Silver Lining

by FoxVII

Summary

When Harvey's brand of suppressant is recalled, he's left with a choice: face a rut alone for the first time in fifteen years, or hire a companion. As it turns out, there's a silver lining to drug recalls, one by the name of Mike Ross.

Notes

Hello there, Secret Santa! Merry smutty Christmas to you! I hope you enjoy it. ♥

“What do you mean you can't give me another prescription?”

The doctor looked at him steadily, as though he delivered this kind of life altering information on a daily basis. But then, considering his profession, he likely did.

“Given the nature of Rutnull's recall and the fact that you've been on those for nearly ten years - and suppressants in general for almost fifteen - I cannot, in good conscience, prescribe you another. You're at too high a risk for side effects and may lose the ability to have children entirely if you continue.”
Harvey sobered at that. His life had never shaken out to the point where having kids was feasible. He hadn't met the right person for that, nor had he the right lifestyle to manage it on his own. That didn't, however, mean that Harvey didn't want children at all. The thought of the possibility of that being taken away from him altogether was sorrowing.

His sadness was quickly overtaken by anger. “I'm going to sue their asses to high hell.”

“There's already a class action underway and I strongly recommend that you add your name,” his doctor supplied, grimly.

“So, now what?”

“You'll need to let nature take its course this time. It is healthy to allow yourself a rut every few months. Ideally, you would have had at least one per year. But you've been using the prescription consistently.” The doctor paused, pursing his lips. “Do you have a consistent partner in your life?”

Harvey shook his head.

“Is there anyone you'd trust to be with you during this time? I won't beat around the bush, Mr. Specter. This won't be a rut you can just burn off with exercise. It's going to be a bad one. I can't stress enough the importance of staying hydrated. You also need a lot of extra protein in your diet. Not to say that exercise isn’t important as well. I've found that some forms of meditation can also ease the strain. I have some pamphlets you can take home with you to study. Since it's been so long since your last cycle, you'll need some time to remember what it was like, and to prepare. All that being said, it helps a great deal to have someone looking after you. An omega, especially, is a balm during a rut.”

“I don't have an omega,” Harvey growled. The source of his frustration wasn't exactly the doctor, but he was a convenient target.

The other man hesitated. “I would ask, then, for you to consider taking an omega companion for the duration of your rut, from a matching service.”

Harvey stared at him. “You want me to use a hooker?”

“Companions, both omega and alpha are considered to be a medical service. Private nurses, if you will.”

“Except you sleep with the nurse.”

“Ruts aren't all about sex, Mr. Specter,” the doctor told him, sternly. “It's possible to get through one without engaging in intercourse at all. What's more important is indulging the alpha urge to protect and provide. Indeed, the omega in this situation would be looking after you, but you'll need to feel as though you're doing some of the looking-after yourself.”

Harvey remained silent, so the doctor continued. “Since you are unmated and single, I would like - with your permission - to submit a scent profile to the companion service. It takes anywhere from three to five days for a match to be found, so it's better to have a potential candidate at hand, in case you need one.”

“How long until my rut hits?”

“You have about four weeks, by my estimate. If I submit something now, you'll have an omega matched to you by the time you'll need one. And if you decide against using the service, you still have the time to cancel. Take your time and think about it.”
As if Harvey was going to be thinking about anything else. “Submit the profile,” he told him.

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Days later, Harvey was still thinking about it. Rightfully, he knew that he didn't have it as bad as omegas did when it came to a heat. But that still didn't stop him from feeling disgruntled about the person he would become in - now - three weeks time. Emotions rode closer to the surface during a rut and he had no brain-to-mouth filter to speak of. He was clingy, possessive, aggressive...

In short, it sucked. And he didn't want a new person to see him when he was so vulnerable, so not his usual self. But then, he didn't want someone he already knew to see him in that light either, and reassess what they thought of him.

His two options were narrowed down to the service, or having to just tough it out. And if it was as bad as his doctor was implying, he was running the risk of getting himself hospitalized.

As much as he disliked having to trust a stranger, he disliked more the thought of dying because of this bullshit.

So the service it was.

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He wasn’t exactly going in completely blind. Once a match had been found (97.3% compatibility - unheard of, apparently) the service contacted him to setup a meeting for him with his omega companion.

He was told it would be better to meet on home turf, or anyplace that he considered familiar and his. They didn't outright get to the point of saying that Harvey needed to invite the omega into his territory but Harvey caught the jist of it regardless.

By that description, this left either his office - very much his space - or, more naturally, his home. Since he didn't want anyone at Pearson Hardman getting an earful of his situation, his condo was the only viable option.

He gave them a date and a time.

When the day of the meeting arrived, Harvey headed home early to give himself extra time to look things over and get ready. He straightened pillows, reshelved books, made sure there was food available and ready to eat. He checked to ensure that there were drinks on hand…

It wasn't until he found himself running a safety sweep of the condo, checking for structural faults, that he finally conceded that getting a companion wasn't a terrible idea. If, at three weeks out, he was already at the point of prepping his territory to impress a potential mate, then he was going to have problems.
Harvey hadn't been told what his companion would look like - something about making the first meeting more genuine and yadda yadda - so when there was a knock at his door at 6:07 - late - that evening Harvey didn't know what to expect. He opened the door, annoyed at having been made to wait, even a little bit.

The annoyance died at the sight of bright blue eyes and a cheerful smile. “Hi, alpha!”

It was a male. Younger than him, but not young enough for Harvey to be calling the service up and demanding answers. His blond hair was ruffled at odd angles, as though he’d just stepped out of the shower and towel dried it before he came here. He’d recently shaved, albeit with a dull razor, given the faint shadow of scruff that still remained on his cheeks. He was slender, almost to the territory of too skinny, but definitely not in an unappealing way.

He was pretty. Really pretty.

But predictably it was the scent that had Harvey gripping the doorframe tighter to stop himself from leaning in and taking a deeper whiff.

97.3% match indeed.

The omega stuck his hand out at him. A bike helmet dangled off the other. “I’m Mike.”

“You're late,” Harvey replied.

Mike looked more puzzled than contrite. “It was like, six minutes.” Mike’s unshaken hand continued to hang in the air. Harvey took mercy and clasped it in his own.

“Seven,” he corrected. He squeezed his fingers around Mike’s hand. He was warm, his fingers were soft, and something pleasant sparked through him at the contact. Harvey managed to reign it in long enough to give Mike’s hand a firm, brisk shake. “Shoes off,” he ordered. “Come in.”

It suddenly became vastly apparent as to why the service had recommended that the meeting happen in a familiar place. It gave him some much-needed control of the situation.

Mike huffed and stepped inside, kicking off his shoes by the door and following Harvey. He stopped just inside the living room, socked toes flexing against the carpet as he took in his surroundings.

“You have… a really nice place,” Mike commented. Harvey's inner alpha preened at the praise.

Harvey told it to shut up.

“Do you want anything to drink?” he asked.

“Nah. Can I sit, alpha?”

Hearing the title was oddly reassuring. Or perhaps, this close to his rut, it was more akin to flattery. All the same, “You can call me Harvey,” he told him. “And yes. You can sit.”

“Okay then. Harvey.” Mike flung himself down on the sofa, wriggling against the cushions to make himself comfortable. Harvey perched on the armchair close by.

“What's with the bike helmet?”
“Oh, I biked in.”

That explained the faint smell of sweat mixed in with Mike's natural scent. Harvey wavered in the spot, deeply tempted to bury his face against Mike's throat. “You bike. In New York.”

“Well, I managed to beat the cars stuck in the traffic snarl. It's not so bad. Besides, I'm used to it. I...I work as a bike messenger. For my other job.”

“And something tells me that's not exactly your goal in life.”


“And how'd you end up as a companion?”

“I needed the extra money.”

Harvey looked at him, then - a long, deep look. Mike squirmed under his scrutiny.

“Drugs?” he asked, finally.

“No! Why would you--?”

“Because half the bike messengers I've ever seen or met have smelled like weed. It's not a stretch, Mike.” He paused for a beat, and then, “Do you still smoke?”

Mike squirmed again. “I never said I did.”

“Your reaction says otherwise.”

Mike heaved a sigh. “Not since becoming a companion, no. The drug rules are strict. You need to be clean to service clients. In every sense of the word.”

The phrasing - service clients - made Harvey wince internally. “Sounds glamorous.”

“It's not about the glamour. Like I said, I needed the money.”

“Okay, I'll bite. Why? We ruled out drugs. And clearly the money is important enough to you that you'd semi-quit smoking to get it. So it isn't for yourself because, just going on appearances, you don't really care about yourself.”

“Hey!”

“You're doing a job you don't want to do, and you dress like,” Harvey gestured at him, “that. You don't care about appearances.”

Mike stared at him. “Are you psychic or somehow sent by the ghost of my failures to torture me, or...?”

“No, just perceptive. But I'll add that title to my business card. Does this mean I'm right?”

Mike narrowed his eyes at him, but looked defeated nonetheless. “It's for my grandmother. She's... she raised me, y'know? And now it's my turn to help her. And she needed better meds, a better home... So I did what I had to do. It was either this or dealing drugs.”

“Not exactly flattering choices.”
“This isn’t so bad, you know? I mean, the service doesn't come cheap, so a lot of the time I get to crash in some really swanky places, like this.”

Harvey bristled inwardly at that.

“Yours is the nicest so far, though,” he added.

Harvey relaxed.

“How long have you been doing this?”

“A couple months. Not long.”

“How does it work? What keeps you safe?”

Mike blinked at him. “Huh… No one's ever asked me that. Well, okay. Might as well get down to business talk then.”

“I do regular check-ins while I'm with you. If I miss one, the case goes through an escalation process. First come the phone calls; three of them. The first comes a half hour after the missed check-in, then fifteen minutes, then five. If all three calls are missed, someone comes to find me. Your name and address are documented with the service, so they know where I'm supposed to be, and when I'm supposed to be there. It's not recommended that we leave the alpha's home, in part so that it's easier to track down a missing companion, and part because it wouldn't be safe for you to be outside anyway.”

“As far as us go; there's this meeting, at the outset, to test the waters. If you decide that you like me enough to want to go forward, you call them here...” Mike kicked out a leg so he could free a crumpled business card out of his pocket. He passed it over to Harvey. "Call this number and let them know, and then it becomes official. They'll talk about payment and specifics with you, but the broad strokes are that you pay for four days, at a flat rate. And then it's extra for any day that I need to stay after that, in case your rut goes longer. Those, you'd pay for after the fact. No one's going to make you get out a credit card in the middle of a rut,” Mike chuckled.

“Aside from that, the company has me covered for anything I need to get for you while I'm with you. Like food or water or anything else specific to your needs. I just expense it later and get reimbursed.”

“But aside from that… I just stay here, with you, for the duration of your rut.” Mike shrugged, sitting back against the couch cushions again.

“And how do you, personally, manage the rest of it?” Harvey asked.

“What do you mean?”

“The...alpha’s expectations.”

Mike stared at him again for a moment and then laughed, a faint tint of pink dusting his cheeks. “Yeah we’re... trained to handle it if an alpha makes a move on us, but it doesn’t happen as often as you’d think. Cycle hormones, for either heats or ruts, don’t change what’s going on inside a person’s head. Simply put, if you wouldn’t sleep with me now, you’re not going to want to later either. It just doesn’t work that way.”

Which, reassuring as it was, still didn’t give Harvey any clue as to what might happen later. At this stage in the game, if they’d met at a bar and this was a pick-up, it’d be a sure thing. He absolutely would’ve taken Mike home. But in perspective? He still didn't know.
Mike noted his intense stare. “You can scent me, you know. You should.”

“I ‘should’?”

Mike nodded. “To see… if you’d be interested in having me around.”

Something about the phrasing pricked at his senses, but with permission given, Harvey was no longer interested in holding back. He slid from his armchair, and Mike scooted over to make room. Harvey sat between Mike and the arm, leaning forward to press his nose to Mike’s neck.

He smelled like summer. Summer and warmth and fresh air, blue skies. Like comfort and familiarity, and one other thing that Harvey wasn’t yet willing to name.

Mike cupped the back of his head, fingers threading through his hair, practically cradling him. Harvey felt him nuzzle against his hair and they stayed like that, curled around one another for longer than was strictly necessary.

Mike broke the silence first. “Does this mean you’re okay with having me? Uh, for your rut...”

Harvey nodded without lifting his head, curling an arm around Mike’s waist and pulling him closer. Mike melted against him with a contented sigh.

“I think so.”

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Mike insisted on exchanging numbers before he left that evening, saying something about how increasing the contact between them would make things easier later. It didn’t affect Harvey either way, so he agreed. Although, he debated that decision when Mike started peppering him with text messages throughout the preceding weeks. Most were benign observations about his day. In others, he asked him what kind of food he liked, what relaxed him, what he enjoyed doing on his spare time, and so on.

Harvey didn’t mind the little intrusions as much as he had expected to. He replied to each one, and when Mike, mentioned offhandedly that he hadn’t taken a bubble bath in literal years, he went out to buy a bottle of the stuff and make sure that his cleaner had the tub ready to go.

He was just a good host. Just making sure that his guest could be comfortable here.

That was all.

Day 0:

Mike showed up at his door (on time, Harvey noted) the day before his rut. He was holding a duffle bag in one hand and, same as before, the bicycle helmet was hanging off the other.

“Was that bike rack in the parking garage always there?” Mike asked, eyes wide.

No, it hadn’t. Harvey had asked building management to put one in, next to his own parking space
last week.

“Yes.”

“Huh. Wonder why the guy at the front didn’t tell me to put my bike there the last time I was here,” Mike wondered aloud.

“I’ll show you to the guest room.” Harvey plucked the bag from Mike’s hand. He led them across the condo, opening one of the doors beside the already-open door leading to his own bedroom. “Figured it’d be good for you to have your own space while you’re here. Just in case.”

“I’m here *for* you,” Mike pointed out, but accepted the gesture anyway, walking in a slow circle to take in the room. “Man, this is still, by far, the nicest place I’ve ever stayed in.”

Harvey preened again. “I have dinner for you too. Once you’re settled in.”

“Thanks! I’ll be... fifteen minutes. If that’s okay?”

Harvey shrugged, nonchalant. “Take however long you need.”

Mike emerged seventeen minutes later, looking ruffled and a little damp around the edges, dressed in soft sweats and a t-shirt. He made a beeline for the kitchen, eyes drawn to one of the plates. “Jalapeno poppers?”

“You said you’d never had one,” Harvey answered, distracted as he took in the scent that Mike dragged in with him. “Is that my soap?”

“Yeah, figured it’d help things if I smelled more like you,” Mike answered.

Harvey suppressed a growl. It *was* helping. A little too much.

Mike reached out and took a bite of one of the poppers, immediately releasing a yelp as his tongue made contact. “Hot!”

Harvey shoved a glass of milk at him. “Jalapeno. Those tend to be hot.”

“Yeah but it’s like you stuffed extra fire into these.” Mike took another bite anyway, sipping at his milk. He looked comfortable there, relaxed. Like he *belonged*. Harvey curled a hand around the edge of the counter to hold himself back.

Mike must have noticed the tension. He took a step forward and pressed into his space, propping his chin on Harvey’s shoulder. “So, I decided on what movie I wanted to watch tonight.”

“Yeah?” Harvey gave himself a break, sliding an arm around Mike’s waist and pulling him in closer. This was part of the point of Mike being here, to make his instincts happy. He was allowed this, he told himself. And he was allowed to enjoy it.

“Space Jam,” Mike answered, grinning.

Harvey pulled back to look Mike in the eye. “Really? You *are* legal, right?”

“Very. And you’ve totally seen it, and you love it. Don’t lie to me.” Mike wiped his hands clean on a napkin, nuzzled against Harvey’s cheek and darted for the sofa.

*Omega. Run. Protect.*
Instinct had Harvey give chase immediately, tackling Mike to the couch, keeping his arms wound around him as they crashed down together. Mike wiggled in place to get comfortable, squirming for the remote and relaxing once he was successful.

Harvey spent the movie coiled tight around him, nose to Mike’s neck, listening to the soft sound of his voice as he quoted it, line for line.

And when Mike tugged him off to the bedroom to sleep, Harvey went, willingly.

Day 1:
Antsy.

He felt antsy. Jittery. He had too much energy. He needed to burn it off. Needed to do...something. Harvey couldn’t just lay here in bed. No. No he needed to patrol. Needed to move around.

“How’s wrong, alpha?”

Harvey growled softly at him. Go back to sleep.

“Too wound up, huh?” Mike guessed.

Harvey rumbled at him again, and then made for the door. “A run,” he answered.

“You want to go for a run?” Mike asked, sitting up. He worried his lower lip between his teeth. “Well, okay,” he said, leaning against the headboard, letting out a dramatic sigh. “I’ll wait here then. Alone.”

Alone.

The one word pinged around the inside of his skull. Alone. He couldn’t leave his omega alone. Defenceless? Unprotected? Harvey was a good alpha. He couldn’t do something like that. He couldn’t go outside. But then… what? He needed to do something. His pacing grew more frantic.

“Alpha, doesn’t your building have a gym?”

Harvey gave him an answering grunt. Yes.

“Show me?”

Show him. Show… Mike. Mike wanted to see the gym. Mike, his omega, wanted something. Okay. Okay, that was good. He could do that. He could provide.

Harvey held out a hand, helping Mike out of the bed and to the door.

“Shoes,” Mike pointed out.

Shoes. Omega wanted shoes. Omega would get shoes.

It continued that way all the way there, with Mike reminding him to get his keycard for the gym, lock the door, or to get the elevator, or any of the multitude of things that his now scattered brain was wont to forget.
Once in the gym, Mike pointed him to the treadmill, helping Harvey with the buttons once he stepped on.

Harvey began to run, keeping one eye on Mike. He wandered too far once, outside of Harvey’s line of sight, and he made a sound in the back of his throat.

*Come back.*

Obligingly, he did, waiting for him close by as Harvey jogged at full speed. Nearly twenty minutes went by with Mike patiently waiting for him to burn off the extra energy.

The running helped clear his mind. It wasn’t as *good* indoors as it was when he was outside. He didn’t quite feel like he was patrolling, for one, but Mike was close by, so it helped. He couldn’t see the sky or smell the fresh air, but the burn of his muscles was satisfying.

*More.* He wanted more.

“Harvey,” Mike called.

He kept running.

“Harvey,” Mike repeated, creeping closer to the machine.

He kept running.

“Alpha! Stop!”

Stop. *Mike* wanted him to stop. Harvey looked at the buttons in front of him and… why were there so *many*? He just wanted to be done with it!

Mike wanted him to be done. Mike needed him to stop.

So he hit the safety all-stop, nearly launching himself over the bars of the machine with the momentum of his run as the treadmill cut off abruptly.

Mike hopped up next to him, sliding under his arm to support his shaking legs. “It’s okay, alpha. I have you. You’re okay. Thank you, alpha,” he murmured, helping Harvey off the machine.

Harvey felt like he was made of jelly, stumbling over to a bench like a newborn foal. Mike stuck with him, a walking balm for his frayed nerves.

Shaky. Weak. He couldn’t protect anyone like this. He crumpled inwardly with the disappointment. What if Mike thought he was weak and he left?

But Mike stayed. Mike was there, nuzzling him, gently rubbing a hand over his thighs. Soothing him.

What a good omega. Harvey relaxed and leaned closer, nosing under Mike's throat, feeling some of the fraught tangle inside him ease with the proximity. Mike let him, curling his fingers through his hair, petting him.

It felt nice. He felt cared for. But was that enough? No. No, *Mike* was the one who should be looked after...Mike was the one who needed it. He needed to give him something. Anything. He needed to look after him, keep him safe.

Harvey pressed closer, blanketing Mike with his body.
“Harvey?”

Harvey growled softly at him, still nosing at his throat. Soft skin. Delicate skin. Mike could be hurt so easily. He needed to be protected. He needed to be marked. What if someone thought Mike was available and stole him away? Harvey nipped at the pale column of Mike’s neck, leaving a tint of pink behind. Mike whimpered under him, a full-body shiver raking through his form.

Not enough. It wasn’t nearly enough. Mike needed to smell like him. Mike needed to be his.

“Harvey,” Mike murmured, voice breathy and soft as Harvey moved his hips against him.

He rumbled his acknowledgement, voice rising at the end in question. Yes?

“Not here, alpha,” Mike told him, his hands fisting against his shirt.

Harvey nipped at his throat again, more playfully this time.

Why not?

Mike tried again. “It’s not safe here, alpha. Too open, don’t you think?”

Harvey raised his head and looked across the empty gym. He scented the air. No one was around, but…

“Someone could come in,” Mike supplied, in that gentle-soft tone. “Upstairs, maybe? Our nest. Where it’s safe. Where I’ll be safe.”

Safe. Safe omega. His omega.

The exhaustion vanished all at once and Harvey hauled Mike to his feet, dragging him out of the gym and back to the elevator again. He backed Mike against the far corner, grinning at him. Mike smiled back, his blue eyes wide and clear.

Pretty omega.

They managed to get back inside the condo without further mishap, and Mike darted for the bedroom as soon as he passed the threshold. Harvey sprinted after him, catching him around the waist and tackling him onto the bed.

He clamped his teeth against the back of Mike’s neck again, growling low in warning. Mine.

Mike went still under him, and he let out a soft moan. Harvey laid his weight against him for a moment, silently asking him to stay put before he pulled away, making a happy noise at the pink mark now decorating the back of Mike’s neck. It wasn’t a mating bite - Mike would need to be in heat for that - but it was enough.

For now.

Mike pushed back against him, the curve of his ass rubbing against the front of Harvey’s sweats. Harvey ground back, grabbing Mike by the hips and rocking against him steadily. Mike moaned again, breathy and soft, grazing back against him in slow, languid movements.

“Go on, alpha. You have me,” Mike murmured, pulling at the hem of his shirt. Harvey rumbled his approval, lowering himself to pay homage to the newly-bared skin. Pale and smooth and perfect.

His omega was perfect.

Mike hummed in pleasure as Harvey traced the line of his spine with his tongue, stopping at the
waistband of his sweats. He grabbed at them, suddenly furious at the cloth for existing, for barring the way between himself and his partner. Mike arched himself up off the bed, helping Harvey yank them off before they tore.

“You too, alpha,” he murmured, rolling onto his side and watching him with hazy, half-lidded eyes. And of course Harvey obliged, ripping off his own clothes and launching himself down to slot up behind Mike. His cock slid against the crack of Mike’s ass and Harvey rumbled softly, mouthing at the mark he’d left behind on his neck. Mike moved with him, reaching a hand back to dig against Harvey’s hair, pulling him all the closer.

The slide became smoother with his pre-cum slicking the way, and Mike shifted slightly, letting Harvey fuck himself against his thighs. He squeezed them tight, and Harvey lost himself to the feeling of Mike flexing around him, to his scent and those gorgeous sounds.

He opened his eyes to see Mike’s hand flying across his own length, his hips jerking up to meet his fingers. Harvey growled again, batting Mike’s hand away and wrapping his own around him instead. Mike arched himself back against him and shot off almost instantly with a wail, going slack with relief as his orgasm raced through him.

The scent of Mike’s release hit Harvey’s nose like a brick and he bit against Mike’s shoulder, digging the fingers of his free hand against his hip as he rocked himself to completion, adding to the mess on the bed and between Mike’s thighs.

Harvey lay against him, catching his breath. Mike smelled like omega and sex and his. No one would question that now. He grumbled, disgruntled when Mike squirmed under him.

“Hold on, alpha. Oof, Harvey! Let go. Two seconds, I promise.”

Harvey made a low nose of discontent, but he let go regardless. Mike reached for something along his bedside table and then rolled back to him, reaching down to slide something onto his cock. It fit against his swollen knot, squeezing it gently and Harvey sighed in relief, spurting another, smaller release. Mike continued to massage him, kissing along his neck and shoulders.

“There you go, Harvey. I’m all yours, see? I’m not going anywhere. Not unless you want me to.”

Harvey growled softly. Good.

Day 2:

They lay tangled together, Harvey’s head resting on Mike’s chest, listening to the sound of Mike’s heartbeat and letting it soothe him. Mike hummed to himself, stroking his fingers through Harvey’s hair, content to lay there together.

Omega safe. Omega here.

Mike’s stomach growled and Harvey bolted upright, a wounded sound tearing from his throat.

Omega hungry!

Bad! He was a bad provider! Bad alpha! The sound of Mike’s laughter followed him to the kitchen.

“Harvey, I’m not starving to death, it’s fine.”
Not fine. Harvey ripped open the fridge door, poking around until he found one of several premade sandwiches. Mike had made a batch of them after that first day, among a host of other things.

Harvey opened up the container and fished one out, plopping it onto a plate and dragging Mike to the dinner table, setting the plate in front of him. He sat across from Mike, looking at him expectantly.

“If I eat, you have to eat too.”

Harvey shook his head, and Mike stared back at him, obstinate. “Harvey.”

He only snarled back. No.

Mike shrugged and pushed himself out of the chair, walking away to sit on the couch. Away from the food.

No no no no. That wouldn’t do. Mike couldn’t go hungry.

Harvey followed him with the plate, a soft whine at the back of his throat.

“You having something to eat isn’t taking food away from me,” Mike said. “And now you’re going to eat this or I’m not taking another bite and then I will starve and die. How about that, huh, alpha?”

Harvey glared at him, considering that. Finally, begrudgingly, he opened his mouth, allowing Mike to feed him the bite. For his part, Mike looked unbearably smug.

Day 3:

“You need to drink.”

Mike got a growl in response. It didn’t taste right. It didn’t taste like Mike.

“You. Need. To. Drink.”

No. He only wanted Mike. Harvey curled around his omega in attempt to get closer to Mike, but trying to escape the bottle at the same time.
Mike sat on him, taking a drink from the bottle and pressing his mouth to Harvey’s, letting a stream of water flow between them.

Day 3.5:

This tastes better. This tasted right. Mike’s skin. Harvey licked around the head of his erection, lapping up the salty fluid. He coaxed Mike to raise one of his legs and nosed down between them, pulling back with a surprised noise.

A sleek, silver plug was pressed between his cheeks. Harvey rubbed his thumb over Mike's opening, pressing lightly against the plug. Mike arched under him.

“Seemed like a smart idea to be prepared,” he explained between pants.

Harvey set about making the best use of that preparation.

Day 4:

Mike knelt in the shower in front of him, head bobbing as he worked his mouth along Harvey’s shaft. Harvey had a hand buried in his hair, water pouring over the both of them. Steam billowed around them as he came down Mike's throat.

Day 4.5:

They lay tangled together again, their fingers laced. “What would you be doing - what would you be, if you weren’t a bike messenger-companion?” Harvey asked. His voice cracked from lack of use. It had taken him a solid fifteen minutes to piece that many words together inside his head.

Mike was silent for a long time before he answered:

“A lawyer. Like you.”

Harvey hummed and pressed a kiss to Mike's forehead.

Day 5:

He pawed at Mike from behind.

“For fuck’s sake, Harvey, you can wait ten minutes for me to finish cooking!”

Day 6:

“Do you regret this?” Harvey sounded more like himself. The words came easier now. He still tended to vocalize instead of using actual words, but he was getting better.

“Which part?”
“Being a companion?”

Mike beamed at him, leaning in to kiss his cheek. “No. I got to meet you.”

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On the eighth day, Harvey’s rut ended. He could feel it finally leave his body, like a particularly itchy wool sweater being taken off at the end of a long day. He breathed in and stretched, long and slow and languid.

He was himself again.

Mike stayed for the remainder of that day, saying that he didn’t want to leave Harvey just in case another wave hit after he’d left. Harvey knew that he was done, that he was in the clear. But he didn’t protest.

On the morning of the ninth day, Mike left.

His condo felt far too large.

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He threw himself into his usual routine after that, willing himself to be normal, willing the memories to fade. Despite his efforts, Harvey felt like he was being haunted by Mike. Every time his phone pinged with a notification, his heart foolishly leapt into his throat because he thought it was from him.

It never was.

Every time he saw a mop of sunny blond hair, he stilled and stared, because what if it was Mike?

It never was.

Every time he saw the colour blue, he thought of Mike. He thought of his clear, summer-sky eyes. His sunshine smell.

Every time the breeze kicked up, he thought he caught Mike’s scent.

It was never him.

As the days passed by, Harvey felt all the more foolish. Mike was a companion. He had done his job - and done it well. That was it.

This aching feeling inside him, that his mate had left him, was a lie. It was the lingering ghost of hormones and rut and sex. It wasn’t real. None of it was.

Mike’s voice whispered through his mind. “Cycle hormones, for either heats or ruts, don’t change
what’s going on inside a person’s head. Simply put, if you wouldn’t sleep with me now, you’re not going to want to later either.”

Mike must have been wrong.

***

That night, there was a knock at the door. Harvey opened it without looking to see who it was. Mike tumbled into his arms. “I lied,” he babbled, looking up at him, distraught. “Exchanging numbers isn’t part of the job. I just wanted a way to contact you. And I-I wanted to text. I did. But I wasn’t sure if you’d want me to or not, or if you even cared anymore, and it’s stupid and unprofessional and I shouldn’t be here, but I just wanted to see you again, an--”

Harvey shut him up with a kiss, sinking into the feeling of having Mike’s body pressed against his again, having Mike’s scent - real and true - thick in his nose once more.

Omega. Mine.

“I’m glad you did,” Harvey croaked, once they pulled away. Mike pressed back into his space again, nuzzling in against his neck, nose to his scent gland.

Mate.

The scent that Harvey wasn’t willing to name before. It was mate.

**EPILOGUE:**

“Have you seen my other sock?”

Harvey set down his coffee mug, giving Mike a flat stare. “Why isn’t it in the drawer with the other socks?”

“Well, life happens, Harvey. You can’t always keep track of socks.” Mike wandered around the apartment, one foot properly clad, the bare one tapping against the hardwood.

“You’re going to be late for class.”

“I know, I know, I-- found it!” Mike returned from the bedroom, grinning with pride. Harvey rolled his eyes, but there wasn’t nearly as much scorn behind it as the situation required.

“Don’t give me that look,” Mike said, stepping up to him and kissing his cheek. “You love me.”

“I do,” Harvey admitted, graciously.

“And one day you’ll have a pup to nag out of bed and harass about socks too.”

Harvey set his now empty mug in the sink. “One day,” he echoed, smiling to himself at the thought. A kid of his own… He actually could have that now. Maybe once Mike was done with law school...
“One day, roughly eight months and two weeks from now,” Mike supplied, slipping on his shoes.

“A newborn’s not going to be getting dressed on his own,” came Harvey’s reply, washing the mug and setting it on the dish drainer.

“Okay. Then in four years, eight months and two weeks,” Mike rattled off, setting his messenger bag over his shoulder and securing it. He pranced out the door.

Harvey was halfway through tying the laces of his own shoes when the penny dropped.

“Mike? Mike! Were you trying to say-- are you pregnant?”

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