Can We Talk for a Moment?
by lululawrence

Summary

It was widely known that alphas were never as common as betas or omegas. It is believed the reasoning for that was safety for their packs. Each pack could only have one Alpha, and in order to keep order and make sure there was no mistaking who was in power, once the successor had been named, other alphas would be forced out of the pack.

The populations grew, as was to be expected with time and all manner of developments, and while the packs got larger and joined together, the number of alphas never increased.

Harry didn’t care for the reasons behind the phenomenon. In the end, it didn’t really matter. All he knew was he was the only alpha within about a thousand mile radius, and he was a complete and total disappointment.

Or the one where Harry is a shy, nerdy alpha, Louis is a loud omega punk, and there's more to both of them than their reputations.

Notes

My darlings Nic, Tabby, and Michelle! I adore all of you so very much and have looked up to all of your writing for just...ever. Becoming friends with all of you over the past year has been amazing and i'm still in awe of the fact that like...we chat. And you know me. And you
let me annoy you. hahahaha Anyway, thank you to all of you for being such amazing people and always so kind! I hope you had (and for Michelle, will have!) amazing birthdays! This is dedicated to all of you for those special days of yours. (Michelle, I hope this first dip into the A/B/O fic world won’t scare you and is easy to follow. I tried to make it that way for you, even if my world building is quite a bit different than you usually see). I love all of you very much a lot!!!

This fic was also written as part of an ongoing challenge using the book 1000 Feelings For Which There Are No Names for our prompts. To read the other fics written in this challenge, click here. You can find more information on the challenge here and to reblog the masterpost on tumblr, you can click here.

My prompt was 746: The longing for someone to woo you over to the dark side.

Biggest thanks to my brainstorming pal, Emmu, and my beta, Bri. They make the world go round! All remaining mistakes are, as always, my own.

Title comes from Wait by Maroon 5. I love the song and as soon as I heard it I thought of this fic. I almost forgot, though, so I’m glad I remembered while I complained to anyone who would listen about how much I hate finding titles for my fics. lollll

This is a work of fiction, please treat it as such and please also do not share this with anyone in any way associated with the band or their solo acts as that is just awkwardness waiting to ensue. Thank you, and I hope you enjoy this fic!

See the end of the work for more notes.

There were a lot of theories regarding why alphas were so rare. They ranged everywhere from “so technical it was nearly impossible fully understand”, to “not very likely”, to “full on bizarre”. Out of the multitude of theories presented, there was one most commonly accepted as The Truth, thanks to research done by respected anthropologists.

It was widely known that alphas were never as common as betas or omegas. It is believed the reasoning for that was safety for their packs. Each pack could only have one Alpha, and in order to keep order and make sure there was no mistaking who was in power, once the successor had been named, other alphas would be forced out of the pack.

As of about one or two hundred years ago, it was the norm to only have the Alpha and the successor in each pack. By that point, shifting was also no longer done, but they still kept to their own in a tribal-type system.

The populations grew, as was to be expected with time and all manner of developments, and while the packs got larger and joined together, the number of alphas never increased.

Harry didn’t care for the reasons behind the phenomenon. In the end, it didn’t really matter. All he knew was he was the only alpha within about a thousand mile radius, and he was a complete and total disappointment.
Harry hunched his shoulders and gripped his bookbag. The first day of each semester always got to him, made his nerves go crazy. He wasn’t sure why, because school had been exactly the same since he’d started kindergarten at age five.

Absolutely nothing had changed since then. He was still scorned and looked down on for being such a wimpy and unconventional alpha. Harry didn’t understand why it was such a big deal. So he wasn’t as tall and broad and muscular as alphas were traditionally expected to be. Maybe he liked button up shirts and bow ties and had to wear glasses and got on the honor roll every grading period. It didn’t mean he was a bad alpha, or at least that’s what he told himself. Someone had to, since nearly everyone else was more than disappointed in him.

The other side of all of this was something he actually hated even more than the obvious contempt, and that was those same people he could hear talking about him behind his back throwing themselves at him. Omegas and, at times, even betas would go around talking shit about him loud enough that he could easily hear everything they were saying, and then a class or two later would come up and ask him on a date.

Harry was brought back to the present by the a shout down the hall and he realized he needed to focus on his books if he wanted to get to class on time.

“Oh, look at Marcel! Is that a brand new bow tie?” one omega teased after they’d slammed Harry’s locker shut in his face. “Didja get that for Christmas?”

The rest of the group of omegas and betas laughed before continuing down the hall. Harry took a deep breath and opened his locker again so he could finish getting his things for his morning classes.

Christmas break had been so refreshing. It had given him a chance to spend time with his family and see Gemma for the first time since spring break as well as see his childhood best friend, Liam. Liam had moved away when they were only eight, but he came back every Christmas with his family to spend the holiday with his grandparents, who still lived close to Harry.

Liam was the only omega Harry had ever met who treated him like he was worth anything. Most people made Harry feel like he was a waste of space and particularly a waste of the alpha gender, but Liam never had and still didn’t.

Then again, that made it all that more difficult returning to school where everyone had been calling him Marcel for so long, Harry was pretty certain most of them didn’t even remember that wasn’t his name. It had been coined by a kid in one of his classes who got mad at him when he wouldn’t let them cheat off of him and, because Harry was who he was, the name had spread the more people talked about him, and now even the teachers referred to him as Marcel.

Harry shut his locker and headed towards his gender studies course that he was starting this semester. He wasn’t all that excited for the section on alphas that would undoubtedly give his classmates more material to use against him, but he had high hopes of being able to sit in the back of the class.

For a minute he let himself dream about a world where people couldn’t smell the alpha on him. A world where he could blend in and be like any other student who just wanted to graduate and leave town.

He was quickly jarred from that dream by someone bumping into him. With a snicker, the girl said, “Oh! Sorry, Alpha!”
Harry really couldn’t wait to get away from here and find a place where maybe he could belong.

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Harry’s last period of the day was art. As he walked into the room, he took a deep breath and slowly let it out.

He loved the smell of paints and pencil shavings. He loved being able to look around and not find a single surface in the room that was untouched by an art medium of some kind. There was even a dark crevice in the wall from when Harry was a sophomore and one of the other students in his class was doing the final touches on a metal sculpture and, over the course of only a few minutes, the soldering iron somehow burned its way into the wall while the student tried to save a weak portion of the piece from falling on the floor. It had smelled of burnt paint for weeks, but every time Harry looked at it he had to smile because, in a small way at least, he had left his own marks on the room as well. He liked the reminder of that.

“Harry! Glad you’re joining us again!”

Harry turned around and saw his favorite teacher, Mr. Aumiller, setting out supplies that would be used for their class period.

“Isn’t this class a little basic for you, considering the others you’ve taken the past couple of years?”

Harry shrugged before he set his bookbag down on a chair and went to help the beta get things ready for class.

“It was the only one that worked with the other required classes this semester. I don’t mind if it’s an intro class, I just want to be able to do art.”

Mr. Aumiller smiled his crooked grin and nodded towards the paper he wanted Harry to help with.

“Well, I’m happy that you’re here.”

Harry felt warmth in his chest as he was spoken to with kindness and familiarity for the first time all day. Mr. Aumiller was the only one in the school who called Harry by his actual name, and Harry didn’t have the words to express how important that was for him. As soon as Mr. Aumiller made the effort to make Harry feel comfortable in his classroom the first day of high school, Harry had known he would do anything he could to continue taking art. Even if it meant an introductory course his final semester of senior year.

Class started and, once the syllabus had been introduced, Mr. Aumiller got them going on their first project.

“We are going to be having you pair up. There’s only fourteen of you, so everyone should have a partner. We are going to be working on silhouettes.”

As Mr. Aumiller introduced the first project, Harry got more and more excited. He’d never done one before, but he’d bought one every year when he went to the state fair. He loved seeing the caricature versions of his silhouette, so he was interested in seeing how they would turn out now.

Except that meant he’d have to work with another student. Harry took a deep breath as he waited to
hear whether Mr. Aumiller would be assigning them partners or allowing them to choose.

“I’m going to allow you to choose, but be adults about it, okay? If you see someone who doesn’t have a partner and you need one, just go over and introduce yourself. None of this being shy teenagers shit. I know the truth, I’ve been doing this long enough.”

Harry snorted. Mr. Aumiller never had cared about language in his classroom, but he still enjoyed seeing the shock on other students’ faces the first time they heard him curse in class. As the chairs began to scrape across the floor, it was only then Harry fully realized the situation.

He’d be working with a partner for this project. Harry looked around, apprehensive as to who, if anyone, would come and ask to be his partner. To his surprise, Louis Tomlinson stood up and walked straight over to Harry.

“Why does he call you Harry when that’s not your name?”

Harry blinked at Louis in confusion. He took in the omega’s dark eyeliner, pierced nose, ears, and eyebrow, and hair, currently colored to look like a flame. It was beautifully done, a pale blue near his scalp that faded up to a red with orange and yellow at the tips as it stood, spiky all over his head.

Louis had never spoken to Harry before, which hadn’t bothered Harry in the slightest. Louis was a bit of a troublemaker, never opting for biting his tongue when it really would have been better for him to keep quiet and, in addition to being a punk with an unapologetic attitude, he also had a bit of a reputation as well.

“Oh come on. I know you can talk, because you schooled stupid Mr. Hamrick in gender studies earlier. Why’s Mr. Aumiller calling you Harry?”

Harry swallowed a bit, feeling nervous with the full force of Louis’ forceful blue eyes on him. “Uh, he calls me Harry because Harry is actually my name, not Marcel.”

Louis’ mouth popped open a little at that, and he sat down with a huff in the chair beside Harry’s. Eyebrows furrowed and intensity burning in his blue eyes, Louis leaned forward and said, “Wait, seriously? I’ve known who you were since I moved here in seventh grade and only now I’m learning your name isn’t Marcel? How the fuck did that happen?”

Harry shrugged. “Someone called me that to be mean when we were younger and it kinda stuck.”

Louis studied his face a little longer before he asked, “Why the fuck do you let them call you that?”

Harry couldn’t help the strangled squawk that escaped him in surprise. No one had ever bothered to ask him that, much less with such force and bluntness. Honestly, he wasn’t sure he had an answer.

“Uh, well, I tried at first, but once it caught on, it was too much work. People don’t really listen to me, anyway.”

Louis scowled at him. “Well, it’s nice to meet you, Harry.”

Harry gave a weak smile before looking around the class. All of them had already paired up and gotten their lamps, paper, pencils, and carving tools to get started.

Turning back to Louis, Harry said, “Well. I hope you don’t mind, but it looks like we’re partners now.”

“Course I don’t mind. I’ll go grab our things.”
Harry was surprised when Louis hopped right up to get the tools needed. That was three -- or was it four? -- times that Louis had caught him off guard already this class, but his mind was already racing as he tried to figure the omega out.

What was his motivation? Was it just curiosity, or was it that he saw this as his chance to get to Harry? Louis certainly didn’t seem like the others who had done everything they could to gain Harry’s attention, but that didn’t mean anything.

Harry watched as Mr. Aumiller said something to Louis that made him smile so wide his eyes crinkled a little in the corner, and it was then that Harry decided. Everyone deserved a chance to prove people wrong, Harry knew that better than almost anyone, so he would do what he could to ensure he gave Louis a fair one.

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“You know, I’d always thought this would be easy,” Louis said before sticking his tongue out of the corner of his mouth in concentration. They were working on carving the silhouettes they had drawn during yesterday’s last class, and due to the heavy weight of the paper, they were finding it difficult to get a smooth and clean cut. “But it’s pretty fucking hard.”

Harry snorted. “The concept is easy, but the execution definitely isn’t.”

Louis rolled his eyes. “This is only my second day actually talking to you, and you really do sound as smart as you look.”

Pursing his lips, Harry looked at Louis. “You’re surprised I’m actually smart?”

Louis froze, and looked up at Harry. Harry avoided his gaze and focused instead on Louis’ chipped dark blue nail polish. He quite liked the color; it matched Louis’ eyes when he was deep in thought.

“I’m not surprised you’re smart. The fact you’re on the honor roll speaks for itself, but like...you can’t always believe what people say. People talk a lot of shit, and I wasn’t sure if you really were everything people said you were.”

It was Harry’s turn to feel uncomfortable. “Yeah. A lot of shit.”

Louis only hummed in agreement before focusing on the silhouette of Harry he’d outlined yesterday. Harry took his cue and went back to making sure he carved each individual spike of hair just right. It was so hard to maneuver the knives through the paper he was constantly afraid of it skipping off the paper and ruining what Harry had done. He would rather not start over again.

They worked in silence, and for once Harry found he didn’t mind it. It wasn’t uncomfortable and it didn’t feel judgemental like it usually did with others. Maybe Louis was giving Harry a chance too. Harry wouldn’t mind if he did. For the first time since Harry was old enough to realize that anyone bonding with one of the few alphas in the world would automatically improve their social standing, Harry felt like he was with someone who didn’t care about that. Well, someone other than Liam. It was nice.

Harry peeked up and saw Louis’ glasses were slipping down his nose a little bit. Harry had seen Louis wear glasses when sitting in the back of class in order to read the board, but he’d never been able to observe him up close like this. Louis was quite stunning in them. They gave him a different
quality, more pensive or something, to go with his usual *I don’t give a fuck* aura.

Shaking his head at himself, Harry went back to the silhouette. He was being stupid and after only two days of Louis being nice to him during one class, Harry was already finding himself thinking better of Louis. Just because he was nice didn’t mean that the other parts of his reputation, namely his sexual promiscuity, would be false. Besides, Louis had proven to be just as brash as Harry had expected him to be, constantly spouting his thoughts and opinions without fear of how they’d be received. So really, the rest could be true as well.

Just then, Harry’s knife skipped over the paper, putting a deep gash into the paper right about in Louis’ nose and making the paper crumple up like an accordion under the blade.

“Shit,” Harry cursed as he inspected it closer. There was no way to remedy that. He hadn’t taken off one of the offending spikes, but there also wasn’t a way to cover up a hole of that size. It had snagged the paper and made a bigger tear than Harry would have expected for paper this thick.

“Oh man, that sucks,” Louis said softly. “Should I go get the lamp again?”

Harry nodded sadly. He looked around and saw another pairing was doing a new silhouette sketch as well. At least he wasn’t the only one.

“Yeah, thanks. I’ll get a new sheet of paper.”

The second time sketching Louis’ silhouette went smoother than the first.

“This one might turn out better than yesterday’s anyway,” Harry said slowly as he worked on getting Louis’ hair just right.

“Oh yeah? That’s good. I’m trying to sit a little more still today. I didn’t realize how hard I was making it until I was sketching you and a tiny movement threw me off. Sorry, man.”

Harry chuckled a bit as his pencil continued to mark the paper. Once the hair was done, Harry actually enjoyed the rest. The smooth slope of Louis’ forehead, the sharp jut of his nose that was almost a smidge too large for his face, but somehow when matched with his chin and hair, it worked. Harry loved being able to see the simplicity of people’s features when done in silhouette. It helped him admire the small things, like the slight indentation before Louis’ browline, that he wouldn’t have noticed otherwise.

“Okay, I think I’m done,” Harry said after he took a minute to make sure it was how he wanted it. He took the paper down from the easel and, once the lamp had been returned to its corner, got back to work carving the paper.

“You’ve got some incredible lips, Harry,” Louis murmured.

At first Harry was caught off guard due to how the comment came from out of nowhere, but then he felt a weight gathering in the pit of his stomach. Harry tried to will away his unease. He really had hoped Louis would be different than the others, but now he was making comments about Harry’s lips?

“I mean, look at them,” Louis motioned down at his paper, and the anxiety that had started to curl up his spine slowly loosened when he realized Louis was talking about his lips on the paper just as he had been considering Louis’ brows and nose a few moments ago. “You can tell how full they are even in this silhouette. My sister would be incredibly jealous. She’s only twelve, but she’s already asked my mom for the stuff that makes your lips bigger? What’s that called? It’s not botox or whatever, the other stuff.”
“What, like, lip plumper or something?” Harry asked. He thought that’s what his sister called it.

“Yeah, that kinda thing. You don’t need that, though. Yours are amazing. Not thin like mine.”

Harry sat there, considering. Was he expected to give a compliment now to help Louis feel better? Should he just stay silent and awkward? Should he say thank you?

“Oh, stop freaking out, H. You don’t need to say anything or make a big deal of it. I’m just saying.”

Harry let out the breath he’d unintentionally held since Louis had first mentioned his mouth.

“Sorry I made that awkward.” Harry bit his lip as he started cutting out Louis’ silhouette again.

“Okay, everyone. Five minutes to clean everything up before the bell rings and we’re all free until tomorrow morning!” Mr. Aumiller called.

“He’s a riot, isn’t he?” Louis asked. He rubbed his eye and smudged his eyeliner a little, but Harry thought it looked almost better that way. “I mean, I knew people thought he was cool, but he actually is, ya know?”

A chuckle escaped and Harry noticed a small smile on Louis’ face at the sound. “Yeah, he really is.”

They focused on clearing up their things and putting their silhouettes in their assigned cubbies for their work before Mr. Aumiller locked the door to the cabinet, and then the bell rang.

“See ya tomorrow, H,” Louis said with a smile before walking out the door.

Harry stood staring at the door for longer than was normal before he realized how awkward he looked. He grabbed his bookbag and left the classroom as well.

H. Louis had called him H twice today. Was that a nickname he’d given to Harry? Harry had never really had a nickname from anyone outside of his family, unless he counted Marcel, and he didn’t. He hated that name. But this? This was the first time someone had called him something other than his name and he’d liked it.

Walking back to his locker, Harry tried to ignore the way he could almost smell Louis’ distinctive rosemary scent lingering in the halls. He was probably making things up, his nose searching for and making his brain find any traces of Louis it possibly could after being in such close quarters with the omega for the past forty-eight minutes.

“Marcel! You going on any hot dates this weekend?” an unknown voice called out.

Harry rolled his eyes and kept walking, but another voice responded to the first and said, “Yeah! With me! Make me yours, Alpha!”

Hoots and hollers followed Harry down the hall, and he hunched further into himself. Maybe, if he made himself as small as possible, the words wouldn’t follow him all the way home like they sometimes did on his bad days. Harry figured he was safe from the cruel taunts continuing to bounce around his brain today, though. It was a little more focused on a surprisingly soft omega punk and his almost spicy scent that had Harry already wanting more.

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“Why do you do that?”

Harry looked up from the chapter they had just been assigned to read in class since they had a substitute for gender studies. He looked around and realized that sometime in the last five minutes, Louis had gotten up from where he had been sitting on the other side of the room, surrounded by his best friends Zayn, Niall, and Bebe, and set all his things on the desk beside Harry.

This was technically the first time Louis had acknowledged Harry outside of their shared art class, despite the fact they’d been talking and becoming closer friends over the past month of class. Harry wasn’t sure what it meant, if anything, but he figured he should reply to Louis.

“What do you do that?”

Louis rolled his eyes as he opened their textbook to chapter twelve. Their teacher had decided they’d focus on each individual gender before delving into the various relationships within and between the genders. Currently they were finishing their study of betas, and Harry was finding it fascinating.

Louis turned himself in his seat, looking at the substitute to make sure she was still messing around on her phone, before facing Harry.

“You let everyone talk to you however they want, and most of the time it’s like shit. Why do you do that?”

“Uhm,” Harry looked around the room as he tried to gather his words. He’d hoped that as time went on, he’d get used to Louis’ laser focus being entirely on him and be able to put words together easier, but that hadn’t come yet. “I dunno?”

“Harold. This is not okay. You aren’t some piece of shit that people can just walk over. You need to tell them you deserve to be spoken to like a person because you are a person.”

“Yeah, I know,” Harry said quietly before physically moving to lean over his book. He hoped that Louis would get the point that Harry was trying to focus on their classwork, but Louis kept going.

“You obviously don’t though,” Louis pressed. “Harry, you need to stand up for yourself. You need to tell them they can’t talk to you like that. You need to remind them you’re a person beyond just being an alpha and that you deserve respect.”

“Louis-”

“No, Harry,” Louis interrupted. “No excuses. You’re a person and have a right to remind them of that when they treat you so badly.”

“Yeah, but I’m also the only alpha in like the closest eight states, and I can’t seem to live up to anyone’s expectations, so in a way I kinda deserve to be treated like shit, even if I don’t like it. Right?”

Harry’s eyes widened and he covered his mouth with his hands. Oh God, why had he said that? Those were thoughts he only admitted to himself on his darkest of nights. He’d never even said it out loud to Liam or his mom, so he definitely hadn’t to anyone else, and yet here he was spilling his guts in the middle of a full and entirely quiet classroom to Louis Tomlinson, the punk omega with a bad reputation? What the hell was he thinking?

It was then that Harry finally realized a very scary look had entered Louis’ eyes. Harry had read in books about sparks of anger being seen in people’s eyes, but he’d never experienced it for himself. He’d assumed it was some exaggeration that was commonplace in fiction, but not real life. He
realized now that it was absolutely real, because he could feel and see the anger Louis was projecting.

“You’re coming with me. Pack up your shit.”

Louis began to throw everything into his drawstring backpack that was held together by safety pins, but Harry refused to move.

“I’m sorry, what?”

“Get your stuff in your bag, Harry. We’re leaving class.”

Harry scoffed as quietly as he could, but didn’t even move to close his textbook. “And where do you think we’re going?”

Louis turned back to Harry, and his eyes looked like they flashed red for a second in his frustration. Rather than having Louis rip his head off, Harry gathered his things as quickly as possible and dumped them haphazardly into his bag. Louis then took his arm and put on a show about helping Harry down the steps in their theater style room to the substitute.

“Miss Jones?” Louis said, voice all sweetness and giving off incredibly strong demure omega vibes. Harry hadn’t seen him like this before. He honestly hadn’t known Louis had it in him. It was interesting to say the least. “Harry here is feeling incredibly ill and needs help getting to the nurse’s office. Is it okay if I escort him to make sure he gets there alright?”

“Sure thing,” Miss Jones said without even looking up from her phone. “Feel better soon.”

“Thank you,” Harry whispered as Louis practically pulled him out of the classroom. Once they were in the hall and had given their excuses to the officer patrolling the halls, Harry whispered in Louis’ ear, “Where are you taking me?”

“To my car, Harry. It’s the only time of day my house is actually silent, so we’re going home to talk about this because the shit you spewed back there is in no way okay.”

Harry stayed silent as Louis dragged him from the school, somehow getting away with not showing a pass to the monitor by the exit, and to his car. Harry had no idea where Louis lived, and he was sure he’d get in trouble as soon as the school called his mom to inform her that Harry wasn’t in class, but honestly he felt something he hadn’t in a very long time.

As Harry thought on it, he looked out the window and watched the trees and houses pass them by. The feeling grew the more they drove, and it was only when Louis pulled into his driveway that Harry finally realized what it was.

Excitement and anticipation. He’d never so expressly flaunted and gone against the rules like Louis had gotten him to do today, and it was almost thrilling.

“You coming?” Louis asked, motioning at the seatbelt that was still buckled across Harry’s lap.

Harry scrambled as quickly as he could and followed Louis to the door and inside the house. As soon as he was there, his shoulders relaxed and the excitement that had been bubbling inside him turned to happiness. There was something about the house that gave off the most loving and warm vibes Harry had ever experienced. Everything from the toys scattered across the floor to the blankets still sitting where they’d last been used on the couches spoke of a well lived in house and Harry loved it.
“Come on. This is big and my supplies are in my room.”

Harry’s eyes widened. He’d never been in another boy’s room before. Well, he’d been in Liam’s, but that didn’t really count.

“Harry,” Louis stopped on the stairs and looked at Harry closely, his dark lined eyes even more piercing blue today since he’d chosen to go with black instead of his usual purple. “You okay?”

Blushing a little, Harry nodded before tripping a little and hurried to follow Louis.

Louis apparently had continued talking, but the blood was rushing through Harry’s ears only calmed down once he reached the landing, so he tuned back in mid-sentence.

“...until like 3:30 when my sisters get home, so you can stay until then or later if you want, or if you need me to take you home, that’s fine too, okay?”

“Uh,” Harry shook his head and froze at the door to Louis’ room before quietly saying, “My mom’s gonna be pissed I skipped, but I don’t have plans today,” as he took in Louis’ room.

There was makeup and nail polish strewn about the top of Louis’ dresser where there were photos lining the mirror. He had large band posters that ranged from Pearl Jam and Smashing Pumpkins to Frank Sinatra and the Temptations to the Rocket Summer and Fall Out Boy. There was a fusion of color covering every surface and a huge amount of bright light. Seeing Louis, dressed in his black, ratty flare jeans and Slipknot t-shirt with his blue hair, standing within the riot of color was quite the juxtaposition.

“You can come in, Curly.”

It was only then Harry realized he hadn’t entered and he was still staring at Louis. Right. He should come in.

Tripping over his feet once more, Harry finally crossed the threshold and realized that, while the room wasn’t what he’d expected, it really did feel very much like Louis.

“Sit down there, I’m going to paint your nails and you’re going to talk.”

Harry nearly choked on his spit in surprise, but after coughing a little he finally said, “Painting my nails?”

Louis rolled his eyes. “Yes. My sisters always say it’s easier to spill your thoughts when the person you’re talking to isn’t looking right at you, so I’m going to paint your nails. Now, I only have black, blue, and red, but my sisters have some softer colors if you’d like me to use some of theirs.”

Louis held out his nail polish to Harry. All of them were in bottles that had the glass shaped like skulls, and it was then Harry felt another wave of emotion flow through him. This one was a bit more unfamiliar, but it had slowly been growing since Harry had started getting to know Louis more.

Louis was this bad boy who didn’t give a shit what anyone thought and went through life doing as he liked. He had such confidence and it seemed almost effortless the way he carried himself. Harry had started wanting to be a little more like him, mostly in his inner-attitude and self-assurance, but now? Now Harry was also recognizing he had been slowly coming to long for Louis to invite him to cross the line. Cross the line from good to...not bad, so much, but less good. The dark side, it could be said.

Harry stared at the dark, bold colors in Louis’ hand. Maybe this was it. Maybe this was Louis
woosing him to take the first step.

In for a penny, in for a pound.

“Let’s go black.”

Louis’ eyes glinted and his smile widened. “Oh, well look at you. Harry really is a daring one after all. Okay, let’s do this.”

Harry sat down near where Louis had indicated earlier, and looked to move the bag that was on the chair somewhere.

“Oh, let me take that. Needed more yarn and haven’t gotten to putting it away yet.”

“Yarn?” Harry asked as Louis took the bag out of his hands.

“Yeah,” Louis said. “I knit. Mostly just make random hats or scarves or socks for my sisters, but sometimes, if asked very kindly, I’ve been known to make things for friends too.”

Louis winked at Harry, and he just...sat there. Louis liked the Temptations enough to have a poster of them on his wall. His favorite band was Green Day and he’d been able to meet them a couple times. He had a rainbow plush pillow on his bed, his nails were chipped and painted red...and he knitted.

Harry obviously had no idea who this guy was.

Suddenly Louis had his thumb on Harry’s forehead, and Harry looked up to where Louis was standing right in front of him.

“Don’t think so hard, H. You’re too young to have worry lines.”

Harry licked his lips and took a stabilizing breath in as his eyes dropped to the carpet in front of him. “I feel like I hardly know you, and yet you’ve brought me here and are letting me see...everything.”

A chair was pulled over into his line of sight, and Louis threw himself down into it before placing Harry’s hands on his desk.

Shrugging, Louis got to work on the nails. “It’s not a secret, really. Any of this. I know I give off a very specific vibe and mostly it’s because I like how I feel when I look and dress like this. It makes me feel powerful in a way I usually don’t, but that also means people usually judge me and believe things about me that aren’t necessarily true.” Louis paused before adding on, “But that also was part of the point of the image I project too.”

Harry swallowed and opened his mouth to ask something, but closed his mouth again.

“Hey,” Louis said, pausing his brush after he finished putting a careful coat of polish on one of Harry’s thumbs. Harry looked up at Louis, and Louis smiled. “I tell you what. We talk a little more about why you said what you did in class and how wrong that is, and then I’ll let you ask me some questions. Okay?”

Harry nodded.

“Okay,” Louis said, then looked back down at Harry’s nails and continued painting. “So why do you think you deserve to be treated like shit?”

Harry shifted a little in his seat, and Louis tutted at him for moving.

Harry swallowed and looked at the Temptations poster. Their matching blue suits and facial expressions gave off a feeling of confidence, and Harry tried his best to channel that as he finally gave voice to the thoughts and feelings that had been rooted deep inside him from the moment he realized he wasn’t the alpha everyone had hoped he would be.

Sighing, Harry looked at the five men in the poster, and began to talk like the members of this band from the past were the only ones in the room with him, rather than the intimidating omega sitting beside him, painting his nails.

“I’ve never been all that strong,” Harry said quietly. “Physically, I mean. I’m horrible at sports and would rather sketch or work with clay than spend time outdoors. I like to cook with my mom, I enjoy studying for tests because of the rush I get when I know all of the answers. I hate confrontation and lying, I do my best to treat everyone with kindness and never want to hurt anyone’s feelings ever.

“But all those things,” Harry paused for a minute, looking into the eyes of the beta in the forefront of the poster, then said, “They’re not bad. They’re qualities I was always taught people admired and sought out, but they aren’t what people expect of an alpha. I’m lanky and awkward, and even after presenting a couple years ago, I still haven’t filled out or become more aggressive. Almost every day I get teased or told I’m a disappointment. I don’t necessarily think I should be treated the way I am, but I kinda am a waste of an alpha.”

Harry could feel the brush strokes against his nails stop, and when he looked down he saw the first coat was done. Louis leaned over and softly blew across Harry’s nails. The sensation gave Harry chills, and he couldn’t help the shiver that went up his spine.

Once Louis was happy with the state of Harry’s nails, at least for the time being, he sat up straight and looked at Harry. His eyes weren’t filled with anger this time, but rather resolve.

“Okay, Harry. Listen. No offense to anyone, especially you, but everything you just said?” Louis leaned forward, his eyes piercing, as he said slowly, “It’s all complete bullshit.”

Harry sputtered a little saying, “Excuse me?”

Louis smiled and leaned back again, waving his hands a little. “Okay, not all of it. I believe everything you said about yourself because you really are the softest and sweetest person I’ve ever met, but a waste of an alpha?” Louis shook his head before widening his eyes and saying, “Absolutely not.”

“How can you say that?” Harry whispered, focusing on the drying nail polish. He lifted his hands and admired how the polish made his fingers look longer, more delicate. It also made him feel strong and bold. He wanted to channel that now, but he wasn’t sure he could. “You’ve only known me a couple of weeks.”

“Yeah,” Louis said as he nudged Harry’s leg with his toe. Louis had kicked off his shoes as soon as they’d come inside, and he was now barefoot. His feet were adorable.

Shit. Harry had to really figure out if it was simply because he’d never been this close with an omega he was even a little bit attracted to or what, because he was starting to worry about himself. Who had cute feet? Apparently Louis did, but he wasn’t sure what exactly constituted feet being deemed cute.

“I’ve only known you a few weeks, but you know what I’ve learned?”

Harry looked back up at Louis’ face then. He did want to know what Louis thought, more than
almost anything else right now.

“I’ve learned that everything I’ve been taught about alphas, everything I always thought I hated about them, isn’t necessarily true.”

Louis gave Harry a soft smile, and Harry’s breath caught in his chest. Louis was always pretty, but when he smiled in such an open and genuine way like he was right now, Harry’s heart began to race. He hoped Louis couldn’t smell it on him.

“I’ve learned that if you are the only alpha who is gentle and kind and always looking for the good in everything around him, then you’re the only alpha I want to know.”

Harry’s brows furrowed. “How can you say that? The whole point of an alpha is to protect and to be strong and-”

Louis interrupted and asked, “Are you saying you aren’t protective when you helped that old beta cross the street last week?”

“How…” Harry blinked in confusion. “How do you know about that?”

“I was the driver you held your hand out to as you crossed the street,” Louis said with a shrug. “And are you saying that going out there every day and being who you are, instead of who you are expected to be, isn’t strong?”

Harry pursed his lips. “Those aren’t exactly what I mean, and I think you know that.”

Louis rolled his eyes and reached for Harry’s hands, putting them back on the desk for the second coat. “All I’m saying is, you might not be what is expected, but you’re more of an alpha than you or anyone else thinks you are. And even if you weren’t, that doesn’t mean you deserve to be treated badly. You’re a person, just like the rest of us. You deserve the same care and treatment as anyone else.”

They sat in silence for a little bit, and when Louis was finished with Harry’s nails this time, he capped the polish then walked over to lay on his bed.

“Well, Harold. Are you going to ask me whatever you were thinking about earlier?”

Harry wasn’t sure he wanted to now, but he was curious enough to ask a few things.

“You’re just so different from what your reputation made me think you are.”


Harry chuckled quietly before inspecting his nails again. “You already said you like the way you feel when you dress that way and you like it, but your reputation is more than that.” Harry looked up from beneath his eyelashes, and knew Louis understood which reputation he was talking about without having to say it.

“Ohhh, you’re talking about my promiscuity,” Louis said teasingly. “Yeah, well. That’s all total shit.”

Harry’s forehead scrunched up a little. “What?”

“Yeah, I’m a virgin. In like, every way. But let’s keep that our secret, yeah?”

Harry was at a total loss. Why would anyone want people to think they were something they
weren’t? “Doesn’t it bother you that people think that about you?”

“Think what?” Louis asked, before laughing. “People talk. So what if it’s true or not? At least the rumors are that I’m good, right?”

Harry laughed a little again, but he was still confused. “Why don’t you want people to know you’re a virgin?”

“Because too much pressure is placed on it, Harry. It’s ridiculous. Why should it matter if I am or not? Besides, I’m not ready for that, for like, a lot of reasons.”

It was only now that Louis was starting to look vulnerable. Harry thought carefully before he answered.

“Yeah, same here I think.” Harry had always imagined he’d be at least a little in love with someone before he slept with them, much less knotted them, but he’d never been close enough to anyone to even start thinking about that. He knew once he found someone who might be that person for him, he’d figure things out more, but until then, his hand and the toys he kept for his ruts were enough.

Louis rolled his eyes. “You presented at fourteen, Harry. I doubt your reasons are the same as mine.”

Harry sometimes forgot everyone knew details of his life that most considered personal thanks to the status his secondary gender gave him. It was always a bit unnerving when someone brought up a detail he’d never told them.

Looking back at Louis, Harry cleared his throat. “You’ve presented too, though. I mean, your scent is faint enough I figured you were on suppressants or something, but it doesn’t really matter when you present.”

Louis’ lips pursed and his shoulders went a little tight before he gave a minute shake of his head.

“You...aren’t on suppressants?” Harry asked slowly. A lot of kids in school chose to use suppressants in order to have more control over their heats, so Harry hadn’t thought much about it. If Louis wasn’t on suppressants, though, then that meant...

“I’ve not presented yet.”

It was said so quietly, Harry almost doubted Louis had said it, but he could tell by the look of fear on Louis’ face that he had.

“You...wow.”

Louis nodded. Most kids presented by the time they were fifteen, but there were always a few late bloomers. Even those had usually presented by seventeen, though, so the fact that Louis was eighteen and not presented yet was definitely a rare case.

“Are you...is everything okay? Are you okay?” Harry asked. As far as he knew, it was best for the omega if they had heats regularly, but he wasn’t sure if that was something that only started after they’d had their first heat or if that physical need for heats happened whether they had presented or not.

“Yeah,” Louis said, with a small laugh. It was obviously for show, because there was no humor to be found in it. “My mom forced me to an omega specialist a few months ago, and they said everything is in working order, I just haven’t...started yet. They said to come back if I still haven’t by the time I’m nineteen and they can give me something to trigger them to start, but I really want to
Harry nodded. That made sense. He didn’t know how he would feel if he hadn’t presented and was needing a chemical to bring that out in him. It was painful enough when brought on naturally, he could only imagine if it was done so forcefully by medication and science.

“Well, I hope it doesn’t come to that.”

Louis nodded. “Yeah. Me too.” It was then that Louis finally made eye contact with Harry again. “I know I was kinda joking before, but I really haven’t told anyone else about this, ya know? I mean, I just…”

“Louis, this is really personal. I would never tell anyone.”

Harry honestly could hardly believe they were sitting here casually talking about it in the first place. Or not so casually. All the same, the topic had come up and they’d just gone with it.

Not even conversations with Liam were this easy. Why was it so different with Louis?

Louis sighed and began to sort through the yarn on his bed before he said, “Thanks.”

“For what?” Harry asked, skeptical.

Louis had taken the initiative to bring Harry back to his house, paint his nails, and help him feel better about himself and who he was as an alpha. Why was Louis thanking him when everything was pointing to the fact that Harry should probably be the one doing the thanking?

Louis looked up and Harry felt his eyes boring into him. For the first time since he’d met Louis, though, the sensation wasn’t overwhelming. It was welcome and began to warm him to his core.

“For being someone I can trust with every part of who I am.”

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Things changed after that afternoon. Harry became a regular fixture at the Tomlinson household and he began to be welcomed into Louis’ friend group. Bebe especially had become a good friend to Harry, probably because she was so similar personality wise to Louis.

The best part of everything, though, was how Harry felt like Louis understood Harry. He’d never felt that way before. Liam did the best he could, but while he knew Harry well and could predict all of Harry’s reactions to various situations, Louis was on another level. It was like he understood Harry’s motivations and not just his actions. It gave him a peace of self and the beginnings of confidence he hadn’t understood would ever be possible while still surrounded by the same people that did their best to make him miserable. Or at least that’s how it seemed.

“Harry!” Bebe cried as she sat down in his lap and wrapped her arms around him. Harry smiled and leaned his head against her shoulder. He was not attracted to women at all, but if he was, he was pretty sure he’d be happy with Bebe as his mate. “Harry, I missed you.”

Harry laughed as he leaned into the soft, warm omega in his lap. “It was a whole week for Spring Break. I’m sure you missed me so much you couldn’t even text me.”
Bebe blushed a bit before swatting Harry’s arm. “You’ve gotten all kinds of mouthy ever since you started hanging out with Louis more. I’m not sure I like it. I’ll stick with Niall from now on.”

“Come on over,” Niall said as he pulled another seat closer to his. “Class is about to start so you should probably get your own chair anyway.”

“Niall, you’re too much of a pushover sometimes,” Bebe said as she moved to his side and left the seat next to Harry open for Louis. “That’s the real reason I like Harry better.”

Harry laughed at the same time Niall’s jaw dropped.

“What the fuck?”

“You are, man. Even more than me,” Zayn said with a laugh. The betas got into a squabble that Harry couldn’t help but smile at. His life was so much more fun now that he had them as friends.

“Hey, Harold. How are you?”

Harry looked up and saw Louis settling in beside him. His hair was closer to his natural brown, but more than just his hair was different. Something was off about Louis. He looked flushed and was moving slower than usual. He was usually a bit of a manic presence, constantly fidgeting and talking and bouncing his leg, but he looked lethargic today.

“I’m alright,” Harry said, brows furrowed in concern. When the omega had settled in beside him, Harry reached over and felt Louis’ forehead. “Oh my God, Lou. You’re burning up. Are you feeling okay?”

Louis shifted around as he pulled his hoodie closer to his body. It might have been late March, but the weather hadn’t gotten its shit pulled together yet, so it was still pretty chilly outside.

“I keep feeling kinda hot and then cold and I don’t have any energy. I’m kinda afraid I’m getting the flu or something.”

As soon as Louis said that, Bebe, Niall, and Zayn all shifted their seats further away. The movement caused the air to shift, though, and it was then that Harry smelled it.

Muted, Louis’ scent that was a spicy rosemary had already found a way to wind itself around Harry and leave him constantly seeking it. There was nothing muted about Louis’ scent now.

The rosemary was accented by a rich buttery scent and something more raw, almost like something fresh from the garden. It was rich, it was strong, and Harry’s mind was starting to go a bit fuzzy from desire.

“Lou,” Harry said as quietly as possible.

His attempt at whispering didn’t seem to work very well, though, because both Louis and Bebe shivered a little at the growl that had worked its way into the single syllable. Harry took a deep breath in an attempt to steady him, but it was the wrong thing to do. Louis’ pheromones were taking over all of Harry’s senses the more he picked up his scent.

Harry held his breath for a moment in an attempt to clear his head before he cleared his throat and tried to speak quieter and calmer this time. “I think you need to get home.”

Harry opened his eyes once he realized that, at some point, he had closed them without realizing. Louis was studying him, curious, but as soon as Harry made eye contact, it seemed that Louis put the
pieces together and knew what was happening.

“Oh fuck,” Louis whispered. He jolted from his seat, nearly turning it over, and began to storm out of the classroom with his bookbag still only halfway packed.

Mr. Hamrick was yelling after Louis and Bebe and Niall were whispering questions fiercely at Harry, but he ignored all of them as he attempted to gather not only his own things but also Louis’ and then followed him out of the class.

“Marcel, where do you think you’re going too?” Mr. Hamrick shouted.

“Sorry, it’s an emergency.” Harry called back as he slammed out of the classroom too. He could still smell Louis’ scent in the hallway, so he followed it and hoped he would be able to catch him before he drove away.

Harry jogged past the cafeteria and had just gotten to the doors when he saw Louis arguing with the monitor about leaving the school premises without a pass.

“Louis, you know better than anyone that I can’t just let you past—”

“But Ms. Dougherty, you don’t understand,” Louis interrupted. He shifted and pulled his hoodie away from his neck, looking incredibly uncomfortable. He must be getting to a heat wave again. Ms. Dougherty was a beta who should be able to smell his heat coming on, but maybe the hole in her window was small enough she couldn’t.

“Hi, Ms. Dougherty,” Harry greeted as he walked up to the window.

Ms. Dougherty looked at Harry warily. “Hi, Marcel. Do you have a pass?”

“I don’t, but see, Louis is feeling very out of sorts and is so sick he was worried he wouldn’t even make it to the nurse’s office before losing his breakfast. I’m just going to make sure he gets home. I’m sure if you call our parents, they’ll understand since we are going to be texting them as soon as we are out of the building.”

Louis let out a soft whine. It was only then that Harry realized Louis was standing as close as he possibly could be without touching. Harry wrapped his arm around Louis’ shoulders, and the omega immediately wrapped himself around Harry, his nose digging into Harry’s shoulder. He wasn’t quite scenting Harry, but he was closer than anyone else ever had been, and it was causing even more rushes of desire to course through Harry.

That, finally, was enough to convince Ms. Dougherty of what was happening.

“Oh, yes. Of course. Please take care, you two. And be safe.” She winked at Harry, which made Harry want to correct her presumptions, but Louis was already dragging Harry out the door.

Right, of course. Louis needed out of there as soon as possible.

“Are you able to drive?” Harry asked as Louis guided them through the parking lot, refusing to let go of Harry’s hand. “I can drive you home if you need.”

“Please drive, H.” Louis tugged the keys out of his pocket and, once they got to his car, he finally let go of Harry’s hand and walked to the passenger side.

Harry’s inner alpha didn’t like the distance from the omega going into heat. It was like the pull Louis had over Harry was even stronger with his pheromones going haywire. He hoped he would be able
to drive them safely to Louis’ house as well.

“Text your mom while I drive?” Harry reminded gently.

Louis whined and pulled away from where he’d been leaning over the middle console and nosing at Harry’s shoulder. “You just smell so good. You always do, but it’s like...even better now or something.”

Harry giggled nervously as he eased onto the road. “Do you want me to stop and get you anything from the pharmacy before we go home? Do you have everything you might need?”

“Uh,” Louis pulled his hoodie off, and Harry could see the way his sweat was staining the dark gray t-shirt he’d worn underneath today. “I don’t know. What might I need?”

Harry’s eyes widened as he realized how big a deal this was. Fuck. He knew what Liam liked, because he had been the one making the runs for him when he was nearing his heat and didn’t want people to be able to smell it on him, but that seemed like a personal taste kind of thing. But how did someone develop that taste other than just...experimenting during their heats and learning?

“Shit. Okay, I’m gonna stop and just get like...a little bit of everything, okay?”

The earthy rosemary scent was nearly clouding the air, it smelled so thick to Harry. He knew it wasn’t really, but damn was it making his vision a bit hazy. He was starting to worry he would go past having a semi to a full hard on before they made it to Louis’ house thanks to the way it was nearly rolling off of Louis.

“Sounds good. God, I’m nervous, Harry. Everyone says it’s almost painful to go through alone.” Harry peeked over at Louis, and found him biting his lip. His dark hair paired with his eyebrows and eyeliner caused his bright blue eyes to stand out even more than usual, and Harry loved it. The only problem was, though, it also made the nerves that were easily seen in those eyes to be that much more prominent. “I know what to do, every omega does, but like, how much is it gonna hurt?”

Harry looked back at the road and sighed. “I dunno, Lou. My first several knots hurt really bad during my ruts, so if it’s like that, it could be pretty bad. I hope it’s not, though.”

Louis curled down in his seat and hugged himself. “I don’t wanna do it alone. This fucking sucks.”

Harry parked outside the CVS and looked at Louis. “I’ll be as fast as I can, okay? I’m just gonna grab, like, one of everything and then I’ll be back.”

Louis nodded and pulled his hoodie off as Harry climbed out.

As soon as he got a whiff of clean air without any presence of Louis, Harry could feel his mind working faster as well. Get in, get everything Louis could possibly want or need, and get out.

Harry grabbed a basket and went through the aisles, picking up any number of various lubes, condoms for Louis’ sex toys (a variety since he didn’t know if Louis’ dildos had knots, and Harry didn’t really want to start thinking too hard about that), medications that were sometimes used during heats, as well as snacks and gatorade to keep on hand and extra clean up supplies. Harry hoped he hadn’t forgotten anything, paid the exorbitant amount they charged for the products, and rushed back out to the car.

“Did you buy me the entire pharmacy?” Louis teased before whining and pushing closer to Harry when he climbed in. “God, what am I going to do without you?”
Harry once again ignored the comment, unsure how to handle it. He was more than willing to help Louis, he had been dreaming about this kind of opportunity for ages, but he didn’t want to take advantage. Besides, Louis only wanted Harry in the room with him for his pheromones and Harry didn’t think he could handle watching Louis go through his heat and survive.

“H?” Louis asked quietly. “Do you think…”

Louis trailed off and Harry could feel in his chest that whatever Louis was about to ask was big. He just hoped he would be able to give the right answer.

“What?” Harry prompted. They were almost to Louis’ house, so Louis didn’t have much time left before Harry would be leaving him anyway.

“I just...would you be willing to spend my heat with me?”

Harry pushed on the break a little harder than he meant to at the four-way stop and turned to Louis, his eyes wide.

“You...you want me to spend your heat with you?”

Louis bit his lip and nodded, fear mixing in with his scent to go with the need that was already filling the air.

Harry wanted to say yes. Of course he did, but there was so much more going on. There were so many ways Harry could hurt Louis. There was always the chance of an alpha hurting an omega during heat or rut, but Louis had never had more than a dildo inside of him so that chance had to be higher.

Plus, Harry wasn’t experienced in any way either. Potentially hurting Louis was a valid fear. If he already felt out of control and like he was having a hard time thinking clearly now, in a few hours there would be no hope. Especially once Louis was starting to release his slick and whine and call to Harry. God, just thinking about it was making Harry hard and causing him to want to give in and say yes.

“But, Louis...this would be...it would be your first time with...all of that and like. Is your heat really the first time you want that?”

“Yes. It is. Especially if it’s you.”

Harry snorted then growled at the depth that had suddenly come into Louis’ scent. “Especially if it’s me? Louis, I don’t know shit about this! This is me we’re talking about.”

“Yeah, exactly,” Louis said, sounding more like himself than he had since he walked into gender studies earlier. “It’s you, Harry. I don’t trust anyone as much as I trust you. Besides, I know you know the omega section of the book better than Mr. Hamrick does by now. You aren’t completely clueless, and I know you’ll take care of me. Please?”

Harry’s heart was pounding, but there was still something holding him back. Was Louis only asking for this because he was scared and Harry’s alpha scent was calling to his omega that was about to come to the forefront? Or was this Louis actually wanting Harry to help him through his heat and...maybe something more?

As much as Harry would love to help Louis through his heat, he didn’t think he could handle even being a participant in it if it meant going back to being friends like before. Knowing what he could have and then not being able to keep it would probably be too much for him.
“Harry. Look at me, please.”

Harry waited until he’d eased Louis’ car into his driveway as best he could before he closed his eyes for a brief moment and turned to Louis.

Louis’ eyes were completely clear and Harry could smell the shift in Louis’ scent that belied the certainty he felt. “I don’t want you to do anything you aren’t comfortable with, but I would feel a lot better knowing I’m going into this with you.”

Turning the ignition off, Harry held the keys out for Louis. “We better get you inside and situated before you fall completely under. Liam said the first time comes on fast and doesn’t let you prepare much.”

Louis lunged forward, spilling the CVS bags onto the floor as he wrapped his arms around Harry’s shoulders. “Thank you, Harry.”

Harry held his breath in an attempt to keep himself steady until they’d at least reached Louis’ room and he’d had time to text his own mother about what had happened. He was already freaking out, but he had to think about more than himself now. Louis needed him.

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Harry stumbled as he pulled his jeans up without bothering to put on his boxers first. It had been a few days, he didn’t really want to put those back on anyway.

As he buttoned and zipped the jeans, he realized he still had some come drying on his belly. Fuck. He really didn’t want that on his shirt to remind him even more of everything that had happened, so he supposed he should take the time to clean that up.

Fucking fuck fuck fuck.

Harry tiptoed over to the nightstand where they’d kept the wipes the entire few days he’d been helping Louis through his heat, and slipped a couple out without crinkling the plastic as best he could. He quickly swiped it through the hair that had clung to the come, and tossed them in the trash before locating his t-shirt and jacket.

He had to leave. Now.

The jacket still smelled like Louis, because of course it did. Everything Harry had brought with him probably smelled like Louis. Harry allowed himself one last glance, the red, healing bondmark almost looking like it had a spotlight shining on it, before he eased himself out of Louis’ room and out of the house.

Thank goodness it was the middle of a weekday. That was the only time Harry knew it was safe for him to exit without being caught by a member of Louis’ family. He loved them, but after accidentally bonding their brother and son, Harry wasn’t sure they’d love him as much.

Damn it. This was exactly what Harry had feared when Louis asked him to help him through his heat. Harry knew he wouldn’t be able to hold himself back, and it just felt so fucking good being inside Louis like that, and smelling Louis surrounding him and feeling him around him and knowing that Harry had been the reason for Louis making such glorious sounds of pleasure and he just…
Well. He hadn’t meant to, that was for sure. Not that that mattered. Louis was going to flip out once he realized that over the course of three days he had not only finally been knotted during his very first heat ever, but he’d gone and gotten himself an unwanted bondmate with the only alpha in the near vicinity. God, Harry was going to hyperventilate if he didn’t get himself under control.

Harry had already walked halfway home when he realized he didn’t have his phone. It was probably in Louis’ car or his bedroom. That was fine. At least that gave Louis one less way to be able to contact Harry and yell at him for doing what he did.

His hands were shaking uncontrollably by the time Harry finally got to his house, and he wasn’t sure if it was because of the events of the past few days or how cold it was. Maybe a combination of both. Shit, Harry just kept thinking of all the reasons why bonding Louis was going to end up being the biggest mistake of his life.

Harry had only just turned eighteen. He was such a bad alpha he couldn’t even keep himself from bonding his friend while helping him through his heat! It was the first time for both of them, and now they were stuck with each other forever. Harry suddenly had the responsibility of taking care of an omega. And, while he’d always looked forward to that, he didn’t want to do that for an omega that didn’t want him.

Louis was going to kill Harry. Actually, the more he thought about it, the more welcoming that option was becoming.

“Oh, you’re back! Go up and take a shower, I’m sure you need one, then come on down and I’ll have a good meal prepared. Is Louis doing alright?”

Harry looked up at his mom and realized it must be Thursday. She had every Thursday off, and he’d been so focused on getting out of Louis’ house without anyone catching him, he’d completely forgotten about his own mother possibly being home.

“Yeah,” Harry said with a squeak. “He’s fine.” Then he ducked his head and ran upstairs, listening to his mother chuckle. Shit, she probably thought it was all cute that Harry had finally gone and accepted part of his alpha role like he had, but she wouldn’t be laughing if she realized what a permanent mess he’d made of the past few days.

Harry jumped into the shower with the water running a little too hot. It was okay. Harry felt like he deserved some pain.

The last few days had been incredible. Even more than he’d ever dreamed of. Their bodies seemed to be made for each other. In a way, he supposed they were. Harry’s knot was meant to be taken by a willing omega, especially during their heat, but it was more than that. Everything that made Harry and Louis click so well as friends carried over.

Sure, the first few times had lead to them fumbling and not quite getting everything right, but that was one nice thing about spending Louis’ heat together. They were able to try again and their bodies were ready for it, wanting it. Needing it.

Harry had been thriving in it, knowing nothing in his life was ever going to beat this moment, and that was when he’d done it. He’d felt such a rush as he bit down on Louis’ shoulder. It had forged a connection between them that was even better than what they’d already had.

It was only when Louis’ scent settled down and took on a different tone, one distinctly speaking of being taken and claimed, that Harry realized what he’d done. Louis’ heat was receding quickly, now that he’d been knotted several times as well as bonded, and Harry had to get out of there before
Louis could figure it out too.

There was a part of Harry that was feeling guilty the longer he stood under the hot water. A large part. The guilt might actually be growing within him. However, knowing that he’d taken away Louis’ choice in the matter of bonding didn’t help. He knew that Louis would be mad and not want it, so Harry had run as fast as he could so Louis wouldn’t have to look into Harry’s face and see the person who had done that right away.

Harry was a coward. He knew that. He should have stayed and taken responsibility for what he’d done, but he really did think Louis would be able to handle it better without his being there. Then, when Louis was ready to figure out how they wanted to deal with the situation and what Louis wanted to do to rectify the massive mistake Harry had made, they could do that.

Knowing Louis’ temper and how hot it flared, though, Harry wasn’t expecting that to come anytime soon.

Harry shut off the shower and walked back to his bedroom only to find it wasn’t empty.

“What the fucking hell did you think you were doing leaving me like that?”

Louis didn’t even wait for Harry’s door to close before he started yelling, and he was just as mad as Harry had known he would be. Harry hunched over, trying his best to make himself small, just like he always did when people said things he knew he wouldn’t like.

“I mean, seriously. Harry, you can’t just fucking bond someone and run away.”

Harry wrapped his arms around himself in an attempt to cover his quickly drying skin that was on display. He didn’t need to feel more vulnerable than he already did.

“I trusted you. I asked you to come and help me with my heat, and you did a really great job with that until the end, by the way, when you fucking left me! What was I supposed to think about that, Harry? You bonded me and then left? What the hell? You’re smart enough to know better than that, I know you are. And now you’re here and you can’t even look at me?”

Harry cringed. He didn’t want to see the loathing he knew would be filling Louis’ eyes.

“Great. Fine. You just go and revel in the fact you claimed yourself an omega and then left. I’ll be waiting for you to grow a pair of balls to go with that massive dick. And I’m not talking about your cock, you fucking idiot.”

Harry moved to the side so Louis could leave, doing his best not to breathe in through his nose. If he could smell Louis’ anger, it would hurt even more.

“I left your phone on the charger. It was dead when I found it,” Louis said as he left the room and slammed the door.

Harry gasped, breathing in as much air through his mouth as he could, but it didn’t help the pain that was radiating from his chest, especially with Louis’ scent still filling the room.

For the first time since he’d started hanging out with Louis, Harry really did feel like a waste of space. He’d hurt Louis. He’d angered him. And now Louis was his responsibility. The only way that Harry could think of to make things better was to avoid him for awhile and allow him to heal a little bit. Once he had, maybe they could figure things out.

That didn’t help him feel any better, though. Everything in him was calling to him to reach out to
Louis and help him feel better. Ease his pain and fear. Help Louis know that Harry would take care of him. There was no way Louis could want him like that, though. Why would he? Harry was a weak alpha who couldn’t live up to his gender. Louis was an incredible, beautiful, strong omega who could do far better than Harry. So, Harry withheld.

Not bothering to even put on a fresh pair of boxers, Harry dropped face down on his bed and allowed himself to finally cry the tears that had been building up from the moment he left Louis’ house. It was going to take a long time before he finally felt better and had any relief from the guilt and pain of knowing he hurt and took advantage of Louis, but he knew it had to come eventually.

Until then, he’d do the best he could to help Louis by keeping away from him and allowing him to heal.

*~*~*~*~*~*

Harry somehow convinced his mom that he was sick on Friday, so he was able to avoid going to school that day. He barely left his room, sulking with the light off and spending his time using his constellation night light to quiz himself on the various star and constellation names from various points around the world. It was the only thing he could focus on long enough to take his mind off the tugging he felt in his chest every time he thought about Louis and how amazing it was to be with him.

Shifting on his bed to check the time, Harry got a whiff of Louis off of the scarf Harry had wrapped around his neck earlier that day. It had been a stupid idea, but his inner alpha needed Louis close, and the best Harry could do was wrap his neck in the blue scarf Louis had made for him. It wasn’t anything fancy, but it was Harry’s new favorite and he had yet to wash it so Louis’ scent still clung to the yarn. It did end up making his attempts at ignoring Louis and focusing on the constellations far more difficult, though.

Somewhere around two in the afternoon, Harry finally needed to get a drink of water, so he ventured out of his room.

Harry let out a frustrated groan as he filled his favorite mug. Why had he been so stupid? Why couldn’t he contain his alpha nature? He supposed he had known going into it that it was going to be difficult, but he was still disappointed in himself. Helping an omega through their heat as a virgin alpha was incredibly stupid, but even more so when the omega was Louis. Harry had essentially known he would mess up somehow, he just didn’t think it would be this bad.

Just as he turned off the tap, the doorbell rang. The clock on the stove read 2:18 in bright white numbers. School was still in and, as far as Harry knew, he wasn’t expecting anyone.

He’d started scuffing his slippers across the floor as he made his way to the door when he heard a knock as well as the doorbell ringing again.

“I’m coming,” Harry called, somewhat annoyed. Whoever it was apparently didn’t have much patience. He opened the door and squinted in the light.

Standing on the doorstep was a beta holding a tiny vase with four flowers in it.

“Harry Styles?” the man asked.
“That’s me,” Harry answered. Who would send him flowers?

Harry scratched something resembling his name on the tiny receipt held to the clipboard and then closed the door once the man rushed back to his car. Harry walked back up to his room with the flowers, curious as to who they could be from.

Harry flipped his bedroom light on to see better before he set the flowers down on his desk. They really were quite pretty. It was a skinny, glass vase, simple in design in order to better put the focus on the flowers.

The flowers themselves were...bright. They weren’t Harry’s favorites or even a flower he was used to seeing delivered in this way. They looked like daisies that were colored completely unnatural colors, yet somehow with just the four of them in the simple vase, they made his chest warm. For the first time all day, Harry smiled.

Spinning the vase around, Harry saw a tiny square note tucked and tied to one of the flowers. He pulled it off and inside was a little printed note.

Harry,
I know you’re scared, but we need to talk. Please don’t avoid me.
Louis

Harry stared at the note and read it a second time, then a third.

Why was Louis sending him flowers? He’d come and yelled at Harry within an hour of Harry leaving. Twenty-four hours later and he was sending Harry flowers? Saying they needed to talk? Harry knew they needed to talk. He just would rather they do it without Louis raising his voice at him.

Harry left the flowers on his desk, turned his light off again, and then flopped back onto his bed. Louis might be ready to talk, but Harry wasn’t quite prepared to listen to Louis’ plans for how they would break their bond. He needed more time to get ready for that.

*~*~*~*~*~*

Saturday Harry woke up to sunlight streaming in through his window. He was certain he’d closed his light-canceling curtains before going to bed, so that didn’t make any sense, but that didn’t stop the fact that he was being blinded by natural light.

Harry sat up in bed and blinked, trying to figure out what had happened with his curtains when he saw something on the windowsill that hadn’t been there the day before. Harry stood up and walked over in order to inspect it, and found it to be three rocks, sat in a row. Each had one word written on them, the message reading, “Call me maybe?”

“Mom?” Harry called. It had to have been her doing. He was sure he’d be able to smell if Louis had been the one to place them there.

When his mom didn’t answer, Harry left his room and headed downstairs.

“Mom, did you put those rocks on my windowsill?”
Harry turned into the kitchen and saw Anne sitting at the kitchen table with her coffee as she read something on her phone. She looked up and smiled.

“Yes, I just thought it was so sweet! Plus he explained he’d tried calling you himself but it seems your phone has been turned off or something.”

Harry pursed his lips as he wrapped his arms around himself. He’d turned his phone off on purpose because he didn’t want to have to read any texts from Louis or his friends telling him how awful he was for bonding Louis. Harry was smart enough to know that if you piss off Louis, it isn’t only Louis’ wrath you have to deal with.

“Oh, Harry. Just get over your embarrassment of spending Louis’ heat with him and call the boy.”

Did...did Harry’s mom really not realize that he’d bonded Louis? Harry had hoped that as a beta she wouldn’t be able to smell the difference in his scent, but she had to have seen Louis’ bondmark. It was in a fairly prominent place thanks, once again, to Harry not really taking care of what he was doing that day. He’d figured as soon as Anne had seen Louis that she would know. Maybe she didn’t, though.

Harry blushed over the fact that he would, at some point, need to tell her what he’d done. He took a deep breath and after forcing it out, he leaned down and gave his mom a hug.

“I will. I promise. Just...later. Okay?”

Anne eyed Harry before she lifted her hand to his cheek. “That boy is falling for you, honey, and I don’t blame him. Don’t make him wait too long, okay?”

Harry did his best to give her a smile that wasn’t a grimace. “Sure, Mom.”

*~*~**~*

Monday found Harry walking into school, more than nervous about what he’d find.

Strangely enough, things were fairly normal. Or, well. The old normal. The way his days at school had gone before Louis had become the focus of most of Harry’s time.

Harry could feel Louis’ eyes (along with Bebe, Niall, and Zayn’s) boring into him as he steadfastly ignored them and focused on the front of class in gender studies and then again as he walked past their table at lunch. He didn’t approach them, and none of them approached him. It was great. It was exactly what he’d wanted.

It was complete shit. Harry felt worse than he’d felt even on Thursday with Louis yelling at him and the pain of leaving Louis still fresh. Harry really hadn’t thought it could get worse than it had in that moment. He’d thought that time would help ease the pain and frustration, but if anything it had only accentuated how utterly wrong everything was.

Harry was about to walk into art class when he felt an arm tugging him out of the doorway. It was Louis. Of course.

“Don’t say a word, Styles. We are talking, whether you want to or not.”
Harry swallowed forcibly and nearly tripped as Louis dragged him through a few hallways to an abandoned one out by the fieldhouse. He’d never been here before, but Louis obviously knew his way around it. It was quiet and empty, which was all that really mattered he supposed.

“What the fuck, Harry?”

Harry jolted, surprised by the way Louis decided to start his lecture. He’d assumed Louis would jump right in and start to lecture him. He wasn’t expecting a question.

“I’m sorry, what?”

“I said what. The fuck?” Louis punctuated each word with a sharp poke to Harry’s chest.

Harry rubbed where Louis’ finger had dug in, thankful for something truly physical to take away from the fact he was having a hard time breathing being this close to Louis again.

“I mean, come on, H. What the hell are you doing? I get that you regret bonding me, but like, you can’t just ignore it and think it’s going to go away, you fuckwad!”

“What?” Harry asked, again. He was starting to sound like a broken record. He shook his head so Louis didn’t go off on another tangent, and pulled himself together enough to say, “I don’t regret it.”

Louis blinked repeatedly. It was obvious he had tried to use his makeup to conceal the fact he hadn’t been sleeping well. There were dark circles beneath his eyes and, while he looked entirely beautiful still, he was frayed at the edges if one knew where to look.

Harry knew where to look.

“I’m sorry, I don’t understand.” Louis shifted his weight and put his hands on his hips as he said, “You don’t regret biting me while you had your knot shoved up my ass during my very first heat ever just last week?”

Harry choked at the way Louis chose to word it, but he supposed that was exactly what had happened.

“Because, honestly, you’re acting like we were never even friends, so excuse me for being confused about your feelings regarding this.”

“Well, yeah,” Harry said, exasperated. “Of course I stayed away from you. I bonded you without your permission! What was I supposed to do, start playing house?” Harry let out a mirthless chuckle, his hands going to his hair to tug at it a little in his distress. “I mean, I was scared out of my mind, and I knew you’d be pissed, so I thought it would be better to stay away and let you figure out what you wanted to do about the mess I’d gotten us into.”

“Oh my God, Harry. You’re such a fucking idiot.”

“I know, thanks,” Harry huffed as he crossed his arms in an attempt to protect himself from Louis’ insults. “No need to remind me.”

“I sent you those gifts because I knew you were scared. As an omega, I’m already pretty sensitive to your emotions, but as soon as we were bonded it was even stronger. I’d always thought if I found a mate that I would be the one getting wooed, but figured perhaps I should put that to the side for a bit and reach out to you, you know? Help ease your fear or whatever.” Louis paused and snorted. “That worked really well.”
Harry considered what Louis had said. As the alpha, he should have been the one sending the gifts after bonding. He’d never even considered that idea, he was so caught up in what he’d done, and he also hadn’t thought about the fact that Louis had taken on Harry’s role, possibly to help him feel better. Now Harry only felt worse.

“For real, though.” Louis took a breath, and the way Louis’ voice sounded made Harry look even closer. Louis was more than a little frayed at the edges. It looked like he was barely holding himself together and tears were gathering in his eyes. “We spent my heat together, and before I’d even come out of it completely, you left. You left me coming out of that really scary, incredibly vulnerable time finding that I’d bonded with you, and you were gone. How was I supposed to feel about that?”

Harry opened his mouth to respond, to fight back about how he knew Louis would be disappointed and angry, but Louis held up his hand.

“No. Listen to me.”

Harry closed his mouth immediately. Louis had never sounded so authoritative and yet so broken.

“You know omegas need additional physical affection and care after their heat. You know we need to feel taken care of during that time, but it’s even stronger after we’ve bonded. You know this, because I know you aced the omega exam in gender studies. And yet, even knowing that, you ran away and left me to try to pick up the pieces myself.

“Then, when I came to talk to you about it, you closed yourself off completely. I knew you were scared, like I said before, and I get that sometimes roles are reversed and shit, but I can’t do that right now. Especially if you’re going to keep ignoring me.” Louis stepped closer and tentatively reached out to Harry’s hand. “I know you’re scared, I kind of am too, but I need you right now, Harry. Even if you don’t want to be there for me as my mate, I need you there as my friend.”

Harry felt like he couldn’t get enough air into his lungs to counteract the way his heart was racing and burning him at the same time.

He’d hurt his omega. He’d been trying to protect Louis and help him, but in doing so he’d only caused more pain for him. Holy shit, Louis was right. Harry knew all of that, but in his fear he’d allowed himself to forget. According to everything Harry had read, omegas needed the physical intimacy and close quarters with their mates after bonding. It eased them and allowed them to have confidence that their alpha would take care of them and helped their bond solidify. Harry had done the exact opposite of that, and he could only imagine how much Louis had been hurt, emotionally and physically, because of that.

Harry still wasn’t really able to put words together, so he did what he’d been wanting to do from the moment he’d smelled Louis that afternoon; he opened his arms to him. He didn’t wrap them around Louis yet, he needed Louis to know he had the choice to accept the embrace or not, but Harry was finally offering it as he should have been all along.

Louis sniffled and his entire body seemed to crumple as he fell into Harry’s embrace. His arms wrapped around Harry’s neck and he clung to Harry tightly as he cried into Harry’s shoulder.

“I tried so hard to hate you, but it never worked. It just made me want to be near you even more,” Louis said into Harry’s shoulder. “Please tell me it wasn’t easy for you to stay away.”

“It wasn’t,” Harry said, tightening his arms around Louis’ waist and nosing at the juncture of Louis’ neck and shoulder. Louis had it covered so others couldn’t see the bondmark, but Harry knew it was there all the same. He could tell he’d found it when Louis shivered a little. Harry barely withheld a
pleased growl before he continued. “It was the hardest thing I’d ever done. I could hardly leave my room for fear I’d go running back to you and hurt you more.”

“You’re such an idiot,” Louis laughed, voice thick with his tears. “An idiot who made me cry and ruin my eyeliner. But I still don’t want to let you go.”

“What do you say we go to my house?” Harry suggested. “We can have some cookies and talk about...everything.”

Harry felt Louis nod before the omega tilted his head just enough to finally scent Harry. Harry had scented Louis before, obviously, but the omega had been so far under during his heat that he hadn’t ever deliberately scented Harry. He’d been perfectly happy just basking in Harry’s scent rather than nosing at the sensitive skin.

It was the first time Harry had ever been scented, and it was delicious. The feeling that took over Harry’s entire body was one he’d experienced in small doses before, but it was nearly overwhelming him in its strength now. It felt like desire and love and belonging. It felt like he was right where he should be.

“Let’s go home, Harry,” Louis said softly. “I just want to be alone with my Alpha.”

Harry had experienced having his gender used as a title his entire life. Most of the time, kids had been mocking him or surprised to learn who he was. Now, though, he understood the appeal of having your mate call you by the title. He wondered if Louis felt the same way.

“Okay. I really want to spend some time with my Omega too.”

Louis’ breath hitched, and he whined a little before pulling back and wiping beneath his eyes. Taking a deep breath, Louis looked at Harry tentatively and asked, “Am I a mess?”

Harry shook his head, wiped the lone tear left on Louis’ cheek, then leaned in for a soft kiss. It wasn’t the first they had shared, but it was the first they were sharing as mates. It felt like a soft summer breeze with the sun warmed his skin and Harry knew he would continue to kiss Louis every moment he could.

*~~***~~*

“Harry, do you have the tickets?”

“Everything’s on my phone, Lou. No one does paper tickets these days.”

“And you remembered to pack the extra chargers for the phones so we can be sure to not lose power while we’re on our day trips?”

“Louis, I have everything covered so the kids or our moms can reach us if they need to. We have everything we could possibly need. It’s time to go.”

Louis continued to scramble as he ran around their tiny house, just a blur of color as Harry stood with their luggage by the door. They were celebrating their twentieth anniversary by taking their first trip to Europe and their moms were taking care of the kids. Harry was grateful, but Louis was obviously at a bit of a loss regarding leaving the kids behind for two whole weeks.
“I just want to be sure,” Louis mumbled as he tried flying past Harry again.

Harry’s hand darted out and easily grasped Louis’ wrist, bringing the omega to a stop almost immediately. Looking at Harry in confusion and worry, Harry stepped forward and gave a soft nip onto Louis’ shoulder.

“Everything will be okay, my love. Please, take a few deep breaths to relax, and let’s head to the airport. Okay?”

Louis leaned his forehead on Harry’s shoulder, his shoulders falling and muscles loosening after Harry’s gentle bite, but the last of his tension relaxed when he nosed at Harry’s neck. The chills never had stopped for Harry, every time Louis scented him felt like the first. Harry hoped it never did go away, it was one of his favorite feelings he got to experience with Louis.

“I’m sorry. Thank you.”

Harry hummed and rubbed Louis’ back. “You feel alright? Ready to get in the car?”

Sighing, Louis pulled back and gave Harry a smirk. He’d long since lost the crazy hair colors and dark makeup, but the mischievous spark in his eyes was still there. It was only then Louis seemed to notice the scarf wrapped around Harry’s neck.

Jaw dropping, Louis tutted. “Harold. Why are you still wearing that ratty thing? I’ve made you far nicer ones, you know, and yet you still insist on this one.”

Harry looked down at the slightly worn but no less soft and vibrant blue scarf Louis had gifted Harry their senior year.

“It’s the very first gift my bondmate ever gave me,” Harry said softly, and Louis’ eyes softened even further. “I thought it was the perfect accessory to kick off our anniversary trip with.”

Rolling his eyes, but definitely not covering up the fondness still evident in his facial expression, Louis said, “Alright, you sap. Let’s go.”

Harry turned to grab their bags, but a strong hand on his shoulders stopped him and turned him back to his mate.

“I love you,” Louis whispered, followed by a quick but soft kiss.

“I love you, too.” Harry knew his smile was wide based on how his cheeks were already hurting. He was more than ready to handle that pain for the next two weeks, because it meant he had Louis beside him the entire way. “Now let’s go celebrate.”

End Notes

Thank you so much for reading! I sure hope you liked it. If you did, please consider leaving kudos and/or a lovely comment. Those always make me smile and feel happy. I would also appreciate you helping me spreading the word about this little fic of mine by sharing my fic post. Thanks again!

Interested in helping support charities with fanfic? If you are, I could write a fic for you!
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