihyun too hugged him tighter. He meant his words, all of them. In another life they could have been happy together. God, he had been so blind and selfish. He really hated himself for hurting Minhyuk. “I’m so sorry,” he said again, triggering more tears.

Minhyuk sighed again. "That's enough," he said more suddenly, more firmly than intended. He paused and sighed again. "I just... stop being sorry. How am I supposed to get over you if you keep being so empathetic."

It was supposed to be a joke, albeit self-deprecating; he was just trying to lighten the mood and save the pity party for after Kihyun left. But Minhyuk’s words tugged on Kihyun’s heartstrings. “Min—”

Loud honking boomed from outside. Kihyun reluctantly pulled away from Minhyuk. “That’s my cab,” he said with a hint of sadness. He cupped the beta’s cheek and gave the other side a small kiss; a farewell for the meantime. “I’ll come visit when I can. I promise.”

Kihyun was really leaving. This was real. With a heavy heart, Minhyuk looked at the pile of luggage and asked, “I can help take these out?”

Kihyun stepped back, taking a quick look at the multitude of bags and smiled. “I would like that.”

Together they carried the bags out to the taxi, filling the trunk to the brim and piling the surplus into the back seat with Kihyun. Hand planted on the roof of the taxi, Minhyuk leaned over the open back passenger door to say his final goodbye to his best friend. “Guess I’ll see you around?”
Minhyuk offered a lopsided, half-smile. “Say hi to her for me...”

“Of course I will,” Kihyun replied, a strange change in his tone.

Sterile tools and clean linens stained bleached, hospital hallways. Kihyun walked through the habitual corridors to his mother’s room, remembering the path like it was second nature. His feet felt heavy as he walked. He was so scared He hadn’t seen his mother in months. He wasn’t the same Kihyun he was the last time they saw each other. Her baby boy had grown up in ways a parent should never know.

His hand trembled at the door knob, but the child in him craved his mother. With his luggage in tow and a heavily bag on each shoulder, he entered the familiar room and quietly set his things down when he saw his mother sleeping on the bed. She was much smaller, paler, almost lifeless. The heart monitor beeped steadily in the quiet of the small room. It’s sweet lullaby almost brought him to tears.

Kihyun approached the bed and softly grasped his mother’s frail hand. Her sickly complexion worried him, and he felt frustrated with himself. He was failing as a caretaker and as a son. How could he let her get like this? How could he do this to her? He dropped to his knees at bedside and pressed his forehead to her hand, crying softly against her delicate palm. He sobbed for several minutes, having to constantly remind himself she was still alive not because her hand had any life in it but because the heart monitor was still beeping.

“Don’t worry, mom. There were distractions... I got lost, but I won’t fail you, I promise,” he cried, breathing in her peaceful scent nearly muted by the sterility of hospital sheets.

He spent hours with her, telling her everything. Not once did she awake, not even a slight stir, but he spared no details. He wasn’t sure if confessing everything was for her or for him, but airing it all out in full—not the abridged version he told Minhyuk—felt cathartic and necessary. It forced out a lot of suppressed feelings that were hard to even utter, but it was the closure he needed to move on.

Afterwards, he spotted her cellphone on the bedside table and pondered making a call he wasn’t sure he’d regret. It took twenty minutes to convince himself he had to make that call. So he did. He withdrew a piece of paper from his pocket and dialled the number scribbled on it.

Then he waited, scared as hell.

“I see you found my note.” It was Hyungwon’s voice on the other line. “Surprised you didn’t call me sooner. I’m hurt, you know?” he teased, feigning betrayal. “How much was the cab fare? You could’ve just called me to pick you up, princess.”

Hearing Hyungwon’s lighthearted words coaxed a smile onto Kihyun’s lips. He thought of a hundred comebacks that could match Hyungwon’s sarcastic charade, yet the beta’s words gave a chill down his spine. “Hm, still stalking me, huh? Can’t keep your eyes off me very long, can you?”

“You caught me,” Hyungwon replied with a chuckle. “Tell me, though. What are you doing at a hospital?” The only explanation he could think up was perhaps Kihyun was at a follow-up appointment with the doctor, but why did he bring all his luggage?

Keeping his personal life secret, Kihyun stuck with anonymity. “Just some things I had to take care of. Maybe you’ll know one day, maybe you won’t.” He slithered his hand into his pocket and
cleared his throat. “I need a favour. Meet me outside by the front doors?”

A laugh could be heard through the phone. “You’re in luck, princess, because that’s where I am right now. There’s a nurse who is real tired of scolding me for smoking cigarettes by the entrance.”

Kihyun clicked his tongue into the speaker. “Troublemaker. I’ll be there in a few minutes.” He hung up and put it back on the bedside table. He gazed at his mom once more and leaned over to press a gentle kiss to her cheek. “I love you. I promise I won’t fail.”

Quietly, he gathered his bags and carriers, closed her door and began his walk to the entrance of the hospital. Surprisingly, the environment didn’t trigger bad memories of the miscarriage, which he was thankful for because he wasn’t sure how much more his poor heart could take after Minhyuk and his mother.

Upon walking out, Kihyun turned his head and saw Hyungwon harassing a middle-aged nurse. Amused, he rolled his carriers over to the beta and stopped in front of the tall man with a lopsided grin. “See? Troublemaker.”

Hyungwon cocked his head at Kihyun as he tossed a half-spent cigarette to the ground. The nosey nurse’s face was red with anger as she scolded the beta for the ten millionth time. Hyungwon ignored her, which provoked her to complain to the large security officers now glaring at him. “Best we get outta here, huh?” he said as a greeting, though he was genuinely happy to see the omega.

He walked over and grabbed a bag and a carrier from Kihyun. “I’d ask what’s going on here, but I’m down for a surprise.”

Kihyun nodded, adjusting his other bag on his shoulder. For some odd reason, he was really glad to see Hyungwon. “Hyungwon, about the favor...” He looked at the beta with a serious expression. “Take me to the penthouse.”

Hyungwon said he was down for surprises, but he never expected to be parked in front of Boss’s penthouse with Kihyun. Not after everything that happened. Not after the way the omega was treated.

Even lesser alpha guards at the wrought iron gate entrance were bewildered by the omega’s return, and took many precautions when scanning him for wires, body cams, or other spy equipment. The modus operandi was to handle Kihyun with skepticism and caution because, given what he knew from his unique perspective into jo-pok culture and way of life, they figured law enforcement must’ve recruited the omega for information; all they needed was credible, incriminating intel that would trigger a warrant to search and destroy the Gwangju jo-pok branch and gangster Son Hyunwoo. And even though tensions relaxed in the social sphere since Kihyun’s denial of abduction, there was too much to lose to handle the omega so flippantly.

With gripes, Kihyun followed the guards’ protocol, knowing full well why he was under suspicion—they wouldn’t let just anyone wander inside the penthouse grounds, not without good reason for being there. No doubt they already forewarned Hyunwoo.

Hyungwon parked directly in front of the long steps leading to the front door. Sunlight illuminated the stained glass design of the front door, casting multicolor shapes onto the courtyard pavement. The landscape had changed since Kihyun was last there, with new perennial flowers planted in place of older, less vibrant ones.
Sighing, the beta glanced at Kihyun. “You know he knows you’re here. They wouldn’t have let you in otherwise.” He let his gaze linger on the pretty omega. His cherry smell was quite endearing. Hyungwon almost smiled. “You sure you want to go back?”

Reluctant and nervous to advance inside, Kihyun stared at the steps with a blank expression. Would Hyunwoo even want him back? What if the alpha moved on and lost complete interest in his once-alluring cherry blossom queen? Maybe Hyunwoo was still lost in what they found before their separation… he hoped Hyunwoo wasn’t too far-gone, as Hyungwon made it seem.

“From what you told me, he needs me. If I didn’t want to come back, I wouldn’t be here.” Kihyun found comfort in the soft ocean waves of Hyungwon’s scent, lazing in the calm before the storm. He tightened his fist around the strap of the bag resting on his lap that carried makeup and beauty products he used during the drive over. He only hoped he was ready for whatever was to come. He lashed Hyungwon a wary smile. “Wish me luck?”

Hyungwon raised a brow. “Good luck,” he said with an ambiguous, knowing tone.

Boss had flown off the rails the past few weeks and created collateral damage in his reckless, downward spiral. Though the alpha pinned it all on Boss Bang’s risky assignment, Hyungwon knew better—Boss wasn’t the type to be impetuous without significant, pressing cause. With Kihyun around, the alpha did better, was better. That was why the beta planted the seed of thought in the omega, why he watered and nourished the idea. Balance needed to be restored.

Kihyun didn’t know how his return would affect Hyunwoo, how the alpha would react. Whether it be joyous or unwelcomed, the omega left his bags in the car as he exited and closed the door behind him. He strolled up the stairs, shoes clicking against stone as he ascended. The decorative doors opened for him to the familiar faces of the kind maids who made his stay pleasant the few months he called this place home. It had almost been a month since he had been inside these daunting walls.

He offered the maids a simple smile. “Is my king around?” he asked, aware they had been given word a surprise guest had arrived.

A redheaded maid opened her mouth to speak, but the omega caught a glimpse of a familiar face—none other than Elise walked into the main room with a stack of freshly-folded laundry in her arms. The instant she spotted Kihyun, she dropped the stack and rushed over. Like a mother, she cupped the omega’s cheeks and smiled wide at him. “It’s so good to see you, my sweet boy. How have you been?” she asked with utmost sincerity.

The warmth spreading on his cheeks, the aroma of fresh, clean laundry, it all almost brought Kihyun to tears. He placed his hands atop hers and smiled wider. Elise was always his breath of fresh air. “I’ve been better. Coping, mostly.” He recalled the last time he was with Elise was in the hospital room, crying into her arms in a sorrowful scene of loss. “How are you?”

Elise’s smile wavered for a millisecond. “I’m well.” Even after everything, Kihyun was still asking others how they were and brushing off his own trauma. She sighed and paused, her eyes giving away the apprehension and worry her body felt without her having to vocalize. After a moment of scanning Kihyun’s lovely face, she asked, “Sweetheart, what are you doing back?”

“I’m here to see Hyunwoo. Would you be so kind as to take me to him, please?” The omega looked at the woman with pleading eyes. “Unless you have a prior commitment?”

Elise hesitated for a moment, but she hid it well. “I’m terribly sorry, sweet boy, but I have more cleaning to do… Mr. Son is in his office. It’s right down the hall, as I’m sure you remember.” She
pressed her lips together, adding, “I’ll have the girls fetch your bags from the car.”

Kihyun set his hand on Elise’s shoulder, “Thank you, Elise. Hyungwon is with the car.” He peered down the long, marble hall. He wasn’t sure what he was getting himself into; was this really the wisest choice? Yes, it had to be. He was confronting the truth. “Let’s see how wild the dragon has become…”

With determined steps and the taps of his shoes echoing in the halls once more, Kihyun walked with a lifted chin. He ignored the stares of the puzzled servants, afraid he would lose his train of thought if he saw their shocked expressions. The nearer he came to the office, the more potent Hyunwoo’s signature cherry blossom cigarette smoke permeated this wing of the penthouse. He knew the alpha smoked that flavor because it reminded him of Kihyun. Realizing he still did that boosted Kihyun’s confidence that the alpha still wanted him, that this wasn’t a lost cause.

Broken things could be fixed.

In the large, leather chair at the large, wooden desk of his dimly-lit office, Hyunwoo stared at the ceiling fan. It wobbled and creaked, a subtle yet pestering noise in the otherwise quiet space. A spent cigarette smoldered in the ashtray on his desk, it’s cherry-nicotine smoke a haunting tease for the alpha’s sensitive nose. Fingers drummed on the arms of the leather chair and he breathed deeply as the cocaine in his system melted him into the chair.

He had re-upped only minutes before receiving a call from the gate announcing Kihyun’s return. Now he sat with regret for getting high when his omega was finally coming back to him. His heart was speeding out of his ribcage as he anticipated the omega’s knock. The alpha knew he was near based on the pungency of his distinct scent.

Damn, how he missed that smell lingering in these marble halls.

Once Kihyun approached Hyunwoo’s office, he slowed his stride, eyes fixed on the familiar doors. From within the office, the alpha stared at the door from the inside, feeling the same heavy weight as the omega did staring at the wood from the outside. Then, Kihyun didn’t hesitate to bang his knuckles against the door, hard enough that they echoed down the hallway.

He was here, and he was here for Hyunwoo.

Hyunwoo swallowed hard and rose up from the chair. He was higher than he realized once he actually stood up, but he put on a sober face. The closer he came to the door, the more his alpha biology sang being reunited with familiar omega pheromones. Grabbing the knob, he opened the door and leaned against the door frame, figure large and looming over the pretty omega. All the apprehension Hyunwoo felt prior vanished in the depths of Kihyun’s eyes. He was breathless.

Swallowing hard, he reached out and gently brushed a loose strand of brown hair from the omega’s eyes. A flash of a grin appeared on his lips as he gazed at Kihyun with admiration.

After several moments, he finally spoke. “You came back.”

The affectionate gesture was not like the alpha at all, but Kihyun didn’t move away. He wasn’t the scared and helpless omega as he was when they first met, and they both knew that. He cupped a hand over Hyunwoo’s cheek, smiling sweetly. “I’ve come home.”
Chapter 25

Kihyun’s cherry scent potent in the air, Hyunwoo’s biology reciprocated with its own spiced citrus. Their bodies reconnected instinctually, pheromones seeping into one another in a way reminiscent of bonded mates. The headrush was profound, even stronger than a cocaine high, and it gravitated them closer and closer to one another like magnets.

Pupils blown wide from the cocaine in his system, chest rising and falling from shortness of breath, seeing Kihyun intensified Hyunwoo’s drug-induced euphoria. It spellbound him in something akin to a dizzying mating ritual.

Staring down at the omega in the doorway of his office, Hyunwoo was shirtless beneath an unbuttoned, jet black blazer, bronze skin sultry in the low light. A simple pair of dark jeans hugged his hips low enough to tease a glimpse of the white elastic of his Versace boxers. In Kihyun’s absence, he lifted weights to burn off excess energy when he couldn’t sleep; he was more muscular than the last time Kihyun saw him, and had gotten another tattoo that spread from his cherry blossom shoulder piece across his pec to the center of his chest—a roaring bear surrounded by fluttering cherry blossom petals.

“Brown looks good on you...” the alpha remarked, breathless when the comment curled Kihyun’s lips into a grin, his beauty mark a mere inch from the corners of his mouth.

“Figured it was time for a change. My roots were starting to show, and I didn’t feel like bleaching again,” Kihyun informed as his fingers glided down Hyunwoo’s sharp jawline and passed the dip between his collarbones; a familiar, sensual action that triggered a ripple of déjà vu in his memory.

Gradually, the omega caressed the taut, freshly-inked muscle of the alpha’s pec, down the much more prominent and delicious ridges of his abs, knuckles brushing over the trail of hair disappearing behind the alpha’s boxers. Eyes locked on Kihyun, Hyunwoo stared at the omega with a myriad of emotions on his face. It felt like anywhere Kihyun’s fingers touched, his skin prickled with electricity; he liked the way the omega touched him and appreciated his well-built body.

Boldly, Kihyun shoved two fingers inside Hyunwoo’s waistband and pulled the alpha close. The stench of mint repulsed Hyunwoo, waking storms of jealousy within, but he wasn’t surprised. He had released the omega from his debt a month ago; he knew where the omega had been all that time, who he was with and what he likely had done. The alpha’s exhale came out as a low growl, but he remained ambivalent as Kihyun spoke before he could protest.

“Listen, Hyunwoo... With me being back, things need to change. I’m not your prisoner paying off a debt anymore. I’m free. I am to be treated fairly, as your queen. That means I accompany you wherever you go—collections, meetings, anything and everything.” Kihyun spoke with confidence, head held high with pride and maturity. It triggered his sweet cherry scent to permeate the area, emitting from the brunet like the control and confidence he exuded. “You will respect me. I am allowed to say yes and no. I am your equal in this relationship.” Hyunwoo had to understand that Kihyun wasn’t some pushover he could use and abuse. Not anymore. “Oh, and I’ll be needing a cell phone,” he added. “How else am I to send you dick pics?”

Cocking his head, the alpha studied Kihyun. He was quiet, observant, expression just as mysterious as before. Sweet cherry pheromones snuffed the flames of jealousy within, instead stoking the fires of passion. “As long as you’re here with me, you will have anything you want, my queen,” Hyunwoo finally replied, grasping Kihyun by the wrist and pressing a mild yet sultry kiss to the
back of his hand. “Please don’t leave me again,” he whispered against the skin, boyish desperation breaking through cracks in his steeled, alpha demeanor.

Hyunwoo’s words cut deep as Kihyun felt the warm touch of those chapped lips on the skin of his knuckles, a sweet and uncharacteristic gesture on Hyunwoo’s part. The alpha never said please, which gave away his desperation to keep Kihyun by his side. If the omega had been away longer, a week even, how much more self-destruction would the alpha have fallen to?

*How much more darkness would they both have succumbed to?*

“Anything?” Kihyun repeated provocatively, pulling his hand from the jo-pok boss’s grasp. “I want you, Hyunwoo. *I love you.*” The brunette confessed, eyes swimming with the emotions inside him.

The alpha’s cocaine-laced heartbeat sped impossibly faster at the confession. After confessing his truth at the hospital, Hyunwoo left before he could get a reply. He wasn’t sure he wanted one. He knew the type of man he was, the type of monster he was, and he knew beautiful things did not love monsters. Having spent the last month abusing himself with cocaine in an effort to numb the painful throbbing of his heart, Hyunwoo repeated those three words over and over in his head, as if repeating them would affirm their authenticity.

Kihyun gripped the collar of Hyunwoo’s blazer and pulled the taller man down to his level, whispering seductively, “Now kiss me, my king.”

The alpha groaned at Kihyun’s signature scent enshrouding him. Then those words. *Shit.* No hesitation, Hyunwoo cupped Kihyun by the jaw with a large, calloused hand and kissed him hard, passionately, like they had eternities make up for in Kihyun’s absence.

Kihyun’s hands loosened around Hyunwoo’s blazer the moment their lips touched, unbothered if either of them were in their right minds. He melted, sighing through his nose, arms lax around the taller male’s neck. It felt *good* to be back. Being near Hyunwoo dissolved his stress and anxiety, replacing it with pungent alpha pheromones that heightened his own senses.

A febrile desire provoked Kihyun to guide them to the nearest wall. He pushed himself against Hyunwoo’s larger body and trapped the alpha between himself and a hard place. Adventurous, his tongue probed the alpha’s hot mouth, fingers lost in Hyunwoo’s dark hair. He had a new sense of fearlessness to explore, and the alpha was a happy and eager recipient. Actually, Hyunwoo liked the omega who returned to him reinvigorated with life, with passion, with control. The helpless boy he first met was no longer; Kihyun had really come into his own.

And it was fucking *hot.*

The alpha groaned as their tongues danced in their feverish kiss, arms wrapped around the omega and gripping possessively, needily. Fingertips digging into soft flesh, he fought back the urge to lift Kihyun up and toss him onto the office table, pull his hair and fuck him from behind, tell him how much he missed him. But he didn’t; he wanted to see how far Kihyun was going to take his spark of dominance.

The pressure of Hyunwoo’s fingers against his body, fingertips compressed into the skin above his black jeans, smooth flesh hidden underneath a black t-shirt. Hearing the alpha groan enticed Kihyun to join; a small whine muffled by tongues. His arm lifted off Hyunwoo’s shoulder, palm rubbing over the bulge in the alpha’s pants. Eyes fluttering shut at the sheer size in his grasp, Kihyun pulled away from the alpha to whimper. His jeans felt uncomfortable.
“Have you been with others?” the omega asked, continuously palming his king’s crotch and fingers gently pulling on Hyunwoo’s hair. “Who else made your cock wet?”

Hyunwoo knew at any time he could shove Kihyun away with ease, grab him by the throat and seize control, but he was loving the jealousy that illuminated the omega’s stare. He smirked, eyes heavy-lidded. “Would it kill you to know if I did?” he teased as he grabbed the hem of Kihyun’s shirt. “Would it matter if I said no?” He slowly pulled the shirt up and over the omega’s head. “Would you think I was telling the truth if I said I didn’t want to fuck anyone else?” He growled, throwing the shirt across the room as he seized Kihyun with one arm and pulled him close. He palmed the omega’s ass roughly and stared down at him with carnal desire. “No one gets as wet for me as you, pet.”

Envy was a sin Kihyun never particularly indulged in, but if someone had touched what was his, he wanted to know. “It would matter,” he stated firmly. “I want to know how many whores had you balls deep in their skanky bodies.” He almost growled, using his hips to pin the alpha against the wall. With the ghostly kiss of air against his heated skin accompanied by Hyunwoo’s possessive touch, Kihyun was acutely aware of just how tight his pants were. Talking back to the alpha turned him on more than he realized, too.

The omega bit his lip as he caressed the alpha’s chest, hands roaming up before grasping the collar of Hyunwoo’s blazer once more. “How many people have you fucked that weren’t me? I bet they couldn’t make you cum as hard as I can. I bet their pussies weren’t dripping for you the way mine is.” He yanked the blazer down the alpha’s shoulders and drank in the detail of the new roaring bear surrounded by cherry blossoms that was forever inked on Hyunwoo’s chest.

Hyunwoo growled at the omega, eyes alight and pointy fangs bared. His fingers gripped Kihyun’s lithe form tighter, more possessively, and when he couldn’t endure the omega’s dirty mouth any longer without stealing control, the alpha asked, “Feeling mouthy?”

Suddenly, he lifted Kihyun up, guiding his legs to wrap around the alpha’s broad waist, then carried the omega across the dark office to the wooden desk. Excitement rushed through Kihyun’s veins; he missed being manhandled by his king, missed feeling those rough hands all over him. Hyunwoo set Kihyun down roughly but carefully, muscular body still wedged between his slender legs as he leaned over the omega’s shoulders and stared into his dark-lined eyes. “You get all pretty just for me, pet?”

“That’s queen to you, my king. And yes... I put makeup on purposely for you to make it run down my face. That’s why I didn’t style my hair, and why I wore a sexy little piece under my jeans... Just for you, Hyunwoo, so you can ruin it all.” Kihyun rolled his hips up, tempting the alpha further into his web of seduction.

Lips left wet marks along Kihyun’s neck and collarbone as the alpha kissed him. His fingers worked at the omega’s pants button and zipper, tugging roughly at the denim material to pull them off Kihyun’s slender legs. Once off, Hyunwoo threw them behind him, knocking over the heavy-bottom snifters on his personal mini bar in the corner of his office, glass shattering on the floor loudly from his recklessness. He nipped at the pale skin of Kihyun’s torso and the pink nubs of his nipples, nose motivated by the syrupy sweetness of the omega’s slick. The slightest touch on his sensitive nipples made Kihyun’s back arch into the other man, fingers scratching at the alpha’s nape.

All the teasing was maddening; Kihyun wanted to be fucked right now. To entice his king, Kihyun whined and spread his legs further apart, body ignited by the fires of lust. His slick soaked his teal thong—the surprise he promised his king.
Hard dick pressed against the back of Kihyun’s bare thigh, Hyunwoo rutted against it as his mouth continued leaving hickies and bites in the omega’s flesh. God, how he missed Kihyun’s scent, his body, his softness and his poise, his sexy noises, his flustered face. But ever since stripping the omega of his clothing, Hyunwoo had tunnel vision—that was until he caught sight of the racy teal thong. “Fuck,” he muttered under his breath, practically salivating on sight. He couldn’t help himself; he wanted a taste.

Kissing over the satin material, the alpha’s senses were overwhelmed by cherry bliss. He lapped at the bulge, his hot tongue leaving wet streaks on the material. A hand crept up the inside of Kihyun’s left thigh, massaging the crease where thigh met low abdomen until the omega’s delicious smell had him pining and aching. “I can smell how wet you are for me,” he whispered over Kihyun’s bulge as he rubbed the pad of his finger over the wet spot in the thong.

“Mmm, do something about it, my king.” Alpha pheromones steeped into Kihyun’s skin that glistened with a sheen coat of perspiration. Having the notorious gangster’s face between his legs, lips kissing his constricted bulge, the omega was that much closer. He groaned, hole quivering from the smallest touch beyond his thong.

The smirk on Hyunwoo’s lips was fleeting as he indulged his panting omega’s demand, giving way only to a devious grin. Swiftly, he grabbed Kihyun by the hips and pulled him roughly toward the edge of the desk, then gripped his thighs and yanked up so the omega was folded into loose a c-shape, ass in Hyunwoo’s face. Kihyun gasped in surprise and aroused embarrassment at his prone position, but his cock throbbed from every touch of Hyunwoo’s skin against his own.

Grip on Kihyun’s thighs strong, Hyunwoo groaned at the pungency of cherries exciting his alpha instincts and lapped at the creamy skin of the omega’s inner thighs. Freeing a hand, he rubbed Kihyun’s cock through his thong, sliding the front of them down just enough for Kihyun’s dick to poke out through the top. Hyunwoo growled again, tongue salivating at the visual, but decided to treat his queen to something better than a blow job—his warm tongue swiped over the teal stripe of fabric of Kihyun’s thong once more, teasing himself briefly before nosing the material to the side and licking the omega’s tight, wet hole. When he pulled away, a thick string of slick connected his tongue to Kihyun’s heat.

“H-Hyunwoo, what are you—” Kihyun stuttered, face burning red. No alpha had ever put their lips, let alone their tongue, so close to his heat. His head fell back as he moaned at the alpha’s tongue fucking into him repeatedly.

Omega pheromones tantalizing his alpha biology, messing with his mind and body the way it always did so well, Hyunwoo stared dead into Kihyun’s eyes as he wiped the corner of his lips with his finger to lick the final bit of cherry slick from his mouth. He sucked the finger into his mouth, then without warning plunged it into Kihyun’s ass. He added a second finger, pumped deeply a few times, then added a third, never looking away from his pretty queen. He was so intense, so focused, and the utter domination expedited Kihyun’s impending orgasm. The omega was dripping slick already, powerless to control his own body when Hyunwoo was staring at him like that. Fuck, this was so different than Minhyuk.

“You smell like him,” Hyunwoo whispered, tone laced with jealousy. Bergamot citrus intensified around him as he inadvertently scented the omega. He fingerfucked deeper, fingers dripping with slick, but he wanted Kihyun to mewl and beg for his alpha knot.

The comment made Kihyun’s chest tighten. Last night’s troubles and this morning’s endeavour still fresh, he was quick to push those memories away and be present in this moment. “We fucked l-last night...” he confessed, fingers pressed into the desk. “B-but he’s not you, my king.”
“Damn right he’s not,” Hyunwoo rumbled, alpha ego inflated at the compliment.

A flash of his fangs and he licked Kihyun’s hole again, delving his tongue inside in sync with his fingers until his chin dripped with syrupy omega slick. His cock throbbed in his pants; the urge to relieve the throbbing pressure provoked him to plop Kihyun down on the desk and unzip his fly. The charcoal grey of his Versace boxers burst from the opened zipper, dick so hard it couldn’t stay confined in denim.

“No one can make you feel like I can, isn’t that right?” The alpha remarked, freeing his dick from his boxers and slapping the meat of it atop Kihyun’s clothed cock. The size difference made Kihyun swallow and blush under Hyunwoo’s amused gaze.

And shit. No one’s sharp eyes were as intimidating, looking so deep into his being as if they were able to see through any front, learning a plethora of information on an intimate level with skill only a criminal would have—it terrified Kihyun that someone like that could have so much power. “Y-yes, baby, nobody...” the omega moaned.

Rutting his hips, Hyunwoo groaned at the hot, frottage friction as he leaned over Kihyun’s body and pushed his lips apart with cherry slick-coated fingers. “Remind me what those lips can do, pet.”

As Kihyun’s hands wrapped around the alpha’s wrist, his lips curled around wet fingers. His head lifted, he kept eye contact with his king whilst taking the fingers as deep as he could, inner omega wishing he was sucking something thicker, heavier, hotter.

“That’s it, pet, just like that.” Kihyun’s mouth suckling his fingers drove Hyunwoo crazy. The omega looked so slutty, so good; shit, he missed his queen.

He grabbed his cock with his free hand and slid it into the cleft of Kihyun’s ass, grinding against the omega’s heat until his dick glistened with slick. His instincts to dominate and claim never left, but instead of taking them by force his heart softened the predator in him this time—he wanted dominance that was granted to him, a willing and eager prey. Hyunwoo intentionally thrust his fingers deeper into Kihyun’s mouth before teasing his hole with the head of the alpha’s cock. “You want me to fuck you like this, huh? Watch you squirm as you cum on my cock like a good omega? Or I could fuck you from behind, watch that ass bounce...?”

All the teasing drove Kihyun into a needy, lust-crazed omega. Hyunwoo always did this to him. It made him impatient, wanting his king to take him and defile him. Kihyun eased his head back, removing Hyunwoo’s fingers from his mouth. “You... You’re asking how I want you to take me?” he asked, eyebrow quirked as he affectionately rubbed his fingers against the alpha’s knuckles.

It had yet to sink into the omega’s mind that things would actually be different. That there would be respect, understanding, and even permission.

A smirk stretched his lips, never before feeling like he had power over the alpha. It was exhilarating. “Why don’t you fuck me from behind, hm? You have all night to watch me come undone...”

The alpha smirked, pleased with Kihyun’s response. Breath heavy, he stared the omega down with half-lidded eyes and jerked himself off with slow, deliberate strokes. Spiced citrus enveloped them again, rising and falling in cadence with Kihyun’s scent. “Get up on your hands and knees and give me a pretty view.” Hyunwoo instructed, fangs prominent in his smirk.

Trusting the table’s robustness, Kihyun sat up and maneuvered onto his hands and knees. After
what just happened, he didn’t feel as shy about displaying himself for Hyunwoo, but his cheeks were pink as he felt the alpha’s eyes all over him. He slid his knees apart and leaned down, chest pressed into the desk surface. “Like this?” he asked breathily. Slick slowly trickled down the inside of his thighs, thong tinged a darker colour.

“Fuck yeah,” Hyunwoo grunted as he slapped Kihyun’s ass. He watched it jiggle from impact, then smacked it again until he was satisfied with the red marks forming on the skin. Aroused by the visual of his pretty omega queen, he slid the teal thong aside and suddenly plunged three fingers into Kihyun’s dripping hole, pumping a few times just to feel the omega squirm again.

The alpha couldn’t help himself from biting the soft flesh of Kihyun’s left ass cheek before pulling his fingers out and smearing the cherry lubricant over his throbbing cock. “I love you like this, open and exposed. The perfect slut just for me—” Hyunwoo snatched Kihyun by the hips and yanked him to the edge of the desk, filling the omega with alpha cock abruptly. Groaning at the wet heat around his dick, Hyunwoo fucked into his omega several times before reaching forward and grasping him by the throat with one hand.

Kihyun whined at the pleasure that engulfed him in a euphoric cloud; floating on a rapturous high, drifting. His ass contracted around the cock stretching him open, straining to suppress an all too familiar sensation. Hyunwoo’s thrusting spurred electrifying awareness within him, breath heavy, fast, and uncontrolled. The alpha’s skin against his throat burned deliciously, prickling his heated skin like a sinfully erotic touch of parethesia.

A month without an alpha dick spreading his walls apart was something Kihyun missed so fucking much. Hell, the mere thought of Hyunwoo’s knot was enough to make him cum. And he fucking did—a guttural moan slipped past his parted lips, limbs and body trembling as liquid gushed from around Hyunwoo’s cock. Omega juices pooled on the floor, dripping off the table into a messy puddle. Velvety walls pulsed against Hyunwoo’s dick, and Kihyun’s eyelids fluttered shut at the intensity of his orgasm.

“Fuck!” he gasped. Drifting turned into flying.

The omega’s orgasm shot through Hyunwoo just as intensely. The quivering and squirting all over his cock, the squirming of the omega’s body beneath him, the eroticism of choked noises from Kihyun’s throat vibrating in the palm of his hand—the alpha was overwhelmed by the power rush, and most profoundly, the influx of endorphins from Kihyun’s potent pheromone release. The magic of alpha and omega synergy was irrefutable; everything was incredible in the presence of each other because they were designed for this.

“Shit, pet, fuck you’re so hot,” Hyunwoo rasped against the omega’s spine as he leant forward to kiss it. The pleasure that ripped through him from Kihyun’s orgasm was enough to compel the alpha to ask, “You good, baby?” His hips slowed slightly, mostly to pace himself, but he grip on the omega’s throat was still firm.

Mind swimming in his post-orgasmic ocean, stars appeared behind the omega’s eyelids. He felt heat radiate from the alpha, warming his muscles. He felt everything; sensitivity heightened from such a forceful orgasm. Kihyun answered Hyunwoo with a husky voice, “Yes, yes fuck. Don’t stop.” His eyes opened, vision blurry to the room before him. The new pet name gave his stomach a flip. He had to tell the alpha even if words were cut off by the alpha’s hold around his neck. “Call me baby again, Hyunwoo, please. I love it.”

And Hyunwoo could’ve sworn Kihyun clenched around him when he begged to be called baby again.
A warm sensation boiled inside the alpha as he squeezed tighter on the omega’s throat and pulled him backward, deepening the arch of Kihyun’s back. Hips snapping quicker, the alpha stared at the image of his cock slamming in and out until he leaned forth over Kihyun and bit his left shoulder blade. Ever-closer to the omega’s scent gland on the nape of his neck, Hyunwoo was intoxicated by all things omega. “You like it when I fuck you like this, baby? Fuck you so hard you squirt all over my cock,” he hissed against the reddened bitemark he just made. He grabbed the omega’s ass with one hand and spread apart the globes, accenting the juicy squelches of their fucking. “You hear how wet you are?” Hyunwoo groaned.

The bite earned its giver a strangled cry of a painful pleasure, Kihyun’s voice garbled by the hand that held him so tightly. He scratched the table in response to the alpha’s dirty questions making him hyperaware of the noises. “Yeah,” he replied breathlessly. “Ah, fucking knot me, alpha…”

Hyunwoo was tempted, he really was. Tempted by the sweet ambrosia of Kihyun’s scent gland. Tempted by the biological urge to knot the omega. Tempted to utterly control Kihyun in every way, just as he had done since the moment they met.

Hyunwoo had been in this exact predicament before—his mind waging war with his body until he inevitably lost to the alpha impulse he so vehemently battled against. Last time he failed, Kihyun got pregnant; his life as a selfish, wealthy gangster could’ve been jeopardized. He wouldn’t, couldn’t, knot the omega again, but the cocaine in his system frenzied his judgement.

“Fuck,” he groaned again, hips speeding up as he fought through his internal struggle and took it out on Kihyun. He slapped the omega’s pretty ass again, sharp and loud, and squeezed his hand tighter on Kihyun’s throat. The tighter he grasped, the more the battle to resist biting Kihyun’s scent gland crumbled. Kihyun was his omega who returned to be his queen—his inner alpha roared at the opportunity to claim and possess. The cocaine served only to intensify his urges.

Every whimper and whine from the omega was dulled by the tight squeeze around his neck. The cut-off of air caused a narcotic effect, and once again he was brought to climax. His rim twitched as he came, pungent omega slick flowing down his balls and thighs. The thrill of it caused his arms to give out, and he landed on his torso on the desk with his ass still up.

Kihyun’s body tingled with pleasure Minhyuk couldn’t give him. A beta never could. There was an authentic, biological connection between alpha and omega. Together, they solicit a form of beauty that was chaotic by design, something that inspired lust—a thin replica of love rooted in desire and power. It was amazing, crushing, and all-encompassing. The omega experienced it firsthand right now as he was shrouded in a cloud of passion only he and Hyunwoo understood.

As Kihyun panted in his new, vulnerable posture, his second orgasm resonated in Hyunwoo’s body more intensely than the first. “You know how goddamn sexy you are?” the alpha snarled. He gritted his teeth as he willed down the insatiable desire to bite the omega and give him the knot he so desperately craved.

In a veil of cherries, the alpha couldn’t control himself as his blunt nails dig into the skin of Kihyun’s hip and his hand around Kihyun’s throat remained firm, pinning the omega still as he came balls deep inside. Body flush against the other’s, Hyunwoo released his grasp on the omega and groaned through the endless waves of pleasure coursing through him. His post-orgasmic state had him nuzzling Kihyun’s nape, fangs poking out from his lips as he lapped at the potent gland and lazily jerked the omega’s leaking cock.

Kihyun writhed under the alpha, moaning and whimpering. Flustered, he turned his head into the crook of his arm as Hyunwoo filled him up. “Oh... oh, f-fuck, Hyunwoo...” Everything pushed him over the edge at once. He panted heavily, his very soul thrumming with his third orgasm spurti
from his cock onto the desk. His teeth clamped around his forearm to somehow ground his frazzled, pleasured-induced mind as his body shook and his hips gave out. He flattened on the desk with his king’s weight bearing him down.

With how incredible Kihyun looked pulsing through his third orgasm, it took everything Hyunwoo had to pull out before the bulbous knot forming at the base of his cock anchored him inside the omega. Kihyun had just returned, and Hyunwoo had plans to fuck his pretty omega queen raw all over the penthouse until he milked every last drop of cum from him.

Cock wet and hard from round one, the alpha grabbed Kihyun with strong, inked arms and turned him around to face him. Documents, folders, envelopes, and pens were strewn around the floor around the wooden desk; an office made messy by primal lust. The room was ripe with sex pheromones, adding to the seedy atmosphere.

Into the shell of the omega’s ear, Hyunwoo whispered, “I’m going to fuck you everywhere and anywhere I want. In the kitchen, by the pool, on the table in the conference room. I want everyone to hear you moan. I want everyone to know you’re back. And I want everyone to know you’re mine...” The alpha nipped Kihyun’s neck, collarbone, and shoulder before adding, “And I am yours.”

Kihyun lazily set his hands on Hyunwoo’s shoulders. The alpha had just wrung three orgasms out of him and the sex-crazed alpha was already talking about sexing the omega up more? His eyeshadow clumped in the crease of his eyelids, his eyeliner streaked down his cheeks, his complexion was sweaty and pink—he said he wanted Hyunwoo to wreck him, and fuck, did he ever.

“Right now?” the omega asked breathlessly, tone excited and exhausted and delirious.

Hyunwoo hummed a deep, rumbling response as he admired the hot mess staring back at him. Then, he smirked, fangs prominent and eyes glazed over with alpha desire. He lifted Kihyun up off the desk and hooked his slender legs around his tan, sweaty abdomen as he carried the omega across the room. He slammed him against the wall, knocking down portraits and documents as he ravaged Kihyun’s neck in bite marks and hickies.

“Be careful what you ask for, baby…”
Chapter 26

The rose pink light of dawn snuck into Hyunwoo’s bedroom and reflected through the smoky haze of Kihyun’s much needed cigarette. The nicotine helped him relax from their passionate night of sex. Every fluid was drained from his body, resulting in many dry orgasms throughout the night; how many bottles of water had he gone through? Not as many as the amount of times he and Hyunwoo fucked around the penthouse, scenting each room with the essence of maraschino cherries and bergamot spice. They did have to make up for lost time, after all.

Body sore, ass tender, and limbs heavy, lounging on Hyunwoo’s bed, or their bed now, was a deserved commodity that Kihyun relished. They relaxed in a peaceful quiet, each sucking down a cigarette, spent from the sleepless night. Scooting forward, the omega dispensed cigarette ash into the tray on the nightstand, draping over Hyunwoo’s torso to do so. Purple and red bruises lined his neck, collarbones, and chest, scratches streaked his back and hips, and welts were half-formed on his ass courtesy of Hyunwoo’s grabby hands. The alpha smirked to himself as he admired his handiwork.

Kihyun’s weight atop him, Hyunwoo sunk into the bed a little more; it made the ache in his body from their reunion sex more evident, more pressing. He had already smoked two cigarettes, leaving a third of the last one to smolder in the ashtray at bedside in exchange for gazing at Kihyun’s tired yet gorgeous face for the better half of twenty minutes.

When the omega moved away, Hyunwoo glanced at the ashtray he had just used, prompting him to eye the tiny baggie of coke he left out from the night before. There wasn’t much left and he’d have to re-up soon, but there was just enough for a decent bump to dull the ache. Staring at the powder, however, reminded him of the hospital where he first relapsed, triggering a chain of nagging thoughts to fire off. Turning back to Kihyun, the alpha asked, “How come you didn’t tell me...?”

Kihyun knew exactly what Hyunwoo was referring to. The alpha deserved answers, he really did, especially knowing that behind the steel walls Hyunwoo barricaded around himself that he was actually capable of remorseful emotions, but the omega had too much to lose. He had only recently achieved the clarity to refocus on the task at hand, and he had to play his cards exactly right if any of this was going to work in his favor. He had to give Hyunwoo what he wanted—be the perfect omega queen.

With effort and stiff muscles, he knelt beside Hyunwoo’s hip on the bed. “I was scared...” he started softly. “Part of me wanted to tell you but the other part wanted to keep the news secret. I went with the latter because I didn’t think you would... want it. I already fucked up so much, and I was afraid of what would happen to you if the news travelled.” Kihyun brushed his dark brown hair back, vulnerable. “I’m sorry... the guilt of not speaking about it to you is just as heavy as the sorrow of losing it.”

The alpha’s initial, knee-jerk emotion was anger. His body noticeably tensed, muscles tightening and knuckles white from clenching his fists. He wanted to belittle and ridicule Kihyun, make him feel selfish and stupid for shouldering something too heavy for him to bear alone. The omega was poor and helpless and undeniably unfit to parent. And Hyunwoo... well, Kihyun was right; the alpha couldn’t do it either. But he had resources, money, connections—just a snap of his fingers and he could’ve made their little problem disappear for good...

Then the second emotion hit: deep-rooted, long-suffering trauma. Abandonment issues. Cowardice. An orphaned child himself, the alpha immediately discarded the idea. Fuck that, he wasn’t his piece of shit parents, whoever they were.
Lastly, realization hit. Whether they kept the child or not, it’s fate would inevitably lead back to a life of death, betrayal, and untrustworthy allies—the life of crime in the jo-pok. There was no silver lining and maybe fate knew that. Maybe a failed pregnancy was the only viable option.

Fate spared the villain again.

After his long, brooding silence, the alpha cracked his knuckles to relieve tension, then sighed. “Don’t lie to me again,” he said simply, childishly, sternly.

Kihyun felt the tension radiate off Hyunwoo as a pungent aroma of earthy citrus that gave him a sense of worry. Worry that Hyunwoo would walk away from a serious conversation, ignore the feelings caged inside, and miss the opportunity for the omega to be there for him. Yet, Hyunwoo surprised the brunet once again.

With a single nod, the omega pressed a hand against his bruised chest. “You know... we can’t carry them in our arms, but we can carry them in our hearts,” he uttered in a soft voice, keeping his gaze downcast. The mention of their lost child would always bring heartbreak into light, a reminder of how he fell so far off course, but it was good that they finally spoke about it.

While Kihyun bared the heaviness of his loss, a half-smile appeared on Hyunwoo’s lips. It wasn’t particularly the sentiment Kihyun said that made him smile but rather the notion that the omega cared enough to console Hyunwoo’s noticeable shift in demeanor. Just as quick as the smile appeared, it vanished as the alpha looked away briefly. “Oh, is that what happens?” he teased with a low chuckle, making light of the situation.

Kihyun finally looked at Hyunwoo, eyebrows knitting together as he frowned. “Yeah. That is also what happens when you fuck an omega in heat who is off their birth control with no protection.”

He didn’t mean to sound so angry, but Hyunwoo seemed ignorant to the situation. Yet at the same time, how could the alpha have developed any kind of emotion for something he never knew about until it was too late… It was partially Kihyun’s fault for not telling anyone about his pregnancy other than Elise. Regardless, he willed his negativity down. If he—er, they—were to make this work, they had to meet on equal ground. “I... I apologize.” He avoided Hyunwoo’s eyes again as he sighed. “It’s still... I’m still trying to cope, um...”

Even after Kihyun apologized, the effect had been done and anger swelled back up in Hyunwoo.

“It takes two. Accept your half of the responsibility.” he sneered, bothered at the ignorance of the omega’s outburst. Chest thumping with the cadence of confrontation and aggression, the alpha peered at the omega. Bergamot seeped from him. “I’m not dealing with this,” he said as he shifted away and peeled back the duvet to sit up on the edge of the bed.

Facing the nightstand, he tore open the baggie of cocaine and poured it on the polished, wooden surface before using the stiff corner of the bag to cut the powder into makeshift lines.

Understanding what Hyunwoo was about to do, Kihyun didn’t hesitate to take action. He hurried to the edge of the bed and grabbed the alpha’s wrist, holding firm. “No, Hyunwoo. This has to stop. Now.” His voice was heavy with authority, demanding that the jo-pok boss ceased his unhealthy addiction. With his knee on the bed and a foot on the ground, he leaned over the alpha to try to assert some dominance over the other.

“The fuck you think you’re doing?” Hyunwoo hissed, easily wrangling out of Kihyun’s grasp. Their peaceful, post-sex reprieve was soured by the omega’s tantrum, and now he was trying to tell Hyunwoo what to do? Try to stop him from things that didn’t concern or involve him? Try to stop
him from his coping mechanism as a result of the omega’s poor judgement and deceit? The alpha scoffed, amused and furious. “You don’t tell me what I can and cannot do, omega...”

He was defensive and combative; he continued to cut lines until they were of reasonable size to snort. Ignoring Kihyun’s demand, however caring it was beneath the surface of his firm tone, the alpha leaned forward to take a bump.

Dejected by Hyunwoo’s retaliation, Kihyun’s previously-subdued valorous side took over. No longer was he the sheepish and weak omega everyone pegged him to be once upon a time. No longer would he sit by and watch the alpha succumb to his self-destructive ways. Hastily he clasped his hands on Hyunwoo’s shoulders and pushed the other man’s bulkier body back onto the bed, stopping him from inhaling the powdery poison.

As swiftly as he could, Kihyun climbed onto Hyunwoo’s lap, and with a snarl of his own, straddled the alpha to keep him in place. “You listen to me, Son Hyunwoo. I will not sit by and watch you kill yourself. Continue to abuse drugs like this... and I’ll leave, I fucking swear.”

The alpha was sore from the night and weak from cocaine withdrawals, so fighting back felt like a burdensome endeavor. Nevertheless, he was livid at the audacity. How fucking dare Kihyun? Who did he think he was? Hyunwoo clenched onto the omega’s thighs like a vice grip and channeled his fury via keeping the omega anchored and prone above him. Ready to attack verbally, he was thwarted by a warm sensation in his chest from the piercing, strangely compassionate stare the omega gave him. Kihyun was... concerned? About him?

The alpha analyzed the circumstance, picking apart every minute detail in an emotion-fueled search to find the lie; he couldn’t find one. He didn’t receive compassion well, however, and thusly found an outlet for his anger in the form of shifting blame. “I did this because of you...” he sneered, grip still tight on the omega’s thighs as he glanced at the jagged lines of white powder on the bedside table.

Kihyun’s gaze softened at Hyunwoo’s words. To resort to drugs to cope, how far into the darkness had this man fallen? How alone did he feel? Just how corrupt was his soul? How close was he to shattering into a million pieces and find a new way to bleed from unspoken feelings and deep secrets?

Carefully, the omega cupped Hyunwoo’s jaw, hoping to get the alpha to look at him. The alpha flinched at Kihyun’s gentle touch, unaccustomed to tenderness regardless of how many times the omega had given it to him. Kihyun’s features were soft as he spoke. “Then stop this because of me... because of us. Use me to get high, my king. Let me be your addiction when you need an escape.”

Hyunwoo’s blood boiled from their argument and his body craved the pretty powder within reach; no matter how compelling Kihyun was, Hyunwoo was still a junkie who needed a fix even his lover couldn’t provide. But it wasn’t until the omega spoke those words that Hyunwoo truly understood that Kihyun was his escape, and when he left, the alpha relapsed to his former escape, and that even if he rose above his current cravings, he’d eventually fall to another escape—he was a danger to himself before he was one to anyone else.

And that was why he’d never be able to fill Boss Bang’s shoes and lead the jo-pok. Everything he was doing for Boss Bang’s big assignment, for Kihyun, for his so-called empire, meant nothing because he was just another junkie punk unfit to be a king... unfit to be a father...

A steely stare and a hoarse voice. “This is what I am. You need to understand that.”
It was true they grew up in different worlds and were accustomed to the way their environment functioned around them, creating two very different people; here two worlds collided, from a dangerous life of violence, crime, and wickedness, to a life dedicated to saving a dying mother at any cost. The tenderness and love Kihyun knew was nothing like the darkness and hate Hyunwoo had lived through, but they both had to make sacrifices to survive their worlds.

“I do,” the omega replied. “If you need an escape, use me. Indulge in me to your heart’s content.” Kihyun pressed his forehead to Hyunwoo’s, deepening the intimacy. “Let me help you, Hyunwoo. You’re not alone in this.”

‘You’re not alone in this’ repeated in Hyunwoo’s mind. The statement alone amused him enough to evoke a smirk on his face. “Of course I am...” he muttered, accustomed to the rough life he chose for himself. But something was different this time, something reminded him he really wasn’t alone anymore.

Staring into chocolate brown eyes and feeling the weight of intimacy settle on him, a calm sensation washed over him. Close exposure to omega pheromones smoothed his sharp edges. Eventually, Hyunwoo succumbed and wrapped his muscular arms around the omega on top of him, enjoying the embrace. The affectionate gesture affected him in ways only Kihyun could make him feel; a chemistry only an omega could grant an alpha.

Whispering against the omega’s lips, Hyunwoo’s voice was deep, manly as he asked, “Do you have it in you to be my addiction? Can you give me every part of yourself, and then give me more?” It was equal parts seductive alpha and desperate addict but all of it was Hyunwoo.

Morning light made him glisten, sun-kissed skin glowing like amber—Kihyun’s dark angel swathed in yellow light; ethereal. Goddamn, was he charming.

Against the alpha’s forehead, Kihyun nodded as his thumbs traced along strong alpha jaw. “You have all of me,” he whispered back, determined to be there for his lover, to carry the burdens Hyunwoo had together. It was his role as Hyunwoo’s queen to oversee the wellbeing of his king.

Yet Hyunwoo mentally rejected Kihyun’s promise because he knew better; he knew it was a lie. Gangsters didn’t get a happy ending because they didn’t deserve one. The alpha was no saint, and he’d get exactly what was coming to him. But his heart graciously held onto everything Kihyun said, as if the abandoned child inside had been waiting for someone to cling to.

Everyone had a breaking point, a time when the weight of the world was too much, and Kihyun wanted Hyunwoo to know he wasn’t alone anymore. To share the stress, the troubles of a jo-pok boss, would become Kihyun’s as well. He kissed the alpha’s jaw and breathed in bergamot as his hand grazed over the alpha’s heart; the throbbirth it was painful for Hyunwoo, but it overshadowed the symptoms of withdrawal, albeit temporarily, sweeping him up into the illusion of a happily ever after.

“Okay,” Hyunwoo said, reluctantly acquiescing. “I’ll quit...” He clenched his jaw, lost in thought as he paused. “I’ll be better than Boss Bang when I become chairman...”

Kihyun’s lips lifted into a gentle smile. “You’ll do wonderfully, my king.” He curled his arms loosely around Hyunwoo’s neck and tilted his head, his lips barely hovering against his lover’s. “You’ll take the fucking world, baby, and make it your own. Nobody will dare stand in your way.”

And Kihyun sealed his words with a deep kiss, the soft thrum of worry pushed to the back of his head. He needed to make this work. He had to.
Late morning on the balcony was breezy and warm. The sun was nestled in fluffy clouds tinted grey with the promise of rain, but the humidity was mild and the sky was blue. The huge cherry blossom tree rustled and swayed, gorgeous and strong as always. There were fewer blossoms than earlier in the year, but their color was pinker, richer in the wake of hot summertime.

After their discussion in bed earlier, Hyunwoo showered the night of sex off himself and called for servants to tend to breakfast. He then made his way to the circular, wrought iron table on the balcony in a pair of dark denim jeans and a white shirt, something uncharacteristically casual. The bold ink of his tattoos contested the white fabric, making his golden skin pop in the morning glow.

A mimosa in hand, the alpha stared out at his city as he often did, awaiting Kihyun’s arrival with the morning’s conversation weighing heavy on his mind. Interestingly, the last time he had breakfast here with Kihyun, it was the day after the omega was first brought to the penthouse. Hyunwoo regarded him as a strategic item to pay a debt, something to keep this dick wet and entertain him until he was bored; he never anticipated to develop feelings for the boy, for him to be unwaveringly compassionate and patient.

Cliches were cliches for a reason—they happened too commonly, too effortlessly, to be rejected or denied.

After a much needed shower, Kihyun emerged smelling like fresh maraschino cherries. His oversized, black t-shirt hung delicately off the curve of his shoulder, showing off the purple of bruises and the pink of teeth marks littering his neck and collarbone. The shorts he wore were also loose, hiding smooth thighs that had also been caressed by alpha lips all night, leaving a stain in the form of hickeys. He wanted to show off his claimed body for his king, swell his ego just for the fun of it.

As the omega stepped onto the balcony, a smile found its way to his lips. He approached the alpha, a hand ghosting along Hyunwoo’s broad back from one shoulder to the other. “Surveying your kingdom, my king?” he asked, taking a seat beside the other man. He glided his fingers through his damp hair, legs crossing as his eyes found Hyunwoo’s. A clean, refreshing aroma of bergamot wafted towards him, and the omega sighed at the delicious tingle it gave him. His king looked and smelled like royalty.

Hyunwoo chuckled. “Yes, and my queen too, huh?” He shamelessly stared at the omega, as if a full night of sex didn’t sate his thirst. He winked at Kihyun before taking a sip of his mimosa. “Champagne?” he asked, gesturing to the metallic ice bucket housing a heavy, sloped bottle of bubbly. An omega servant rushed over, obedient as she awaited the queen’s choice.

Flustered by Hyunwoo’s flirtatious gesture, Kihyun looked away and cast his eyes on the champagne bottle. “Mmm...” he hummed as his chocolate eyes glanced at the glass in Hyunwoo’s hand, then to the servant. “I’ll have whatever my king is having, please.” He lifted his left knee up to his chest, portraying a casual and comfortable demeanour. His body language was more relaxed and less alert, unlike the first time he set foot on the balcony. Last time, he was a helpless omega in chains, now he was the queen of his king’s heart.

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Hyunwoo lifted a brow, impressed and a little smitten; who knew Kihyun would turn out to be so ideal. Deep down, the alpha was still wary due to years of trust issues beaten into him by the jo-pok life, but the warm feeling in his chest was a feeling Kihyun—and Kihyun alone—resurrected from the graveyard of his heart. He focused on that feeling anytime cocaine withdrawals clawed at
his resolve, like right now...

Clearing his throat, Hyunwoo chugged the rest of his mimosa and pushed the empty flute toward the flustered servant. She nodded in understanding and poured Mr. Son a second glass. She then acknowledged the omega before grasping the champagne flute by his shiny cutlery and polishing it. With a practiced smiled, she poured a blend of champagne and fresh orange juice before presenting it to the omega. Kihyun lifted the glass to his lips, smelling fresh citrus in the flute.

Hyunwoo gave her an impatient look. “The meal?”

The servant glanced down obediently, hands laced together in her lap as she replied, “I’ll see to it’s status immediately, Mr. Son.” She turned and vanished into the penthouse, leaving them.

Kihyun tilted the glass and let it wet his parched throat, the perfect blend of juice and bubbly alcohol. His tongue swished over his bottom lip as he lowered the glass to the table. “What’s on the menu for breakfast this morning?” he questioned casually, a stagecraft, as if this was a normal morning they had frequently.

“Up to the chef. Just hired this guy. We’ll see how he does.” Hyunwoo shrugged as he pulled a pack of smokes from his back pocket and plucked one out. They were the cherry flavored kind, and the pack was nearly empty. Clearly, he had been fiending for a taste of cherry blossoms in Kihyun’s absence. He put the stick to his lips and lit the tip with the same zippo lighter he always used before offering the pack to Kihyun.

The omega plucked a cigarette from its perfect placement. It was amusing knowing that the alpha had a fondness for cherry blossoms; it gave off a soft aspect to him that he typically subdued and hid away from everyone… until Kihyun came along. The omega liked having that power. He bit his lip at the alpha, amusing himself with his thoughts about the older man.

Just like their previous breakfast months ago, two lesser alpha enforcers stood guard on the wide balcony, dark sunglasses and a cold shoulder closing them off from the jovial atmosphere surrounding the alpha and omega. Different this time, however, was Hyungwon’s presence as he made himself known at the sliding glass doors of the balance entrance. Hyunwoo exhaled a lung of smoke and motioned for the beta to step forth.

Kihyun caught the motion and looked over, softening upon seeing the tall beta. He had just slipped the smoke between his lips when the familiar ocean scent permeated their cherry blossom ambiance. He stared at Hyungwon as the beta strolled over to the wrought iron table they sat at to deliver daily news and updates.

When Hyungwon was in earshot, he said, “Pardon me, Boss, I don’t mean to interrupt. I, uh...” His eyes drifted to Kihyun, unexpectedly taken aback before catching himself. “Uh, morning, Kihyun.”

Kihyun smirked as he gazed at Hyungwon, eyeing the beta up and down. “Morning,” he acknowledged with a smile.

Expectant and impatient, the alpha nodded for Hyungwon to get on with it. Hyungwon cleared his throat before doing so. “Right, anyway…. The stakeholder has agreed to meet, but he’s only available tonight.”

The mention of a meeting intrigued the omega. He leaned back in his chair, eyes drifting to Hyunwoo for more information. He hadn’t heard the alpha mention an important meeting, but come to think of it, he did mention something involving Boss Bang. Kihyun’s interest was piqued,
but interrupting his king after becoming official was something he was wary of. Besides, he had waited patiently and put in all this time, what was just a little longer?

Hyunwoo leaned back in his chair and exhaled a cloud of smoke. Cigarette loose on his lips, he simply stared at the beta and considered the news for a moment. Boss Bang rallied for him to get stakeholder interest and support, and finally one he had been working on for weeks took the bait. It was extra good, too, because this particular stakeholder’s greatest export was information—hell, Hyunwoo recruited Hyungwon from this man.

With a smirk, he replied, “Oh yeah? Where at?”

The beta cocked his head. “Devotion. In the back, special VIP… you know, the tattoo room?”

“Mmm, he wants to share ink, yeah?” Hyunwoo spoke through an exhale, then held the stick between his fingers. Apparently the stakeholder was a man of tradition, probably appreciated talk of business over irezumi, soju, and gorgeous foreign women. And at Devotion, no less; a popular club façade known in the seedy depths of society for its prostitution.

The alpha extorted money from the club owners on many occasions as punishment for accepting foreign currency from tourists looking to get their dick wet; too much unexchanged currency was a red flag to police that illicit activity operated through the otherwise legal business. Hyunwoo wasn’t involved in prostitution rings, but he did receive a large cut of profits for even permitting the business to run in his territory of Gwangju to begin with. As long as things were efficient and quiet, no one got hurt. That was the deal.

Hyungwon glanced at Kihyun, who probably didn’t know the full implication of meeting at Devotion. “And maybe something else too…”
In the morning light cast upon their breakfast table on Hyunwoo’s grand balcony, Kihyun locked eyes with Hyungwon as he pulled an unlit cigarette from his mouth. The beta had just informed Boss of a business meeting with a stakeholder Hyunwoo seemed very invested in—something about a tattoo room in a place called Devotion—triggering a sudden, acute interest in the omega as well.

“A meeting?” Kihyun asked with a raised eyebrow, chocolate eyes darkening as they drifted to Hyunwoo. “Sounds important. When is it?” His slim fingers curled around the champagne flute previously poured for him.

Hyungwon cocked his head. His sea salt aroma was suddenly more pungent to Kihyun’s senses, but the omega couldn’t decipher the reason. “After midnight...” He regarded the alpha. “He’ll want to see you first, Boss.”

The alpha snickered and took a drag of his cigarette. Exhaling, he replied, “Of course he will... I got room on this body for more stories.” He sipped his mimosa and inhaled another long drag. He held it for a little longer than usual just to feel the smoke linger in his lungs, to simulate a pathetic high in the absence of cocaine, then exhaled through his nose. “But what business does he want with Kihyun?” he asked sternly, already knowing the answer.

The beta scoffed. “You know what he wants.”

Hyunwoo angrily slammed his fists on the table, rattling the ceramic plates and cutlery and startling nearby servants. Kihyun paid no mind to the outburst. Voice raised, the alpha snapped, “And he’s not going to fucking have it. Did you tell him that?”

“I figured an emotional response wasn’t the most tactful,” Hyungwon countered. Kihyun couldn’t help but grin at Hyungwon’s wisecrack, but the beta immediately regretted it, knowing fully well how the alpha would take it. “I mean... I didn’t want to assume things and answer for you, Boss.”

Hyunwoo snarled. “You’re lucky I’m in a good mood, beta...” He trailed off, fists clenched as he swallowed the reality, hell the irony, of the situation—he needed the stakeholder’s support and involvement in order to move Boss Bang’s assignment forward, yet he only agreed to the assignment to secure the top spot in the jo-pok and rule alongside his omega, his queen, Kihyun. Yet now his new perspective of his actions granted him objective insight into what this meeting would entail. He knew exactly how the situation would go because he was guilty of the very same treatment.

Disgruntled by this realization, Hyunwoo stewed in his anger but repressed it in favor of business. “I’ll go first to assess everything. Hyungwon, you will escort Kihyun and arrive later. Be armed.”

Hyungwon nodded but said nothing as his hands buried themselves into his pockets. Kihyun, however, was full of burning questions. This meeting was more important than he initially gathered, not just because Hyunwoo was tenser than usual but because laidback Hyungwon was tense, too. It was crucial that he learned more.

The omega leaned forward and placed a hand on Hyunwoo’s clenched fist. “What’s this meeting about, my king?”

Hyungwon grinned but did so subtly. Finally the big assignment the beta had mentioned weeks
back in Minhyuk’s driveway breached the surface, and finally Kihyun had enough puzzle pieces to ask the right questions. He wondered if Boss would divulge all details or just drop bits and pieces relevant to the omega. Truth be told, Hyungwon wasn’t actually sure himself if he was informed of all the details, or if he only knew what was deemed necessary for him to know. Surely a decorated crime boss like Hyunwoo wouldn’t neglect information from his intelligence ally? Nevertheless, the beta took Hyunwoo’s enhancement of scent as the cue to leave.

“I’ll be on my way now. I’ll see you lovebirds later,” Hyungwon said as he turned and left. Hyunwoo waited for the click of the sliding glass doors before properly acknowledging Kihyun’s question.

Any time Boss Bang’s big assignment was mentioned, the urge for a bump was stronger and more urgent. Perhaps it was nothing other than the standard Pavlovian phenomena, but Hyunwoo hated the stress nonetheless. Staring into Kihyun’s eyes made matters worse. “We’re meeting with a well-informed stakeholder. We’ll need his partnership and resources to carry out a big assignment from the chairman himself.” The alpha took another pull from his cigarette. “If it all goes well, we will have everything.”

With a smile, Kihyun affectionately rubbed Hyunwoo’s knuckles. “I already have everything, my king, but I’ll do whatever you need me to do,” he whispered sweetly.

“I know you will. Then we will have more than everything,” the alpha replied before drinking from his champagne flute. As he did so, a servant appeared at the sliding glass doors.

“Mr. Son, breakfast is ready!” she announced as two other servants manifested behind her with silver trays with steaming, delicious food atop.

Night swept over the country, tempting sinners to come out and play. And out to play they were as they filed into a club in a seedy pocket of Gwangju. A concrete jungle surrounding it, the exterior walls of Devotion were lofty in comparison. Made of black stone and lit by neon purple light, it epitomized a diamond in the rough. From the outside of the club, the bass of blasting trap music resonated from within. Massive bodyguards stood watch, each with a distinctly unique job; most unique, though, were those who watched over the sexily-dressed prostitutes luring deep-pocketed tourists seeking foreign flavor.

Kihyun waited in front of Devotion with a cigarette in hand, trying to blend in with the other smokers but failing. Because, as usual, he didn’t dress to blend in; he dressed to break hearts. Rugged rips in his jeans showed more skin than material, his Versace Atlas sneakers were tinged black and gold, and his shirt was half black half mesh, exposing his entire left torso, nipple and all, to everyone. He wore Tom Ford Fucking Fabulous and pulled his look together with smokey eye makeup and shimmery highlighter, and small, 24 karat gold diamond-studded hoops in his ears.

He sucked down his cigarette quicker than planned because he was nervous. Hopefully his pheromones didn’t solicit unwanted attention. Sighing, he threw his cigarette to the ground and crushed it with his sneakers. He knew Hyunwoo was more than capable to handle himself, but he hoped nothing fell to the wayside with the mystery stakeholder. He also hoped Hyungwon would return soon because he was getting real sick of rejecting horny tourists waving cash in his face for a blowjob.

While Kihyun waited at the front entrance, Hyungwon had quickly scoped the area. Normal vehicles, normal patrons, normal bouncers. The terraced parking garage in back safeguarded more expensive cars for wealthier patrons and was heavily guarded by more than just typical bouncers.
From his spot at the door, Hyungwon saw the sporty sheen of Hyunwoo’s midnight blue Bugatti Veyron. He laughed; the alpha bastard was always one to make a pretentious impression.

After his brief reconnaissance, Hyungwon stuffed his hands in the pockets of his slim, black pants, something that became somewhat of a pensive habit. His silver hair was styled in a messy, charming way, and the color looked almost identical to the miniature, white gold hoops in his ears. A loose, long sleeve shirt with hot red flames dancing up the front was unbuttoned down to his chest. He looked as flirty as the smirk on his full lips when a couple of giggly beta women sauntered by. And as he returned to the club entrance, he took half a second to admire how gorgeous the omega looked before resuming his appropriate role to the queen.

Kihyun noticed him by scent first, then quirked his brow and smirked. “Well, I’m here. Are you going to open the door for me? I am your queen.” The playfulness in his tone matched the mischievous glint in his eyes.

Hyungwon chuckled at the unexpected sass. “Of course, Your Highness,” he replied, indulging the omega. He stepped to the side and grabbed ahold the handle, opening the door with theatrics for Kihyun to pass through.

With an eye-catching smile directed towards Hyungwon and the sharp-eyed bouncers, Kihyun walked into Devotion as if he walked on air. The interior was bright with flashing neon lights and fervid scents swirled around the bustling crowd; an atmosphere of an orgy of bodies reaching orgasmic ecstasy. It was one hundred percent unadulterated sex. Intoxicated people of every status and dynamic moved to the music, shaking off their daily stresses as if all the alcohol in their systems wouldn’t turn into raging hangovers in the morning. It was hard to hear over the speakers, but the mix of mating pheromones were harder to ignore. All the one night stands that were bound to happen, all the sex lead on by women in skimpy dresses and men sporting aroused testosterone, and all the sex actively happening in rooms heavily monitored by obvious pimps.

Hyungwon walked behind the omega as they moved through Devotion. He was Kihyun’s babysitter first and foremost, having kept a promise to keep an eye on the queen in the king’s absence, but he truly did want to ensure Kihyun’s safety in a club known to non-civilians as sleazy and dangerous. Staring down whoever took a second look, he kept a hand at the ready over the concealed pistol at his waist.

In a clearing of people, Kihyun pulled out his brand new iPhone X, gifted to him by Hyunwoo that afternoon, and texted the jo-pok boss himself to let the alpha know he was there. After shoving the device back into his pocket, he turned to Hyungwon with questioning eyes. “Do you know where we go?” he asked, voice travelling over the music.

“Yeah. You see that staircase over there? Third floor, back right corridor. You’ll see a change in patrons before you actually get to the door.” The floor Hyungwon referred to was lit hot pink, contrasting from the color scheme of the rest of the club. “You go first. I’ll walk behind.”

Following Hyungwon’s instructions, Kihyun made a bee-line towards the mentioned staircase leading up to a pink haven. He avoided drunken clubbers as he wove through the crowd, unintentionally rubbing against blitzed men and women on his way to his king. Lustful eyes followed his movements and he felt them trying to close in, like an antelope in a room of lions, yet every pass made to him by horny alphas wanting a piece of his ass was ignored as he rushed by. Plus, he felt safe knowing Hyungwon wasn’t far behind with a loaded gun at the ready.

On the third floor he noticed the change in patrons, as mentioned by the beta. He also noticed near-naked, diamond-draped prostitutes posed outside their respective VIP rooms. They were different from the workers outside and on the first floor. These workers were top tier and highly sought
after; only the wealthiest could have a taste. Kihyun acknowledged them with a soft smile before rounding the back right corridor.

Confidently, the omega approached the door of the VIP tattoo room, which was heavily protected by alpha enforcers with suspicious eyes and several guns openly displayed. “My King is expecting us,” he declared. The demand paired with a look from Hyungwon granted them access to the room.

Kihyun first noticed the array lights; the transition of green to purple stretched from the stage to the back of the private room. There was a mini bar at the back wall where the silhouette of a short bartender polished glasses. Directly across from the bar was a pretty alpha woman twirling on a silver pole and caressing her fit body for the VIPs lucky enough to witness her private show.

As Kihyun continued on, Hyungwon halted just inside the room by the door to keep a respectful distance from Boss and his former mentor. As much as he wanted to greet his mentor, it wasn’t his place to anymore; he only served one boss now. He fell into a comfortable stance and ogled the gorgeous alpha woman dancing on the private stage. Her jasmine scent occupied the room and harmonized with Kihyun’s floral scent to create a very compatible, very alluring fragrance. It was irresistibly distracting.

“What’s your name, handsome?” the dancer asked, enjoying being a distraction to the beta.

Hyungwon grinned, replying, “Hyungwon.”

“Hyungwon, huh? If you’re going to be staring at me like that the whole time, you better have some cash in your wallet.”

“Whoa, wait, what? I don’t get to know your name?” The beta griped.

She smirked. “It’s Hyuna. Now show me your wallet, baby boy.”

Following Kihyun to the far left of the room, up a few steps to a higher platform he heard the peculiar, almost muffled sound of skin being repeatedly prodded. A few steps further revealed Hyunwoo receiving a new shoulder piece by a tebori-specialized tattooist. Hyunwoo smelled Kihyun before he ever saw him enter, but when his eyes landed on the omega, a proud half-smile flickered on his lips. Kihyun was relieved when he saw his alpha smile and walked up to the duo.

The man tattooing Hyunwoo, a beta from the looks of it, pulled away and set the wooden tool down on the table beside him, wiping the abused muscles clean with a moist paper towel. His hair was a striking deep red, but not as red as the silk robe loose around his shoulders that exposed his own assortment of vibrant irezumi tattoos—forever branding him as a gangster like Hyunwoo. The man’s most distinct tattoo, however, was a small cross under his right eye, sharpening his edgy appearance. His rugged appearance didn’t match the sweet smell of piña colada wafting off of him nor the dimples in his cheeks when he smiled at the visitors.

Kihyun smirked as he placed his hand on Hyunwoo’s nape and whispered in the alpha’s ear. “Hey, baby.”

The brush of the omega’s hand on Hyunwoo’s nape lit his alpha biology, and he hummed low at the welcomed presence of his queen. Grabbing Kihyun’s wrist, he pulled him down slightly, just enough to plant a possessive kiss on his cherry-sweet lips. “Hey,” he whispered back, then offered the omega a place to sit beside him.

Hyunwoo sat on the floor of the platform beside the famed information broker and soon-to-be
stakeholder, Lee Jooheon. Both jo-pok, they donned traditional silk robes to display their distinct irezumi; inked allegiance to their lifestyle. Hyunwoo’s navy blue robe pooled at his elbows as he sat reclined to allow Jooheon to stab ink into his pectoralis muscle, completing the first quarter of the alpha’s jo-pok bodysuit. His tan skin was swollen and red, but the ink was fresh and vivid and precise. Jooheon did good work.

Jooheon didn’t belong to a specific branch or territory of the Korean jo-pok. He was independent and served Boss Bang directly. As the sole tebori specialist, he survived a tradition that held a necessary and honorable spot in East Asian organized crime history. He tattooed all branches, all territories, including jo-pok in other countries—as such, he knew a lot of inside info, making him the most educated asset for any branch boss. Hyunwoo needed his expertise.

The only way to get it was to get inked—share blood, share soju, share time.

Hyunwoo was already five soju bottles deep by the time Kihyun arrived. From his spot by the door, Hyungwon chuckled to himself; his mentor had a high tolerance for alcohol, which was definitely the secret to how and why he knew all the gossip of the crime world.

Hyunwoo wrapped an arm around his omega possessively. Bergamot and citrus smoldered into the atmospheric tobacco smoke as he scented Kihyun. “This is Lee Jooheon. He has agreed to invest in our international cause. We couldn’t do it without him and his expertise. He’s a very intelligent man with great influence... and an iron liver.” The alpha raised his soju glass, then tossed back the liquid. Beside the tebori equipment were dozens of the empty, green bottles. The two had certainly become acquainted quickly.

The queen’s smokey eyes glanced at the freshly tattooed skin that gave the alpha’s pec a fuller appearance. “What did I miss?” he asked, leaning into his king as his hand found purchase upon Hyunwoo’s thigh where it leisurely sat. By his king’s demeanor, Kihyun hoped he hadn’t missed too much of the fun.

“And who is this?” Jooheon asked Hyunwoo, delighting in the omega’s fragrance.

Hyunwoo smirked at Jooheon. “Who’s this? This is the queen of my empire, the one you specifically asked to see.” He tightened his hold, evermore jealous. “What did you want with him?”

Realization flickered in the beta’s eyes as he took in the exquisite company his new acquaintance had at his side. “He’s as radiant as a diamond, hm? Ah! What I want is what any pleasure-seeker wants.” He discarded the collection of used paper towels in a garbage beside his seat and pulled his gloves off, throwing them away as well. His unaffected demeanor suggested he had a devious streak. “Just a little show between our omegas before we move any further, to really seal the deal. Your queen with my prince.” Smirking at Kihyun with anticipation, Jooheon intertwined his fingers on his lap. “What do you say?”

Kihyun didn’t know what this man’s ultimate intentions were but he knew what the mischievous beta was playing at. The man wasn’t going to relent his allegiance easily, but the omega was good at this game—hell, he had played it well up until this point. Can’t play a pro, as they say. Kihyun assured the alpha and looked at him with a grin. “I’ll do it. Been a while since I had fun with another omega.” His tone, flirty. His mind, ready. If it was to help his beloved king reach their goals, what was a little innocent fun?

Hyunwoo wasn’t expecting the beta to make such a passively voyeuristic demand, though given his occupation he should’ve anticipated something of the sort. Possessiveness was still a quality of prominence in his alpha dynamic, especially since he and Kihyun had developed into something more serious than a gangster and debtor. As such, the flippancy he once had at sharing Kihyun died
when the omega confessed and reciprocated his love. He didn’t want to share, not anymore, not ever, and he’d go to dangerous lengths to prevent it.

Perhaps it was luck that the most critical stakeholder to secure was a taken beta, unaffected by the affliction of hormone-crazed biology. Admittedly, Hyunwoo was relieved. If the only requirement to seal the deal was omega-on-omega exhibitionism, something Kihyun eagerly consented to, Hyunwoo simply shrugged and shot Jooheon a grin.

“Give him a show he’ll never forget, pet,” he whispered to Kihyun.

Permission granted and willing, Kihyun pressed his lips to Hyunwoo’s cheek and whispered to the alpha. “I’ll make sure no one forgets. Including you, my king... and that’s a promise.” He turned to the beta with a grin and nodded, a subtle gesture that made the fiery beta’s smirk widen.

“Changkyun!” Jooheon called out in a sing-song tone. The short silhouette at the bar emerged from the shadows, unveiling a handsome omega with shiny piercings and American-style tattoos up his arms. He came obediently and leaned over Jooheon, lithe fingers dipping under the robe around the beta’s torso to tease the tiger tattoo on the beta’s chest.

“You called?” Such a deep voice did not match the omega’s appearance.

Hyunwoo had noticed one of the anonymous figures lurking in the background of the room paid special attention to he and Jooheon throughout the night, but he wrote it off as earnest surveillance. He did not anticipate a lurking omega lover, especially one to a beta.

Jooheon called him Changkyun, and the alpha reacted to the omega’s pheromones the instant their raspberry scent drifted into his nose. God, he smelled delectable. Hormones surged within him to prey on the new omega, to conquer and devour just as he had Kihyun. The hypocrisy of his possessiveness and reactivity grounded him momentarily, though his resolve was loosened by countless bottles of shared soju with Jooheon and cocaine withdrawals.

Kihyun inspected the newcomer, noting his skinny figure under tight jeans and an unbuttoned dress shirt. The crisp aroma of raspberries was refreshing in his nose.

With a simple movement, Jooheon’s finger hooked under the omega’s chin. “Mhm. Entertain us with this exquisite creature, won’t you, my love? Play nice now.”

“It’ll be my pleasure,” replied Changkyun.

From afar, Hyungwon grinned at Changkyun. He hardly knew the guy, but he knew his mentor was smitten based on the way his body language perked at his presence. The omega must’ve given off a scent most appealing to alphas, because both Boss and the dancer, as well as the lesser alpha enforcers outside, were stupefied by him.

Kihyun locked eyes with Changkyun. An electric surge rushed through him. God, the other omega was handsome. He didn’t miss the subtle wink directed at Hyunwoo by Changkyun, a teasing gesture from the omega playbook Kihyun knew all too well. The other omega then stood up and held a hand out for Kihyun to take. “What’s your name, beauty?”

“Kihyun,” he replied, smiling. Their height difference gave Kihyun the benefit from the lift in his shoes.

Being so close to Changkyun introduced a distinct to Kihyun’s nose—the permanence of beta pheromones locked into the omega’s. It was a fruity marriage combined to forever ward off predators who would want the omega for themselves... Changkyun and Jooheon were mated? And
yet the beta was fine with allowing his mate to partake in such spectacles? Was that the freedom love with a beta granted? Minhyuk came to mind, but Kihyun quickly suppressed the thought. He had a job to do here, after all.

Changkyun tilted his head, freeing his hand from Kihyun’s to hold the curve of his hip. Guiding Kihyun’s cheek with his other hand, their lips met. Compared to Hyunwoo’s lips, Changkyun’s were thinner, firm but wet; a welcomed change as he Kihyun kissed back, indulging himself in the delicacy of omega lips. His hands wound around Changkyun’s waist as their simple kiss became one, more, several. Each became more intimate, sensual, until Kihyun’s eyes fell closed and he succumbed.

Lips opened, welcoming needier kisses, wandering and curious tongues. They were losing themselves in sweet omega nirvana. Then, Kihyun felt something hard against his bottom lip and he pulled his head away with momentary shock.

“Like that?” Changkyun’s deep voice whispered against his lips, and Kihyun smirked playfully, nodding his head when he realized what it was.

“Let me see.” Kihyun replied. Changkyun’s tongue poked out and flashed not one, but two horizontal silver studs pierced through his tongue. ”Oh, fuck.” Aroused by the jewelry, Kihyun slipped his tongue into Changkyun’s mouth, the balls of the piercings against his tongue making him wetter.

Hyunwoo popped a cigarette in his mouth and, being the older of the two jo-pok men, poured them another round of soju. He smoked without taking the stick from his lips, and instead exhaled through his nose, adding a smoky vibe to the intoxicating cherry-raspberry hurricane ripping through him. Fuck, watching his omega battle for dominance over another filled him with a sense of pride; it also made him want to bend Kihyun over and fuck him then and there for all to watch.

Hyungwon inadvertently walked closer to the erotic show, tongue absentmindedly swiping over his lip as he did. Entranced, he again found himself staring at the cherry blossom queen for longer than a good underling should. Perhaps he was too obvious because Hyuna snickered at him.

Back on the neon lit platform, the omegas moaned and rutted against one another. Changkyun snuck his hand between Kihyun’s thighs to palm his crotch, and an audible gasp came from Kihyun’s swollen lips, breaking their heated, voyeuristic makeout show as pleasure built.

Changkyun didn’t hesitate to press his lips to Kihyun’s neck, ghosting over pre-existing hickies and love bites from Hyunwoo.

“Changkyun, baby, remember boundaries.” Jooheon, who had been sitting back to watch the enticing scene unfold, warned his mate. His tropical scent complemented his excitement nicely.

The omega in question chuckled against Kihyun’s neck. “Sorry, am I getting carried away?”

When Jooheon piped up, Hyunwoo sneered—it was just like a beta to stop the action before it got juicy. The stakeholder wanted this, yet he wanted it to end prematurely? The hell kind of voyeur was he? Hyunwoo growled, aroused alpha pheromones strong in the air.

“No, continue,” he said with an alpha tone, taking the reins over the other dynamics.

The other alpha in the room, the dancer named Hyuna, also permeated the neon-lit space with her jasmine scent. Her and Hyunwoo exchanged glares from across the room in a show of dominance. She looked like she wanted a piece of the action, too.
Jooheon lifted a shot of soju to his lips, eyeing the alpha with a dour gaze. Fine, if the haughty alpha wanted it, Jooheon would push the bastard to his breaking point. A quick nod to Changkyun told the overexcited omega to continue his lewd ministrations.

A flash of a grin and curious hands wandered past the tight hem of Kihyun’s pants and nimble fingers pressed into the flesh of Kihyun’s ass. It drove the queen wild, but he would not submit so easily. As Changkyun pressed open-mouthed kisses along his neck, Kihyun gripped the other omega’s hips and shoved Changkyun against the wall. Caught off guard, Changkyun mewled at the turn of dominance. His deep moans went straight to Kihyun’s dick, making him grind against Changkyun.

Hyunwoo adamantly watched, proud and aroused, as Kihyun overtook Jooheon’s lover. By the looks of the beta’s expression, this display of exhibitionism and voyeurism was commonplace in Jooheon’s jo-pok meetings and pivotal in negotiations—it was passive persuasion that appealed to all dynamics, and it was nothing like alpha-alpha businesses.

Smoky aura around him, the alpha regarded Jooheon with confidence. “My queen’s performance is more than adequate, as I’m sure you’d agree. So I believe we’ve come to an agreement on the matter at hand, yes?”

Jooheon assessed Hyunwoo with tenacity, unclasping his hands as he looked away from the alpha. “It seems we have... Changkyun, that’s enough.”

Changkyun removed his hand from Kihyun’s pants. “We should do this again sometime,” he whispered against Kihyun’s red, puffed lips and gave him one last kiss. He backed away and returned to Jooheon’s side.

Kihyun, frazzled and panting, did what he could to compose himself by pulling down his shirt and licking his raspberry-stained lips. Stumbling, he returned to his seat beside Hyunwoo, willing his sweet cherry pheromones to calm down. Never had another omega aroused him quite like that, and he couldn’t help but make quick glances at Changkyun. “I think I just made a friend,” he said to Hyunwoo.

The alpha smirked. “We sure did, pet,” he commented, though he referred to a different friend and a different situation. Jooheon was a peculiar character with hedonistic tastes who created an idyllic setting dripping with sexual energy—something he as a balanced beta seemed to comfortably thrive amidst other-dynamic chaos. He knew exactly what he was doing, and he was damn good at it.

Try as he might to pacify his alpha biology in the strong presence of Kihyun’s hormone surge, Hyunwoo couldn’t; especially when the alpha female across the room eyed his omega like prey. Gripping Kihyun by the chin, Hyunwoo inhaled cherry paradise and licked the omega’s wet, raspberry lips seductively, reclaiming his queen. Fangs prominent, he seized Kihyun’s lips in a searing kiss, groaning at the taste of two omegas on his tongue.

Hyungwon looked away without meaning to; something set him off about Hyunwoo remarking his queen. Perfect timing anyway as his cellphone rang. He slipped passed the bulky alpha enforcers to take the call in the hall. It was an anonymous number from one of his burner phones, which usually indicated hot intel. It was the late 90’s Nokia with a Hatsune Miku sticker, the one used only for Gwangju branch intel. Problem was, that burner hardly ever went off. This meant bad news—something from within was going awry.

Satisfied with the new allied companion, Jooheon rubbed his hand up and down his bothered omega with a smirk, amused by how easily affected alphas were, or at least those who were there
to witness two beautiful omegas partake in an innocent kissing show. “How about another round, Mr. Son? To celebrate! It’s on the house.”

Pulling away from Kihyun, Hyunwoo agreed to Jooheon’s offer of more revelry. “Fuck yeah, keep it coming.” As long as the sin they enjoyed didn’t involve sharing Kihyun anymore, he was accepting. Besides, the drunker he got, the easier it was to ignore his withdrawals… Maybe it’d help numb the nagging irritation building inside, too.

The alpha kissed the omega again, shorter this time, before casting his heavy gaze to the pretty omega beside Jooheon. He smelled the distinct nirvana of omega slick from Changkyun and growled at the effect it had on him. He was half hard, mind alight with aspirations of ménage à trois.

On the mini stage, Hyuna stopped dancing and ventured closer to the group, her jasmine scent captivating and enchanting. “May I offer anyone a dance? Perhaps a striptease?” she cooed, pressing her breasts together to sweeten the offer.

Kihyun gazed at her full chest before looking at her angelic face. Swept by her beauty and affected by her aroma, he turned to face the woman, lingering lust in his eyes. Being an unmarked omega in a place like this was dangerous. His omega biology yearned for the dancer to dominate him in his moment of weakness, especially for the intimate company of a woman. “I, um…”

Hyunwoo growled at Hyuna. Another alpha’s arousal was poison to his nose and she was no different. Plus, the omega smelled sweeter, which meant he was reacting to her come-ons.

“Kihyun might!” Changkyun sang, flashing an impish wink to Jooheon, then Kihyun. Jooheon chuckled, proud of his mate for encouraging his hedonistic ways. Changkyun then slithered off Jooheon’s lap to fetch them more drinks like the firestarter he was.

Hyunwoo stood as Hyuna neared Kihyun, boasting his ego and puffing his chest when she rolled her eyes at the display of dominance.

“Chill, big guy. I’m not trying to take your man… I’m trying to take your money,” Hyuna litled in an alpha tone and snapped the lace strap of her bra where cash was tucked. Hyunwoo snarled. She rolled her eyes.

“Now here’s what I’m going to do: I’m going to dance on this gorgeous omega here, and you’re going to watch me do it…” She tossed her gaze to Jooheon momentarily. “The gentleman over there already paid for the service. Best to keep him satisfied, right?” Her hazel eyes lingered on Hyunwoo’s fresh tattoo and smiled; she was all too familiar with men like him. “I know how much you jo-pok men will do for business… I’m sure this isn’t the worst thing to happen,” she added as she straddled Kihyun’s lap and slowly sunk down, her alpha nose tingling with omega arousal.

Hyunwoo stared at Jooheon, hating the man with every alpha gene in his body. The fucker was just exploiting Hyunwoo’s biology for the fun of it, like some cruel, sadistic prank to spike his beta plateau. No decorum, only mischief—using brokerage as influence for leverage over the king. Hyunwoo had no choice but to stand down.

He did so reluctantly, but scented Kihyun with spiced citrus once he returned sitting. “Hurry, get your money’s worth, whore.”

Kihyun was aware of Hyunwoo’s anger, but saying no to such a lovely service would be rude to the woman and to the beta who paid for her. He followed his omega instincts and gave into submission, allowing her to do what she wanted to him with a racing heart and surging cock.
From his own seat, Jooheon grinned maliciously as he watched Hyuna. All the pheromones in the room were finally beginning to affect him as well—his power move almost bounced back in his face, but it was worth paying the stripper to see the look on the alpha’s face. Another day, another test to provoke his own jo-pok brethren; bothered men leaked info too easily.

Hyuna smiled pretty and batted her thick eye lashes. Pursing her red lips together, she tilted her head to the side in a rather demure, passive motion as she began swiveling her hips to the music that otherwise fell to the background of the mens’ conversation. Her body language appeared innocent, almost virginal, but she was nothing of that sort. Her red stiletto nails gently dug into Kihyun’s shoulder, then she raked them down the length of his arms just to see if he’d goosebump.

Chocolate brown hair whispy in her face, she bit her lip and rolled her hips, allowing the movement to ripple up her torso. Jasmine encased them, competing with bergamot but winning only due to proximity. “You want it sensual?” Hyuna whispered into Kihyun’s ear, tiny moans accepting her question. “Or do you want it dirty?” She reached between them to rub the omega’s semi.

Eyes locked on the two, Hyunwoo growled at the overt action. She was really pushing boundaries. He had half a mind to pull out his concealed pistol and show her who the hell she was messing with.

In an effort to calm his raging king, Kihyun took her wrist in his grasp. His touch gentle, he whispered against her neck, “Keep it clean, angel. Wouldn’t want to make my king rip your pretty wings off.” No doubt if this turned into more, Hyunwoo would go feral; after all, he was the only one to watch Kihyun squirm under skilled alpha touches. The omega nosed at her jewelled ear, guiding her hand away from his crotch and to his waist instead. “Show me where to put my hands.”

Hyuna pouted. “Fine, but only because you called me Angel.” She guided the omega’s hands to her hips and squeezed gently. Tossing a look to the silently seething jo-pok boss, she cooed, “Hold me tight, baby, or I just might fly away.”

She grinded and swayed, her movements slow and careful and sensual in the most feminine of ways. Her tattooed arms draped around Kihyun’s neck, she made sure to keep him real close so he could feel every move she made. “You can tell it’s been a while since you’ve been with a woman... Men can be barbarians, you know,” she whispered against his neck, again poking the beast just to see his reaction. She clearly didn’t give a fuck about pissing off the other alpha—in fact, it seemed as though she was paid to do it.

Hyunwoo shot daggers at her, enraged with jealousy, pheromones a flurry of hostile emotions, and cursed the debaucherous games of the mischievous beta. Hell, if Hyunwoo didn’t require Jooheon’s unique skill so direly, and if he didn’t come at such a high recommendation from Boss Bang himself, the alpha would’ve already beat the bloody pulp out of that grinning motherfucker.

What the fuck did he get out of this anyway? Why agree to help? Just to torture those who would otherwise be superior to him?

Kihyun bit his lower lip. “Am I one of those barbarians?” he asked sensually, tightening his hands around her hips, playing into her wicked game which pulled on his inner omega’s last string of composure.

Hyuna shook her head. “No, you’re just the man I go for,” she said flirtatiously. She spun around, back flush against Kihyun’s chest, and leaned forward to bounce her ass on his lap. Gliding her hips reverse cowgirl, she paid special attention to Kihyun’s groin, turning herself on with endless fantasies about playing with the omega her way.
The cyclone of inter-dynamic scents saturated the neon-lit room, casting a thick blanket of arousal over all. Even the alpha enforcers standing guard were effected by the waves of unbridled sex waking their biologies, clouding their judgement. Naturally, Hyunwoo was livid and feverish, aggressive and confrontational; the urge to snort a line grew stronger with each abuse of his authority. Like a loaded firework, he’d explode at any moment.

Changkyun returned with a tray of soju bottles and shot glasses full of a mysterious purple liquid. Sensing more envy mixed with sweet cherry permeate the lounge, he lowered a tray to offer Hyunwoo the booze. “You look like you could use one... or three.”

Hyunwoo grabbed a bottle of soju, untwisted the cap, and swigged down half its contents. He eyed the omega, distrusting and malicious, like he wanted to snap his thin build in half for just acquainting with the slimy information broker. Directing his attention to Jooheon, the alpha impatiently asked, “Why are you helping me? What do you get out of this, huh?”

Grinning, Jooheon snapped his fingers. “All right, Hyuna. That’ll be all for now, thank you.”

Hyuna did as Jooheon requested, her obedience stemming only from the promise of money from the beta rather than true obedience. She stared at Jooheon pointedly, reminding him of his promise before walking out the door with a trail of jasmine in her wake. Hyunwoo, fuming and impatient, the alcohol in his system amplifying his alpha demeanor, pulled Kihyun close and immediately scented him in spiced bergamot.

Jooheon grasped a shot from the tray his mate set on the small table and downed it before finally indulging the alpha. “I’m always interested in a story of triumph despite the odds. I have a soft spot for underdogs.”

Distracted by his queen, Hyunwoo almost missed a critical word he’d never associated with himself. It stabbed its way into his ear—underdog.

“What the fuck do you mean underdog? Whose the fucking underdog? What fucking odds?” The alpha snapped, shooting up to a defensive stance and lording over the sitting beta. “I am the Boss of the Gwangju branch jo-pok. I own this city and everyone in it. I stimulate this economy, I protect local business and citizens, I do what is necessary to keep Gwangju prolific... I create my own odds. So tell me, beta, what the fuck are you talking about?”

He was so enraged, it didn’t matter if he lost Boss Bang’s most recommended stakeholder.

Jooheon’s smile never faltered. “Regicide, my hot-headed Gwangju king.”

End Notes

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