this is the way the world ends

by Adagium

Summary

When visiting the Crown City for diplomatic matters, Ardyn Izunia catches sight of the young prince's retainer, and immediately realizes something everyone else had missed. There is more than one way to bring Insomnia to its knees, and forcibly bonding with the king's adopted son proves to be the most fun Ardyn has had in centuries.

This is a plot-heavy dramatic fic (that is hopefully a realistic portrayal of grooming, child abuse and recovery) from multiple perspectives to demonstrate how this affects everyone around Ignis, but chapters with extensive smut will have a * in the chapter title for those who here for that!

Notes

This is pure self-indulgence and it's going to eventually cover a lot of horrible things. Sorry, Ignis.

While the whole fic will be written in the third-person, different sections will focus on different character perspectives. I hope to capture the "family drama" element in doing so. The prologue focuses on Gladio and Regis. Chapter 1 will jump back a few weeks!
<Gladio.>

He almost doesn’t respond to the text. He’s just finishing up polishing his uniform, his new Crownguard boots being particularly unpleasant to clean up, and he desperately wants to go home and eat everything in the fridge.

<Yea?> He’s grateful that texts do not indicate irritation and he can feign ignorance, because he does not want to deal with Ignis right now, especially not as he sounds like he’s going to be angry about something Noctis did.

<I made a mistake.>

He freezes. Where was Ignis, anyway? He hadn’t come to Crownguard practice; Cor made mention of Ignis having some kind of cram school exam, but it wasn’t like Ignis to double-book anything. His thumb hovers over the text field, unsure of how to reply. He doesn’t have a chance to though, because he can see Ignis writing again.

<Tell Noctis I’m sorry.>

*If he’s just bitching about possibly answering a question on an exam wrong, I’m going to kill him.*

He half smirks at the thought as he responds. *<Whatd u do?>*

But the smirk dies on his lips when he sees Ignis’ next words.

<I don’t think he’ll let me leave.>

The smirk dies and Gladio understands.

Because last week Ignis had mentioned something casually at lunch, so casually that Gladio had decided it was best to ignore it. Ignis had met someone, someone *a bit* older. He thought he might like him. But in seventh grade, that sort of comment means nothing, and so he had ignored it. For one thing, he didn’t know how to wrap his mind around Ignis liking boys and he was afraid Ignis would ask him about sex if he pursued the topic. He did not want to talk about sex with Ignis. Gladio was big for his age, and he’d hit puberty at eleven. He was an alpha at that and could easily pass for sixteen or even eighteen; he’d had sex enough, which more or less everyone in the school knew. Gladio would happily give sex advice to nearly anyone who asked, but he’d always been mildly worried that Ignis would eventually ask him. Refusing him would be awkward, but that was one conversation he’d like to die without having.

In part because Ignis was far too serious and would probably want to study diagrams with him and ask awkward anatomical questions, and in part because Ignis was *cute.*

But maybe Gladio should have pursued the subject, should have talked to him about it. Because there is no other *he* in Ignis’ life beyond their classmates, the men in the Crownguard.
He frantically flicks open the app telling him where his friends are, looks around for Ignis’ GPS dot. Gone, of course. Ignis regularly turned it off because he felt it was intrusive. But he’s okay, he’s okay. He has his phone. He’s texting in complete sentences. Gladio bites his thumb and sucks air in around it. And he calls him.

He calls him once, twice, three times, frantically hitting the call button over and over every time it automatically goes to voicemail as he runs out of the locker room and looks desperately down the hall, this way and that. Someone must be around. Someone who can help. Gladio had never been conscious of his age before, had never felt like he wasn’t adult enough, but now. Now. And that’s when Ignis picks up, on the seventh call.

He doesn’t give Gladio a chance to speak, doesn’t offer a greeting. “I want to go home,” he inhales sharply at the end of the word home, and he’s sobbing then.

“Ignis, Ignis,” Gladio says over and over, pressing the phone against his mouth so hard that his teeth scrape the plastic. “I’ve never heard you cry before, never heard you scared. It terrifies him. “I’ll come get you. Where are you?” He can’t drive, at least not legally, but it hardly matters. He’d bring the whole Crownsguard with him if he had to.

“Gladio, I’m not a…” There is sheer terror in his voice now.

And then nothing, the rustle of fabric, a soft clicking and Ignis gasping. A low murmur of sound that Gladio only belatedly places as another voice. He. He.

“My friend. Gladio?” He sounds startled, his voice hiccupping, and Gladio closes his eyes in horror. Ignis never sounds this unhinged, never sounds this afraid. And Ignis would never so freely give information that could be dangerous.

He doesn’t recognize the voice, the very adult voice, doesn’t recognize the faint accent that screams foreigner, synonymous with danger these days, that murmurs low in his ear now. “I’ll bring him home.”

A thousand threats scream through his vocal cords but all Gladio says is, “Is he okay?”

“Yes, yes.” The voice is languid, liquid fire, and for a moment Gladio can understand why Ignis fell for him, whoever he is. “Self-discovery can be a bitch though, hm?”

“What do—”

“I’ll drop him at the palace in, oh, twenty minutes? We aren’t far. And yes, I have permission to pass through the gates.”

And then there’s a click as he hangs up.

-Prologue - Regis-

He’s in his school uniform. And it isn’t torn or bloodied; it looks immaculate as ever, and Regis clings desperately to this fact as he skips half of the stairs, forgets his bad leg, and lunges for Ignis. He’s as neat and tidy as he ever is, even if a little wild-eyed as he stands there at the foot of the
steps in the throne room, and therefore that means he’s okay. He’s safe.

Regis is grabbing him then, sweeping him up and clutching him to his chest. Ignis clings to him, arms wrapped tightly around his neck and one leg drawn in tightly against himself, the other hooked around the king’s waist. He’s never been very affectionate, and Regis has never known the strength of his hugs before now. And Ignis sobs. He sobs and he sobs and Regis cradles him, gently presses the back of his head as Ignis buries his face in his throat and howls.

Regis does not know what to say, what to do. He’s only ever seen Ignis cry twice before, when Noctis has been hurt, when the Scientia child who was at once his son and not his son had first seen his brother in a wheelchair. He’d burst into tears then, sobbing that he’d been unable to protect him. And again only last year, at the tenth anniversary of Aulea’s death. Regis had gone down to the tombs to be alone, but Ignis had doggedly followed him, had stood beside the crypt and held his hand and wept silently because that was what his King was doing.

His neck is damp, skin wet and the collar of his jacket sticky from Ignis’ tears. Ignis Scientia does not cry for himself; he only cries for others, and something about his tears now sends a vine of dread unfurling through his veins and taking root in his spine. Something is very wrong here.

It’s a long moment before he is able to release him, before he is able to pass Ignis off into Clarus’ arms. Clarus, who had been accosted by his own son only fifteen minutes before, who had had to pass on the news to the King that his adopted son was being held by an unknown man and was supposedly about to be dropped off at the palace steps. Take him to Acanthus, please. She’ll know what to do. And it might help him to see Gladio. Or it might not. One can never know with teenage boys. Boys. He knows without asking what has happened to Ignis, and it is a thing he’d never expected to have to deal with as the father of two sons.

It’s only when Clarus is gone, when he is certain that Ignis is out of sight and out of sound, that he turns towards the doors and steps out into the sunlight.

He strides purposefully towards the car waiting, inwardly impressed that this man has made no effort to leave but loathing him all the same. How could anyone do this to a child?

It takes him a moment to understand who he is seeing as he slams a hand down on the roof and leans in as the tinted window slides down.

Ardyn Izunia, Chancellor of Niflheim and public mastermind of their war machine. His gut twists in fear and that sense of dread returns, because Ardyn looks exactly as he had twenty years ago, while Regis has gone grey and old. So he truly is the monster he’d claimed to be all those years ago. But before he can say a word, Ardyn is cocking his head and waving at him lazily from the backseat.

“I’m here on official duty as an envoy. Lay a finger on me and you commit an act of war,” the man purrs, rolling his head over the back of the seat and grinning up at him.

There’s nothing he can say to this, so he only snaps, “He’s thirteen.”

“Legal. In both Lucis and Niflheim.”

Regis turns on his heel for a moment and looks away, so furious he cannot even look at this man. But he’s right. He’s right. The Scourge had wreaked such havoc over Eos that many countries were forced to lower their ages of consent, to alter their marriage laws in a desperate bid to keep the human race going. Many people out in the countryside married at fifteen now, even fourteen or thirteen. But here in Insomnia, those new laws went ignored. And rightfully so. Thirteen. Ignis had
always been a serious boy, but he was still clearly a child. Five feet tall and less than a hundred pounds, soft and smooth-cheeked and wide-eyed. He likes hiding under the covers with a flashlight and reading all night. He gets excited over holidays and festivals. He still plays pretend with Noctis when the prince asks. He’d never admit it, but he needs help with his homework sometimes.

Regis wants to tell him these things, these things and more, because this must be a mistake. Ignis must have fooled him, must have worn his Crownsguard uniform and spoken low and managed to pass himself off as older, as he has been trying to do during Council meetings as of late. Stupid, stupid child. I should have warned him about this. But it had never occurred to him, because Ignis was a son and a beta at that. It’s a long time before he can breathe, before he can drag his hand from his face and turn to look at the man sitting in the back seat of a car so expensive its annual taxes must cost more than the Regalia itself. No, there is no point in telling this man that Ignis is only a little boy.

“What do you want?” He says tightly, his voice low and dangerous. “Act of war or not, he is my son as much as the Prince is.”

“Want? I don’t want anything. I have what I want already. I bonded with him.”

He isn’t sure he’s following this any longer. Bonded? Ignis isn’t…

“Remember that I have parental visitation rights.”

What? Ignis’ parents are dead. They died in the war six years ago. He’d been turned over to his uncle, and subsequently the king, to be raised. Regis starts to say this just as the implications of what Ardyn said hit him, and the words die on his lips as Ardyn leers at him, vicious and predatory and triumphant.

“Oh, you didn’t know, did you?” he says softly, his voice almost a purr. “He does have a hormonal imbalance that makes it a little messy, I suppose. He’s an omega. Now my omega.”
Chapter 1 - Six days earlier - Ardyn, Noctis

Chapter Summary

Ardyn discovers there's something unusual about the prince's retainer and zeros in on him, while Noctis grows suspicious of a stranger.

Chapter Notes

I am sorry that this took so long! I have been writing this fic out of order, and the events leading up to Ardyn and Ignis meeting got shoved aside for a bit. Hopefully after the next chapter or so, things will go a bit more quickly. Thank you for being patient.

Like the Prologue, this chapter is split into two “perspectives”. As I intend this to be a drama showing how Ignis' mistake affects everyone around him, each chapter will be broken into 2 or 3 sections from various character’s perspectives. Last time, it was Gladio and Regis. Now it’s Ardyn and Noctis! This takes place six days before the prologue.

Chapter 1 – Ardyn

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Chancellor Ardyn Izunia expects nothing when he enters Insomnia for the seventh time since Noctis Lucis Caelum was born. He expects it to be like the other six times. He will go in, make sure the boy is still alive and well, lurk in the Citadel’s libraries for a little while, indulge himself in one of their classy hotels – far fancier than anything Gralea has to offer – and make his way back to Niflheim after sending the king an uncomfortable letter from some random Nif dignitary, postmarked from within the city’s walls that nobody is supposed to be able to infiltrate, complimenting him on his son’s growth. It’s a ritual he performs every year or two now, one he’d likely carry out much more often had he not stopped caring about the human passage of time.

But this time, he is surprised.

He notices it immediately when he lays eyes on the prince, surrounded by a handful of boys his age in the school’s courtyard. Not just any omega. He’s long since learned to block out that scent; one gets tired of knowing everyone else’s sex lives after a few centuries. And not just an omega in heat or close to manifestation. This is different, something far more suited to his tastes.

Darling prince Noctis. Oh wouldn't that be sweet, in the way only the cruelest twist of irony can be. But Noctis is only ten or eleven, far too young to be manifesting. And nearly all male Lucis Caelums, even quite a few females, have been Alphas. But it might be fitting that the last one, and he will be the last one, is an omega. I should remember to come back in two years, see what he has shaped up to be, see if he'd be worth playing with a bit before carrying on down the path to the end of the world.
There's a boy beside him, perhaps the same age, but Ardyn's eyes skate over him due to the distraction to the left of him.

The Amiticia. It must be. He's the only one old enough. Massive for his age, perhaps fifteen if Ardyn remembers correctly. A little late to manifest, but plenty of Amiticias, plenty of shields, have been oetas and omegas. Ardyn frowns. It would be fun, he supposes, but the boy doesn't seem particularly fun when it comes down to it. Ardyn has seen and heard enough around the Citadel to know by now that the boy is insecure about his position, that he doubts whether or not his father is a true Shield because he’d bypassed the Trials. Insecurity gets boring very quickly. So easy to exploit, and then there is nothing left.

So perhaps it’s his bias that causes him to turn back to the boy between them, the mousy-brown-haired kid with glasses. Him. He understands it then. He’s young, perhaps twelve, maybe thirteen if he’s unfortunate, but if he’s an omega, his lot in life is misfortune. Apparently not on suppressants, perhaps young enough that his parents misjudged, didn’t get him on any in time, because it is rare to manifest at twelve or thirteen. Ardyn inhales again. Four or five days, perhaps a week at the most. I'll know better if I can touch him, smell him up close. But for now he only watches.

He's pretty, in a haughty sort of way. Insolent and difficult; Ardyn can see that immediately in his eyes, in his subtle pout, the way he carries himself. He’s confident, standoffish in a way that is alarmingly attractive, even at his age. Ardyn has only very rarely been interested in children younger than fifteen or sixteen before now, a fact that Verstael Besithia exhibited unexpected moral disgust towards. But Ardyn has been alive a long time and when one is alive so long, they are compelled towards expanding their sexual appetite out of sheer boredom. And this child will not be a child in a week.

Vibrant green eyes behind glasses that Ardyn immediately suspects aren’t entirely necessary. Pale pink lips, slightly bowed. He wonders about the color of his little cock and his fingers curl slightly. And beneath his cock, beneath his little testicles, there will be a short expanse of skin, soft and smooth, and then a hole. He will smell divine down there. And he will be wet for him.

The more Ardyn watches him, the more he wants. Wants and wants. Less than a week. I have less than a week to claim him as I want to. He hasn’t cared about the human passage of time in over a thousand years, but suddenly he feels the crushing weight of the urgency of mortality. He needs to know who he is immediately.

Titus Drautos, scornful traitor to the Lucian Empire, fountain of knowledge about everything to do with Insomnia, and an absolute delight to blackmail. He is very sensitive about too many things, and he hasn’t learned to guard himself as much as he ought to if he really does plan on leading an army against his own king. Far in the future. I might have other plans, and everyone in the Empire will by necessity bow to my will.

Because Ardyn is rapidly realizing that there are other options. Even if Titus Drautos might be expendable in the near future, right now he has his uses. You’d think he have learned to not answer the phone when he sees my name by now. He knows that Drautos has silly names for anyone related to Niflheim on his phone. It’s less suspicious than a second cell phone, if that were to be discovered. And he knows that his pseudonym is Dry Cleaner. Because I always feel the need to visit one after we talk, the mortal had quipped one day.

“I was in Insomnia today, checking up on our darling little prince.” Nothing like living up to
expectations.

“You really shouldn’t keep doing that,” he growls, immediately followed by a loud sigh. “What do you want?”

“You’re always to the point, aren’t you? Tell me about the kid with glasses who is always with him.”

“Ignis Stupeo Scientia. Retainer to the King, though he’s treated more like a family member.”

“Scientia. They were a scribe family, no?” The middle name surprises him. It suggests royalty, and the Scientias aren’t what anyone should consider royalty.

“Something like that, yea. His uncle was the retainer before him. I know a couple of others were but that family…” he trails off, and Ardyn can read between the lines easily enough.

“He’s a bastard, isn’t he?”

“There are rumors.” Noncommittal, as usual. *The asshole. He never likes getting involved in anything interesting.* “Don’t try to start anything over it, though.”

But rumors are enough. Possible bastard son to the King, retainer and half-brother to the Chosen One. And an omega. A young, impressionable, unbonded omega. The Lucian laws for going after underage omegas are particularly brutal, but the Crown apparently cares little for them once they reach a certain age. “Wouldn’t dream of causing the dear king any trouble. How old is he?”

“Thirteen.”

Of age. And therefore not a boon but a political asset. “Convenient. Lovely.”

“I’m going to pretend I didn’t hear that.”

“What’s he like?”

“Kind of haughty, though it’s warranted. He’s a little clumsy and uncoordinated in the Crownsguard, but he shows promise.”

Already in the Crownsguard then. He must have joined the minute he turned thirteen. Cute. And naïve. Stubborn, probably very stubborn, refusing to acknowledge that he might be clumsy. Ardyn can almost taste the boy’s sweat as he imagines him being *uncoordinated* in training, and he holds the phone too close to his mouth as he purrs, “How so?”

“He’s got spirit and a willpower that’s pretty offputting to everyone else. He’s a little creepy. Too forceful,” Drautos sighs again, and he sounds almost proud as he goes on, “Highly intelligent, too, especially regarding strategy. Big fan of chess and shogi. Loves going to Council meetings. Pity he’s growing up under a king who doesn’t care about his own people. It’s a waste.”

“A waste, yes of course, but if he were to grow up under the *great and holy* Empire of Niflheim?”

“I’m *really* going to pretend I didn’t hear that.” And he hangs up before Ardyn has the chance to say another word.

Insubordination. But Ardyn only taps the phone receiver against his chin and smirks. So his initial perspectives on the boy had been correct. Which means he’d be very easy to lure in, even easier because if he’s this close, his hormones must be pushing him to make a lot of mistakes, to act
without thinking. Ardyn would feel bad if he remembered what it was like, but it’s been a long time since he has been thirteen. A very long time.

Chapter one - Noctis

Noctis hates going to the library on the best of days, but the best of days doesn't involve strange men who make his hair stand on end lounging in the history section with a chess board on the table in front of him.

"That's a very rare chess set," Ignis mutters absently beside him.

Noctis makes a vague, noncommittal sound to acknowledge that he heard him, but he's more interested in getting the book he needs for his class report immediately so he can go home and play video games. Not that Ignis cares, because he's already veering off to get a closer look. An action that the stranger notices immediately because he visibly perks up. As of he'd been waiting. Noctis wants to warn Ignis, grab his hand and pull him back, but Ignis is older, smarter. He knows better. If he isn’t alarmed, Noctis shouldn’t be either. Not even when the man speaks to him.

"Care for a game?"

There is a clear challenge in his voice, unnatural when considering the fact that he is speaking to children. It bothers Noctis in a way he can't describe, and he turns his full attention to him. Even sitting, he is large, tall and impeccably dressed in what must be what some call high fashion. His hair is an unnatural reddish purple, though why a middle-aged man would dye his hair is beyond his comprehension, and his eyes a deep amber. His clothes are expensive, but he looks a little messy. Noct can't imagine escaping the palace looking the way this man does without Ignis dragging him back to straighten him up. Must be nice to not be a royal. He almost smirks, until he realizes that this man might be royalty. Because he is clearly an Alpha. Noctis can tell this even at his age, even being an Alpha himself. No royal family that Noctis recognizes, and he has been forced to sit through a lot of council meetings, forced to be wheeled around in a lot of family gatherings when he was incapacitated. He might not even be Lucian. Was that an accent I heard?

And he looks at Ignis, who is unexpectedly pale, limbs locked and rigid as he stares at the strange man. He's afraid, Noctis realizes suddenly. He knows something about this man I don't and he's afraid of him. He glances back at the stranger, sees the way he's staring at Ignis, devouring him with his eyes. It pushes him to act in a way he rarely acts. Assertive, protective, dominant. The way the Crown Prince ought to act. He wonders if his father would be proud as he steps forward, "Not him. You'll play me."

Ignis glances at him, startled, clearly vaguely irritated, but after a moment he bows his head and steps back.

Noctis doesn't like it when he does that, when he acts as if there is a wall between them, and it only makes him want to protect him more. He's just my brother and this is what brothers do for each other. "I'll need your help sometimes." All the time.

"Two against one, is it?" the man purrs softly, his hooded eyes narrow and unreadable. Yet Noctis can't help but feel he is irritated as he murmurs, "I suppose your combined age is still less than mine, so it's only fair."
Ignis bristles beside him, but he doesn't rise to the bait. He only pulls up a second chair and waits until Noctis sits, flatly and abruptly, across from the strange man before sitting himself. Noctis feels sick, dizzy and anxious; there is something horribly wrong with this man and this situation but he can't place what. Plenty of people hang around the library and its neighboring cafe with chess sets, shogi and go boards. He knows that Ignis has been distracted more than once by this sort of setup, knows that there's nothing untoward or unusual about the situation. But this man. He feels out of his depth, and he is more aware of his age than he has ever been.

He makes the first move, though Ignis makes such a loud groan of frustration that for the next several, he lets the older boy direct where to put each piece. At least until the man murmurs something about how they ought to play equally, and that Noctis shouldn't make Ignis do everything all the time.

He can tell that this man, Izunia, as he called himself, is only playing with them. He doesn't know how or why, but the older man isn't even trying to hide it. It's in the way he lazily flicks the pieces around, the way he sometimes spends five minutes mulling over a move only to do something that makes Ignis scoff or roll his eyes.

"Stop giving it to him. It's disrespectful," Ignis finally snaps. He's being rude, even for Ignis, and his cheeks are slightly flushed.

"Do you really want me to play properly?"

"Yes," Ignis says so firmly that Noctis flinches.

And Izunia wipes the floor with them within the next four moves as Ignis stares on in horror, as if he hadn't been expecting it. Because even at thirteen, Ignis was one of the best players in Insomnia. Noctis would normally be delighted to see him lose, but this makes him feel sick.

"Play again sometime?" he yawns after asking, his movements lazy and leonine as he rearranges the pieces to their original positions.

No, no, no, you dirty old creep. Noctis opens his mouth to tell him off, but Ignis beats him to it. "Maybe sometime," he snaps out, and Noctis can sense his tension. He reaches up and grabs his hand, squeezes it and pulls back.

"We gotta go."

Ignis nods, bows his head slightly in that way of his whenever Noctis asks or demands something of him, and he waves half-heartedly at the strange man that Noct wants nothing to do with ever again.

He notices too late that Ignis is shaking his hand free as he glances back towards the library. "Hold on, I forgot something." And before Noct can even digest his words, before he can react, the older boy had darted off. He could be remarkably fast when he wanted to be.

So Noctis waits with bated breath, unsure of how long he should stand there before getting concerned. Ignis never forgets anything, so there is clearly something else here that he doesn't understand. At least not then, not until Ignis finally comes trotting back what feels like an eternity, but must only have been a couple of minutes, later.

"Nothing. Just a question about his technique." He says it breathlessly, quickly, and he will not meet Noctis's eyes.

Noct says nothing. He's too busy noticing how Ignis shoves something into his pocket and curls his
fingers around it, forming a bulge on his thigh. Ignis has always been secretive, private, and Noctis knows that the older boy would never tell him even if he pressed. But he doesn't have to ask. He'd caught a glimpse, and he knows that what Ignis had just retrieved from the man in the library was a set of keys.
**Chapter 2 - Five, Four days earlier - Ignis, Prompto**

Chapter Summary

Ignis begins acting irrationally, while Prompto's spying reveals an alarming royal secret.

Chapter Notes

Finally, Ignis! His sections will be a little disjointed and odd right now, as he's...undergoing a significant hormonal change so his brain is not all there. The smut will probably start next chapter, and if not, definitely the one after that (if that's what you're here for). This chapter also introduces Prompto, who was surprisingly fun to write! On a third note, I don't want to info-dump the a/b/o dynamics and how they are heavily tied to politics and magic usage, so I will be dropping some lore throughout the story. Please be patient on that ground. Thank you for reading. I hope you enjoy!

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**Chapter 2 – Ignis**

His finger slips on the door buzzer – strange, that a hotel would have one on every room – and it takes him a moment to realize it’s because his hands are sweaty. *Nervous.* He’s felt a little uneasy the last week, a little tired, a little warm. Which doesn’t make very much sense, because he’s never been worried about final exams before. Maybe it’s because they’re his last set of easy tests before he must take the high school entrance exams. He wipes his hands off on his pants just as the door creaks open a couple of inches.

“It’s you.”

The redhead stranger sounds vaguely irritated, and he makes no effort to open the door further or move out of the way. Ignis freezes. He’d been thinking about this all day, scarcely paid attention to a word said in class and had even cut out of cram school half an hour early because he’d been unable to bear it any longer. And he’d all but run from the train station to the hotel. Only to have Izunia be irritated with him. Ignis wonders if perhaps he has someone over. A woman, probably. That could be uncomfortable. He doesn’t know why that thought irritates him, so he asks, “Should I go?”

Izunia cocks his head, eyes askance for a moment. “If you wish to,” and then he sighs as he pulls the door open further. Green pants as before, with a black shirt this time, a far plainer outfit than he’d been wearing when they’d first met. “Or come in. Whatever you’d like to do.”

Ignis doesn’t step in immediately. The man’s behavior is offputting, as if he regrets his offer that he come over whenever he pleases to play chess. Because after this man had utterly destroyed him in a chess match, Ignis had dragged Noctis out of the library only to return moments later to accost...
the man. I’d never seen a couple of those moves before. Can you teach me? Izunia had stared blankly at him for a long moment before nodding once and Ignis had been unexpectedly thrilled over that nod. Now he isn’t so certain. “Are you busy?”

“Never for charming young individuals like you.” He opens the door fully now and gestures for him to come in.

Ignis’ eyes momentarily widen at the sight of the room. He’d known this was an expensive hotel when Izunia had handed him the key. I always request two because I am remarkably adept at losing things. I’m normally in the library until four or five but feel free to come by after that. I’ll be in town through the nineteenth. The name etched on the keys was for one of the finest hotels in Insomnia. Ignis had looked it up last night, had stared at the guest room photos online. This looks exactly like the photos.

“I admit I didn’t think you’d come.”

“Why wouldn’t I?” He sidles in through the door and looks around. The room is messier than it ought to be, but the door to the bathroom is open and no one else is there. He’s definitely alone, and Ignis is unexpectedly relieved at this.

“Because your parents probably taught you not to talk to strangers, much less meet them at hotels.”

Ignis narrows his eyes at parents. His parents died ages ago. His uncle barely acknowledges his existence. The king is…the king. Busy. But he isn’t about to tell Izunia any of that, so he merely shrugs. “You’re the best at chess I’ve ever seen.”

Izunia seems to accept this, just as he accepts a thirteen-year-old showing up without warning. He only makes his way to the massive desk in the corner and opens drawers aimlessly, as if he isn’t sure where he put something. Probably not, as he seems a bit of a slob. His hair is even messier than it was at the library, so messy that Ignis feels the urge to comb it, run his hands through those thick waves. It makes his fingers twitch in impatience as the man finally sighs. “I’m staying here because it’s so close to the palace libraries. And it’s quiet enough that I can conduct research in peace. A lot of the other hotels in the area…” he waves a hand. “Let’s just say that this hotel has two floors designated for people traveling with children and I am six floors above that.”

He isn’t sure if there’s a hint in there, a dig at his age, so he stays silent as the stranger pulls out a chess board and a wooden box. Ones he promptly shoves into Ignis’ hands.

“Set it up.”

Ignis is so startled that he obeys.

-“I didn’t introduce myself before, did I?” he says it lazily after nearly half an hour of pushing pieces around. They’d made barely any progress, as Ignis had spent ten minutes asking questions about the origin of the set only to receive vague answers. The man clearly isn’t used to inquisition, or perhaps he’s so used to it that he’s learned omission is better than lying. “My proper name is Ardyn Izunia. You can call me whatever you like.”

“Okay.” Ignis darts a glance up at him as he finally puts his piece down. He can’t tell what language that is, neither first nor last name. “I’m Ignis.”

Ardyn only nods, and Ignis feels at once relieved and irritated that he doesn’t seem more interested. He wants this man interested in him, instead of merely looking upon him as a mild nuisance.
“Ignis Scientia,” he says bluntly, inhaling deeply the moment he says it as if to drag the words back between his lips. *I shouldn’t have said that. He might recognize the name.*

“I didn’t ask.”

*Or not.* Now he feels distinctly irritated, but he keeps quiet for another round or two, afraid he will say something else that will compromise him. The thought makes him realize that his hands are sweating again, that he feels uncharacteristically warm, and as soon as it’s Ardyn’s turn again he wipes them on his pants, holds them in his lap. He wonders if he could ask him to put the air conditioner on, but when he opens his mouth, he only blurts out, “I like your cologne.”

And he flinches. *So much for not embarrassing myself.* But it’s true, he’s realizing now. He does like it quite a bit, far better than whatever everyone in the Crownsguard training locker room sprays all over themselves.

Ardyn’s hand stops moving, chess piece hovering over the board, as he stares at him. His eyes are such a strange color that Ignis can’t stop looking at them. “Little young to be worrying about that, aren’t you?”

Ignis ignores this. He must not know anything about teenagers, because half of his class wears cologne and perfume already. But if that’s all he finds strange about the comment, he’ll run with it. “What is it?”

He puts the rook down. “Nothing you can afford. I bought it when traveling through Niflheim.”

He scowls. He’s grateful that Ardyn hadn’t commented on the strangeness of his behavior, but the incessant jibes at his adolescence are irritating. “Are you from Niflheim?”

“I’ve lived in Gralea the last few decades, if that’s what you’re asking.”

“That’s not what I was asking, actually,” he grumbles as he moves a pawn in turn. *Decades.* He doesn’t like the more aggressive reminder that this man is at least three times his age.

Ardyn only grunts in response at that. “Stupid move. I’ll let you redo it.”

Ignis immediately picks it up again, moves it back to where it had been. He also doesn’t like that Ardyn is letting him cheat, but he doesn’t want to act too childish either and so he stays silent.

Not that he knows what Ardyn expects of him either.

He doesn’t know what to do and he stares numbly at the board. He’d thought Ardyn had boxed him into a corner, but now he has the uncomfortable suspicion that the man had purposefully given him an out. One that he can’t find. *He’s making it easy for me and I still can’t manage.* The thought makes him sick and with a jolt he realizes that he not only feels feverish, but actually a little ill.

Ardyn gives him a few minutes, then five, a few more before he sighs softly. “Would you like something to drink?”

“Mm,” Ignis mumbles as Ardyn stands, embarrassed that the man might have noticed that he looks sick. He himself isn’t sure if that’s a *yes* or a *no*, but he will accept whatever Ardyn does. He doesn’t dare look up as Ardyn stands, doesn’t move as the man brushes past him.

Instead he freezes. The hand against his shoulder for the barest of moments unsettles him somehow. *It was an accident, surely. And what difference would it make? I’m used to being jostled and pushed around by men. That’s half of what being in the Crownsguard is.* But nobody in the
Crownsguard is this man.

Though he doesn’t have time to work through that, as Ardyn is now placing a glass on the table in front of him before sitting down. Ignis finds himself fixating on how the cloth of his pants stretch over his thighs when he moves. The drink had arrived too quickly and he doesn’t like how he seems to have lost a minute in there somewhere, so he once again drops his piece down in a random spot and takes a sip.

Apple juice, whereas Ardyn is drinking something similar in color but likely alcoholic. He seems the type. Also the type to give a child apple juice, assuming he likes it because he’s a child. But it’s sweet and cold and it gives Ignis a rush of contentment as he sips it, allows him to focus on something other than the feverishness and anxiety.

But they don’t finish the game. Ardyn admonishes him on his next move, offers a few suggestions, warns him of common pitfalls, and after another few exchanges of a similar note he yawns loudly and cocks his head towards the door. **Rude.**

“You can just say you want me to leave.”

“You’ve been here two hours,” he shrugs as he stands, the gesture leonine and lazy as everything else he does, and he takes a step towards the bathroom. “Come on. I have things to do tonight.”

Ignis blushes at that. **Two hours.** He hadn’t realized he’d been intruding for so long. He half-turns in his chair to apologize, and that’s when he sees the orange scarf that Ardyn had worn in the library hanging on a hook behind the front door.

He forgets to apologize. Instead, Ignis waits until the man closes the bathroom door before moving. He jumps up, sidles across the room to finger the scarf. And he raises it to his face, presses the fabric against his cheeks and smells it. **That scent.** It makes him dizzy, warm and comfortable in a way he doesn’t understand.

He jumps at a sound behind him and half turns, guiltily. Ardyn’s leaning against the doorway to the bathroom, his hip jutting out in a way that Ignis finds distracting. “The cologne?”

He hadn’t realized he was holding his breath until he exhales in relief. Because Ardyn had given him an out, an excuse for why he was standing there huffing the man’s clothing instead of sitting where he’d left him or packing to leave. “It’s nice.”

“I don’t like spraying it on myself, only the clothing,” he yawns and Ignis stares hard at his mouth, his teeth, the way his tongue curls. “It probably reeks. Keep it if you want.”

“Yes, because you’re not from here. You’re from Gralea. And you’re going to go home in a week or two and I’ll never see you again.” He pauses then, surprised at how assertive he feels. “Thanks.”

“Ardyn smirks lazily, mouth crooked. “I have a few. I hardly need one in this climate anyway.”

“Same time tomorrow?”

“Yes. because you’re not from here. You’re from Gralea. And you’re going to go home in a week or two and I’ll never see you again. “Thanks.” He pauses then, surprised at how assertive he feels. “Same time tomorrow?”

“No.”

He can’t hide how crestfallen he feels in time, only to have Ardyn’s smirk turn into a grin.

“Don’t skip cram school again. Come after.”
Ignis feels his blush only deepen at the rush of gratitude he feels. “Yea, yea.” He grabs his bag and he goes, winding the orange scarf around his neck as he does, uncaring of how desperate he probably looks. It’s so warm.

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He pulls his blankets tightly around him as he always does before sleeping. But it’s not enough, not the feeling he’s looking for. He rearranges them, turns and twists the sheets before sighing and sitting up for a moment. He can’t justify more blankets in such early fall weather, but he wants comfort and weight to press against more than he does heat, so he slips off to the linen closet to collect a couple of towels. Now his bed is better. Blankets and towels not on him but around him, all but for one. And the scarf. He keeps that with him, because it smells nice.

He inhales. He inhales as he curls around the scarf and absently pushes a hand between his legs. He doesn’t do anything with it, merely presses the inside of his wrist against his groin as if to still the pressure, the heat.

He wakes up with a jolt hours later, and the first thought that crosses his mind is that he hadn’t told Ardyn he’d skipped class.

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Chapter 2 – Prompto

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He should be minding his own business. Should be jogging home to burn a hundred calories, should be doing his math homework and finishing the poster he’s supposed to make for the school fair next week, should be cleaning up his mess from breakfast, should be calling his mother to let his parents know that he made it home safely from another day at school and all is well.

But he isn’t, because he is instead watching Ignis Scientia.

There are three reasons why Ignis Scientia has always been of particular interest to him.

- He is Noctis’…something. Prompto isn’t very clear on this. Royal advisor or something of the sort, though at his age he can’t be all that useful. So instead he circles the prince as his older brother, maybe even a little like his mother. They don’t act quite like friends, because Ignis seems like a bit of a nag, but he’s always around the prince and that’s something.
- He is in the Crownguard, and he’s only thirteen. Thirteen! He must have been allowed to join immediately. Thirteen is the youngest anyone in Lucis can join the Crownguard, though they can’t see active combat until sixteen with rare exception. It’s like the marriage law. One can technically marry at thirteen, but they have limited autonomy until sixteen, and nobody actually does
- He’s a beta, and he’s still considered kin to the Royal family. That is unfathomable to Prompto. He knows, knows that plenty of people in the Council are betas, but the palace is inhabited predominantly by Alphas. The Lucis Caelums always are with rare exception. It’s a requirement that the Shield and some of the other high-ranking positions are as well. So it’s surprising that Ignis, a mere beta like Prompto, would be future adviser to the king. It will cause a stir later, Prompto suspects, but right now Ignis isn’t officially anything, and only his classmates currently know (or care enough) to pay attention to what anyone is at their age. Not that Ignis isn’t older than Prompto. Two years, he thinks, though he acts like it’s five or six.
So naturally, he tends to follow Ignis around just as he does Noctis. They are rarely apart, anyway, and when they are apart, Prompto gets curious.

Like right now.

He spends too much time aimlessly wandering the city, taking photos that his mother has gently said were a little creepy.

His mother is an omega, a barren one at that. She’d told Prompto often enough that he was more or less a gift from the Astrals. A barren omega. Did such a thing even really exist before his mother? She didn’t seem to think so, and he’d brought her back from the brink of despair. So dad said, anyway. It’s not like he seems much of either of them these days.

Maybe if his mother was around more, maybe if she wasn’t working at the hospital so late every night, he’d listen when she told him he shouldn’t wander off on his own so much, shouldn’t take photos of people without their permission. But she isn’t around, so Prompto does what he pleases. The photos aren’t harming anyone, after all.

This is the third day in a row that Ignis skipped off immediately after school, leaving Noctis with the older boy, Gladiolus. Prompto has heard jokes in school about how Ignis is joined at the hip with the prince, how he never does anything without him, so he knows that this is strange. He’s caught Ignis alone often enough, though he is usually at the library, at cafes ordering ebony, which he should not be drinking at his age.

Prompto suspects that isn’t what’s happening this week, so on the third day, he decides to actively pursue him until he finds out exactly where he goes, even if it means he has to use some of his allowance on a taxi and ask the driver to follow that car like they do in the movies.

He’s almost disappointed when Ignis takes the train.

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He waits outside the hotel for an hour, then two. Three. He has trouble imagining Ignis abandoning the prince for so long, but he must be doing it. At least the hotel has both a café and a burger joint across the street, despite being in the expensive part of the city. He can eat at one, then scurry off to the other when the staff start eyeing him. Obnoxious how many adults think it’s okay to gently reprimand him for eating three hamburgers in an hour.

He’s relieved when Ignis finally steps through the front door of the hotel, stands on the portico. Less relieved when he realizes the redheaded man who came out with him is actually with him, and it wasn’t just a coincidence that they went through the doors together. Because it hits him then that he doesn’t even know who Ignis’ parents are, if they are alive at all, where they were from, what they look like. He doesn’t know, but he doesn’t think this man is his father.

Because as he keeps watching, unsure of what he is seeing, the red-haired man places a hand on Ignis’ shoulder in a way that makes Prompto flinch. Especially when he flicks a finger up to stroke the boy’s cheek, a gesture uncomfortably intimate. Especially when instead of jerking away from him, Ignis leans into his touch and smiles up at him, catches his arm and holds it.

Definitely not his father. They’re acting the way high schoolers act when dating. Except Ignis is thirteen and this man looks like he’s in his forties. It makes Prompto’s gut twist. Ignis is mature for his age, but this is wrong. Ignis is a smart kid. He must realize this. Yet why...

Prompto has never gotten very good grades, but he’s always had a knack for knowing how others
are feeling. And his parents are doctors. And he’s overheard enough conversations, read enough books lying around the house, to know some things. *Ignis is not acting like himself, not even acting like a typical stupid teenager.* Which likely means one thing. One thing that apparently, nobody else realized. One thing that the royal family really should know about immediately.

Except Prompto has no one to tell.
Chapter 3 – Gladio

Sometimes Gladio wishes that Ignis didn't skip classes. He hadn't skipped an entire grade, thankfully. The junior high school they attended frowned on that, lest it lead to socialization issues. Gladio doesn't think that should factor into letting Ignis Scientia skip, as the boy has some questionable social behavior as it is. Nonetheless, he's thankful that Ignis has only skipped a few classes. Gladio can escape him for about half of the day.

He likes him, likes being around him. But he gets a little tired of him sometimes, especially as he's getting older and discovering that Ignis is attractive. He doesn't like boys, not normally, but the Scientia is an exception. *It's just because we spend so much time together, because we're both in the employ of the king and we have more or less grown up together. We both share far more responsibility than anyone our age should and we've therefore bonded over it. And his eyes are bright and green and the way he parts his lips a little when he's thinking is...*

That's why it's such a problem when Ignis begins talking about it one lunch period. *It. Dating.*

"I think I like men."

Gladio all but chokes. He squeezes his eyes closed a moment as he ducks his head. Men. Ignis Scientia is into men. The cutest boy in the school apparently doesn't like girls. Or he might like girls, but he also likes boys. Why, why must the Astrals be so cruel? Gladio glances up nervously now, looks at his watch and wonders if he can just skip through the next six minutes of lunch. Ignis isn't in his next class, thankfully, though that has more to do with Gladio being in average math while Ignis is, as usual, in the highest level that the school offers.

But if Ignis notices that he's acting strange, he doesn't react. "Not boys, I don't think. Older men."

"How do you know?" He finally asks.

Ignis doesn't answer immediately. He eats his cake slowly, the way he always does. He'd never admit it to Noctis, but Ignis likes his sweets. Gladio has caught him buying two desserts at lunch more than once, particularly when it's cake. He will wolf down everything else simply to enjoy his dessert. "I met someone, actually. I like spending time with him. Not quite dating but..."

"You spend time with him then?" Oh Astrals. Probably someone in the Crownsguard. The thought makes him uncomfortable. He wonders if it's Nyx Ulric, who's managed to charm his way through every woman in the Guard already. He doesn't strike him as Ignis’ type, but who knows. At least
Nyx is a good guy, for the most part. No fears of him taking advantage of Ignis. Not that I’m worried about anyone doing that.

"He's helping improve my chess technique."

Gladio sighs then, rolls his eyes to hide his relief. As expected. The poor guy probably has no idea that Ignis is crushing on him. He can just imagine it, some older man, somewhere between middle age and seniority, teaching a kid in the library chess out of the good of his heart. Or, what he suspects is more likely, teaching a kid in the library chess because said kid was so pushy that he had no choice in the matter. He smirks at the thought. So it’s nothing, nothing. Ignis just acting his age, after all. "Poor guy."

Ignis ignores this. "I find him very attractive."

The smirk fades. "How old is he?"

"Old enough," he snaps this out now, as it embarrassed. "I don't need your advice. I was just telling you."

Thank the gods for that. He can imagine the kind of advice Ignis might have asked him. He glances at him now, sees the faint flush in his cheeks and wonders. Ignis turned thirteen recently. Old enough to be interested in sex, not that it really means anything at their age. Gladio knows that he’s one of the few people experienced in such matters at their school. But Ignis? Any crush of his likely means nothing. Nothing.

He decides to change the subject, make it about something that Ignis likes, that Ignis can be proud of. "You finish the history report yet?"

"No, actually."

"No?"

"I'm busy after cram school this week so I'm a little behind. I'll get it done," he finishes his cake and pushes his tray aside.

“What?” Ignis not finishing everything a week before it’s due is downright bizarre. It’s because he’s playing chess with this guy. He’s neglecting his work to hang out with him. The behavior is so unlike Ignis he doesn’t know how to digest this information.

“I’ve been busy,” he says again, this time with an edge to his voice that Gladio knows is a precursor to violence, an edge that only tends to emerge when someone is bother Noctis. Strange.

Gladio only shakes his head.

Chapter 3 – Ardyn

Ignis shows up again, like clockwork, so soon after Ardyn knows that cram school ends that he knows the boy is skipping out early. But at least he’s keeping up appearances. It’s conceivable that he could arrive here only 23 minutes after class, assuming that he runs to the train, makes the first one, and runs to the hotel from the station.
Ardyn opens the door immediately when he hears the clinking of keys. And the boy is there, grinning up at him with an expression that he himself would be ashamed of if he knew. Ignis is wearing the scarf he gave him, the scarf he’s worn every day since.

He doesn’t invite him in anymore, just swings the door wide and turns, walks back into the room, a bottle of wine still in his hand. He needs a drink now to get through this, to manage to survive the next two hours without losing his mind, without throwing Ignis down on the floor and ripping his clothing off, fucking him blind before he’s properly manifested, which would only damage and traumatize him. No attachment, no possibility of bonding, no possibility of marriage. Everything would be over before it began.

Because last night. Last night, only on the third night, Ignis had touched him, and Ardyn is finding that he’s having trouble concentrating when he thinks about this.

He’d managed to spill water on his own chair, an act that Ardyn suspects was on purpose. But he’d played along, let the boy sit beside him on the couch instead, his little thigh warm against his own.

“Move either a rook or a knight now. I won’t say which.”

Ignis leans in, grabs the rook with his right hand just as he lays his left hand on Ardyn's thigh.

Ardyn stares for a moment, studying that thin little hand, the tapered fingers, so petite and slim. He almost leaves it, almost grabs that hand and pushes it up his thigh and into his groin, but he doesn’t. He behaves. Instead he pulls the little hand up and off of him.

But Ignis resists him, continues to clutch his hand and squeezes, tries to twine his fingers through his. Ardyn deliberates for a moment; it would be so easy to rip away from him, to shove him down, violate him, do whatever he wishes. Because while Ignis is being firm, he can’t hold a candle to Ardyn’s strength. And there is something endearing about it, his weakness. So Ardyn relents. He gives in, lets Ignis' damp fingers weave through his. The boy is satisfied then as he leans against Ardyn and sighs softly. “This is the move you wanted me to do, hm?”

"Yes." Ardyn murmurs, glancing down at him. But he's not talking about the board, not at all.

But this time, Ignis throws himself down on the couch, stretches out, stretches so much that his shirt half-untucks from his pants and Ardyn’s gaze is dragged to his waistline. He wants to pull his shirt up completely, see his pale little belly. He wonders what his belly button looks like, if he’s developing a little naval line of pubic hair yet. But Ignis speaks then, and Ardyn’s gaze is dragged back to his face. "Mm, I've been tired lately."

"It's because you're coming here," he taps his foot, unwilling to get any closer. “After regular class and then cram school. Or Crownguard practice.”

He half-shrugs and readjusts himself on the couch, curls up now. "This kinda schedule is normal for me. Just haven't been sleeping that well at night for some reason."

Ardyn arches an eyebrow but doesn't respond. He can imagine a few reasons.

"Do you care if I sleep here?"

Not at all, not at all. Eventually, you will stay whether you want to or not. I will take you to that bed in the next room and I will make you mine. You will sweat and writhe and climax on those sheets
one day within the next week and even if you cry and beg, even if your mind doesn't want it, your body will betray you. The thought makes his dick twitch and he is thankful that Ignis can't see him from this angle. "A little."

Ignis scowls. "I don't snore or anything."

"I modify my schedule so that you can come visit. To play chess. I'm not interested in babysitting." True. He isn't. He doesn't particularly like children. Ignis is an exception, because he appears to be the most genetically compatible omega that Ardyn has ever crossed paths with in his long years on Eos.

"Just an hour or so," he murmurs, and Ardyn catches a note in his voice that makes his gut drop, a faintly sultry tone, something soft and throaty. His voice hasn't changed yet, but for a moment Ardyn catches a hint of what he might sound like in a couple of years. I will know him then. If he is still alive, I will own him. If he is no longer alive, it will be because I killed him. Nobody can have him but me.

"Set your alarm then. I'm not waking you."

Ignis lasts all of three minutes after he puts his phone back down on the arm of the couch. He passes out soundly and quickly, his lips slightly parted. Ardyn watches him a few minutes, fixates on his belly, how close his shirt is to being untucked. I could touch it, just a little bit, pull it up and see what his stomach looks like. He groans softly at the thought and realizes he must cover him, because he can't resist. He quickly drapes his coat over the boy, tucks the collar around his shoulders. Ignis stirs as he does this, stretches a leg out and then curls up beneath the coat. He's smiling in his sleep now, his face flushed.

Ardyn is rapidly realizing that Ignis is, indeed, very cute. It had been a knee-jerk reaction previously, intense lust driving him to target him, but now that he has spent some time alone with him, seen him relax in a habitat that he, somehow, felt comfortable in, he's seeing that the boy is startlingly attractive.

And he smells. He smells very nice. Ardyn wants to open him up, to spread his legs and push a couple of fingers inside of that wet warmth and work him open. He wants Ignis to squirm and shudder on his fingers, to leak around him and make soft noises and arch his back, reveal his pale neck for Ardyn to mark. He wonders absently if Ignis would be receptive to being touched yet. Not fucked. He must wait until the boy goes fully into heat before doing that, wait until Ignis can't resist him and it would be consensual, at least as consensual as an omega can have. He doesn't want to scare him away.

He sits down in the chair across from the couch then. He steeples his fingers in front of his face and inhales slowly through his hands before he finally sits back, crosses his legs and stares at the boy. He watches him sleep, absorbs every breath, every toss and turn or stretch of a limb. He's a restless sleeper, and he clutches the coat, nuzzles his face against it, as if he likes the smell. The same sort of action he did with the scarf. Cute.

But Ardyn doesn’t like how quickly he himself is losing control. I’m two thousand years old. I have been through this a hundred times. I have seen empires rise and fall. I have watched how omegas went from revered to scorned to hunted to grudgingly accepted and now, again, slowly becoming valued in a time of gradual apocalypse. He’s fucked thousands of people by now, probably at least a thousand omegas by now, but he’s never bonded with a single one. He’s never wanted to. Not even Ignis. He just wants to fuck him, own him, destroy him.
Ignis awakes with a snort when his alarm goes off.

"You do snore a little."

"Don't tell anyone," he scowls as he pulls the coat off of him, pushes it to the side.

Ardyn laughs at that, cuts it off and sighs as he finishes setting up the chess pieces. He’d begun a minute ago, when he knew that the boy’s alarm would be going off any second. He’d finished off the bottle of wine in the last hour, begun another. "Who would I tell?"

He surprises him then by shrugging his vest off, commenting on feeling hot, and could Ardyn turn on the AC? Ardyn doesn't comment that it's on already, but he does turn it up. Not only because he needs to keep up appearances, but because he needs to turn his back on Ignis for a moment to compose himself.

Because the boy’s nipples are pushing up against his shirt and Ardyn wonders if he notices, if he finds that strange. He wants to taste them, flick his tongue across them and suck and nip until Ignis is moaning. If he's already this sensitive, this close to heat, he'd probably be doing that in a heartbeat. He wonders if Ignis has ever masturbated, ever jerked off or fingered himself. Probably not. He seems the uptight sort, embarrassed by his body. he might have noticed something off otherwise. Because omegas have two sweet spots, too far apart for fingers to reach simultaneously, not that he couldn't discover them individually. Only a cock can hit both. It's known that omegas can have the most divine sex, the most exquisite orgasms, but the tradeoff is that they are all but owned by their heats, that they can be impregnated. It would be so much easier to keep him if he were pregnant. He'd belong to me, legally. If only I...

Ardyn is jerked back to Eos when Ignis clears his throat behind him. A quiet sound, but indignant, pushy. The boy is demanding. He glances over at him. Ignis is sitting upright a little too stiffly on the couch, hands clasped between his knees. He’d unbuttoned the first two buttons of his shirt and Ardyn can see that the flush of his cheeks goes all the way down his neck. His lips are pink and damp and his eyes are too bright. His hair is a mess. Ardyn suspects that he never looks this disheveled normally, that he’d be angry if he knew how messy he looked. He’s losing control.

“Only one hour to play chess today then.” Ardyn says softly, turning to gaze out the window. One hour and then you must leave, because I can not stand to be around you any longer, because I will take you before you are ready and ruin everything. And he adds, before it’s too late. “I don’t know if I’ll be here tomorrow.”

He can just imagine the fury on Ignis’ face, but right now he’s more concerned with the heat in his gut. I am losing control, he thinks numbly.
Chapter 4 - Ignis

He opens his textbook to a random page but makes no effort to turn to what the teacher is talking about.

This class. Sexual education. He'd tried to get out of this class, but the king had refused to sign the waiver that had been handed out. Had commented that he needs to behave like the rest of the students regardless of how smart he is, that he can't act like he's superior to other kids his age just because of his IQ. Ignis had been taken aback by that, had been a little insulted by it, but he'd backed down. Now the class just makes him uncomfortable because he thinks about him. He'd rather learn about sex from him, not a book.

He glances down at the page his book is open to.

Betas take up 92.2% of the population, Alphas 5.1%, omegas 2.7%. Approximately 10% of all Alphas were female, 10% of all omegas male. The unfortunate ones, the ones the students snickered about, except the handful who never did. A girl in his class had asked about the textbook only the other day. Why is Alpha the only one ever capitalized? It irritated Ignis, too, though more for the sake of consistency than anything else. He grew up in a royal household, even if he wasn't royal himself. Recognition that certain individuals were superior was engrained in him, and even when he questioned it, he couldn't do much about it. For that matter, it bothered him that there were so many more Alphas than omegas. Shouldn't it be equal? But no. Alphas were more likely to be immune to the Scourge, whereas omegas succumbed to it faster than average. The balance upset over time, as the book explains, and is expected to only get worse as time goes on.

But that isn't what the teacher is talking about right now. Something much more physical.

The teacher's words are going in one ear and out the other, rattling through his brain as they pass through. He rubs his brow, pushes his glasses up and presses his fingers tight against his eyelids. A headache coming on. He's had them off and on recently, had aches and pains all over recently. Nothing to worry about. He feels feverish, but he's checked his own temperature a few times and nothing ever came of it.

Growing pains, the king would say if Ignis asked him. Boys his age get them, boys who unexpectedly, suddenly, viciously start growing. His uncle is tall. He knows that both of his
parents were, as well, knows that he very likely will also be on the taller side. Not that he is now. Barely five feet tall, one of the shortest boys in his grade, nearly a whole foot shorter than Gladio now. The thought makes him stretch his legs out beneath his desk, first one, then the other. One of his knees cracks and he winces at the sound. It doesn't help that he's in a foul mood. Because Ardyn had all but kicked him out last night, told him he might not be around today. Not that it will stop Ignis; he's still going to go. He has to.

And as he thinks of this, as he remembers Ardyn's dismissal of him, he sticks his hand in his pocket and rubs his thumb over the ivory piece in his pocket. The Queen. A silly choice, but he had acted on impulse when Ardyn had all but pushed him out the door last night, had swept it into his backpack so that it would appear to be an accident if the man caught him at it.

He must return it. It's clearly an expensive chess set. He isn't sure if he's supposed to return the scarf, not that he wants to do so. Because it smells like him.

Ardyn.

Gladio had scoffed at him when he'd tried to tell him. Yes, yes we just play chess, but he also touches me. He gives me things. He lets me sleep on the couch and gives me his coat to curl up in. He likes him, likes him quite a bit, and he doesn't care that Ardyn is a man, a man significantly older than him. He remembers how Ardyn had held his hand the other night, had then walked him out onto the front steps of the hotel and touched his face. The thought makes him rub his face, two fingers over his cheek. His skin is warm, so warm, and sensitive. I should check my temperature again tonight. Buy a new thermometer and try it again.

“Scientia.” The teacher sounds irritated.

“What?” he asks, half in a daze. He doesn’t remember her saying anything.

“What are the pregnancy rates for omegas during their cycles?”

Pregnancy rates. The thought makes his stomach lurch in disgust. I don’t have to think about that. I like men. And I’m a beta, so it’s not like I’m going to get swayed by anyone.

He knows the answer. Alarmingly low numbers. Something about the genes carrying extreme fertility for omegas were what made them particularly susceptible to the Scourge. 37% for female omegas. 22% for male omegas. Even in heat, the rates are that low. So he opens his mouth to spit the answers out, to recite the explanation he knows the teacher wants to hear, but nothing comes out. He feels sick, horribly sick, and he realizes with horror that he's about to throw up.

He stands up from his desk abruptly and all but runs from the room.

He locks himself in the stall furthest from the door, the one with the cool cement wall on one side. I can't be sick. I can't be sick. I have to go see him, I have to- He vomits once, twice, then collapses against the wall. He curls up slowly, horrified to find that he is shaking, that he still feels warm, that his insides feel strange in a way that is not quite sick any longer, but something nonetheless.

He's never had such a bad case of nerves before.

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Ardyn doesn't answer the knock. He doesn't answer the private doorbell the suites in this hotel have. And Ignis stands there in the hallway, trembling faintly - he still feels horribly ill and at this point suspects he has the flu, which he certainly should not be passing on to a middle-aged man - unsure of what to do next. He has the keys. Ardyn had given him keys. But he'd never had to use
them before now. *He wouldn't have given them to me if he hadn't wanted me to use them.*

He deliberates a moment before he finally pulls them from his pocket and unlocks the door. The suite is somehow sad without the older man there, but he pokes into every corner. Ardyn brought a lot of clothing with him, though much of it is the same in varying shades. But Ignis still touches all of it, rubs his face against the shirts and inhales. Yes, he likes men. So what? He helps himself to the fridge, picks through Ardyn's leftovers, most of which seems to be from room service and a Galahdian take-out place. He even samples a bottle of gin, but a single sip makes him grimace for a few seconds.

He's there nearly two hours before he hears a key in the lock, and he can't hide his eagerness as he leans forward on the couch, presses his hands between his thighs. *I just want to play chess, I just want to play chess. I don't want him to smile at me or touch me or kiss me.*

Ardyn looks at him for a long moment before sighing and dropping the bag on the table. Bottles clinking. Alcohol then. "I had hoped against hope you'd leave after two hours, like you usually do."

"I only leave after two hours when you tell me to. Besides, it's Friday," he shrugs, but he knows that he's blushing. "And I needed to return this." He pulls out the Queen with a flourish, though now he's embarrassed about having stolen it.

Ardyn strides over to him, throws his coat over the back of the couch behind him and touches Ignis' shoulder. Ignis flinches and immediately grabs his hand instead of jerking away. Which surprises him, confuses him. It goes against all of the Crownsguard training he's had thus far. Someone grabs you like that when you're sitting, you twist, break away. You shouldn't grab unless you can get the leverage to flip them over your shoulder, which he can't do when sitting. Especially when Ardyn is twice his size.

"You can stay for another hour. Then get out."

"You've been rude lately." He doesn't let go of his hand and Ardyn doesn't pull away.

"When I invited you, I knew you'd come by, but I didn't expect you to be this pushy over chess."

"It's not just chess," he blurts out before he can stop himself. And then the truth hangs there in the air before him, his shame for all the world to see.

But Ardyn doesn't laugh. He pulls his hand away, drops it to Ignis' head and musses his hair as he softly murmurs. "I know. But you're thirteen."

*Thirteen-year-olds can have sex,* he wants to say, but he instead says, "A thirteen-year-old tasked with being an adult since he was six." Because he’s talked to Ardyn these last few days, far more than he should have.

"Being deprived of a childhood doesn’t make you more of an adult."

"I beg to differ."

"*I beg to differ.* You’re insolent. Set up the board. If you don’t want to play tonight, get out.” And only then does he let his hand slide off of his head, tap against his shoulder a moment before he turns away to bring his bags to the kitchenette.

- He doesn’t realize he’s shivering until Ardyn comments on it. "You were so hot yesterday and yet
now you're shivering.”

“I’m not cold.” But he is. He wasn’t, but the moment he says it he realizes that he is. His skin feels hot and his stomach is in turmoil but it is freezing in the room. He is fairly certain now that he is sick, that he has something unpleasant and contagious and he should definitely leave before he gets Ardyn sick, but he doesn’t move.

“Would your response change if I told you that I am most likely immune to whatever ails you? I haven’t caught it yet. Niflheim has superior vaccines.”

He exhales then, a little offended but oddly relieved, too. “I am a little cold.”

“Uh huh,” he breathes, plays with the piece in his hand. He doesn’t have to guide Ignis as much anymore. “You know where the thermostat is, seeing as you fiddled with it earlier. Go adjust it as you see fit.”

He doesn’t remember playing with it, but he remembers where it is, so he stands up, taken aback by the sense of vertigo as he grabs the arm of the couch and steadies himself. The room is already set at 68 degrees. Warm. Still, he cranks it up to 72.

And then, stupidly, in an act he could never quite explain when he looked back on it, he does not go back to his own seat on the couch. Instead, approaches Ardyn. And he sits in his lap. He sits in his lap and Ardyn grunts in response but he makes no attempt to shove him off.

"You're playing with fire, boy."

He could make a joke in response, comment on his name, shoot back a snide remark about how he knows what he’s doing. But he does none of that; for once he keeps his mouth shut, because Ignis Scientia is more or less at a loss for words about what he had just done. Something breaks inside of him around this man. He's warm, dizzy, lightheaded. His groin feels tight and his stomach warm. He's getting hard, which has only happened to him a couple of times before, all recently. Embarrassing. He pushes his hands between his thighs and squeezes his legs together to prevent Ardyn from noticing. Not that it matters, because he probably only drew attention to it.

"Watch yourself," he snaps, but Ignis still pushes back, squirms against him until he feels a hand at the back of his neck and he gets jerked around. He can see the fury in those golden eyes and he expects to be thrown out, yelled at.

But Ardyn kisses him.

It's barely more than a brush of lips but Ignis gasps, heart fluttering in his chest as he grabs for Ardyn's arms, his shirt, his vest, anything at all. He grabs for him and presses his body flush against his and he has never felt so warm before in his life, so desperate and needy, hungry and somehow empty, as if he is incomplete until whatever it is between them comes to pass. There is fire in the pit of his belly and his groin feels hot, hard.

"Please, please, please..." please touch me, please respond to my hands on your body, please open your mouth and kiss me proper and run your tongue down my throat, graze your teeth against my neck, push a hand between my legs and. He’s never needed anything so badly as he does now, and he doesn’t care, doesn’t care that all of his being is suddenly concentrated in his groin. He's gasping over and over as he presses his lips to Ardyn's again and again, licks the man's face in desperation to get him to open up. But he won't, and finally Ignis nips at his lower lip, whines as he rubs his body against him. Ignis is opening his mouth to kiss him again when Ardyn finally reacts and the word comes.
"Leave."

He must have misheard. Obviously. "What?"

"Leave. Now. You've been here too long." His voice sounds tight, angry, and he pushes Ignis off of his lap, abruptly stands.

"You can't-" Ignis catches himself before falling, stumbles upright and glowers up at Ardyn.

Only for the man to grabs Ignis' shoulders then, jerks him towards him and leans over him and Ignis catches his breath, holds it and stares at the wall over Ardyn's shoulder, wide-eyed at the claws digging into him, as the man whispers in his ear. "Come back tomorrow when you have more time."

Chapter 4 – Luna

The letter is from that boy, the one in Insomnia who aided Pyrna when she was hurt. He hadn’t sent her a single letter since she had replied, thanking him. That was years ago now, so the fact that he is now contacting her gives her pause. Something is wrong.

Because he wouldn’t contact her otherwise. But he is not anyone significant in Insomnia, at least not that she is aware of, and so she hesitates a moment before opening the letter, wonders if she should be sitting down for this, wonders if she should read it in Maria’s presence. She carries it back to her quarters and studies the envelope carefully. Postmarked only yesterday. He must have spent a lot of money on postage.

She almost doesn’t hear the footsteps behind her, so quiet is Ravus. He leans behind her and snatches it out of her hands. “An Insomnia postmark? Who would write you?” He sounds snide, mocking, but Luna knows better. He’s curious more than anything else.

“I think it’s the boy who helped Pyrna,” she replies calmly, making no effort to grab it from him. There’s no point. At nineteen, Ravus is alarmingly tall, and she has remained frustratingly short for her age of fifteen.

“He’s a kid, right?"

“I think he’s about Prince Noctis’ age.”

“Okay, so a kid.” He clears his throat and begins reading, his voice high-pitched and dramatic. “Dear Princess Lunafreya… Is that the right way for him to address you? I do hope you are well. Do you know Ignis Scientia?”

Luna tries not to laugh, snorts in the process. Seeing Ravus joke is so rare these days, and the expression on his face brings her unexpected relief, as anxious as she is about the letter. “Noctis’ adopted brother.”

“Mm, yes. Adopted.” Because Ravus believes the rumors; Luna knows this. “I think he is in trouble. There is something you should know about him. Oh no, sounds serious.”

And then he simply stops, his eyes skimming the rest of the page.
“Well?” Luna finally asks, aware that even Pyrna and Umbra are watching him now.

“This…Prompto Argentum… Why is he telling you that? Why do Lucians care so much about that? It’s disgusting. As if you need—“

“Telling me what?” But she suspects, because one of Ravus’ favorite things to complain about when it comes to the Lucians is their fixation on sexual roles. They don’t matter in Tenebrae. Not that that doesn’t cause issues of its own, especially with the Niflheim occupation.

Ravus doesn’t answer. Instead he looks in the envelop again, pulls out a photo. And then he freezes. “Why…” He trails off, mouth hanging open a moment before he pushes the photo in Luna’s face. “Do you understand this?”

She stares at the photo for one long, paralyzing moment, her brain unable to process what she’s seeing. She recognizes him but seeing him there is so unsettling that she can’t grapple with it.

Ardyn Izunia. In Insomnia. Standing in the foyery of what is clearly one of the more expensive hotels of the city, Lucian banners framing the massive doors. And with him is Ignis.

She grabs the letter from Ravus now, and she sees the lines that he had spoken of. I don’t think that he is a beta, even though he is working for the Royal family. I think there was some kind of mistake.

The Chancellor had always been unhealthily interested in Insomnia, even more so than the Emperor, as if there was any significant difference between the two at this point. A Puppet Empire, Ravus often sneered, not that he didn’t bow down to them. He pretended it was merely because they had the Crystal, and Ardyn Izunia has always been obsessed with magic, but there was something more. He despised the royal family with a dedication that Luna had always found hard to believe wasn’t personal.

The Chancellor has also always been unabashedly, violently Alpha. One who flaunts it regularly and takes as he pleases. Ravus had whispered to Luna at one point that rumor had it, betas in the higher circles of Niflheim’s government sometimes resorted to taking medication to appear as if they were Alpha, if only to keep Ardyn from talking down at them too much. As if anything could stop him from talking down to everyone. But that didn’t stop Verstael Besithia from designing a new drug, available only to those in of a certain social circle in the Empire. I’m surprised he doesn’t take something to be present as an omega, given his obsession with Izunia, Ravus had scoffed.

“It means he’s going to take Ignis. Probably as leverage against King Regis.” She surprises herself with how calm she sounds, even as she feels that all of her insides are trembling.

For once, Ravus doesn’t snap at how she calls him King Regis, familiar and affectionate. “Impatient son of a bitch. He’d compromise everything to wet his…” And he stops, remembering that he is in the presence of his sister. “The kid’s only twelve, right? He’d be committing a felony in Lucis in a time of truce, the fool.”

“I think he’s thirteen.”

Ravus forgets that he doesn’t like swearing around Luna.
Chapter 5 – Noctis

Prince Noctis has nightmares. It’s to be expected, given what he’d survived by the time he was eleven, but he doesn’t like to admit it to anyone. Anyone but Ignis, who he has no choice but to tell because half the time, he ends up curled up in the older boy’s bed. He doesn’t tell his father though. Never his father. *He has enough to worry about. You must not worry your father over childish things. You must be a grown-up. You will be king yourself one day.*

His father never says these things to him, but *other* people do, Gladio being one of them. So he doesn’t tell Gladio anything, either. Just Ignis, because Ignis is – well – his brother, perhaps even a bit of his mother. He doesn’t remember her, but he knows that Ignis does a lot of the things that mothers are supposed to do for their kids, even if he’s only thirteen and a kid himself.

So Noctis is surprised when that Friday night, he crawls into Ignis’ bed only to have the older boy push him away.

But Noctis is persistent. It’d been a particular bad nightmare. One not about the demon that mauled him or the massacre in Tenebrae that he’d witnessed, but about Ignis.

“Had a nightmare,” he mumbles, as if anything needs an explanation, and he presses against Ignis, seeking his warmth.

“Get off,” Ignis snaps then, finally rolling over and putting his back to Noctis.

Noctis realizes then that the back of Ignis’ pajama top is damp, even the sheets are a little damp, as if he’s feverish.

“Iggy.” Ignis hates being called that, though sometimes he lets it slide when it’s Gladio speaking. It had only been acceptable when Noctis couldn’t pronounce his full name. He only calls him Iggy now when he’s desperate to get his attention, when he knows that Ignis will zero in on him in frustration. “You’re…all hot.”

“I know,” the older boy hisses, furious, but for once not correcting his name. “I’m sick. Go away or you’ll get sick, too.”

Ignis has never told Noctis to go away, never.

“Iggy, there’s something wrong with you.”
"I’m fine. Just sick."

"No," he hesitates, uncertain of how to proceed. He isn’t used to telling Ignis things that he doesn’t already know, but apparently Ignis is confused. There’s something he doesn’t know about himself, and why Noctis doesn’t quite understand it, he has a suspicion. I had a nightmare, he wants to say. I had a nightmare that you were taken away, that something happened to you and you fell into darkness. But you were smiling about it. There was something comforting about it and that scared me more than losing you. “Not just sick.”

“Just a cold. Shut up and go to sleep,” he snarls, and Noctis is taken aback at the rudeness, the coldness of his behavior. But there’s no point in arguing with him, so Noct sighs loudly and turns away himself, pushes his back against Ignis to jostle him, to express his upset, and closes his eyes. I don’t need him, not like this anyway. I’m eleven.

It’s nearly twenty minutes later before Noctis feels Ignis moving against him as the older boy now rolls towards him. And finally Ignis puts his arms around him, pulls him close and buries his face in his hair the way he normally does whenever Noctis has a nightmare. It’s a relief, not that Noct needs that kind of comfort anymore, but because it means Ignis is acting normally again.

Until he speaks, his voice small in the dark of the room.

“I’m scared.”

Noctis feels as if something in his world has suddenly become unhinged, as if something has just been irrevocably broken. Ignis is never afraid.

Chapter 5 – Ardyn

At around 3:48, Ardyn accepts the possibility that Ignis is not going to show up. Because he should have come over by now. Over the week, he’d shown up around 5 every day, and today, Ardyn had told him that they needed more time. Ignis had wanted more time.

And if Ignis isn’t showing up, that means that he probably panicked at the last minute. Or it means that he manifested last night, after Ardyn had sent him home reeking of a burgeoning first heat. It means that Ignis had woken up in the morning with slick running down his thighs. It means that he realized all of his irrational behavior was because he was going into his first heat prematurely, that he won’t come to Ardyn now. The thought makes Ardyn gnash his teeth, curl his fingers into the arms of the chair and leave marks where his nails dig in.

He’s been alive a long time. He’s fucked a lot of omegas, has learned to recognize the scents, had learned how to gauge a heat down to within an hour. I wouldn’t have misjudged so badly with him. He couldn’t have manifested yet. He will tonight. He didn’t yesterday night.

But why isn’t he here?

He pulls out his phone and deliberates, wondering what Ignis would do if he called him. The boy had imposed his number upon him a few nights ago, had actually snatched Ardyn’s phone from his hands and put his own number in. A bold move, one that left Ardyn holding his breath lest he open the gallery and notice that there were quite a few photos of himself in there. Ignis sleeping. Ignis poking through the fridge. Ignis stretching and yawning in the hallway. Ardyn had snapped a number of him, all unawares, over the last week. He looks at these now, flicking through them one after another, his boredom and frustration growing. It’d have been a terrible waste of the week if
he’d misjudged. He could go get him, impersonate a member of the Crownsguard and walk into the palace as if he owned the place, hunt down Ignis and say he’s needed for something. Then knock him out, drag him back to the hotel and rape him. But he wants him to come to him.

And then at 5:14, the doorbell rings. He all but lunges towards the door, opening it with far more violence than he intends but he can smell him, smell him out in the hallway.

“You’re rather late.”

“I can stay the night.”

This is unexpected. “What?”

“You implied that we’d need more time today and I… I made up a good story. So I can stay here until tomorrow.” He doesn’t sound proud of himself, not exactly, but he sounds confident enough to make Ardyn’s lips curl.

“Presumptuous,” but he’s grinning as he says it.

But Ignis surprises him, because then he’s shrugging, half-turning back towards the elevators.

“Should I go then?”

No. No, no, don’t you dare leave. Ardyn almost grabs him. Almost, hand flicking forward before he can catch himself, and then he is grabbing the doorframe, leaning heavily on it.

Ignis stares at his hand, eyes wide, and for a moment Ardyn is afraid he was too forceful. But then Ignis looks at him and grins, and Ardyn is almost weak. The boy is attractive, unbearably so, and he feels sick. He’s never been this attracted to anyone before and it makes him furious. Because Ignis is a haughty thirteen-year-old boy in the employ of the Lucis Caelum line. By right he should be mine. And he will be, he thinks numbly as Ignis now grabs Ardyn’s hand on the doorframe, takes a step forward into the room and curls his fingers around Ardyn’s.

“Do you want to play chess tonight? Order room service?” He’s never been this nervous before, not in two thousand years. Because of this little brat before him. He’s thirteen. And he smells utterly divine, probably only hours away from his first heat.

“Mm. Whatever you want.” He absently presses against Ardyn’s body as he speaks, his body burning up.

Ardyn feels something inside of him crack in that moment and he flicks his wrist, twists free from the boy’s grip and now drops his hand to his shoulder, traces his thumb over the side of Ignis’ neck. Just over one of his glands. His skin is on fire. “Do you really want to stay the night? You don’t have to.” Not true. If the boy tries to leave now, Ardyn will drag him back, throw him down onto the floor and fuck him senseless.

“I want to,” he smiles.

And Ardyn grins, touches his face now, dares to touch his mouth, his lower lip. “Good,” he says softly.

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They do play chess. One full game. Ignis, unexpectedly, suggests another, holding a couch pillow in his lap and pressing it hard into his groin, legs tightly together and face flushed.
“You’re being shy,” he smirks as he rearranges the board, but his gaze keeps flicking over to Ignis. He’ll have to snatch that pillow when Ignis gets up because it’s bound to smell like him, like the heat he’s starting to slip into. Ardyn is surprised at how much he’s resisting it, and for a moment he wonders if this will be as easy as he’d expected it to be. Drautos had warned him that the boy was difficult, stubborn. He wonders for a moment what’s going through his mind, because thus far he’d avoided asking him too much, seeming too interested.

“Mm,” he shrugs, but doesn’t say anything further.

“Come here,” he finally gestures.

Ignis looks at him for a long moment before he smiles, stands up slowly and continues to hold the cushion against his middle. It crosses Ardyn’s mind that he has an erection and doesn’t know how to handle it, despite clearly wanting sex. They hadn’t talked about it, neither of them having broached the subject even though it’s the obvious direction, what with Ignis spending the night. So when Ardyn speaks next, he isn’t certain if it’s the right idea.

“Do you want another kiss?”

Apparently it was the right idea, and it’s all the encouragement he needs. Because Ignis is on him then, surprisingly forceful for his size as he pushes his way into Ardyn’s lap, straddles his hips and lunges for him, his little groin momentarily pressed against Ardyn’s own. Definitely has a bit of a hardon, and he must notice that Ardyn is rock-hard in his pants, but he says nothing about it.

Ardyn kisses him slowly, first on his forehead, his nose, his cheeks, as he caresses his face and gently tugs at his hair. Ignis laughs a little at that, breathless as he tries to turn his head, align his mouth with Ardyn’s for a proper kiss, but the older man takes his time with it, at one point burying his face in the boy’s neck and inhaling deeply. Mine, mine. His fingers suddenly spasm and he pulls his hair much harder than he intended, leaving Ignis to unexpectedly moan. Interesting. Very interesting. So he kisses him proper. He’s a poor kisser, which is all Ardyn can expect with his inexperience, but he’s enthusiastic and he smells good, dangerously good.

Ignis arches his back and leans into him, his entire body trembling and hot beneath his hands. Good. Good, good you little whore. He spreads his fingers over the small of his back, his hand covering much of his backside, and pulls him closer. It’s so easy to push him around, to mold him to do as he wishes.

He leans back after a moment, takes a moment to study his face. His pupils are dilated, eyes far too bright, his cheeks flushed and his kiss-swollen lips parted, saliva dripping down his chin. His mouth in particular had caught Ardyn’s eye earlier, his mouth and his cute habit of sticking his tongue out slightly when he’s thinking. He's attractive, even if he weren't what Ardyn knows him to be. What will he look like in three years, five, ten? Will he lose the baby fat on his face? Will his legs grow long, his shoulders fill in? There is already a hint of musculature to him and Ardyn suspects that he will be strong, solid if lithe, when he gets older. Unusual for an omega, but then something is clearly wrong with his hormones if he’s manifesting this early.

"You're rather promiscuous for your age."

"Am I?” He’s all but purring as he speaks and Ardyn wonders if he’s aware of how alluring he is, how seductive even though he doesn’t know the first thing about sex. Surely he is unaware, just as he doesn’t know how attractive he is. “I know plenty of betas my age who are doing this."

Betas. Ardyn's eyes widen in surprise for a moment before he can contain it, before he can lock away his glee. He’d suspected that something was wrong, that Ignis hadn’t realized how close he
was to his first heat, maybe that he was told he was a beta but suspected he wasn’t, but this is far more than what he expected. So he doesn’t know. He knows nothing at all, doesn’t even seem to wonder. He does have a hormonal balance after all. Perhaps he showed up as a beta on blood tests. Perhaps the king refused to have his adopted son tested, assuming he’d be a beta if not an alpha, as if being adopted into the royal family ensured it. Oh, this will be fun. He licks his lips and leers at Ignis. “This?”

And he touches him between his legs.

Ignis tenses up then, unexpectedly, and something like fear flashes through his eyes. He’s realizing that perhaps this shouldn’t be happening, that he’s too young for this, that this is wrong, that he doesn’t want it.

So Ardyn draws his hand back, sighs softly and places his palms on Ignis’ thighs, his slim hips, his tiny waist, circles his ribcage and rests his thumbs on the boy’s nipples, hard and erect beneath his shirt. Ignis likes a challenge, and he has already proven that he can’t say no to them. “Do you want me to stop? If you’re uncomfortable I can stop. We can finish the game and you can go home and I won’t speak a word of it,” and he flicks one of his thumbs, drawing a ragged gasp from him.

“No,” Ignis hisses finally, and then he draws in a slow breath, heart fluttering beneath Ardyn’s hands. “Take me to bed.”

And Ardyn does. He scoops him up, one arm around his shoulders and the other beneath his little knees. The boy is tiny; feeling that weight in his arms, all ninety-seven pounds as he will discover, makes him nauseous with need. He’d never felt the urge to protect an omega before, not in the least, but Ignis. So small, so fragile, so feverish and beautiful in his arms as he looks up at him, eyes half-closed and heavy beneath his glasses, his lashes alarmingly long. He can barely control himself as he half-stumbles into the bedroom, lays Ignis on the bed and immediately crawls up beside him.

He touches Ignis between his legs again, and this time the boy doesn’t flinch. Instead he thrusts up into his hand, panting and whimpering. Ardyn squeezes then, leans in and kisses him, kneads the small erection he can feel. And Ignis squirms beneath him, bites him, sinks his little teeth into his lower lip and tugs at him. Ardyn can see it. Ignis is gone, though he’d clearly fought it as long as he could. He can see it in the glaze of his eyes, the sheen of sweat on his skin. He’s going into his first heat, perhaps triggered a little early by his presence, and Ardyn can’t wait any longer.

He can smell Ignis long before he strips him, and he can no longer hide his need as he roughly unbuttons the boy’s shirt and Ignis writhes beneath him, grabs for him and brings him down for another kiss. His desperation is endearing, his youth and size making his behavior seem an act, practice. Ardyn will remember it later, and while he won’t feel bad, he will dwell on it. He never had a chance. Hands running down the boy’s torso, thumbing over his belly, his little naval. He kisses him there, presses his lips to his stomach and kisses down his naval trail, lips brushing against the soft fuzz of his skin. Such a beautiful little stomach. He wonders what it would look like swollen and full of his seed. And he pulls the boy’s pants down, drags his underwear down with his teeth while Ignis pants and moans and trembles beneath him, fisting the sheets.

The boy only comes to his senses for a moment, a hesitance Ardyn can sense in the way he suddenly grabs his hair and makes a sound that is more fear than arousal, but Ardyn ignores it, rips his pants down and throws them aside. Because all he can do is smell him, smell him, and he smells divine. Unbearably good, his pheromones now finally fully released, his little cock erect and damp with sweat, balls drawn up and tight. He wants to devour him whole. So young. He buries his face between his legs and moans, drinks in his scent and feels himself leaking precome, even
without stimulation.

*I am the first to touch him. I am the first to show him who he really is. I will bond him to me, make him mine forever. I will own him for the rest of his life.* He suddenly imagines taking him back to Niflheim, forcing him to live with him. He imagines being able to fuck him whenever he wants, molding him to want him, need him. At thirteen he can legally marry him, and as a bonded omega he’d have to consent to it. And the King of Lucis would have to acquiesce, lest there be a political scandal. For the first time in his life he almost wishes he weren't sterile, wishes he could impregnate him. He lays a hand on that small belly, spreads his fingers slowly and presses down. Ignis squirms and groans, and that's when he begins leaking.

Looking back on it, Ardyn can’t remember what he noticed first, the scent of his slick or the wetness on his chin as he nuzzles the boy’s cock. Because from that moment on, he ceases to think. He sticks his tongue out, licks down his perineum and pushes his tongue into Ignis’ hole, wet as it is. *He doesn't know, doesn't know he's an omega.* Ardyn doesn't want him realizing it just yet, doesn't want him knowing that he's getting wet between the legs because betas shouldn't.

*Gods,* he tastes good, and for a moment Ardyn forgets how small he is, how young he is, because he's dragging him in, lifting him off the bed and pulling him hard against him, the boy's ass against his chest to give himself better access. And he sticks his tongue as deep as he can into him, rubs his perineum with his nose and moans. Tastes and smells divine. And Ignis howls, all but shrieks, every cry bringing a fresh spurt of fluid into his mouth. He’s messy, either because it’s his first heat or merely because he’s genetically inclined towards it, Ardyn doesn’t know or care. It’s cute, endearing. Ardyn has always liked to undo people, to force them to fall apart in his arms until they don’t know themselves, until they know nothing but what he makes them feel. And Ignis. *Ignis.*

It’s been a long time since Ardy had witnessed an omega's awakening, and he’s never been in the process of eating one out when it happened. How cruel it is, that less than three percent of the population exists to be breeders, and yet there is something so very *holy* about them, divine, awe-inspiring. Worthy of worship. Ardyn would crawl between those pale, thin thighs and take up residence in his gut if he could. He finally draws back for air and Ignis sobs beneath him, thighs convulsing under his hands. If Ignis were any larger, he'd have to work to hold him still, but at his size it's easy enough to keep him from moving too much. He’s already close, the approach of orgasm strong in his pheromones.

So he pushes him down, half drops him, presses him onto his back even as he arches up to meet him, desperate and needy, and he unbucks his own belt, all but rips the zipper off of his pants in his own need. And then Ignis surprises him, because the boy’s willpower surfaces for a moment and he reaches up, eyes snapping open as he hisses, “*suck me.*”

**Difficult. He’s going to be a difficult little bitch, isn’t he?**

But Ardyn humors him, gives him what he wants because he knows that Ignis will never again have what he wants. *Because soon he will be fucked, and then he shall know he's an omega. And everything he wants in life will forever be beyond his reach.* So he slides back, ducks his head down and takes Ignis in his mouth. Easy to deep-throat him, all four-odd inches of his thirteen-year-old cock. He takes his balls next, drops his tongue out and pulls them into his mouth. Ignis howls, and after a moment Ardyn pushes a finger in, sinks into his slick hole with startling ease. *Another.* Scissors them inside of that heat and pulls slowly downwards just as he swallows.

His orgasm is long, hitting him in waves, and Ardyn watches, fascinated, as the boy bucks and screams until his voice cracks and he breaks off, gasping and keening. The sheer abandon with which he climaxes is somehow *cute.* He keeps the fingers inside of him, reveling in how flexible
his muscles are, how loose and warm he is between contractions, how much slick is still spurting out of him, soaking the sheets. And eventually he prods one of his sweet spots, closes his eyes and moans softly at the gasp Ignis makes, the trembling in his body. He wonders if he’s orgasming multiple times, as some omegas can. *He will do this around me. In moments I will rut in him, force his body to take me deep, deep up beneath his ribcage. I will come in him, fill him with everything that I am, and even if I may not be able to impregnate him, I can still destroy him so that he may never enjoy sex again. He will always wish for what I could give to him. I, the most ancient and powerful being in all of Eos, one so genetically compatible that he will never be satisfied with anyone, anything but the memory of this night even as he screams for mercy.*

Ardyn doesn’t notice when it finally passes, because he’s too busy concentrating all of his efforts on not fucking him immediately. He wants him *aware.*

Ignis coughs then, once, and laughs breathlessly for a moment before he struggles up, props himself up on his trembling elbows and looks at Ardyn, eyes glazed and bright. That’s when Ardyn sees the dawning recognition on Ignis’ face, the surprise and confusion giving way to horror as he comes to understand what just happened, what he *is.*

He tries to run, scramble back and roll off the bed, but Ardyn is faster. Ardyn is *always* faster.
Chapter 6 - The night before - Ignis (*)

Chapter Notes

Poor Ignis! This chapter is only from his perspective. This was a little difficult to write, as I was trying to balance his omega needs and his more rational mind (I imagine his stubbornness and willpower throw a wrench in his hormones at times), so I hope it's okay! As usual, thank you all for reading and I encourage suggestions and chatting about this! Next up: Ardyn and Clarus deal with the aftermath.

Chapter 6 - Ignis

Ignis feels as if he had gone away somewhere for a year, a decade, an eternity, and when he finally finds air to drag into his lungs, he feels as if he is a new person. Unrecognizable. Ardyn has made him be born anew, and he hasn't even fucked me yet. He'd never orgasmed before, only ever touched himself a few times and grew anxious before it could amount to anything. And he'd never known that fingers inside of him could have done anything, never considered the possibility that men could push tongues inside of other men. He’d gone here this evening with the intention of staying the night, with the intention of trying to coax Ardyn into possibly fucking him. He’d hoped that sex would happen, not that he knew much about it. He hadn’t expected Ardyn to drive him as crazy as he has, hadn’t expected sex to be this good. And we haven’t even fucked yet. He’d laugh if he could. The man had swallowed down his orgasm, drunk the come he’d released for the first time in his life, but for a drop or two that fell on his stomach. Ignis can feel it.

But he also feels very wet between his legs, and for a moment he is afraid that he'd pissed himself. He finds his hands beneath him and half sits up, limbs trembling, and looks down at himself. He stares, uncomprehending at first, at the wet slick running down his inner thighs, at his small erection that hasn't flagged despite already climaxing. And then he understands.

He understands.

He feels a sense of whiplash, but he doesn’t allow himself to consider it. He finds his speed, his strength, scrambles back on the bed, rolls onto his hip and lunges for the edge of the bed, the floor, the rest of the room, the door.

But Ardyn is faster, stronger. And he laughs as he grabs Ignis’ ankle, jerks him back towards him. Ignis shrieks, kicks him, lashes out with everything he has, but Ardyn knocks him flat onto his back with a slap as he scoots up between his legs and leers at him.

"You finally figured it out, hm?" he purrs, and Ignis finds himself fixating on the glistening of his own slick on Ardyn’s chin. Because that’s what it is. Slick. "I thought you’d be faster. Tell me, didn't you find your own behavior strange? Or do you have a history of going to hotels with strange men at least three times your age?"

Men like me, the words go unsaid. Alphas. Crouched on the bed between his legs and staring at him with a hunger that makes Ignis want to wail in fear. This man is going to rape me, and he acts on impulse, opens his hands wide on the sheets and summons his weapons.
His short swords don’t come to him.

He tries again, now seeking his polearm. Nothing. A knife. Anything. Nothing. He no longer has access to the king’s magic. Because I. I am nothing. We have no place in the Guard nor in the family. We are unworthy to fight, good for nothing but breeding and being protected. Weak and helpless. Unable to... He glances up at Ardyn, utterly lost and inconceivably looking towards the only adult around, even as he sought to kill him seconds ago.

Ardyn’s watching him with a now-unreadable expression on his face, and somehow that is what makes Ignis break. An omega. I’m an omega. One of the 2.7%. One of the .27% of the population that are male omegas. One in nearly four hundred. I’m a breeder, weak and sensitive. Sick and worthless for nearly a quarter of the year. Shunned and quarantined by the rest of society, deemed a slut and an inconvenience, some strange leftover from a previous civilization when fertility was worshipped... He bursts into tears. He can’t believe less than two minutes ago he was happier than he’d ever been in his life, and now he has been plunged into the abyss. All because of this man.

"Ardyn. Please, please, please. Don’t do this. Ardyn." He doesn’t care that he’s begging. He no longer has any dignity to protect, any position in the world that ought to be respected. Soon I will do nothing but beg.

"Your body will get used to it. Your body wants this," he murmurs as he runs a hand up his thighs, slips a few fingers between his legs. "You're so wet. It won't hurt as much as it might otherwise."

He sobbs harder because he knows it's true, because there is a heat in his belly that is unfamiliar, a slick between his legs that he'd never known he was capable of, because Ardyn sounds and smells and looks and feels so good. His powerful arms and his wide chest, dusted with just enough red hair that Ignis feels compelled to rub his face against him. His heavy jaw and browline, his sharp eyes, his sharper teeth. It explains so much, explains so very much. He'd never have gone to the hotel of a strange man. He'd never have spent time behind a locked door with an older man whose name he didn't even know, without telling anyone where he was. He’d never have accepted gifts from him, never have cuddled up with those gifts in his bed, never have fallen asleep in front of him, never have rubbed himself all over the man’s clothing. It hits him then that Ardyn knew all along, that he was being strung along for this. Luring him in. Praising him. Giving him his scarf. Laying his coat over him. Touching him. And now raping him.

Because he's going to rape me. He's going to shove his cock inside of me and –“You knew.”

“Of course I knew. You’re cute, and I admit you’re a lot smarter and a bit more fun than I anticipated, but did you really think I was interested in you?”

You. Because there is Ignis the human being and Ignis the omega. “I’m thirteen,” he pleads, desperately, even as he knows what Ardyn will say. Thirteen is far too young to manifest. There must be something wrong, something to explain why nobody else ever noticed, why nobody helped me. He wonders if Ardyn’s presence pushed him to manifest early, as he is clearly a superior Alpha.

“You were pretty interested yourself until this happened,” he touches his inner thighs again, runs fingers through the mess that Ignis is still secreting. “Still interested.”

He flinches, even as he arches his back and leans into the touch, his body betraying him. And with a peculiar clarity he remembers parts of the textbook he’d looked at with little interest earlier that week. Many omegas unconsciously exhibit mating displays, standing and behaving in particular ways around Alphas they find particularly attractive or compatible. Such behaviors might include, but are not limited to: making oneself smaller so to appear submissive, exaggerated hip motion
when walking, throat displays, lordosis, sweating, preening... He has never hated himself more than he does in this moment.

"Just enjoy it. Because I'm not going to stop," he grins as he pushes him flat again and grabs his thighs, pulls them wide open. His eyes are too bright, vibrant gold and betraying his hunger.

And he sticks two fingers in, so easily. Ignis freezes, forgets to breathe as Ardyn whispers, “Have you felt sick the last week? Your stomach?”

*He’s trying to keep me calm, keep me distracted.* He wants to resist it, wants to tell him off and run for it, but his voice is making him sweat. *Impossible to ignore, because he’s an Alpha and I’m in my heat and my body is screaming for him.* He squirms on his fingers, fights the urge, the need, to push down on them, and he nods.

“Your body cleaning itself out,” he groans as he shoves his fingers in as far as he can and Ignis jerks back in a desperate bid to maintain control over his body. “Your other canal is open now.”

Three fingers sunk deep inside of him now. Three hurts, hurts quite a bit. *No, no,* he whimpers, but Ardyn isn’t even looking at him. He’s staring at his ceiling, as if he can’t bear to look at him lest he lose his mind.

“And have you been nesting?” He rolls his head on his shoulders then, still averting his eyes.

*Nesting.* He remembers rearranging his blankets a thousand times, curling up beneath them with the scarf and touching himself. Of course that’s what it was. In hindsight it’s all so clear. And Ardyn’s voice, his scent, compel him to be obedient. He nods. “A little.”

“Fuck,” Ardyn hisses suddenly and he pulls his hand back, Ignis moans, his back arching still further. Because while the fingers hurt, the emptiness is even worse. His body feels empty, open, needy. “Ardyn,” he gasps, unable to stop himself. *I want him in there. I need him back. I need his cock.* And he reaches for him, thighs trembling and dick painfully erect even as he’s terrified, even as he wants to be far far away from here, away from the man who is going to rape him, away from his apparent new role in the world. *But he and I. He and I are so compatible, so perfect.*

Ardyn doesn’t undress, not entirely. He only pulls his shirt off, unbuckles his belt and rips his pants open with an aggression that makes Ignis at once excited and terrified. The man is exactly as he’d always dreamed he would be, broad-chested and solid, muscular in that tired way that military men of a certain age tend to be, a trail of red hair running from his naval down to his groin. And he’s *massive,* his erection easily as long as Ignis’ forearm and even thicker around, a bulge of muscle at the base. His….

“I won’t knot in you,” he says then, his voice unexpectedly gentle, and the warmth in his voice makes something inside Ignis lurch and *burn.*

Ignis is relieved but also disgusted, terrified, because his body reacted to the *word,* Knot. He wonders what it would feel like, having Ardyn swell inside of him, having him lock their bodies together for another half hour, hour past sex. He squirms, unconsciously pushes hands between his thighs and squeezes. *Sex. It’s not sex; it’s rape. I don’t want this. He knew, knew I was about to enter my first heat.* Another spurt of fluid leaks between his fingers and he moans, disgusted by how much his body is responding, by how hard his cock is and how light-headed he feels.

And Ardyn notices. “Looks like your body wants me to.”
Ignis bursts into tears all over again.

He turns his face away and stares hard at the wall, blinking away the tears.

“You’re mine,” Ardyn hisses in his ear. “I’m not letting you go. I’m going to keep you here and fuck you until it takes. I will breed in you. And keep you close by my side until you give birth, and I will impregnate you again immediately. Again and again.”

The words are having an effect on him, the effect that Ardyn probably knows will happen. His body is heating up still further, even as Ardyn now twists fingers in his hair, lifts him up a few inches only to slam him down again, push the side of his face hard into the mattress and snarls “I will mark you, bond you. You will spend the rest of your life carrying my young.”

He can feel Ardyn’s cock pressing against him now and he moans, somewhere between fear and need as he fights to close his legs. But he can’t because he needs him. He’s wailing inside, despairing at his fate, terrified that everything Ardyn says is true. Because we are so compatible. Because we belong together. Because we were drawn to one another to the point where neither of us can control it. Because my body is desperate for him. He moans and whimpers as his dick twitches, as he leaks more fluid around Ardyn. It will be easier. It will hurt less if I accept this, let my body prepare itself. But I don’t want I don’t want I don’t want…

And Ardyn loses his composure, grabs his hips and slams into him so much so that Ignis lifts off the bed until only his shoulders touch the mattress.

He screams. He screams and he screams until he tastes blood in his mouth, his throat raw. Ardyn lets him. He's too busy ramming Ignis again and again, forcing his way into a body far too small to accommodate him. Ignis is in heat, his body loose and willing, eager even, secreting copious amounts of slick, but he’s still only thirteen, still small for his age, still five foot one and ninety seven pounds. Omegas don’t normally manifest until they are fifteen or sixteen, old enough to handle rough sex with Alphas, old enough to bear children.

Gods, I'm dying. I'm dying. You're killing me. He wants to tell him, wants to ask him to stop even as he feels his body suck him in further, feels his own cock bounce and strain between them, but he can’t speak. There isn’t enough of him left to speak, swallowed up by the fear, the pain, and the arousal. He’s never known pain like this. He feels as if he’s being gutted with every thrust, as if Ardyn’s cock is a knife tearing through his body, severing the muscles and sinew that hold his organs together, ensuring that if Ardyn withdraws, his body will fall apart. Ensuring that he cannot live without Ardyn. He finds it in him to grab Ardyn’s shoulders, try to push him away, pound his chest with the heels of his hands until he can’t muster the energy anymore and his hands fall to his own belly.

He can feel him through his stomach, his belly swollen and hard, something moving beneath the surface, and he sobs even as he violently arches his back. Stay there, stay there. Take up residence inside of me. We belong. He screams then, howls to drown out the part of him that is enjoying this. I am in control. I am more than my body, more than just an omega. I can survive this and in order to survive this I must…

And something happens then. Something deep inside of him catches fire and floods his veins with electricity, so much so that it explodes in his fingertips and makes him positively shriek. It’s so much more, much more than what he’d experienced earlier. Because the source is inside of him, nestled so deep that it’s beneath his ribs that it’s a part of him now. A part of him his body has now accepted. It doesn’t hurt anymore and all that matters is his want.
"Oh, now you're feeling it," a low purr in his ear as Ardyn yanks him still closer, presses the boy’s face to his throat. And Ignis inhales his scent, gasps and half-chokes as he struggles to drink down as much of him as he can, his body on fire while Ardyn keeps murmuring. "This is what it feels like when omegas have sex with alphas. This could be your life with me. We could do this. Every day.” He punctuates every couple of words with another thrust. “Every night. Forever.”

He sobs at how cruel fate is, because while the pleasure is so mind-numbingly good that he could forget everything, drift away and pretend this isn’t happening, Ardyn’s voice grounds him. It grounds him and drives him into a frenzy. And his scent is intoxicating. Ignis can’t stop rubbing his face against his throat, licking and nipping at him as he groans. He scratches Ardyn’s back bloody, scratches until skin gathers under his nails and Ardyn hisses his name, repeats it over and over in a mantra that to Ignis’ ears has become a prayer. He wraps his legs tightly around his waist and writhes.

Ardyn grabs his hips, jerks him still closer, pushes his knees up to his shoulders and forced Ignis’ back to curl. And he growls, moans in Ignis’ ear as he fucks him harder still without abandon, as if he’s forgotten how small Ignis is. And Ignis suddenly doesn’t care as he points one foot towards the ceiling and curls his toes as he screams, contracts around the cock deep inside of him. The first orgasm takes him hard.

Ardyn snarls in his ear, moans his name and fists his hair as he reaches his own climax.

He feels Ardyn coming in him, feels a sudden extra push, a liquid heat even deeper inside of him, and it keeps going. The man’s orgasm is long, nearly a minute as Ignis will discover in time, not unusual for an Alpha but jarring for Ignis’ virginity. The violence and strength with which he holds him makes Ignis feel as if he is suffocating and he likes it, likes the helplessness, the sacrifice of control. And he likes holding Ardyn in his thrall, likes having this man all but worship his body and come undone before him.

Ignis is dimly aware of his own body clamping around Ardyn, silently begging him to knot inside of him even as his slick is bloody and his passage is torn. Please, please please. Stay. Lodge inside of me. I am only half a person without you. You are mine, mine.

He can’t even scream when the second orgasm hits him, nor the third. Not that he feels the third, because his brain shuts down from the overstimulation long before that.

He’s barely conscious when Ardyn finally pulls out of him, but he’s conscious of the man immediately pulling him close, curling around him and murmuring something he can’t understand in his ear. It hurts, it hurts, the emptiness between his legs hurts.

And he slips under.
Chapter 7 - That morning - Ardyn, Clarus

Chapter Notes

Finally finished this chapter, which marks the end of "Part 1". I have parts of the next few chapters written but was a little stuck on this one (I worry about it being disjointed because of that so I hope it's okay). Thank you for being patient. And thank you for the comments! I truly, truly appreciate them and will reply; apologies for being late on that. This chapter is from Ardyn's and Clarus' perspective. Part two, beginning next chapter, will be about the consequences (which I'm sure everyone has guessed already). I have a lot of plans for this and am really enjoying it! <3

Chapter 7 – Ardyn

He unexpectedly sleeps.

Ardyn Izunia is not normally one to sleep after sex, and yet when he rolls onto his back and cracks his eyes open, it’s dawn. He’d slept nearly a full eight hours, as if Ignis had sapped his strength. He sits on the edge of the bed and groans, rubs his eyes.

And then he looks at who is still lying in the bed. Ignis sleeps deeply, his body struggling to accept what just happened. Common for omegas to sleep long hours when in heat, their bodies exerting so much energy to breed and fuck that when they finally get laid they conk out. He’ll likely be unconscious for another few hours. He’s fairly certain that Ignis had three orgasms in a row when he’d ravaged him. Three, leaking a little come the first time and dry the second and third. He wonders suddenly if Ignis is capable of fathering children. Some male omegas can, some can’t. Because some only exist to be carriers.

He can’t imagine what the boy has been through.

He’d blocked Ignis’ magic every time the boy had visited him; there wasn’t a need to until last night. He’d felt the faint tug, knew Ignis was trying to summon a weapon. He probably thinks he lost access to his powers because he manifested as an omega. Feels severed from the royal family and Lucis as a whole. Should make him more complacent. I could so easily bring him back to Gralea. I could… The thought makes his lips curl, so he cuts it off before it can go further and instead he only stares at the boy.

He's beautiful, devastatingly attractive despite his age. Face tear-streaked with blood on his lips from biting them, eyelashes stuck together and cheeks pink. He's still oozing pheromones, a scent now mingled with Ardyn's scent. Satisfying. He hasn't marked him. He can't. Because marking is only possible after a second fuck, after a pregnancy takes hold.

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The Oracle had decided such a thing centuries and centuries ago. Claimed it was the Astrals who had done so, though there were whispers that she herself, an omega, had abused her powers and passed her own wishes as those of the gods. Nobody could prove it.

Omegas are dying out due to the Scourge.
Bonding could no longer happen after a rape, after a one-night stand, after a brief fling, not even when the omega wished it to be so. They could not risk being bond to someone they might never see again, could not risk further reducing their pregnancy rates. The word was passed into law in Lucis, and some time ago in a desperate bid to appeal to Lucis’ lofty humanitarian goals, Niflheim made it a law. One not upheld by magic, but a law nonetheless. Accordo and Tenebrae, disinterested in gender dynamics, accepted it as their own law but otherwise ignored it.

As expected, the decree reduced rape, which was somehow less appealing if it wouldn’t result in a bonding. It also reduced pregnancy rates, but nothing could be done for it. The Oracle and her heirs could not pretend the Astrals had never said it.

Being unable to bond had never bothered him before. It was more of a convenience than a disadvantage. He liked fucking and he liked freedom. He likes destroying omegas, seducing them so that they could never appreciate sex with anyone else again, not even their mates. He likes fucking Alphas, too, forcing them to acknowledge that they are not so superior after all. He likes not having to worry about accidental bonds, about stray bites turning into something permanent – he can certainly kill any mate he has, but that’s such an inconvenience. Better to avoid it entirely. The thought of murder makes him remember how much Ignis had screamed last night and his dick twitches even as he looks more carefully at the dark bedsheets.

There’s a lot of blood on the sheets. It doesn’t matter how willing the body is if it’s too small to handle sex. If Ignis hadn’t been an omega, if his body hadn’t self lubricated, his muscles loosened and stretched to accommodate him, he might have hurt him beyond recovery given how vicious he’d been. *I need to heal him*, he thinks absently, *should have healed him right away.*

But he doesn’t move to touch him. He watches him sleep for another ten minutes, fifteen, twenty, before he finally sighs and gently turns him, grabs his hip and rolls him onto his back. Ignis whimpers, twitches his fingers but is otherwise still.

He hesitates again with his hand hovering just over the boy's groin, over his limp cock and the dried bloody slick all over him. He *knows*, knows if he pushes a hand between those legs to heal him, he might not be able to resist the urge to rut again. Because he’s been controlling it well now; he’d never lost control before. But *Ignis*. Ignis does things to him.

He heals him quickly, pushes a single finger into that wet heat and heals the tears, the bruising. His insides are so swollen that Ardyn couldn’t fit a second finger in if he’d tried. His uterine canal had already closed up again, as they do after sex to retain semen, to increase the likelihood of pregnancy. Not as good as knotting, but apparently his body had done it quickly enough that he’d kept most of Ardyn's come inside. His belly looks perfectly normal; the 30 milliliters of semen an Alpha capable of not enough to be visible, but he *feels* that he can see it. And he pulls his finger out quickly because he's already hard again, already desperate and needing the boy. He only risks one glance at his ass afterwards. He's still gaping, his muscles lax and loose post-orgasm.

He wipes him down without looking at him, averting his eyes and instead staring at the wet spot on the sheets, slick and semen and blood and sweat. He buttons the boy’s shirt up, maneuvers his legs and pulls his briefs on and up. The pants can wait until he's awake, but Ardyn can't bear to have his naked ass visible any longer.

And then he pours himself a glass of whiskey and sits in the other room to wait, as far away from his temptation as he dares go.

-Ignis whimpers when he starts to wake, the noise drawing Ardyn to the doorway as he watches the
boy slowly come awake. He takes one look at him and begins crying again. Ardyn groans, suddenly irritated with the boy's youth, with his sensitivity, his fear.

"I healed you. It shouldn’t hurt anymore so stop crying."

"That’s not... They won't want me now. I'm useless."

"Don't be stupid."

"I can't..." he flexes his fingers, his chin trembling. Of course he wouldn't know that Ardyn can block his power, can interrupt the power of the gods when he sees fit.

He wonders if he can get the boy to say it. "You can’t what?"

And then Ignis jumps up, slips off the bed and half stumbles, half dives, for his coat, still lying on the floor beside the bed. He grabs his phone and bolts towards the bathroom before Ardyn can grab him. Little bitch. Lulled him into relaxing his guard.

He lunges after him, presses his ear to the door and listens a moment. Only texting. Surprising. Perhaps he's embarrassed, unsure of who to call. So he waits a moment, wondering if Ignis' fingers are shaking, if he’s crying again. He waits a moment and it’s the best he can do before he’s turning the knob, opening the door that he’d disabled the lock on the night before, and pausing when he hears a voice. Someone must have called him, because now he’s sobbing, murmuring that he wants to go home, that he’s not a. A. And then he stops. Ardyn pushes the door open then, sees Ignis crouched down in the bathtub, as if he could hide himself. The boy doesn’t startle, doesn’t even look at him; he only gasps faintly when Ardyn leans over him and gently takes the phone from his hand. “Who is it?”

“My friend, Gladio?” He’s trembling, his voice cracking on the final word to turn a statement into a question.

Gladio. Ardyn wonders if he’s more than a friend, or could have been had last night not happened. He brings the phone to his ear and grins as he says, “I’ll bring him home.”

The Amiticia boy’s voice is too old for his age, just as his body is, as he snarls out an, “Is he okay?”

“Yes, yes. Self-discovery can be a bitch though, hm?” He’s fighting the urge to laugh as he glances down at Ignis, still curled up in the bathtub, still avoiding eye contact.

“What do—” Righteous, indignant, wrathful. Ardyn suddenly, unexpectedly hopes that there is something between the two boys. It would bring them both such anguish.

“I’ll drop him at the palace in, oh, twenty minutes? We aren’t far. And yes, I have permission to pass through the gates,” he purrs before the kid can say anything about it. He hangs up then.

“Little friend is worried about you,” he sighs, nudges Ignis’ shoulder with the phone until the boy finally reaches up to take it from him. His fingers are cold.

He doesn’t respond to that comment, but instead something Ardyn had said on the phone. "How do you have permission..." he murmurs softly, his voice strangely calm.

There’s no point in feigning innocence. He’s taken what he wanted already. He’d happily take him again and again, but the spell has been broken. Ignis knows he is not a nice person now. "I'm the Chancellor of Niflheim."
"Oh."

His reaction is scarcely a reaction, and Ardyn looks at him for a long time. He's clearly lost inside of himself, despite his occasional moments of clarity. Ardyn might have healed his physical wounds, but nothing more. He knows, knows that the sex was nothing but brutal rape, as much as Ignis begged in the end.

"I was a real find then. Advisor to the future king of an enemy state."

"Mm, you were quite a find. It’s hard to believe we are so compatible. Almost seems like... fate."

He doesn’t respond, but he’s blinking rapidly as if holding back tears.

Ardyn sighs. “I’ll take you home. Get your things.” Your little backpack with schoolbooks and a change of clothes. He wonders absently what Ignis had thought when he’d shown up at the hotel last night. So naïve. So eager and innocent. He wonders what exactly Ignis knew of sex before last night, if anything. But he doesn’t respond to that so Ardyn tries a different tack. "You need to take suppressants. It's too late to do anything about this heat but you can control the rest."

Ignis blinks, but he still won't look at him as he finally moves around him, steps into the living area and picks his bag up, as if operating one statement behind. There's something cute, tragic about his pain. Ardyn wants him again, even as he wants to smack him.

"You're a little messy."

That gets a little bit of a reaction. "What?"

"You leak. A lot." Quite a lot. Not the most that he's seen in a male omega, but close.

"I...what am I supposed to do?"

He rolls his eyes. Hopeless. He's hopeless. "Keep your briefs padded for the next few days. I put some tissues in there already when you were asleep but you’ll need to get some real pads."

"Like women wear."

"You're an omega. You can get pregnant and lactate. Get used to it." The thought of Ignis' stomach swelling, his nipples puffy and sensitive, makes Ardyn's cock twitches. The want makes him ache. He's never felt such need before.

"I won't get used to it. I won't do this again."

"Uh huh," he breathes. He wonders if suppressants would even be enough for Ignis, as unstable as his hormones are. Manifesting at thirteen despite exhibiting barely any signs beforehand. He didn’t even have the chance. “You really were enjoyable. And enthusiastic once you accepted it.”

“I won’t,” he snarls now, sounding surprisingly assertive.

“You were begging me to suck your cock last night. Good luck controlling yourself."

"I think I was demanding you do that."

Ardyn looks at him strangely then as he feels his own cock twitch. Ignis’ spitfire is cute. He’s no match for Ardyn; he can’t possibly be at thirteen, up against a man with two thousand years of solitude and bitterness pumping through his veins. He’s no match, but he tries, and strangely, he is more of a match than most anyone Ardyn has fucked. It’s charming, and he wonders who Ignis will
grow up to be, wonders if he will be around to see it.

"Come on," he pushes him towards the door, perhaps with more force than he intends.

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Ignis has to be shoved into the back of the car, has to have Ardyn buckle his seat belt because he’s withdrawn into himself again. Irritating. He’s so irritating. He wants the bitchy Ignis back, not this sorrowful, catatonic child. He wonders if he should insult him again, drag out the coeurl kitten who’d snapped at him a few minutes ago. But when he slides into the backseat beside him, he watches Ignis immediately press against the passenger side door, make himself as small as he can, and he changes his mind. He taps the driver’s shoulder and commands him to drive. Wedge has driven Ardyn around for the last decade; he’s seen a lot, heard a lot, and always he stays mum. Very useful.

Ardyn waits until the car pulls out before speaking. "Omegas were worshipped in Solheim. The males, too. Perhaps especially. Not only a merge of both male and female in some regards, but also capable of bearing young. Alpha women weren’t revered as much, even though they were arguably capable of the same thing. A lot has been said on that over the years but…” He shrugs, suspecting that Ignis will not be interested in that discussion. “There are few remnants left of Solheim civilization, but we have recovered what we could and secured it within the Gralea libraries and laboratories. I can take you there, if you’re interested one day.”

Ignis still won't look at him, stays pressed against the door as if he’s terrified that he can’t control himself.

"Do you know how many male omegas are alive right now, that we're aware of?"

Ignis responds to that. Because Ignis likes trivia. Ignis likes showing off how smart he is, how good his memory is. "Textbooks suggest .27% of the population, but they cite a survey that's six years old."

"Do you know how few have manifested in the last six years?"

"Shut up."

Ardyn laughs softly before falling silent. There isn’t much traffic as there is in Gralea, but many people in Insomnia use the hundreds of trains criss-crossing the city. Cars are for parents and people who feel that they have to prove something. On any other day, he suspects Ignis would have a lot to say about the subject.

It’s only when the Citadel district is in sight that he looks at Ignis again. He has that look to him, that freshly fucked looked omegas sometimes get when they have sex during estrus. Everyone who sees him today will know immediately that he'd lost his virginity. And that smell. He reeks of Ardyn.

He’s impressed that he lasted as long as he has as he leans over, the backseat too narrow for Ignis to stay out of his reach. Ignis resists at first, grabs at the back of the seat in front of him and makes a startled whimpering sound, but as Ardyn kisses his cheek, he gives up. And Ardyn kisses him once more, grabs the back of his neck and drags him in, crushes his lips to his and pushes his tongue into his mouth. Ignis moans then, fingers scrabbling against Ardyn's chest as he arches his back. And Ardyn's hand snakes down his spine to grab his ass.

He forgets, forgets for a moment, as he pulls him into his lap, squeezes his ass with both hands and
thrusts up into his groin. He's hard again. They're both hard. *I could fuck him again, take him fast and rough here and be done within a few minutes. I could give him back with slick and come running down his thighs. I could tell Wedge to pull over right now and we could fuck right on the side of the road. And I'd—*

Then Ignis bites him.

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**Chapter 7 – Clarus**

Gladio has always been a little touchy, a little sensitive, quick to anger and panic. Traits he was struggling to overcome, ones he sometimes succeeded in overcoming. But not now, because the boy is in a blind panic now as he slams the door to their living quarters open so fast, so violently, that it bounces against the wall.

“Ignis!” He gasps out, breathless, his eyes wide and panicked, and for a moment Clarus’ heart stops. *He’s dead. Ignis is dead, and if Ignis is dead, so is the prince.*

“What…”

“He called me. He’s…He’s in trouble.”

And he feels the fear start to leak out of him then. Because if Ignis called him, if Gladio is using the present tense, then he is *alive.* He places his hands on his son’s shoulders and gently guides him towards an armchair, waits until his son sits with a confused look on his face. “Start at the beginning,” he says softly.

Gladio groans, buries his face in his hands. “He told me earlier this week. I just ignored it ‘cause…He said he was into older men and he had a crush on someone.”

He blinks. It doesn’t surprise him that Ignis likes boys. He’d overheard more than one conversation his son had had with the other boy about girls, about dating, but what had been obvious to him was apparently less obvious to his fourteen-year-old son. “How is he in trouble?”

“He…went to his house, or hotel. I don’t know. He called me this morning.” And then he suddenly sits bolt upright, as if he’d only remembered something. “This guy. He said he has permission to enter the Citadel and he’s going to drop Ignis off. Like right now. I ran here as fast as I could. But he should be here soon.”

Clarus sighs softly, suddenly wondering if the emergency was that his son just discovered that his best friend was gay. Ignis going off with an older man was highly inappropriate, something that Regis would have to confront him about, but if he called Gladio in the morning and was getting a ride back, the situation probably stopped at *inappropriate.* “What’s the problem, then?”

He regrets asking, regrets thinking for even one second that it was only inappropriate, that it wasn’t a big deal, that certain things didn’t happen to boys, to betas.

“I think he…hurt Ignis. Like…” There is a pleading in his eyes, as if begging Clarus to understand what he means without asking him to explain.

And he understands. *Rape.* Ignis was *raped.*
Emergency. Report to the throne room immediately.

Regis strides in, cape thrown over his shoulder. “What is it? Why have you called me here?” He sounds angry, cold, irritated that anyone, even the Shield, would dare call the king to his own quarters, would dare text him on his private phone, would send the code to over-ride any silent settings he might have had on. “Is Noctis all right?”

“Your Majesty,” he says softly, warily. There is no easy way to put this, no easy way to tell the full story he had had to coax out of Gladio only minutes earlier. “My son just came to me with alarming news. Ignis called him.”

“Ignis?” There is a sigh then, an exclamation half in relief, and then he immediately frowns. Because in that sigh were the unspoken words, it’s not Noctis. Noctis is fine. Ignis isn’t as important. And Regis regrets that sigh, so Clarus will not speak of it. Not now, not when he has to tell the king what he must now tell him.

“A man is coming to drop Ignis off in a few minutes. He’s someone with permission to enter the Citadel.”

“A man? Who? Why is Ignis with him?”

“There’s…” he sighs. “Apparently, Ignis developed an interest in an older man. That’s where he was last night.”

“Last night he was at some cram school sleepover,” he says it firmly, as if he needs to make himself believe it.

“Last night he went off with someone,” he repeats. “He called Gladio this morning, saying that he’d made a mistake. My son said he sounded very scared, and whoever he was with took the phone from him afterwards. Said he’d bring Ignis back and that he had permission to enter.”

“Who…? He didn’t tell Gladio anything? Not a name? How they met?”

“Only that they met playing chess in the library.”

The King frowns at this.

“Are any foreign dignitaries on record for being here?”

“Not officially.”

“Which means it might….”

“Might be a Lucian,” Clarus finishes for him. The thought had crossed his mind as well. “Might be in the Crownsguard, the Kingsglaive. Someone we trust.”

Regis groans and pinches the bridge of his nose. “No, no.”

Just then a voice crackles over Clarus’ radio. <Admitted vehicle VX247N. Cleared for explosives.>

Clarus speaks before the King can. “Do you recognize that number?”

He shakes his head, but he looks sick as he does so. “Let’s go.”
Ignis can stand on his own. It’s the first thing he notices. He runs up the steps, looking clean and healthy, looking only frightened, and throws himself into the King’s arms. He’s crying, which Clarus has never seen him do, and he finds himself looking away as Regis hugs him. Several years ago, Iris has vanished, hadn’t been found until late that night. She’d been a tiny child at the time, and a girl, which made it all the more terrifying. Things happened to little girls more often than they happened to little boys. Except for Ignis, the unlucky one.

He doesn’t have time to reflect on this before Regis is pushing the boy into his arm and, startled, Clarus takes him. Ignis Scientia, only a year younger than his own son yet half his size. He feels more as if he’s carrying his daughter in his arms, and yet he knows, intuitively, that he’s carrying the weight of the known world.

He immediately carries him away, brings him to the Council room off to the side where his wife and son await. Son. He shouldn’t be here, but snapping at him now would only increase Ignis’ anguish. Acanthus immediately steps forward just as Ignis squirms out of his arms. He lets him drop, both feet on the ground as he turns towards her.

“Thank you,” Ignis murmurs softly, though to whom Clarus can’t be sure.

He then watches his son grab for Ignis’ arm, squeeze his shoulder, and he watches Ignis flinch away from him. And he knows that just because Ignis could walk, just because his clothing was clean and he didn’t have black eyes, what Gladio feared wasn’t untrue. It’s enough, enough for him to turn on his heel and stride back into the throne room.

And he waits for his king.

- End Part 1 -
Chapter 2/1 - One week later - Ignis, Iris

Chapter Notes

Finally posting the first chapter of Part 2! Sorry for the delay! I have a fair bit of work done on later parts of Part 2, but this chapter took some time (and life matters got very strange). While I procrastinated, I did some outlining of the entire story and I’m very excited for it. Thank you for being patient!! Ignis and Iris here! Next up is Drautos (poor guy thought he could escape) and Gladio.

Part 2, Chapter 1 - Ignis

The first thing he does, when Acanthus brings him to the Amiticia household where he can spend time with a mother and recover from the embarrassment of the king seeing him crying, is take a shower.

Ardyn must have healed him, because his body doesn’t hurt as much as he knows it should. His memories of the pain are strangely sharp, vivid and persistent, intrusive. He can feel those hands on him, that dick inside of him, those teeth on his throat. He scrubs his skin red and raw all over, especially the places that Ardyn had focused on. His throat, his nipples, his hips and ass and thighs and belly and genitals. Everything that the older man had ripped away from him, not only by raping him but by awakening him. And then he sits down on the floor of the shower, curls up around himself and sobs. He’d liked Ardyn. Maybe he had wanted to have sex with him. But he didn’t know it would be like that, didn’t know the truth about his own body, and when he’d told him to stop, he hadn’t. He hadn’t. He kept going, and the shower hides the tears falling from his eyes.

He stumbles out of the shower after twenty minutes and crumples to the floor, shaking violently. He spends a lot of time throwing up, trembling and crying on the floor of the bathroom as he leans over the toilet. It’s trauma. He’s read about it, knows what it is, but it doesn’t make it any easier. His body trying to deal with what happened. His mind grappling with it. It could be something worse though, could be something else, could be something wrong with my body that he did when he when he…

He stays locked in the bathroom for another hour or two until Acanthus asks after him three times, and only then does he scrub the tears from his face, wipe his mouth, and come out.

- The King speaks with him next. It can’t be avoided, and Ignis wants nothing more than to get what will probably be the worst conversation in his life over with.

“Did he…” Regis trails off.

He knows what he wants to ask. Why can’t nobody say the word? As if they’re ashamed to say it, to acknowledge that such a thing exists. And so it won’t have happened. “No. He didn’t rape me, not the way you’re asking.”

He says it tiredly, distantly. He isn’t certain why he’s lying, but he doesn’t need Regis knowing,
doesn’t need anyone knowing. He can’t hide being an omega, not anymore, but he doesn’t want to have to be examined internally, doesn’t want anyone asking him to do a pregnancy test, doesn’t want anyone treating him like he’s made of glass, doesn’t want everyone in the Citadel whispering about his sex life.

And maybe. Maybe he can’t quite admit it.

“She made me perform oral sex on him and vice versa. And he put his fingers in me. It. Hurt. And he kept doing that until I…” He chews his lower lip for a moment, just as embarrassed to be lying as he is to be saying this sort of thing to the king. “When I realized what I was, I just kept crying and he got sick of me, I guess. Or maybe he just wanted me to manifest, like it would upset the royal family if I…”

The king says nothing, not for a long moment, and Ignis wonders if he knows something Ignis doesn’t, if Ardyn had said something to him when he’d stormed down to meet the man who had ruined him. Because Ardyn had idled in the car, Ignis knows this. The car where he touched him again, kissed him and excited his body.

The king says nothing, so Ignis goes on, his voice calm and disconnected from his emotions. The words hurt to speak, tear his throat apart as they crawl forth from him with poisoned claws, but his voice is composed and that’s all that matters anymore. As an omega, my inner life no longer matters. It’s all about how others see me, whether or not I bother others, how well I can keep my hormones in check. I’ll be expected to take drugs for the rest of my life so I don’t distract others. I can’t possibly work in politics, work in the military. “I understand if you don’t want me to be the Prince’s adviser any longer. As an omega I can’t…”

“No,” King Regis snaps, waving a hand, moving it towards Ignis’ shoulder only to freeze an inch away. “It changes nothing. You can still carry out your duties. Take suppressants when you need to and if you decide not to, we will work around it.”

*Unexpected.* Ignis knows he should be relieved, grateful, that he should feel pleasure, excitement, but he can’t feel much of anything but those hands on his body and a tongue down his throat and a bulge in his belly that doesn’t belong to him. He feels the degradation, the shame, the fear. *You say it changes nothing too quickly. You don’t know what happened and I can never tell you. I can’t work around my heats. They control me. They ruined me.* So the words that spill from his mouth aren’t in keeping with gratitude. “I’m a liability now.”

“Ignis,” he says softly. “You’re the same person.”

He remembers the way he flirted with Ardyn, the way he accepted his keys and went to his hotel by himself and invented a story so that he could stay the night. The way he kissed him, touched him, rubbed himself against the man’s clothing and begged for his affection. He’d left Noctis to his own devices multiple times, lied to everyone around him, put his friends in difficult positions, and thought of nothing but himself. Irresponsible, reckless. “No, I’m not,” he says softly.

Regis withdraws his hand then, and he studies him silently. But he doesn’t refute him. He doesn’t refute him.

-One day, two days pass. He spends a lot of time sleeping, a lot of time bathing, a lot of time staring into nothing.

He curls up inside the pile of blankets and squeezes his eyes closed as tightly as he can. It’s a nest.
He knows that now. Warm and comforting around him, a place he can one day share with his mate. *Mate*. He can’t imagine ever having one, not after what just happened. Ardyn hadn’t bonded him, hadn’t been able to and probably wasn’t interested in doing so, but Ignis suspects that this is end for him. He’d never cared about a partner, not the way his classmates did, but *now*. Now it’s unfathomable. Even the thought makes him clutch his stomach and squeeze his eyes closed. Someone else touching him like that, shoving into his body and taking control of it, making him forget who he is, making him *want* them even as he’s screaming, begging them to stop. It had hurt, hurt so badly that the thought of willingly doing it again makes him sick.

*No. My nest is my own, mine and mine and mine only. Unless.*

Unless what he fears is true. He’s worried, because his heat has diminished. The headaches, the fever, the nausea, all diminished. His pheromones have mellowed.

It was written off. Because of his hormonal imbalance, his heats don’t last as long. Anyway, the first heat is usually only a day or two, especially when kids manifest at thirteen or fourteen.

He begged off about seeing a doctor, said he didn’t want to be poked and prodded for a little while longer, that it was too late to get on suppressants for this heat so as long as he went within the next three or four months, it’d be fine. And for good measure, he wept when he said all of this, and the king had relented. He clearly didn’t know how to handle the situation.

But there are other reasons why a heat may recede. But he wasn’t *raped*. Ardyn didn’t shove his dick into him, at least as far as *anyone else* knows, so there’s no reason to be concerned.

No reason at all.

He pulls the covers over his head as he slips the phone from underneath his pillow. And he begins researching pregnancy tests.

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**Part 2, Chapter 1 - Iris**

Ignis stays with the Amiticia for a long time. So long that Iris thinks he might be her new brother. Not that she minds, exactly, though he clearly doesn’t know how to handle kids her age, or girls.

Her mother keeps apologizing, saying he just needs to spend a little time with them because he needs a mother right now, because his own parents are dead and the Queen is also dead. Gone away, as she said, but everyone knows what *that* means. Ignis has no mum, no woman in his life that he can go to for help, and apparently he needs help right now.

Iris doesn’t understand much about omegas, betas, Alphas, except that her father and brother are both Alphas and traditionally, Amiticia men are because it’s tied to royalty and her family is upper-class. She said this in her first grade class once and her teacher said she was wrong, that it had nothing to do with social class or money, but she probably didn’t know what she was talking about.

Or maybe she does, and it’s Iris who is confused. She never bothered to ask anyone else though, because it doesn’t matter to her very much. She had a blood test when younger and she is a beta, and betas don’t really have anything to worry about. So it comes to a surprise to hear that Ignis is an omega. Lower class, poor, far from royal, though her teacher would say that is wrong to think that way.
She knows male omegas are rare, rarer even than Alphas, so that makes Ignis a little exciting. She wants to spend more time with him now because he’s interesting. He also isn’t rough like her brother and sometimes she wants a break from that, not that she’d ever admit it.

“What are you doing?” The perennial question, one she asks him every hour.

“Homework,” he grunts.

“But you haven’t been to class in three days.”

Ignis grimaces at that, his eyebrows furrowed and his lips closed tightly. “I’m a little sick now. Will be for a few more days. But next time this happens, I’ll be on medication so it will be fine.”

“Can’t you go on medication now?”

“I don’t want to go to a doctor now. It isn’t a big deal,” he says it calmly, but his hand drops to his lap and his fingers clench.

She likes the way he smells right now and she doesn’t want him to be sad, so she touches his arm. He smells differently than he used to, and now he is comforting and warm and a little bit like her mother, who she has to share with a third kid now.

She had told Gladio this last night, and her brother had looked grossed out. It’s because he’s an omega. He can be a mom now, so he’ll smell like that sometimes unless he takes his medicine. It’s a nice smell, so he shouldn’t have to take it.

You don’t get it. Anyway you’re a kid. Usually kids can smell omegas all the time ‘til you’re seven or eight.

She remembers this now. “Do you feel sick though?”

He cocks his head and looks at her finally. “Mm. A little bit, but I’m not feverish anymore.”

“Did it hurt? The heat?”

“Not that kind of hurt.” And then, carefully, his eyes narrowed slightly, he whispers, “I did throw up though.”

Iris lets out a shriek and lets go of him, pushes her chair back and stares at him. Gross, gross, gross.

And Ignis laughs softly. It’s the first time she’s seen him laugh since he came here, and she knows that he said it on purpose, that he knew she would be grossed out. Ignis is like that. He can be a little mean sometimes, but he’s cute and clever about it so her mom and dad never notice. Gladio doesn’t usually notice either. Ignis disses him all the time and her brother seems clueless.

But she’s pretty sure that her brother likes Ignis so maybe he ignores it. He ignores a lot of things, just like their father does, like the King does, like Prince Noctis does. Men are good at ignoring things, her mother said, and that’s why Ignis is in trouble now.

He didn’t get a blood test, she said. Because the King had just assumed he would be an Alpha or a beta. Never an omega, because omegas aren’t royalty.

Her mother had said it like it was a secret.
Chapter Notes

Another chapter! Apologies for the erratic updates; this one came out pretty quickly so I thought I’d go ahead and post it (almost done with the next chap so I’m trying to stay about one ahead). Things continue to heat up and there’s some heavy foreshadowing here, if anyone can guess at it (besides Ignis being pregnant. We all know he is!) Thank you for continuing to read and enjoy! I really appreciate all the feedback. <3

Chapter 2 – Titus Drautos

He blinks the sleep from his eyes as he bows, tries to keep himself from looking too irritated about this turn of events. Being summoned by the king to discuss highly personal matters. He’s not interested in anything personal about the king, but he must pretend. Oh, how he looks forward to a day when he doesn’t have to pretend anymore.

“Your highness?”

“Ignis Scientia was hurt three days ago.”

He isn’t sure what this has to do with him, why he should care if little Ignis Scientia lost a finger in Crownsguard practice or crashed a car when he tried to drive two years before he was legally able to, so he just waits.

“I haven’t summoned you before now because I wanted him to have a few days to recover before I tried to talk to him about reparations.”

“Reparations?” And what does this have to do with me? I’m not your damn dog, sicced after anyone who upsets another one of your little adopted children, adopted so that you can feel good about all of the things you’ve done. He’s, unfortunately, always felt a bit of an affinity towards the Scientia boy.

“It’s…a complicated situation. I didn’t end up speaking to him about it, not yet. Perhaps not ever. He’s still rather shaken up over what that monster did to him.”

It clicks then. Of course someone hurt him, and he doesn’t have to even think about who it might have been. He feels his stomach drop. Ardyn Izunia. He remembers that silver, sultry voice in his ear, asking about the boy, asking how old he was. He opens and closes his mouth once before he can find saliva as he pretends. “Do we know who?”

“The Chancellor of Niflheim. Ardyn Izunia. He dropped him off and spoke to me afterwards. Threatened, more like.”

“Astrals,” Drautos breathes, but not for the reason the king likely thinks. He’s shocked, disgusted that Ardyn actually had the nerve to speak to the king afterwards. Risking a diplomatic disaster.

But Regis raises a hand to stop whatever he might be about to say. “There’s more.” And he pauses.
“I had his bloodwork done when he was younger, but apparently we missed something, some kind of imbalance or…. He’s an omega.”

Drautos arches an eyebrow but says nothing. He doesn’t believe Regis, doesn’t buy that he actually checked Ignis out. He probably just assumed he would be a beta at the worst. And it all but confirms his suspicions that the boy is a bastard prince.

No point in mentioning it though. Not his problem. Just as none of this is his problem. “So what?”

The king is clearly not expecting such a response and he only stares, stunned.

“Is he pregnant?”

“No. no. He wasn’t raped.”

Too fast, too fast. “Only roughed up a little?”

“Yes,” the king doesn’t sigh in relief, but it’s there in his words, and Drautos’ disgust only grows. "I must speak with the entire Council about this but I seek your advice in such matters.”

He doesn’t answer immediately, and when he does, he chooses his words carefully. He can’t risk this war happening too soon, can’t risk everything going to waste because Ardyn’s dick is more active than his brain. But he’s angry, because he despises each and every person involved in this travesty and he wants to silence the king, wants a few minutes to himself so he can clear his head and figure out what happened enough that he can extricate himself from the situation. “I think… Chancellor Izunia is too much of an unknown factor to say reparations, even behind closed doors.”

It isn’t a phone call he wants to make, but the blood in his veins is feverish with disgust and rage and he needs to hear what happened from Ardyn, needs to find out what role he had to play in this, unbeknownst to him.

He doesn’t wait for the asshole to say anything before he cuts in as soon as the ringing stops. “What did you do to the Scientia kid?”

Ardyn answers so quickly, so smoothly, it’s almost as if he were waiting for the call. Not that Drautos is one for small talk though. If he had any brains at all, the Chancellor should expect this kind of bluntness whenever he sees Glauca on the screen. “What do you think?’

“The king told me Ignis wasn’t raped, just roughed up.”

Ardyn is silent a moment. “Is that what the boy’s telling people? I suppose it’s less embarrassing.”

Shit. But it’s what he expected. He couldn’t imagine that this man would sink his claws into a politically valuable, vulnerable young omega and not rape him. “Suspected as much,” he sighs. Sometimes he hates his life, hates being a double-agent, hates having to deal with men such as this.

“Oh, the way he screamed,” Ardyn whispers in his ear, voice throaty and low.

“You’re sick.”

“You don’t get aroused easily, do you?” he asks gloatingly, though he full well knows the answer, seeing as they’ve fucked a few times over the years. Titus had learned some time ago that the only way to shut the man up was to bend him over a table, so he’d put up with it from time to time. “It’s
a pity. I think he could turn even you on. He slicks up so easily and his muscles just clench over and over. He’s just so receptive, so responsive. The noises he made, so much crying and yelling. He fought hard, too. You’d be proud of him, little Crownsguard boy.”

“I’m not Crownsguard,” he says, his voice clipped. Of course Ardyn knows this, but he needs to say something, anything. He needs to distract himself and shut this man up. He doesn’t want to think of Ignis in this way. The kid is cute, pretty. But a kid. Hints of baby fat in his cheeks, face and arms soft and hairless.

“I don’t think he will be either, anymore. Omegas… Did the king speak with you about what would happen with him now?”

There’s a certain keening in his voice, something that gives him away. Ardyn is interested, wants to know. Probably wants to isolate him, coerce him into going back to Niflheim with him willingly. His suspicion is confirmed when Ardyn presses further.

“He going to be thrown away now? He doesn’t have any family besides his uncle, does he?”

Drautos hadn’t mentioned that, so either Ignis had told him – stupid, stupid boy – or the Chancellor had done research. “Nothing. He’s still the prince’s adviser. I imagine he will simply take suppressants and that will be the end of it.”

Ardyn snorts. “Pity. He smells so delightful when in heat. And he blushes easily, chews his lower lip. He has such a nice figure too, and he’s still got a lot of growing to do…”

Because suppressants often stunt growth. Ignis is already small for his age; he might balk at the thought of taking something that might keep him that way. He doesn’t touch that though, and instead changes the subject. The same question he’d asked Regis, though now he knows he can expect an honest answer.

“Is there any chance he’s pregnant?”

He laughs at that. “I certainly didn’t use a condom, if that’s what you’re asking. But no. I’d have a few thousand kids by now were I not sterile.”

He isn’t sure how much the man is exaggerating, isn’t sure how many other Ignis’ there are out there. “What do you want with him? You can’t come in here and kidnap him again.”

“I had my fun with him already,” he breathes. “If I see him again, I’ll fuck him again, but I only wanted to awaken him. Scare your beloved king a little. Say. You’re not interested because you’re worried you delivered him to me, are you? Never fear. You made things a bit easier but I would have--”

Drautos hangs up then, and when his phone lights up half a second later, he ignores it. Asshole will probably spit out some synonym of insubordination onto his voice mail and hang up, anyway. He doesn’t know how much of anything he’s heard tonight he should believe, but he doesn’t care either.

Not his problem. Definitely not his problem.

Chapter 2 - Gladio

-
He pretends it’s not different. Pretends everything is the same.

He doesn’t like thinking about his friend that way, doesn’t want to, but he can’t help it. Because if he isn’t an Alpha or a beta, then he’s hardly a good candidate for the adviser to the prince, for the Crownsguard. In fact he isn’t a good candidate for much of anything beyond bearing young. But no. No he’s no different. He can still carry on the same life. He’s the same. He used to admire Ignis, appreciate how vicious he could be in training, how relentless and unforgiving he could be, how quick and agile he was. But all of that will come to a grinding halt now, because omegas are meant to be protected. They are meant to be shielded.

I could be his shield, as well. I could.

Because perhaps worse of all, it makes Ignis an option. He always was, really, as there was nothing stopping an Alpha to fall for someone who couldn’t procreate with them. Omegas were rare, a dying specie, but nobody cared if Alphas passed on their genes. Yes, he was always a choice, but now he’s more of one.

Except.

Except for the fact that someone seduced him, kidnapped him and did things to him. He might not be bonded to anyone, but it still leaves an invisible mark on him. Omegas don’t need to be pure for someone to bond with them, but it’s preferred. Someone else touched him, hurt him, and Gladio doesn’t like to think about it.

And except for the fact that Ignis is a mess now. He adamantly swears that nothing significant happened, but nobody seems to believe that but the king himself. Willful ignorance, Gladio’s mother had hissed. Though Ignis denies it and denies it. He refuses to go to a doctor, and as his legal guardian the king is too lenient. Because Ignis isn’t stupid. He’s intelligent, honest, responsible. If anything really happened, if anything was genuinely wrong, he would go to the doctor, right?

It’s the topic of conversation today. Eight days later. Ignis went back to his own apartment with Noctis in the royal quarters after five days, which was a relief to the entire Amiticia family except perhaps Iris. It gets tiring, acting like everything is normal when one of the royal retinue is unexpectedly an omega, when one of the royal retinue was kidnapped, assaulted. Gladio hasn’t talked to him much, and this is only their second conversation alone since that phone call.

“Because I don’t need to.”

“But…nobody knew you were one. You didn’t act like one, smell like one, so you must have some kind of imbalance.” And you smell different now, a little odd, something I can’t place, so your body is obviously still not handling this right.

Ignis only shrugs. “Everything’s apparently working properly now.”

“That’s not the point. You might be sick. Like you should get it checked out. Maybe your…” he hesitates, remembering something from class. “Thyroid or something.”

Ignis shoots him one of those venomous glares that he mastered at the age of six. “I’m not sick. There are no other symptoms and my growth is perfectly normal for my age.”

You’re a little small. But he won’t say it, knows better than to bring that up. The thing is, Ignis’ legs are long for his size, so omega or not, he will probably grow quite a bit eventually. Gladio doesn’t like paying attention to his legs, but they are pretty hard to ignore. “Don’t you want
Another glower. “Eventually, probably. I haven’t decided yet, though heats are every three or four months. I have a while to think about it. I’ll go to the doctor when I’m ready.” The way he says it is so aggressive that the older boy sighs and drops it. Ignis is getting into a mood.

He always had moods, even when he was six. They’re only going to get worse now that he’s entered puberty. *Not because he’s an omega. That’s irrelevant. He’s no different than he ever was.*

But he’s not. Because there’s something. Something unrelated to whether he’s an omega or a beta. Something else he can’t quite place, and so he raises a hand tentatively, hovers it over the younger boy’s shoulder without touching him.

“Are you okay?”

And in that moment he understands. For the first time that Gladio can remember, Ignis looks afraid, fragile and lonely, as he looks away, drops his gaze and hangs his head. “No.”
Chapter 2|3 - Two weeks later - Ignis, Noctis (*)

Chapter Notes

And here's the next chapter! I had 95% of this done for weeks but only finally got around to writing that last little scene. Things are heating up now as Ignis finally takes a pregnancy test and Noctis tries to cope with his retainer's unexpected social status. Next chapter will jump back to Ardyn, and it will have a good dose of smut. As usual, thanks so much for reading <3

In other news, I am editing all chapter names to include the speaker. If a chapter has an (*) in the drop down menu, it has sexual content, as I know a lot of people only read those bits (hehe).

Part 2, Chapter 3 - Ignis

Ardyn’s heavy on top of him, bearing him down hard onto the floor as he stifles his cries, covers his entire face with one hand as he crushes him, half chokes him before flipping him onto his belly and ripping his pants down. He’s between his knees, stopping him from even struggling. He hears the words so deep in his veins that they barely make a sound.

You didn’t tell anyone, did you? Didn’t tell anyone I fucked you? They don’t know I can bond you. They should have had you under guard, should have been protecting you. But no, you lied. You’re stupid and stubborn and now you’re mine.

And he sinks two fingers into him, two, three as Ignis screams at the pain, the intrusion, the sheer helplessness. Ardyn hits the back of his head, grabs his neck and squeezes. Ignis can see beneath his own bed, immaculate but for the history textbook he’d been reading the night before. He always hides his current book under the bed, an old habit. It’s strangely embarrassing, being raped on the floor in his own bedroom.

He focuses on this, focuses hard as Ardyn’s cock brushes against his entrance, wet with slick. And then he focuses on nothing as the man behind him shoves into him again, focuses on nothing because nothing is easier than the pain, the degradation, the reeling fear not only because Ardyn found him again, but because now he has to tell someone, now he has to admit he was raped, that he’s weak and helpless and he must be protected, that he can’t control his hormones, his urges, that he’s not fit….

Ardyn’s grabbing his hair now, jerking his head to the side as he screams and screams, and burying his face in his neck. Ignis feels the teeth with vivid clarity before he bites down and he sobs in desperation. No, no, no I don’t want to be bound to you.

He wakes up screaming.

Hands between his legs, nails digging into his inner thighs, up and up and he finally spreads his legs, claws frantically at himself, scraping at himself until he presses fingers against the hole between his legs. He’s slippery down there, leaking a little slick that makes him whimper. But I’m
not aroused, I’m not aroused, I’m not…

The thought of being excited at the notion of Ardyn forcibly bonding him makes him want to vomit, and he unconsciously jerks a hand up to touch his neck, first the right side, then the left. He leaves smears of blood on his skin, but he is unmarked.

For now. He can’t push the voice away.

He can’t do it, he can’t do it. He can’t. Even if he finds me again, even if he kidnaps me, rapes me again, he can’t… It’s impossible to bond with an omega unless they’re pregnant, pregnant with their child. The Crystal simply won’t allow any other sort of bond within the bounds of the walls, within Insomnia.

And male omegas rarely get pregnant, especially not after only one fuck, especially not when it’s their first heat, which is often short and may or may not suggest fertility. This is because a male omega’s first heat is preparing his body for future heats, and it is rarely a full estrus cycle.

Remembering his textbook half calms him as he recites lines in his head, stills his breathing. Until that voice returns, at least. Except you’d been sick a week before. Ardyn even commented on it. Your uterine canal was fully open. Don’t fool yourself. It was a full estrus, only cut short because…

He ignores the bloody lines on his thighs as he swings his legs over the side of the bed and finds his slippers. He dresses quickly, quietly, and only then does he open up the map on his phone. There is a 24-hour pharmacy nearby, but he doesn’t want to go somewhere that he often visits. Better to go to another, across the city. Take a taxi. Nobody could possibly see and recognize him at this time of night. The time doesn’t bother him. Insomnia is safe, for the most part.

Anyway, the worst has already happened to him.

- 

He buys three different ones, because one can be wrong. Tests for male omegas are thankfully the same as those for women. No need to buy something specialized and expensive, something more likely to draw attention to him. He’s almost satisfied with his rationale as he pays in cash and leaves the store, purposefully avoids looking down the baby aisle before stepping out onto the curb and hailing a cab again.

He doesn’t remember going home, doesn’t remember taking his shoes off when he enters the apartment and locking himself in the bathroom, as if anyone might walk in. He doesn’t remember choosing one of the tests, doesn’t remember unwrapping it or pissing on it.

It’s as if his life goes on pause for a few minutes, his heartbeat and his breath stilled, lodged deep in his marrow, until the result emerges on the little screen.

Two lines.

He’d known. He’d known all along, intuitively, the moment he’d woken up in that hotel room, even before he remembered what happened, who he was with. I’m pregnant arose in his mind long, confused seconds before I’m an omega I was raped Ardyn Izunia raped me and said he would keep me and it’s all my fault and I’m….

So this is not new information, only a confirmation.

He doesn’t bother trying the other two brands.
He’s sick the next morning, violently ill, and as he’s curled over the toilet he desperately wishes that he could vomit up whatever is inside of him, that he could miraculously be rid of it with nobody else ever knowing. He’d surprised himself last night with his calmness, with how he’d merely wrapped up the test and hidden it in the trash, got back into his pajamas and gone to bed, to *sleep*, as if his brain simply refused to process what had happened.

But now he’s awake and terrified.

Part of him wants to wait. Wait and pray to the Astrals every day that he will miscarriage. He’s so young, after all, his body ill-prepared for this. Miscarriages are common in teenagers, common in male omegas. There is an excellent chance this will be a nonissue soon enough. And if in ten weeks nothing has happened, he will face it. He will tell the king. He will go to the doctor. He will get an abortion and get his uterine canal tied so that no one else may ever hurt him this way again. He doesn’t care that he’s an omega, that the human population is dwindling and he ought to make use of what the Astrals had given him. He never wants to have sex again, never wants to be hurt again, never wants to run the risk of his body being hijacked again.

But another part of him wants it. *It’s the hormones. It’s because I’m an omega, maternal, protective. My hormones want me to bear young, want me to stay in a nest all day with a baby or two or three. It isn’t me, not my brain, not the Ignis who is adviser to the prince, who is meant to be the general of the Crownguard one day. But even as he thinks this, a hand lies unbidden on his belly, as if to protect it from himself.*

And a third part of him, the worst of them all, wants *Ardyn*. He wants Ardyn to hold him, comfort him, tell him it will be okay, that he will get through this, that whether he keeps it or not is entirely up to him, that there is no pressure to do one thing or the other, that he doesn’t have to hide it or be ashamed, that this will not affect the rest of his life, that he will stay by him if that’s what Ignis wants, that he won’t hurt him again, will in fact protect him and the child, support him and teach him all that he knows and ensure that he can be both an omega and a great military adviser.

It’s that third part that makes him reach for his cell phone, left on the side of the bathtub where he’d left it moments ago, still playing the action movie he’d been trying to watch to distract himself in between vomiting.

He texts him.

And he regrets.

And he immediately turns his phone’s connection off, slips it into non-interference mode in the hopes that the message won’t be sent.

And he weeps, curling in around himself, both arms wrapped around his middle.

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**Part 2, Chapter 3 - Noctis**

It’s now been a little over two weeks since Ignis got hurt by that guy. Noctis thinks about that day in the library a lot, when they first met him. He’d known something was wrong, known that the guy wasn’t looking at Ignis right, that Ignis was acting funny.

And now Ignis is an omega.
Noctis doesn’t think it’s that big of a deal. They’re not related, but they’ve been raised together so it doesn’t change much. He’s no more a possible partner than he ever was so maybe he doesn’t get why Gladio’s so uncomfortable. Ignis is like his brother, a little like his mother when he worries about him. Which makes sense now if he’s an omega. Noctis thinks he actually kind of likes it. He’s smelled so good now, ever since he’s awakened. Smells comforting and protective and warm.

They’re both in Ignis’ bed, propped up against the pillows and watching a PG13 movie which normally the older boy wouldn’t let him watch. Some drama about a bank heist.

He glances at him. His hair is still damp from the shower, hanging a little in his face the way it does when it’s wet, his cheeks a little pink. He’s taken a lot of showers recently. At least he’s started going back to school. He was going to only stay out a few days, then a week, and he ended up missing seven days of classes. He didn’t end up missing any work, of course, did it all at home, but it was a lot of school to miss and nobody got mad at him. Noctis was a little jealous. He also skipped Crownguard sessions, not that Noctis has to worry about that yet, but Gladio had told him. Ignis had only shrugged, said he wasn’t feeling good enough for it yet, but he’d flexed his hands as he’d said it. The way he used to do right before he accessed the Arniger, and Noctis had quietly wondered if perhaps he couldn’t any longer.

He doesn’t want to ask though. It scares him and it makes him sad, because he wants Ignis with him, wants Ignis protecting him as he gets older, but that’s selfish and he shouldn’t be thinking about that right now. He also shouldn’t be thinking what he is thinking about right now, but it’s less painful.

He thinks they probably did it. Ignis has always acted like an adult, always acted older than he was. Noctis always figured that he’d start doing it soon, like he’s pretty sure Gladio already has with some of the girls in high school. But doing it with an adult, a man at that… It’s a little strange. That guy was creepy too, handsome but creepy.

So he bluntly asks, “You guys have sex?”

Ignis doesn’t answer immediately. “Not exactly,” he finally sighs, dragging the word out. Like it’s not a big deal, like they’re sharing a joke. He seems calmer now. “I sucked his dick and he did mine.”

He grimaces. Nasty. He knew girls did that, had heard some older kids talking at school. “I was curious. Didn’t want details.”

Ignis smiles at that, makes a huffing sound through his nose and grins for half a second. It’s real, and it’s the first real smile Ignis has shown since it happened. “I’ll tell you more next time you get on my nerves.”

“You want to see him again?”

His smile fades then. “Don’t tell your father.”

“So you’re gonna?” He isn’t sure if he’s disappointed or worried. Because even if Ignis seemed to like him at first, that guy ended up hurting him. Not that it matters, he knows. He’s heard and seen enough drama with the older kids at school, though he suspects most of the time the betrayal is something stupid, not what this man did to Ignis.

“I don’t know, but don’t worry about it. You’re my first priority.”

A weird thing to say, especially as he now knows that Ignis likes boys. Noctis wrinkles his nose
and leans away from him. He hopes he just means the whole *bros before hos* thing.

And Ignis laughs, but he seems distracted, seems too serious to be laughing. “That isn’t what I mean. You’ll understand someday.”

He flicks a glance at Ignis, at the way he’s sitting, at the blankets pulled up to his chest even though it isn’t particularly cold. *I don’t know if I want to.*
Chapter Notes

Annnnnnd the end of Part 2! Just Ardyn in this chapter, as he reacts to Ignis' text. Some of you might have guessed at his reaction but I suspect at least Ignis' response will be a surprise (I hope). As usual, thank you so much for being patient and reading, and I always welcome chatting about the fic!

Part 2, Chapter 4 - Ardyn

Ardyn smirks when he hears his phone buzz. Buzz the special sound he'd set in place for Ignis. Ignis. The little fool who thinks he's so smart. He knew he'd contact him eventually, desperate for more of his cock. If only this atrocious meeting would finish up quickly. He taps his fingers against the table and leans back in his chair, making it clear that he’s disgusted, bored.

Two minutes. Eight. Thirteen. Sixteen. And twenty-one minutes before it ends, and he only checks his watch five times while making a divine effort to remain interested. Another town on the outskirts of Insomnia about to fall to ruin. He might have made some decisions too hastily, might inadvertently cost thousands of lives, but he doesn’t care. The meeting couldn’t end soon enough and he pulls his phone out immediately, even as the emperor still sits before him.

He blinks, frowns at the word pregnant.

And then he smirks. The boy must be trying to get his attention, coax him into visiting him without explicitly saying that he wants him. The boy had often been blunt to him, but the rare moments when he hadn’t been, he’d been clever, coy, strategic. This is something he would do, if a little misguided. Because it won’t work for him.

<Clever, but I’d prefer you simply telling me you want to see me.>

The read receipt blinks, indicating that the boy read it immediately, and Ardyn bares his teeth in a wolfish grin. Ignis must be desperate. Ardyn wonders if he’s touched himself in the last two weeks, if he’s doing it right now, if he’s sitting on his bed with his legs spread, his fingers between his thighs, tugging his cock, rubbing the skin beneath his balls until he works up enough slick to slip them inside. He can imagine his head tilted back, his eyes closed and his mouth open, tongue pushing against his lower teeth as he pants and gasps. He feels his trousers tightening as he waits, but Ignis takes a good few minutes to reply.

When he does, it isn’t what Ardyn expects.

<I don’t want to see you.>

He can almost sense the confusion in those words, but anger spurs him to reply quickly. <Then why would you say that?>
Never mind.

Playing hard to get. For some reason this irritates Ardyn, makes him uneasy. It isn’t like Ignis, to do this. The Ignis he knows would keep pushing, perpetuate the lie and intrigue him, try to play with him.

Which means… he can’t consider it.

- 

He ignores it for three days, four. But by halfway through the fifth day, he can’t. He demands an airship, boards with a pilot and a crew of only three and retreats immediately to his cabin.

Only once he’s seated does he text the boy. He’s been to this hotel before, knows that it’s about three and a half hours from here to the front desk of the hotel, all travel covered. *I booked a room at the Astoria hotel. Check in under my name. It’s taken care of.*

The last thing Ignis had said to him was *never mind*. He can imagine Ignis’ uncertainty, imagine the frown on his face, the furrow in his brow as he realizes that he has to meet Ardyn in a hotel again. But he’ll obey. Because he’s reasonable and there isn’t much else he can do.

And twenty days after he raped the royal adviser-in-training, Ardyn arrives back in Insomnia.

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His stomach lurches when he sees him, when he steps into the hotel room and catches his scent.

Ignis is waiting for him, sitting in an armchair on the side of the fireplace, staring hard at him with those vibrant green eyes of his. His legs crossed, elbow on the armrest and fingers curled near his chin. He looks older than his thirteen years, solemn and intense in that way of his that got him in trouble in the first place. He thinks he’s older than he is, acts it, tried to *be* it. He thinks he can handle things. And so does not run away when men who already raped him once demand that he meet him in a hotel room.

It’s this, the reminder, the glimpse of Ignis as the adult in a child’s body, that cements his suspicion.

*He let someone else fuck him. He spread his legs for another man, probably immediately after I fucked him, and so he has become a whore and seeks to blame it on me.*

He doesn’t like sharing. So his throat is tight, his voice thick as he hisses. "If you aren’t lying, it's not mine."

"Of course it is." He says it petulantly, a hint of a pout on his lips, and Ardyn thinks about that little pout wrapping around his dick. Why hadn’t he made him do that? He should today, before he leaves. Teach the boy how to put his mouth to a better use than sassing off on him. To a better use than bending over for someone else.

"It's. Not. Mine." He bites each word off.

"You raped me. Do you really think I'd go have sex with someone else so soon after?" He holds his composure, names the act calmly, but Ardyn watches as he flicks his hand up a few inches, starts to put it over his belly as if to protect whatever is there.

Something in that gesture, as subtle as it is, makes Ardyn hesitate. "I'm sterile. I can't have
children."

"It’s yours!” Ignis snarls then as he stands, eyes narrowed and teeth bared and little fists clenched. He’s beautiful, and from the flush on his cheeks, he’s growing aroused at merely being in the same room as Ardyn. Perfect.

Ardyn steps forward, closes the gap and grabs him in the same moment the boy reaches for him, but Ignis is faster this time, jumping up, standing on his tiptoes and jerking his down with hands in the collars of his coats. He kisses him roughly, the boy’s jaw dropping to accept his tongue immediately. He’s hungry, desperate, and as he grabs Ignis’ shoulders and slips fingers up to his neck, he can feel his heat.

Ignis squirms against him, little hands running down his chest, his waist, grabbing for his belt. Little whore. “You’re not going to rape me again,” he hisses.

He laughs at that. Can’t rape the willing, and Ignis was willing from the beginning, after all. Stupid boy. He buries his face in his neck and inhales, and he understands then. The boy wasn’t lying. He is with child, with Ardyn’s child.

Impossible.

For a moment he leans back, studies Ignis. He knows he should think about this more, should leave Ignis and contemplate what this means, perhaps consult with Verstael Besithia the scientist. He should not be able to do this. But he can’t think, can’t process what is happening, what the ramifications might be, what the Astrals are doing, because Ignis is in his arms and he’s so pretty.

He smells him again, detects now that Ignis’ excitement isn’t a true estrus, is something else, the sort of secondary heat that omegas only get around their mates when pregnant. He can also smell his fear. He’s pretending to be brave, pretending to want this because that’s what his hormones are driving him to do, but his mind clearly wants out. Because Ardyn can see the wild look in his eyes, the desperation and confusion as he stares up at him. And he holds the teenager’s gaze as he touches him again. He slips a hand down his chest, his waist, and cups his groin. There’s a little hardness there that he squeezes gently. A shiver goes through him, eyes fluttering closed and mouth opening as he lets out a soft noise. Cute. He’s attractive, even at this age.

And Ardyn pushes him down, unzips his fly and pulls his pants down while Ignis tries to shove his hands back, fingers shaking. But he can’t be certain if the boy is trying to help him or stop him as his little erection bobs free. Ardyn grins in satisfaction when he sees the damp on his thighs. He smells different now, smells like he’s his. He slips hands beneath him, kneads his ass and massages the muscles he finds there. The boy is hardly developed yet, and Ardyn wonders again what he will look like in a few years, what he will look like in ten, wonders at what sort of man he will become. If he lives long enough. He leers now as he spreads his legs wide and pushes a finger inside of him, his muscles tight but not resistant as more slick spurts out of him. Depraved boy, with his cheeks flushed and his hair a mess as he looks away from Ardyn; he’s not fighting, only trembling. Ardyn will remember this later.

When he uses a second finger, he sinks them in as far as they’ll go and finds what he seeks. Ignis jerks against him, cries out and lifts one foot off the bed as his toes curl. Ardyn lets him enjoy it for a moment, caressing his sweet spot as Ignis writhes and moans. He knows, knows somewhere in the back of his mind that the boy could be a divine sex partner, sensitive and adventurous and eager to learn, if only he could control himself around him and introduce him to sex more slowly. If only he could not feel an overwhelming urge to rape him every time he saw his pretty face, smelled his scent.
But another time, perhaps, because he’s had enough and he’s withdrawing his fingers, grabbing Ignis’ shoulder and roughly flipping him onto his belly, dragging him up onto his knees even as the boy cries out, clearly reeling in confusion. He manages to tell him to stop, to gasp out a please, no no no even though moments ago he was trying to be brave, but all Ardyn can understand is how good he smells.

He’s as tight inside as he was the first time, burning hot and wondrously wet, his body producing so much slick, even though his uterine canal is now closed for the foreseeable future, that Ardyn is able to push in up to the hilt with relative ease.

It doesn’t mean that it isn’t hurting Ignis, as the boy is screaming in pain again, shuddering and sobbing. Easy to ignore when he feels this good but it’s another thing, another thing he will remember later. How much Ignis endures beneath him, how brave he tries to be, how terrified he really is.

He’s careful not to crush him, careful not to throw his full weight on him, but he fucks him hard. Ignis’ knees give out at one point and he collapses to the bed, letting out a startled whimper at the sudden stimulation against his cock, but Ardyn drags him back up. He wraps hands around his ribcage, digs his fingers into his nipples before sliding them back and circling his waist. Ardyn groans, thrusts into him at a different angle until Ignis squeals, howls, his little cock jerking against Ardyn’s fingers and leaving a smear of precome. He thrusts back against him then, once, twice, and he can feel more slick leaking out of him, now running down his own thighs as much as it does Ignis’. So much. So much.

He stares at his back, at the way his shoulder blades are nearly touching in tension, the sweat running in rivulets down his skin, the vertebrae of his neck and the way his hair sticks to his nape, the soft expanse of skin between his neck and his shoulder. He leans in as he thrusts into him again and smells him, studies the space on his neck over his pheromone gland, slightly swollen as they often get during sex.

And he sinks his teeth into him. Ignis bucks, writhes under him, snarls and spits and then he suddenly drags a ragged gasp and stills. The marking of an omega by an Alpha, especially a compatible one, sends such a rush of hormones through the omega that they are often left paralyzed for a moment.

Ignis orgasms then, his little body clenching and spasming around him in a way that could be divine as Ardyn gnashes his teeth in his neck again before leaning back, feeling nothing but possessiveness and adoration for the boy below him.

And Ardyn half lifts him, grabs one of his arms and jerks him up, runs a hand up his belly and holds him above the mattress as he rams into him again, again. Ignis is silent but for his panting, his mind elsewhere. Ardyn’s orgasm builds in his fingertips and behind his eyes and crawls through his veins, burns his body as the streams of fire finally reach his groin. It’s a violent one, better than most he has had, perhaps ever. Because he is yours. He is your mate. You are bound to him forever now, both bound by the life growing inside of him. He hisses, leans over him as his hips stutter through the rest of the climax, filling the boy just as he had three weeks ago. And Ignis gulps, whimpers and squirms in his arms, the action making his own dick twitch again in a half orgasm, weak and dry.

He resists knotting in him, though the urge to is even stronger than it had been the first time. But Ardyn needs to think and he can’t think when he’s lodged inside of him, he reflects as he slides out of him, strings of come and slick between them. He’s never marked someone before, never had the chance to, and his mind is reeling. It won’t affect his own life, but it will certainly ruin Ignis’. More
than it has already been ruined. But he’s pregnant, and this will affect Ardyn’s life. *This is not something I can run away from. I can not abandon my bastards the way so many others have. Not when I…*

Ignis is trying to sit up, trying to crawl away, but his limbs won’t work as the post-coital exhaustion is rapidly overtaking him. There is not only pain and despair but anger in his eyes, frustration that even now his body is betraying him. It makes Ardyn smile, the fight in him.

“Shh, shhh,” he croons, gently brushing Ignis’ sweat-soaked hair from his face, cupping his cheek. He rubs his thumb over those lips, pushes it into the boy’s mouth to heal the bites on his tongue, and Ignis shudders and weeps. “You can sleep. I won’t fuck you again right now.”

He wants to, oh how he wants to, but this is a promise he will keep. He keeps his hand there, keeps gently stroking the boy’s face until he calms, until his breathing slows and he slips under. Ardyn still doesn’t dare watch him sleep, doesn’t trust himself not to immediately ravage him again the moment the boy stirs or sighs or snores.

He also doesn’t trust himself to really consider what is happening, the ramifications of this pregnancy. No, he isn’t ready to do that yet. And Ardyn has had a long time, centuries and centuries, to learn how to compartmentalize his mind and push things away for later.

Instead he settles for going through his school bag. One textbook, a few notebooks, a mystery novel he must be reading for fun, some spy thriller. A pencil bag. Cell phone, locked of course. Ardyn could break into it, but he doesn’t care to. He knows that Ignis hasn’t told anyone anything, that there will be nothing on there except inane messages to his friends. He opens his wallet. Two thousand yen. Library card. Health insurance card. School ID card. Crownguard ID. He examines each one carefully. The library card is well-used, the insurance card nondescript. He studies his school ID for a long moment. He’s smiling in it, in an awkward way as if he doesn’t know how to, his hair slicked back and his uniform impeccable. Seventh grade. The number makes the corner of his mouth twitch, but it’s the Crownguard ID that gives him pause. Because his enlistment date was barely two months ago. And his birthdate. Thirteen years to the day before he enlisted. He’d joined the second he legally could. Which means that Ignis was barely thirteen when Ardyn first laid eyes on him. He sighs softly, taps the card against his other hand and glances over at the bed. He’d known he was a kid, hadn’t been particularly concerned about it, but knowing that he was twelve two months ago, that he will give birth at thirteen, bothers him a little.

But any sympathy he had is driven away when the boy awakens.

He can’t help but perk up when he hears Ignis whimper softly and he immediately stands, heads back to the bed and sits on the edge as he watches Ignis wake up. He hadn’t slept long, only half an hour at best; he’ll likely faint again in a little while but for now, Ardyn wants to watch him come slowly into consciousness.

He wipes his face, but not before Ardyn catches a glimpse of saliva running from the corner of his mouth. Cute. He wonders if he often drools in his sleep. And Ignis groans, sighs and darts his eyes around in a room that suggests he is far more aware than he pretends. Ardyn catches it too late though, and Ignis is lunging for him, a flash of metal in his right hand and a sudden warmth on his neck, a heat and a wetness followed by a dull throb that might once have been pain two thousand years ago.

Ardyn had blocked his magic, just as he has done every time he meets the boy, but he hadn’t expected Ignis to bring a weapon with him to the meeting. Of course he knew that the Armiger didn’t work for him so well any longer, so he’d kept a blade in his clothing somewhere, a switchblade that Ardyn hadn’t noticed. He remembers suddenly how grown Ignis looked when
he’d arrived at the hotel, how serious he was sitting in that chair. *He must have been planning this all along. Waiting, hoping all the last week that I would come to see him.*

The metal had cut deep, went from beneath one ear diagonally downwards across his neck, slicing through his jugular. He’d put an impressive amount of force into it given his size, given what he’d just been through.

A killing blow, were he alive. He heals it, almost without thinking. A hand on his neck, finger running across the dark slash.

Or most of it. There’s one part he can’t heal. He tries again absently, assuming he’s distracted by the boy, then a third, a fourth time, rising panic in his veins. He can close the wound, but a scar remains. A scar over his pheromone gland. *No, no.*

“Did you mean to kill me or mark me?” he whispers softly.

But Ignis is only staring at him, the knife forgotten in his hand. He clearly saw where the blade went in, how he’d landed what should have been a killing blow, how Ardyn hadn’t even flinched, had healed it with a finger. He’s trembling, mouth hanging open and blood and slick sticking up his thighs. His shock would be cute were Ardyn not struggling with his own.

“Kill,” he finally whispers.

“Well. You didn’t. You marked me. And now we’re…” *bonded. Two thousand years and I have never been bonded with anyone. And now, somehow. This. A half-feral child in the employ of the line and the crown I hate more than anything. A pregnant thirteen-year-old who just tried to kill me. The longer we live, the more bonded we will grow, and I won’t be able to control it. His loathing of humanity can’t triumph over a bond controlled by pheromones. He’d threatened it, used the idea to terrorize the child and the king, but he’d never meant any of it. He likes his freedom. He likes having no one else to worry about. And as much as he enjoys fucking Ignis, he does not want him making things complicated.*

He lunges forward, grabs the boy by the throat and pushes him down again. “There is only one way to break a bond. I’m sure you know what I speak of.”

But Ignis surprises him with the calmness in his voice. Probably in shock. “If you kill me now you’ll kill the baby.”

“I don’t want the baby,” he snarls. But he’s *curious. Would it be a normal child? Would it have the Scourge? Would it be cursed? What sort of vicious little creature would come out of Ignis Scientia? What would it do to him?*”

“Let me…” he gasps out, “Let me have it. Then do…do what you want to me.”

*A sound deal. How brave he is, his gaze steady as he offers to trade his life for the unborn child within him that he can’t possibly care for. And I will have him as often as I please now. “You have 8 months to live, boy.”*

And he fucks him again.
Part 3, Chapter 1 - Ignis

Chapter Summary

Ignis has accidentally bonded with Ardyn, and now struggles to come to terms with it and the secrecy it demands.

Chapter Notes

I feel like I'm always apologizing for late chapters but here I am doing it again! I ended up massively revising a lot of the plot I had outlined, which resulted in me rewriting this chapter several times (the good news is that it means I have a lot of Part 3 written now). This chapter is all Ignis, starting immediately after the end of Part 2! Part 3 will cover approximately the first half of the pregnancy (weeks three to twenty or so) and will focus on trauma and secrecy. I hope everyone is still interested and as always, thank you for reading and enjoying! Always happy to chat about it!

Part 3, Chapter 1 - Ignis

Ignis stares at the ceiling. It’s an elaborate stucco pattern, probably one of the things the hotel gloats about on its website, a reason to inflate the price of a night’s stay. He wonders how much Ardyn paid, wonders if he rented out the rooms on either side as well, because if anyone heard him screaming, they certainly didn’t do anything to help. Maybe screaming during sex is normal here, but he’d been begging, asking him to stop – he’s sure of this – and still nobody came. He’s never felt so alone.

He had needed time to think. That’s what he had said. And then he had pulled, unexpectedly, a pair of handcuffs from his pocket, snapped one side open and stared at the boy. Ignis had been too exhausted to resist, to even show a flicker of fear, and so he’d been locked to the headboard. Only one hand, as if Ardyn knows how weak he is. Ardyn had healed him again, the way he had the first time, but he had done it lazily, failed to take care of everything, and so Ignis’ back still hurts from being curled into position, his thighs burn from the strain, his jaw aches from clenching and screaming, and even though Ignis is no longer bleeding from the ass, no longer in exquisite pain, he’s too worn out to fight, too worn out to even try to get under the blankets or hide his nakedness. He will take what he wants anyway.

It had been a calculated risk. It. All of this.

He’d regretted that initial text he’d send to Ardyn last week, grown only more horrified during the ensuing conversation. But when he had put his phone down, he spent the next few days coming up with a plan were Ardyn to ever contact him again. He’d suspected he would. The decision had come easily. Kill him. Lure him in, lull him into a sense of security, then strike him down. He’d have to have sex with him again. There was even a risk of Ardyn marking him. But it wouldn’t
matter in the end, because the Chancellor of Niflheim would be dead.

It had come easily, and it had brought him some solace. He’d even been able to smile and laugh again for a day or two with Noctis. *Because I thought that it would be over. I thought that he would die, that I would have my life back. And if I chose to bear the child, I could do it in peace and safety. And I could go back to my duty, back to being Noct’s adviser, his brother and mother. The Crownsguard. The Council one day. Maybe even college.*

He almost wants to laugh. Not in a single one of the worst case scenarios that he had drafted out did he accidentally mark Ardyn, bond himself to him, instead of killing him. Why hadn’t he considered that, especially as he was slitting his throat? Why hadn’t he stabbed him? Shot him? Poison him? Why this?

Because stabbing someone hard enough to kill them takes a lot more force than people realize, and they take a while to die. Because Ignis didn’t have access to firearms and even if he did, he didn’t know how to use them. Because poisons had antidotes and people had immunities, and dosages were never exact, and he could always be forced to drink it himself.

Ignis thinks about all of this, thinks hard on how things could have gone. Because he can’t think about what just happened, can’t think about how he was just raped again – twice – and all he did was accidentally bind himself to Ardyn forever. Ardyn who is apparently very difficult to kill. Ardyn who now despises him, wants him dead, and can easily make his life a pure hell until he finally kills him. He can’t think about being kidnapped, being taken to Gralea to be a sex slave. He can’t think about what had been whispered to him the first time he was raped, about being kidnapped and bred upon again and again. He can’t think about how this bond, this pregnancy, will tear him away from everyone he loves. He thinks so hard about what he can’t dwell on that he doesn’t realize Ardyn is moving until he’s bedside him.

He pulls up a dining room chair up, pulls with such strength that he lifts it off the floor before dropping it. Ignis flinches, jerked out of his daze, half sits and draws back as far as he can and pushes against the headboard, but Ardyn makes no move to touch him, or do anything at all for a good long moment.

“I’ve never been in this position before,” he finally sighs.

“Amazing. Me neither,” Ignis quips. He sounds haughty, brave, bored. He’s none of these, but for some reason he has to put on a show for the man who has seen him when he was most broken.

Ardyn ignores that. “You planned to kill me, no? When did you decide to do that?”

He could sneer at him, refuse to answer, be brave and haughty again, but Ardyn might just ignore that, too, might just steamroll over him. He should just answer. *Maybe you want him to appreciate your foresight.* He grits his teeth at the thought. “A few days after I texted you. I didn’t know if you’d ever reply but...I needed to be ready.”

He laughs softly. “Is that why you came on to me?”

He flinches at the phrase used. He hadn’t known how to act, had been afraid it was too obvious that he had been planning something. But apparently not, apparently Ardyn had been so distracted by lust that he’d missed it. *Or maybe he expected you to act that way. Maybe he just saw what he’d assumed he would see.*

“And here I thought it was merely because we were so compatible,” he sighs. “And you knew I might mark you, I presume?”
“Calculated risk,” he murmurs.

“Big risk.”

“I expected you to die.” His voice shakes.

“It would have been quite the scandal, the thirteen-year-old adviser-in-training of the Lucian King murdering the chancellor of Niflheim in bed. You’d probably have been disowned, lost your job and your standing.”

“If anyone even knew what happened.” Shaking a little less now as he clenches his fists and pushes his feet hard into the mattress. Because Ardyn is right. He’d be shamed, outcast, just as he will be if anyone finds out about this.

“You had plans to dispose the body?” He’s grinning now, leaning forward and steepling his fingers.

And Ignis finds a corner of his mouth twitching upwards. Ardyn seems pleased with him, impressed, and it delights Ignis more than he wants it to. “Yes,” he bites his lip then and looks away. He hadn’t really, though he’d considered options. He knew more than one Galahadian who would jump at the chance to help him hide the body, cover the crime up. And he suddenly wants to tell Ardyn this, wants the older man to praise him, call him brilliant and clever, touch his face and kiss him and see him as his equal and- “Though I didn’t know what hotel you’d want me at, so I had to come up with a few alternatives.”

But he’s trying too hard and Ardyn catches the hole, tears it open with a grin. “Why did you assume a hotel? Perhaps I’d just have come and kidnapped you. Wouldn’t that have been more likely?”

“I’d have fought then, would have slit your throat right away. It just would have been messier and I wouldn’t have been able to get rid of your body.”

“Enough of that,” and he suddenly leans over. Ignis shrinks back, his mouth suddenly dry and fear roiling through his veins. He’s still naked from the waist down. Ardyn won’t even have to work to take him again and his breath catches in his throat. He hadn’t even had time to be scared the second time it happened today but it’s rushing back now, retroactive fear mixed with the terror of what’s about to happen again. “Please,” he gasps, voice coming out as a squeak.

But Ardyn doesn’t. He only unlocks the handcuffs, squeezes his wrists until Ignis squirms, and whispers, “Who have you told?”

“No one. No one.” Who could I tell? Nobody even knows I was...

“Keep it that way.”

“I… I can’t imagine telling anyone. I can’t admit that I was raped, that you assaulted me and I’m pregnant. Because I went to you, I made that mistake, and now I made another we’re bonded and it’s bad enough that I’m an omega but…”

But if Ardyn notices the way his breathing is picking up, the nervousness, he doesn’t comment. “If you tell anyone, let anyone know, I will kill Noctis. If you get an abortion, I will kill Noctis. If youmiscarry…you get the picture. I need time to make some arrangements.”

Arrangements. He wonders if he means marriage and the thought makes him want to vomit, makes bile rise in the back of his throat but he swallows hard, forces it back down because Ardyn is still...
leaning over him and he’s terrified of what the man would do to him if he...

But then the man is finally leaning back, sitting in the chair again and sighing loudly. “Now. You can ask me now, whatever you want. It’s only fair. You’re my mate now.”

The whiplash again. Ardyn is all over the place and the unpredictability scares him. The worst part is that he doesn’t think it’s on purpose. He’s genuinely unhinged, enraged at being marked, at the pregnancy, at me. He wets his lips before speaking, struggling to find the saliva as the word rings in his ears. Mate. They are mated now, bound forever. “Why didn’t you die?”

“I’m immortal.”

“Right.”

He groans, rubs his forehead and kneads the bridge of his nose with his thumb, and suddenly Ignis sees how worn out he looks, how confused and stressed he is beneath the anger, and he wants to touch him, comfort him. No. No. It’s your hormones. He chews his lip again as Ardyn continues. “Believe what you will. I’m not telling you the truth right now. Someday, perhaps. Ask something else.”

Are you going to leave me alone now? Are you going to make me marry you? Are you going to hurt me again? But he can’t ask those things. He has to be brave, not for himself but for the king. He’d forgotten about the king for a few minutes there, about his promise, until Ardyn reminded him. He’d never forgotten him before. “Why were you really in Insomnia? Last time.”

A shrug. “I check in every now and then, see what’s happening in the citadel. You can learn quite a bit, just listening.”

“And you get the correct diplomacy paperwork? Who signs them?” He doesn’t actually know how that worked and he should have known, should have researched it back then, immediately after. His brain hasn’t worked properly recently.

“These are not the sort of questions I expected.” A faint twitch of a smile again. He’s amused and Ignis is relieved. “Though maybe I should have, from a chess player.”

He glances down to hide the smile he knows is idiotic, the relief and pleasure he is ashamed of feeling because Ardyn is impressed with him. He glances down and sees blood on his thighs. “Can I take a shower?”

He touches his shoulder then, softly. “Of course. Do you need anything right now?”

His mouth is dry and raw and he has to lick his lips twice to find the strength to ask him for help, to plead to the man who did this to him, because he is also the only one who can help him now.

“I need drugs to hide…” He gestures towards his neck, his belly. There are drugs out there that mask pregnancies. Common, easy to access, especially as most people like to keep their pregnancies private until they are past the likelihood of a miscarriage. The ones that can mask a bond are more complicated. Certainly not illegal, but difficult to get; there aren’t many situations where such a drug is necessary, at least not ones that the authorities smile upon.

Ardyn groans softly. “I’ll get them. You’ll have to wait here an hour or two while I make some calls.”

Ignis nods once.
He’ll wait. He’ll stay here. And he’ll look at the stucco pattern on the ceiling, because Ardyn is the only one who can help him now. He’s already learned tonight that nobody else will come, that nobody else cares.
Chapter 3|2 - Crowe, Ignis

Chapter Summary

Ignis, feeling as if he no longer belongs, quits the Crownguard, while Ardyn circles ever closer.

Chapter Notes

Dare I apologize again for the delay? Part 3 has been a very very messy bit of work, and I've continued to make some major changes (mainly in HOW I tell the story now, as opposed to WHAT I tell), so it's been coming along slower than I would like. In this chapter, I start to bring in more characters with Crowe! And back to Ignis, who will have a part in most of the chapters in Part 3. This chapter takes place 5-7 days after the first chapter in Part 3.

Part 3, Chapter 2 - Crowe

“Titus wants us to help with a new recruit.” Nyx says it the way he always says it when the captain isn’t around. Tit-us, because apparently titty jokes are still funny for 23-year-old men.

Crowe hopes one day Drautos will overhear it and punch Nyx into the wall. She sighs. “New recruit? From where?”

“Get this, Crownguard. He’s an Insomnian, born and bred,” Luche cuts in then.

“Why would he want to join the Glaives then?” because while she loves the Glaives, would rather die than be anywhere else, she knows well that the Crownguard is superior in both military rank and social prestige. It’s not filled with immigrants and refugees, which helps.

“He just found out he’s an omega. Apparently figures he’ll be more accepted here.” Nyx again.

“So he’s a kid?” At sixteen, she’s one of the youngest in the Glaives. Hard to believe anyone much younger than her could join.

“Thirteen. Apparently pretty good with polearms and blades though, and excellent with magic, according to the Marshal.”

The Crownguard might not have much respect for the Glaives and vice versa, but everyone adores Cor. It’s difficult not to. The man is so viciously honest that everyone in Insomnia equally hates and loves him, and he’s too clueless to notice.

“Thirteen is too young. For both an omega awakening and for us,” she snaps it out faster than she probably should, knowing full well it’s not true. The recruitment age is technically the same as
Crownsguard. Thirteen. Far too young, but in Insomnia, one can join the military and get married before they can drive or see a dirty movie. Makes sense, of course. Everything in Insomnia makes perfect sense.

“Kid got bad luck, being a boy omega and then getting hit like that when he’s barely thirteen,” Luche again. There’s something a little aggressive in his voice that Crowe doesn’t like, as if he’s mocking him or something.

The catch is, she agrees. Ignis does have bad luck, and she pities him, but that doesn’t mean she needs to get involved. Their captain might take in strays, but it’s hard enough taking care of herself. “I’m not watching him,” she says then.

But she ends up being the one to offer him the initial interview. You’re one of the best magic users we have. It was hard to argue with that point.

And so she is the one to interview Ignis Scientia, to show him around the training center. He won’t stay in the barracks that many new recruits live in, not at his age. And not at his social class, not when he apparently has an apartment already. One connected to the Citadel for himself and the young prince.

He’s small for his age, and that brings out a momentary snap of pity in her. Because if he’s an omega and he already manifested, there is a chance that he might not grow much more. Male omegas are usually petite, after all, though there is something in the awkward length of his legs that suggests he might get lucky. He’s cute, too, which might be a good thing, might be a bad thing, for an omega. Bright green eyes and a pretty mouth, still trying to outrun the baby fat of his cheeks.

“We heard you’re good with polearms and shortswords, right?”

A nod. Only a nod. She’d heard that Ignis was a little arrogant, and his calmness is offputting.

“And magic?”

“I can’t use magic anymore,” he says bluntly, arrogance clearly far from his mind. “Not allowed.”

Can’t use magic… The thought is alarming, but perhaps he only means he was told not to. “Who told you that?”

He doesn’t answer, only fidgets a moment. “I’ve tried many times since I…manifested. I can’t.”

Impossible. She knows other omegas who can still use magic. Granted, they are women, but that shouldn’t matter. “Show me,” she says softly. “Try to summon your favorite weapon right now.”

He hesitates a moment, clenches his fist and flexes his fingers before sighing. “My shortswords. They always used to come the fastest,” he murmurs, his voice soft and low, and for a moment she can hear the man he will one day become.

She snaps her hands out, grabs his wrists as he flexes his fingers again, and her mouth drops open at what she sense. Because his access to the armiger is clearly being blocked, his magic suppressed by an outside force. That in itself would be enough to startle her – only a member of the royal family could grant or suppress one’s magic, as far as anyone knew – but there is something else, something even
stranger, about Ignis Scientia. She releases him then, studies his face. Whatever is happening there, that isn’t what he needs help with right now.

“Ignis,” she sighs. This started when he manifested, so he claimed. “Can you tell me how you discovered you were an omega?”

He steps back and she sees the fear in his eyes, and even if he says nothing, she knows what happened, and she knows that being cute most definitely was *not* a good thing for Ignis Scientia. Someone hurt him, forced him to manifest at a young age. And somehow managed to block his magic at the same time. “Nobody told you guys? I… I thought it was. Citadel gossip or something.”

*People gossip about anything and everything but the abuse of children, the one thing everyone is careful to stay silent on.* She doesn’t say that though, and in a rush says whatever comes to mind. “It’s no big deal,” she regrets it before the words are even out of her mouth. “Not. I mean you don’t have to tell me. We’ll work with this.”

“You’ll work with the fact that I can’t access the armiger.” There is suspicion in his voice. “You just saw that I can’t.”

“You just saw that I can’t.”

She waves a hand, dismissing it. He obviously doesn’t realize that his magic is being blocked, probably by the same person who hurt him, and though she wants him to relax, she isn’t sure if she should tell him just yet. Better to speak to Titus about it. He’d know how to approach the issue, because if someone in Insomnia has the ability to prevent others from using the king’s magic… It’s possible a matter of national security. *Who did this to you?* She wants to ask, but she remembers the flash of fear in Ignis’ eyes and knows he would never say.

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**Part 3, Chapter 2 - Ignis**

He feels just as much as he sees the car out of the corner of his eyes, big and sleek and black with tinted windows. He’d stayed after school an extra thirty minutes, spoken to one of his teachers about finals and ducked into the school library to pick up a few things, and so he hadn’t left at the regular time. Which means the car can’t be who he thinks it is, because he would have left before now.

He keeps walking, tries to ignore it. *It’s not him, it’s not him. Just a coincidence. It’s nothing to do with me. There are plenty of reasons why what’s clearly a government rental car would be idling outside of the school the prince attends.* But the car keeps rolling softly alongside him and he feels the hairs on the back of his neck rise. He can *smell* him.

He still doesn’t look at the car, but he stops walking, ducks his head and fights back tears. He knows he’s going to go to him. Ardyn is his *mate* now, bound to him forever in ways he can’t control. As much as he despises and fears him, his body longs for him. And if he disobeys, this man might kill Noctis, might kill him, might raise hell in Insomnia.

He hears the buzz of a car window being let down.

“Get in.”

He obeys.
He obeys and he hates himself for obeying but he doesn’t know what else to do because he’s so afraid and Ardyn is the only one who knows why. It makes sense somehow, in a horrible way. He opens the door a little too hard and slides into the backseat beside Ardyn. The driver, the same one as before as if Ardyn drags him all over Eos with him, ignores him, as he always does, as if he’s used to this sort of thing. Ignis wonders if he really doesn’t care, or if Ardyn threatens him to keep quiet.

He wants to look at him, wants to meet his eyes and demand to know what he wants from him, ask if there isn’t anything more important he should be doing in Gralea, but he’s finding that he can’t even make eye contact with him. He pulls his seatbelt on instead, the strap momentarily brushing against the swollen gland on the side of his neck. The medication Ardyn had found had worked well this last week. Nobody seemed to notice he was pregnant, that he was bonded, though whatever illusion had been cast over the skin of his neck had certainly helped. The words had gone unspoken then, but Ignis had felt them seep into his veins just as surely as if they had. See? You need me. I alone can do this for you. I alone can help you.

The thought makes him remember that he’d only been given ten days of medication. How foolish you were, to think he’d really leave you alone. Just as you were foolish to ever go to him. You deserve everything he does to you. He must have made a sound, because the man beside him speaks then.

“Either I fuck you right here, right now, and let you go back to whatever you were doing reeking of sex, or I take you back to a hotel for an hour.” He says it calmly, bluntly, with no fanfare, no pretense.

He opens his mouth to reply, then snaps it shut without saying a word, worrying his lower lip as he feels his cheeks burn in shame. He knows Ardyn isn’t bluffing, knows he’d do it, fuck him right here in the back seat of the car while they’re still on school grounds, then kick him out the door and leave him to invent excuses. But an hour. An hour with him. A lot of pain can happen in one hour. The other times Ardyn touched him, it felt an eternity, but he knows, knows that each time it was only ever ten minutes or so, and he knows that Ardyn can go multiple times in a row. He feels his heart in his throat, feels his breathing start to quicken at the thought of that happening three or four times in a row. Two was bad enough. No. One was bad enough.

And there’s a hand on his thigh and he’s suddenly drawing in a ragged gasp of terror, jerking back hard against his seat, against the car door, because Ardyn is going to hurt him again and he’s going to rape him again and he’s…

He can’t do this now. Put it off, put it off, let my body be my own for another fifteen minutes please – “Hotel,” he gasps out, only to slap a hand over his mouth and bite his tongue bloody.

And Ardyn lets go. “Hotel it is then.”

No, no no that’s not what I wanted. I can’t survive a whole hour. But he can’t speak. He’s discovering that Ardyn renders him mute, so he shrinks back against the car door and stares numbly out the window. He has a lot of homework. There’s a history presentation tomorrow, never mind finals coming up next week... He’s been more tired this last month, and he isn’t sure if it’s because the nightmares prevent him from sleeping or if it’s because of that thing inside of him, but whatever the reason, school has suddenly become a lot harder. And it’s only going to get harder now if Ardyn is going to start grabbing him at random moments.

And then, as if Ardyn can read his mind, he asks, “How was school?”

“What do you care?” A vicious snap, unexpected even for him given that he could barely speak a
moment ago. How dare you ask about school when you’re taking away from my time with it?

“How dare you ask about school when you’re taking away from my time with it?”

“Astrals,” Ardyn breathes, but there is no anger in his voice. Amusement, if anything. “You start eighth grade soon, right?”

He doesn’t remember ever telling Ardyn what grade he was in. *Three weeks*. One week of finals, two weeks of spring vacation, then he can try to pretend everything is normal in eighth grade. Even though assuming all goes well, he’ll be having a baby in January. *Having a baby*. He says nothing.

It’s strangely satisfying, vindicating, to be mute of his own choosing.

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Chapter 3|3 - Noctis, Ignis

Chapter Notes

Next chapter! Continuing the Part 3 theme of trauma and coping, so once again, Ignis has a section in this chapter (as he will with all chapters in Part 3, which I have a significant percentage of written already). This chapter also features Noctis, who is starting to get a little suspicious of Ignis' weird behavior.

Part 3, Chapter 3 - Noctis

“Where are you going?”

Noctis winces when he hears the words behind him. He should have known Ignis would catch him. He always does, even when it seems like he’s too busy to pay attention.

“Arcade,” and he pauses, cocks his head and stares at the boy who might as well be his mother. “Wanna come?”

“We’re in the middle of finals,” he snaps.

“I’m in elementary school. We don’t have finals. And you studied all weekend.” Because he was up all night all weekend, sitting amidst stacks of books and papers. Noctis is afraid that junior high school will really be that bad, but he figures it’s probably just Ignis working too hard, as always. He doesn’t even have to take the high school entrance exam until 9th grade, but he wants to take it in 8th. Maybe to skip a grade, maybe to just allow himself two chances to get into his school of choice. Noct’s always been unclear on it and he doesn’t want to ask because he doesn’t want a lecture.

Ignis hesitates, taps his pen against the table and looks at the corner of the room, the way he’s been doing lately, like the corner of the room is infinitely more interesting than anything else. He even stares at it when watching TV.

“Come on. You always win that UFO catcher.”

True. He never needs more than ten tries to get the most expensive, most difficult-to-win toys. It can be a little infuriating, seeing him win so easily, seeing the other kids gather round to watch. But mostly, Noctis is just amused by it. Seeing Ignis get excited about something besides school is so rare, especially now. He doesn’t even get excited about school now. He’s been a mess lately. Decidedly less fun, more mellow, distant. Which pisses Gladio off and just puts everyone on edge.

And so it’s a surprise when Ignis suddenly nods, absently. “Let me get ready.”

Getting ready involves going to the bathroom, where he spends a lot of time, as he’s been doing recently. Probably getting sick, stressed about finals. He’s like that. And packing a bag, because bringing books to the arcade is a good idea. At least he’d already changed out of his school uniform. He’s always been weird about that, refusing to ever wear it outside of school. Might give the school a bad image or something, as if the smartest and most perfect student could ever have a bad image. Even if he is an omega now.
Which reminds Noctis. He isn’t sure if Ignis was registered with the school as an omega yet. All omegas are supposed to, or their parents are supposed to. Known fact. For their safety or something. Noctis never paid much attention, figuring it would never affect him.

But Ignis spending fifteen minutes getting ready will affect him. “Hurry up though!”

A flicker of a smile. Another absent perk of the corner of his mouth which is so rare these days. “Two minutes. Promise.”

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He was only two minutes, a fact that shocks and pleases Noctis the whole way to the arcade.

What pleases him even more is Ignis’ behavior at the arcade.

UFO catchers first, as Noctis had begged. He’s always so precise, creeping around the machine to study it at all angles, aiming not to grab the items with the claw but instead push them into the position he wants them in. And within ten minutes of arriving, Noctis has a new phone case.

“The prizes in these are always lower quality; be careful with it,” Ignis warns, but there is a gleam in his eye and Noct knows that he’s pleased with himself.

“Don’t mom me,” he smirks, already ripping the package open. It’s decorated with characters from his favorite video game. Of course Ignis would get the best one.

And Ignis freezes at that.

Oh yea. He can be a mom now. The recognition is alarming, confusing, but at the same time, fitting. He’s always acted like one, after all. “Sorry,” he says quickly.

“It’s okay. Not used to you apologizing,” Ignis replies, just as quickly, and then he’s walking towards the change machine as if nothing had happened.

Ignis has a lot of money with him, cramming three 1000-yen bills into the change machine and generously offering half to Noctis. The younger boy can’t remember a time when Ignis has spent so much. He’s being irresponsible, not like a mother at all. Like he was when he snuck off with an older man to sort-of-have-sex, and Noctis wonders if he did it again, if that’s why he’s acting like this.

It clicks. “Did that guy give you money?”

Ignis doesn’t look at him, only pushes three coins into a machine for some racing game – he loves racing games, driving games – presses fingers to the controls. “Uh huh…” and then, “You won’t tell your father, will you?”

Noctis doesn’t think it will matter if the king knows or not, because lately Ignis has been able to do all kinds of strange things and everyone lets it slide. “I don’t talk to him anyway.”

Now he glances at him, eyes cold and narrow beneath his glasses. It wasn’t the answer that Ignis wanted, obviously. “I mean it.”

“I won’t!”

There’s no question between them. The king isn’t there for him. Ignis is. Usually, anyway.

Like he’s only usually in school now, only usually where he’s supposed to be.
Ignis hasn’t just skipped a lot of Crownsguard meetings. He’s quit entirely. Gone. Jumped off to the Kingsglaives, even though everyone told him they’re inferior. Noctis doesn’t really get how it’s inferior – they fight just as good as the Crownsguard, but they’re mostly immigrants and betas, a few omegas too. Like Ignis now. It’s hard to think of him as an omega, as something different than him. He’d figured he was a beta, and betas are different, but not as much as omegas. Regardless, that’s probably why he joined the Glaives. Noct’s father hadn’t seemed very pleased about the development, but he didn’t order Ignis not to.

It seems like being an omega means being able to do whatever someone wants, sometimes.

And this frustrates him, because not only is he an alpha but he’s the prince, and he can never escape his life or his duties. It makes him jealous, and so he pushes the older boy out of the way, elbows him in the stomach then and suddenly Ignis is jerking back, shoving him, jostling his shoulder as he slips away, pretends it’s nothing, and for one split second Noctis wonders. Then he’s distracted by the noises, the lights of the game, and he forgets what had startled him.

Part 3, Chapter 3 - Ignis

“Car this time,” he says immediately, swallowing hard and trying to keep the trembling from his voice. He’d expected the car every day since that day when he’d shown up outside the school, certain that Ardyn can’t spend all his time in Insomnia when he has such an important position in Gralea, but uncertain enough to fear that he might show up every couple of days.

He’s almost relieved that he’s here now, on the last day of finals, the last day before vacation, because now he doesn’t have to keep expecting him.

Almost.

“And here I thought we had such a lovely time at the hotel,” the man all but leers at him.

Lovely. He remembers standing by the front desk as if on display while Ardyn casually rented the room, slipping into the elevator with him and pressing against the wall, aware that so many people saw them together but didn’t care. It should be obvious, shouldn’t it? What’s happening? But apparently not. Ardyn had been on him the moment the door to the hotel room had closed, flinging him onto the bed and pouncing on him, sinking teeth into his neck and claws into his body, dragging his tongue down his torso as he all but ripped his clothing off of him, roughly sucking his dick and shoving fingers deep inside of him while he howled in pain and shock and his body leaked slick, his nipples hardened, his balls tightened. Ardyn had fucked him three times that hour, slapped him and pinched him every time he started to black out, and calmly threatened him whenever Ignis managed to muster the least bit of resistance. A hand on his belly, pressing down just enough, reminding him that he was his and the baby was the only thing keeping Ignis alive.

Or the prospect of a baby. Ignis had researched it. He knows that the chances of carrying it to term, of the baby being alive, much less healthy, are very unlikely at his age. Funny, how only a couple of weeks ago he’d silently prayed for a miscarriage. He reflexively touches his stomach now, which causes Ardyn to flick a glance in his direction.

“We’re going to a hotel today though.”

What? He can’t process this. He’s too busy trying to ignore how attractive Ardyn smells to find words.
“I have something for you and it’s…. Hm. I want to see it on you properly and I can’t do that in a car.”

His stomach turns, intestines twisting up and heart stuttering. *See it on you. It’s some sick sexual thing, some kind of sex slave outfit.* Ignis has never watched porn, never looked at dirty mags or even hentai manga the way other boys his age have, but he’s seen enough by accident to have an idea of what Ardyn might be talking about.

*I’m thirteen,* he wants to tell him again. But he’s not anymore, not really. He’s had sex six times now and he’s pregnant. He’s not a kid anymore, not a victim, just a stupid person who made too many mistakes. So he turns away from him, presses his forehead against the window and closes his eyes, willing the tears in his eyes away for a little longer.

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“You seemed upset last time about wearing padding. I don’t believe these can be found in Insomnia, for whatever reason. I bought a few pairs of these for you.” He holds a pile of folded cloth towards Ignis. Black and white but also purple, as if he knew Ignis’ favorite color.

He doesn’t move to take them, unsure of what exactly they are, of what he’d find if he unfolded them.

“They’re for male omegas,” he sighs then, shaking a purple cloth out.

And Ignis breathes out. Underwear. They just look like normal underwear. Nothing sexy, nothing dirty. But he still doesn’t move. The thought of Ardyn buying him things like this makes him nervous. He doesn’t want clothing that Ardyn touched rubbing against him all the time, even if the man does smell good, a gentle but relentless tug on his insides.

“Take off your pants. I want to see if they fit.”

“I…” *I don’t want them. I don’t want them. I want to go home.* But it’s hard to resist that voice. *It's just because you’re bonded to him. You can fight it. You can refuse him.* But it’s too difficult and he’s scared, scared, scared. So he stares at the floor as he unbuckles his school-uniform-issue belt, unzips his fly and pulls his pants down. And his briefs, hurriedly, nervously, wanting to get them off before Ardyn can demand it. Kick his shoes off and then the pants. He’s grateful that his shirt is long enough that it just covers his genitals, the curve of his ass.

Until Ardyn crouches down before him, face level with his groin as he lazily flicks a hand out, lifts the shirt with one finger. Because he feels his body reacting to the closeness of his mate, his dick stiffening ever so slightly even as his mind is screaming. And Ardyn notices, glances up at his face and smiles lazily. “Lift a foot,” he murmurs, not breaking his gaze as he holds the briefs out, leg hole open.

Ignis obeys. He obeys and he obeys and he doesn’t realize he’s holding his breath until the waistband snaps into place and he suddenly lets it out in a sigh. The words that come out are composed, unexpected, so random he is startled. “They’re girls underwear.”

“Ardyn tugs at the front of the briefs then, slips his fingers through the vertical fly and pulls his not-quite-flaccid cock out. Ignis flinches, digs his nails into the palms of his hands and stares hard at the wall. His eyes are watering and he doesn’t want to cry, not yet. He knows he will have to soon enough.
This is somehow more degrading even than the rape he knows is coming, having even the most basic bodily functions taken from him. And it will only get worse because of the thing growing inside of him. It will change the way he thinks, the way he walks, the way he relieves himself, even the way he breathes. This thing that is half of Ardyn.

Except. They are comfortable. Soft and padded and well-fitted, subtle enough that nobody else would notice they are for omegas, for secreting slick. And as Ardyn smirks again and gently pushes his dick back inside, he knows that he will keep them and wear them. Store them in his nest with the scarf he hasn’t been able to throw out. But he won’t thank him.

As if Ardyn knows, he sighs and stands then. “You’re a hard one to please. Oh yes, you might want these as well.” He pulls a folded paper bag out of his pocket, spills the foil packets into his hand and hands two to Ignis.

He accepts them, again without thanking him. One packet for the pregnancy scent suppressant, one to mask the bond. He knows now that each packet holds ten days of medication. Nothing more. So when he points to the third packet and asks, “What are those?” he knows already.

“Same thing but for Alphas.”

Of course, of course he’d mask it himself. Can’t let anyone know he assaulted a thirteen-year-old Lucian. “Huh,” he breathes out.

“I’m sorry,” Ardyn snaps, his voice sarcastic as he made it clear that if he was sorry for anyone, it was for himself. “Did you expect anything else?”

Ardyn seems irritated with him all of a sudden, bored and exasperated and this makes Ignis’ gut twist in fear.

Don’t. Don’t be angry with me. He knows it’s irrational, stupid to want Ardyn to like him, be happy with him, but this man is the only person who knows what he’s going through. This man raped him, got him into this mess, but he’s helping him now and that’s more than anyone else can do. He should thank him, grovel before him, but he can’t bring himself to do it. For once, the part of him that is Ignis is stronger than the part of him that is omega and for once, he wishes that weren’t so because he’s so afraid. “I’m trying,” the words are a half whisper, his voice cracking, shaking.

And Ardyn hesitates at that before he sighs, drops a hand to his head and strokes his hair. “I know. Now get on the bed.”
Chapter Notes

Wrote this one almost immediately after the last one but waited a bit to post so I could get ahead. I've been on a roll and have a pretty clear layout of the rest of the fic now, so hopefully things can come along more quickly now. Luna and Ignis here! Thank you all for being patient and reading <3

Part 3, Chapter 4 - Luna

She doesn’t want to talk to him, but she must. She’s suspected it for weeks now, that the Chancellor Izunia was interfering with her mail. Because it was unlike Noctis to ignore her, and as the last three letters she had sent were urgent, pertaining to the safety of Ignis Scientia… Something was clearly amiss.

Instead of sending a fourth letter to Noctis, she sent one to the Niflheim Chancellor, requesting an audience next time he happened to be in Tenebrae. Next time happened almost immediately, as she expected it to. The man tries to pretend that he goes wherever his whims may take him, but he’s always been quick to come running if he anticipates a disaster. Not necessarily a disaster for him; he merely likes to witness.

So when he responds, saying he will be at the manor in a day’s time, at two in the afternoon, she is waiting for him.

“You look lovely today,” he purrs, voice low and dangerous, eyes lazy and half-closed. “Becoming in white, as usual. Do you ever wear anything else?”

There’s something in the way he looks at her that suggests he’s really asking a very different question, like perhaps what she’s wearing beneath her dress, so she ignores him. He can’t seem to meet her without flirting, a fact she might have enjoyed had she not the relationship she had with the Empire, had she not known how cruel and vicious he could be. Because he is attractive, a powerful Alpha fortunate enough to have looks as well as political clout, a rare combination.

His magic was subtle but persistent, relentless. He lazily tugged on everyone, Alpha, beta, and omega alike, putting everyone either ill at ease or too at ease depending on his mood. Those who spent more time with him barely noticed anymore, which only made them easier for him to control. But Luna will never fall for it, never allow herself to be lulled into a sense of security around him.

“You’ve been blocking my letters to the prince.”

“Of course. I don’t care to have you spreading gossip about yours truly.”

“You read everything I send out then, even on Umbra and Pyrna?”

“Evidently,” and then he pauses, cocks his head. “But how did you know that the Scientia boy was an omega, as you tried to tell darling Noctis last month?”
She purses her lips. Telling him wouldn’t bring harm to Prompto; she knows he has better things to do and if anything, he might find it amusing, but she doesn’t want the boy on the Chancellor’s radar. She had written back to him, of course, only to receive another letter from him almost immediately. Ravus didn’t know that she saved them, kept his address in the hopes that next time she visits Insomnia, she can finally meet this boy, perhaps persuade him to approach and befriend Noctis. So she only shrugs.

“You even mentioned in the letter that he was with me, which suggests…that a photo exists.”

“You might read everything I send out, but you’re apparently too stupid to read everything coming in,” she smiles at him now, knowing full well that he can’t stand being called an idiot. For someone who puts on airs of caring about nothing, he gets disgruntled easily. “I received word that Ignis was in trouble.”

“Delectable, that one.” He licks his lips, cocks his head and grins lazily in that obscene way of his.

She feels as if her skin is crawling; this man is beyond vile, unsettling in every way, and to think little Ignis Scientia, always acting so mature despite being so young, might have fallen into his claws. She doesn’t have to ask if he touched him, ravaged him; she can see the answer clear in his eyes, so instead she pushes further. “Did you bond with him?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know?” Another grin showing too many teeth. “But alas, I can not father children. I’m only courting him. We are so compatible, and it’s been a long time since I have enjoyed such a compatibility.”

Courting. She’s fairly certain that word suggests a consensual relationship, a proper relationship. He’d calmly threatened her once, leaned over and whispered in her ear that a matrimony between them would be most advantageous for the integrity of Tenebrae, and could pave the way for peace resolutions that would allow the territory to properly regain statehood, and she ought to think long and hard about that. He’d said it all without touching her, but it had been enough to leave her shuddering in revulsion. She suspects that little Ignis was not granted that luxury.

“Oh, don’t give me that look,” he says softly, leaning in now, moving too fast for her to catch as he crooks a finger and hovers just beneath her chin, daring to touch her. “He came to me, and he’s agreed to all of this. He even asks for things, even begs sometimes.”

She pales because she knows it’s possible, likely even, if he is an omega, and if he really is as compatible with Ardyn’s genetic markings as is being suggested. At thirteen he won’t have much resistance. And he surely uses that against the boy, guilts him, terrorizes him and makes him loathe himself. Ignis had always seemed rather high-strung, perhaps even more so than her brother, liable to snap at some point. This isn’t a good combination. And she decides then that she doesn’t want to say another word about Ignis. She doesn’t want to encourage him, so she raises a hand, bats his hand away slowly but firmly.

“You have no jurisdiction over my correspondence.”

He raises an eyebrow. “I don’t? Silly me. I must have forgotten.”

“I’ll report this to the Emperor if I must. I imagine he might have second thoughts about giving you such free reign if he knew you spent your time raping children in Insomnia.” She forgets sometimes, that sense of power that unfurls through her veins whenever she stands up to this man, when she speaks like the princess that people believe her to be.

And Ardyn listens. He drops his hand then, steps back and narrows his eyes a moment before
shrugging. “Write what you wish. You have a fair point, *except*, legally, I can stop you if you were to spread slander about myself and my *bonded mate*.”

*Bonded mate.* When he had just said that he couldn’t do such a thing. “You…”

Another shrug, and he touches his hat as he bows mockingly.

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**Part 3, Chapter 4 - Ignis**

It’s the fourth day of eighth grade; nothing is so very different at school. Gladio, at only a year above him, is still at the junior high school with him, while Noct is still in elementary. Everyone is still where they were, but Ignis is not the same person any longer. Not only because he is an omega, as everyone now knows and seems to be adjusting to, but because of what *he* knows, what he knows and can never speak of.

He’s pushing his school lunch around aimlessly on the tray, only half-listening to the kids around him. Food has been difficult to keep down lately, and certain smells utterly nauseate him. Things he used to love no longer appeal to him, though strangely, he can still eat cake. Because of the pregnancy. It does strange things. He’s read about it, browsed forums filled with women in their thirties lamenting their stretch marks.

But nobody notices. Gladio had only lazily mentioned the other day that Ignis didn’t like the school food because he cooked himself to another kid. A reasonable explanation, though Ignis couldn’t help but hold it against him. *You noticed, but you couldn’t be bothered to ask me why?* The thought makes him scowl and he jabs his spork into the tinfoil-wrapped baked potato.

He can hear Gladio now, chatting with the kid beside Ignis about their holidays. Ignis is surrounded by boys his age, all of whom he now is pretty certain are betas except for his friend. If he can tell this now, why didn’t any other omega warn him that he was one of them? It seems unfair. Hormonal imbalances or not, he can’t understand how he got so far without knowing, and he feels nothing but a vague hostility towards everyone around him right now for having simpler lives.

“How you went to the new theme park over on the coast, yea?”

Ignis blinks, remembers. “Yes, I took Prince Noctis. The mukade ride was especially fun.” Of course it was; it was the only ride he was able to go on, nausea and anxiety overtaking him before he could attempt another. Ardyn had ignored him all vacation, which should have been a relief, but it left him terrified, disoriented, afraid that he’d pop up every second, and perhaps even more afraid that the man had decided he was sick of him and would instead appear to kill Noctis. Not that it matters now. He’d come to him twice in the last three days.

Gladio groans aloud at that. “I can’t believe you guys didn’t take me.”

“You were busy with the Crownsguar,” he shrugs, decides to go ahead and eat the cake now that others are staring at him.

“Or busy with Stella…” the first boy snorts now.

Ignis ignores this, continues eating. It’s sweet potato flavor, a strange choice for the spring, and he wonders how long it sat in the school freezer. Gladio’s new girlfriend doesn’t bother him, not
really. He’d seen the older boy go through a dozen last year alone, and while it hurt him a little, in a way he didn’t quite and still doesn’t really understand, he hadn’t been bothered. This time, it’s the way the other kid said it, like Gladio was somehow superior for dating, for probably getting laid even though he was too young to be doing so and really, nobody at the table knew shit about anything, they were just stupid boys barely into their teens who liked to brag about how many times they jerked off to titty mags. He stabs at the now empty cake tray so violently that Gladio leans back in his seat, startled, before pushing his own over to Ignis.

“I dare you tomorrow to just tell them at the register that you only want cake.”

“The cake comes frozen. They can’t screw it up the way they can everything else.” He’s being a bitch but he knows nobody will comment on it. He’s always been a little uptight, and now apparently as an omega he’s entitled to the same amount of hostility that teenage girls are allowed. Convenient. It’d be more convenient if Gladio started… No. Things are bad enough without dwelling on that.

As if the boys around him knew what he was thinking, they’re all talking about it now. Sex.

He wishes they would stop talking about it. They know nothing. Sex is nothing good, nothing fun. Nothing but pain. A fury of sweaty limbs and snarls in his ear and agony tearing up his spine and his body betraying him. It didn’t get easier. It didn’t hurt less. Orgasms are no good either. He knows a lot about sex now, more than any thirteen-year-old should ever know. Ardyn had made him suck his cock last night, forced him to his knees in front of him as he sat, naked, and spread his legs. He’d sobbed around him, gagged, choked, but he had held his head there, had pushed into his mouth again and again. And it had aroused him, excited him, the smell of his mate’s sweat, his sex, the roughness with which Ardyn touched him, ever reminding him of his power over him.

But what had come later had been worse, far worse. Because Ardyn had lifted him off the floor, dragged him upright even as he considered going limp and gently pulled him towards the bathroom. And there he had offered him a toothbrush, told him he could clean up if he wanted to. He’d been afraid to at first, unsure of what was happening, what was wanted of him. But in the end, he had brushed his teeth, done what he was told, and then Ardyn had led him into the other room and offered to play chess with him or watch a movie, and somehow Ignis had found himself sitting in the man’s lap in a distinctly non-sexual setting.

He holds his hands in his, rubs thumbs along the swollen glands on the insides of his wrists until they hurt and Ignis feels feverish, trembling and unsettled.

Fingers now on his throat, gentle at first, brushing against skin until his hair is standing on end, and then roughly, firmly massaging his glands, rubbing over the scar that Ardyn alone knows exists beneath the illusion he’d cast. And he rubs them, keeps doing so as the discomfort intensifies, bubbles through his veins until it suddenly breaks and he audibly gasps in relief, a new sensation now uncurling inside of him. One of comfort, the way one feels curling up beneath blankets on the first winter night, but so extreme it’s nearly sexual and he sighs. You like that, hm? You are my mate now, after all. You have glands here, too, no? Hands now on his thighs, fingers sliding inwards to rub where his thighs meet his groin, lower and lower as he presses gently to feel out the swollen glands through his pants. They’re low, lower than Ignis had realized when he’d looked at anatomy drawings in his textbook, low enough that if Ardyn slides his fingers too much…

You should have worn your new underwear. I can feel how wet you’re getting even through your pants, he murmurs. And Ignis arches against him, squirms and gasps in his arms. He feels it rising again, that discomfort, the feverish bubble inside of him that he now knows Ardyn alone can break.
so that he can breathe again. He arches again, harder now so that he can lean back and press his face to Ardyn’s throat and smell him.

And then the hands are gone, gone and Ignis is left groaning, whimpering at the agitation in his veins, so violent that it hurts and Tell me what you want, Ignis.

He doesn’t want to remember this.

He stands up suddenly, chair scraping behind him. He doesn’t care how it looks as he grabs his backpack, zips it up roughly and swings it over his shoulder so hard the corner of his science textbook hits his spine and makes him wince.

They’ll just think he’s stuck up, is all. Nobody seems to notice anything is wrong.

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It’s a surprise when the school principal shows up during study hall, enough of a disruption in the schedule of the day that all of the students get distracted, forget what they are doing and lean in to see what they can overhear as he speaks to the teacher; Ignis tries not to, but even he can be caught up in the excitement and curiosity. And it’s even more of a surprise when the teacher bows slightly and the principal is moving away, into the classroom, leaning over his desk.

“Ignis. May we speak a moment?”

He understands then, and he sighs, nods. Something about the high school entrance exams, most likely. The school thinks it’s silly, unwise, for him to take them a year early; they were on his case about it for much of last year, and only yesterday he officially submitted his application. Despite that, he is forced to agree with them now, but not for the same reasons. It’s silly and unwise because at the time of the exams, he will be nearly eight months pregnant, and he believes that Ardyn will kill him at the end of this. There isn’t really any point in trying, in even thinking about high school, but he must pretend.

It’s all he has left. After all, if he didn’t, people would wonder.

He follows him down the hall in silence, down the stairs and through the main office. When the principal invites him to sit down, and sits down slowly himself while sighing heavily, Ignis’ gut twists. This isn’t about the exams, is it? This is something else.

“I understand that you’re an omega now. Even if you didn’t register yourself, we received a letter from the Royal Council.”

There’s something accusatory in his tone and Ignis feels every muscle in his body start to tighten as he sits on his hands. He knows he should have registered himself right away, but he’d been too ashamed, too distressed. Wasn’t it obvious enough when he missed over a week of classes? Did he really have to go announce it as well? So he nods once. “I apologize for not doing it sooner.”

He waves his hand. “That isn’t the issue here.”

“If it’s about the exams, I can still—“

“Not those either. I know you have…urges, but you must control yourself when you are still in uniform. You represent the school.”

“Oh.” What? He can’t process this. That’s been happening a lot lately, his brain slowing down, foggy and strained. Omega hormones, pregnancy hormones, trauma, fear. He can’t pull those
strings apart.

“Other students have seen you getting in a…certain vehicle. Repeatedly. Always in uniform and sometimes even on school grounds.”

Once on school grounds. Three times in uniform. But of course people will exaggerate. He’s raping me. He’s blackmailing me, forcing me to obey him. I’m scared all the time now. I’m carrying his child. He opens and closes his mouth, opens it again as he realizes that now, perhaps finally, he has a chance to get help.

But then the principal goes on. “It doesn’t look good for the school, acting so unruly. It looks as if we can not control or discipline our students. We don’t need the reputation of our students engaging in unsavory activities, even if they are omegas.”

Ignis feels himself sinking, drowning, even as he continues to sit upright and smile vaguely like a good student. He should have known, should have guessed that nobody would help him. That’s the way it is, now that he’s an omega.

-

That night, when Ardyn texts him, he doesn’t immediately turn his phone off. He tosses and turns in bed, but he doesn’t look at the phone and he doesn’t turn it off, throw it across the room as he often does when he realizes he’s testing. Instead he curls up in his bed, his nest, and after a long moment he reaches for the phone, flicks the messaging app open and stares.

It isn’t what he expects, and as he reads and rereads the message he chews his lower lip. How was the first week of school?

A normal message, a casual question. Interested in his life. He knows it’s probably a trap, but nobody else seems to care about anything beyond ignoring him or chastising him. He’s barely ever replied to the man’s texts before, but now, now… He remembers the passive disgust on the principal’s face this afternoon, the way he said omega as if he were saying whore. Nobody seems to understand what he’s dealing with except.

He replies.
Chapter 3\5 - Glauc\a/Drautos, Ignis (*)

Chapter Summary

Drautos' life as a double agent grows more complicated, while Ardyn surprises Ignis with what seems like kindness.

Chapter Notes

Very long chapter here but a lot happens! Back to the smut for a bit too, which will probably be prevalent in the next couple of chapters. This chapter introduces Glauc\a (and continues with Drautos) and of course includes Ignis, who is seeking new ways to cope with the stress (that will probably make it worse of course). As always, thank you for reading <3

Part 3, Chapter 5 – Glauc\a/Drautos

“The Emperor commented on your visits to Insomnia.” *Like I’m your keeper, like it's my fault.* Everything was his fault. That seemed to be the pattern, no matter what country he was in, no matter what face he wore. Figures. The man who does everything is the one who gets shit.

“I kept some a secret, but you know how nosy people get. He’d never notice, but tabloids always need something to chat about.” The Chancellor’s acting unconcerned, but there is something in his eyes that suggests otherwise. Avoidant. It never bodes well when he’s like that.

“I think your little situation in Insomnia is something the tabloids would just love to hear about,” he growls softly, “Why are you still going? Haven’t you done enough damage?”

He ignores the question. “It’s just us. You can take off the armor.”

“I asked,” he starts to say, but he begins dismantling the armor. “You’re going to get caught sooner or later. Tensions are high enough without it being made known that you’re…”

“I know, I know.” He knows and doesn’t answer, as usual, only steps up and pulls his visor off, begins vanishing away the magic sinew holding the crystalian material together. He’d made the armor initially, years ago when Drautos was young and foolish while Ardyn looked the exact same as he does now. This man who was perhaps half of the reason why he’d decided to betray the king of Insomnia and take up the name of Glauc\a as a double agent. Which probably explains why they’re having this conversation in Ardyn’s private quarters. “I mask my appearance most of the time, if you must know. I’m only myself when in the car or hotel.”

He wants to push him away. There had always been something about the Chancellor that disgusted him, unnerved him in ways he couldn’t quite explain, but he was attractive and seductive in all the right ways, and for whatever reason, Drautos always felt that he himself held something over
Ardyn, something that made the tactician strangely eager to please him. But now that he knows he fucked a child, and now regularly goes to Insomnia to visit him.

“I don’t really want him any longer, but I…” he sighs, cards fingers through his hair and scratches his head in that irritating way of his. “We bonded accidentally.”

“Accidentally.”

“I marked him on purpose. He turned around and tried to kill me, but didn’t know how to properly slit a throat,” he rubs his neck as he says it, and vanishes whatever illusion he was playing with. The mark is long, a deep gash of scar tissue right over his scent gland, most definitely a weapon. Probably a magical weapon, at that.

*Impressive. The kid has more guts than people give him credit for, if what Ardyn speaks is the truth.* He strongly suspects that Ignis does know how to properly slit a throat. Just another one of those fatal incidents the Chancellor survived, the sort of fatal incidents nobody wants to really talk about but people in the emperor’s inner circle are increasingly aware of. Poor stupid little Ignis. And perhaps poor stupid Titus, because something about seeing the mark on Ardyn’s neck makes him angry. “If you’re bonded then that means…”

“The little bitch is pregnant.”

Unexpected, probably for everyone involved. He groans, closes his eyes and sits down without removing the rest of his armor. “You got the prince’s adviser pregnant. And then bonded with him. He’s obviously been hiding it but he can’t do that forever, you idiot. If this gets out we have a diplomatic crisis. It could compromise everything. Make him get an abortion.”

“He can’t. Bonded omegas can’t get abortions without written permission from their mates. I’d have to provide proof of bond which…” he tilts his head and sighs. “Means putting my name out there.”

Because bonded omegas have no rights. He wonders how much of this the Scientia boy knows, wonders if he knows that Ardyn essentially owns him, and that nothing in the law in either country can protect him now. “You’ve ruined his life.”

“I don’t want this, either.”

“Will you kill him then?”

It’s there for a moment, the barest of moments, the fury, eyes flashing, the heat and tension in the air rising a fraction as the magic in the Chancellor’s veins unfurls, snaps and reacts. And then he wrings his hands a moment, groans and covers his face and lifts them off to reveal a perfectly calm expression, and Drautos is reminded of something. Of an image glimpsed a few times over the years, Ardyn’s pale back covered in scars, a nightmare deep in his past that Drautos never wanted to ask about, believed he never quite cared enough to ask about.

“It’s complicated,” he says calmly, as if nothing had happened.

And Drautos had acted as if nothing *had*, because he’s seen all of this before. “A lot of things about you are complicated.”
“Scientia has now completed his first 4 weeks of initial training.” Crowe Altius, standing to attention before him with her arms folded behind her back. At sixteen she is still tiny. Too young, too small, but thus is the Lucian military. They’re talking about a boy even younger than her, after all.

“And?”

“He’s excelled.”

Drautos grunts, only mildly interested. Ignis Scientia is a weird kid, was always weird and only got weirder after Ardyn hurt him. Of course he’d be good at whatever he tried to do.

“Can he access the Armiger yet though? He can be as proficient as he pleases in weaponry, but if he can’t use magic he’s unfortunately only a detriment. We can’t let him play soldier forever.” It’s frustrating enough to be expected to take on a thirteen-year-old, one who is favored and spoiled by the king and therefore one who makes everyone a little nervous. Poor kid threw himself into the Kingsglaive with the hope that he’d be more accepted as an omega there, but his status as the prince’s adviser brought with it a different sort of ostracizing. If he’s not useful though, if they have to protect him...

But Altius is unperturbed. “That’s the funny thing, sir. He has two reservoirs of magic.”

“What? He’s pregnant?” Nyx pipes up then, and for a moment Drautos feels his gut tighten. If that’s what she’s referring to, mentioning it so casually in front of others… if his relationship with Ardyn becomes obvious, this could become a diplomatic nightmare that I am unprepared to handle. But she wouldn’t.

And she proves this by shooting Nyx one of her withering looks. “He doesn’t need access to magic the way we do, if you catch my drift. I implore you, Captain. Talk to the King about this.”

So that. Then Ignis’ secret is safe for now. Ardyn’s secret is safe for now. Which means that Glaucal is safe for now. He already knows what he’s going to say though. That the rumors are true. That Ignis Scientia, Ignis Stupeo Scientia behind closed doors, is indeed the king’s bastard son. The elder Lucis Caelum, and therefore the rightful heir to the throne.

The rightful heir to the Lucian throne, bonded to the chancellor of an enemy nation and pregnant with his child.

“I’ll speak to him,” he says softly, though what about he doesn’t clearly know.

**Part 3, Chapter 5 - Ignis**

He’s worried about it showing. Eight weeks now. He can feel, see, a slight swelling in his lower belly, not enough for anyone else to notice, but enough for him to feel anxious about how to handle it. He presses his hand gently down on his stomach, feels the softness of his own body. *Just fat right now. It’s only the size of a grape right now.* Not reassuring.

He hadn’t planned on telling anyone anyway, has just silently prayed to the Astrals that it would go away on its own, that he’d come up with a solution, that nobody would ever notice, anything. He’d been too ashamed, and everyone around him all too eager to pretend that he wasn’t raped, that he wasn’t even an omega. It was just easier to say nothing. And then Ardyn had ordered him not to, which had seemed redundant, stupid, at the time.
But now it’s starting to be visible. Only slightly, so slightly that no one else could ever notice, even if they were to see him naked. Especially not as he’s a thirteen-year-old boy, liable to put on weight, eat twice as much as he was eating yesterday, act ornery and hormonal, buy new clothing because he keeps outgrowing everything. Nobody’s going to bat an eye at a boy his age gaining perhaps a kilogram in two months. That will change soon enough though.

He pulls his shirt back down, feeling his heartbeat behind his eyes, loud and intrusive. He’s thrown up nearly every day this last week, suffered a peculiar sense of vertigo and a ringing in his ears off and on. All normal, normal, for a pregnancy. But not for someone who shouldn’t be pregnant, and perhaps not quite normal for someone who is. He feels like he’s a little too sick, a little too tired.

And there’s something tugging at his gut now. Tell someone, tell someone. But he can’t. Even if he could, there’s no one to tell. That much has been made obvious to him in recent weeks. Everyone around him is either quick to dismiss the fact that he’s an omega, or they assume he’s a whore. And they all did such a good job at forgetting he’d been assaulted. Even if he hadn’t ever told anyone exactly what happened, they should have known, shouldn’t they have? Even if he could get help, even if he could tell someone, they’d just assume he went and screwed off recently, that it has nothing to do with that incident everyone else wants to forget happened.

He hasn’t even seen the king in a couple of weeks now. They’d spoken briefly a few weeks back, when Ignis had requested to move from the Crownguard to the Kingsglaive. The king hadn’t been happy about it but, as he’d said, he trusted Captain Titus Drautos would take good care of him, and there would always be a place in the guard for him should he change his mind again. A conversation that was over faster than it should have been, as if the king didn’t know what to do with Ignis.

The thought makes Ignis groan, tug nervously at his hair and pull his feet up, curl around himself. Ardyn had, unexpectedly, not picked him up since Ignis had responded to his text last week. He’d texted him a few other times, but that was all. Behavior too erratic and unpredictable to get a grasp on. And perhaps that thought is what makes him do it, what makes him suddenly pull his phone from his pocket and open his address book and not text, but call.

He calls him, and Ardyn answers.

“Little early for you, isn’t it? Shouldn’t you be getting ready for class?”

He ignores it. He doesn’t know how to talk to Ardyn, how to have a normal conversation with someone who hurt him so badly, and suddenly hearing his voice, knowing this is an interaction he himself initiated, scares him. “I’m worried about….” he trails off, unsure of how much he should say. “I’m sick,” he says finally. “And my stomach’s showing already.”

A long silence. Ignis finds that he is holding his breath until suddenly Ardyn speaks up. “I’m unfortunately tied up today. I can pick you up after school tomorrow.”

He almost says thank you, but he instead bites his lip, closes his eyes and ends the call.

- Ardyn is there, as he knew he would be. True to his word.

He hands him another brown bag first, another ten days of medication. And then another bag, a larger one with the name of a store Ignis had never heard of on it. “It’s not a gift. I think you’d find this store dreadfully boring,” he says dismissively. “Another scarf of mine, for your nest. If you’d
like a shirt or something you can actually wear…”

Ignis fidgets. It’s an effort to keep himself from smelling the scarf immediately. His nest. He’d been wanting something more from Ardyn but hadn’t wanted to ask. The old scarf he had wasn’t enough, not when the only Alpha he ever shared his nest with was Noctis, who made it smell like him.

Ardyn jerks him out of his reverie by pushing an envelop on him next. More money. “For the baby.”

He doesn’t want this much help. “I spent it all at the arcade last time.”

He sighs.

“I can’t buy clothing or anything for it. How can I explain that?”

“Use it however you want then.”

Ignis shrugs, puts it in the bag. He doesn’t know how he feels about the money. The king gives him a paltry allowance, so the additional funds are useful. But it makes him feel like a whore. So he says nothing while Ardyn taps the driver, who now pulls into traffic.

“Hotel?” he says glumly, trying to push the fear back down, back into his marrow where it can’t bother him. He should have known, should have known that’s all Ardyn would want.

But then there is something tapping his shoulder and he flinches, half turns to find a brochure being pressed against his chest now.


“I suspect it’s up your alley, no? The special exhibit just opened, so they are closing at 8 instead of 6 for the next two days. Plenty of time to see that, at the very least.”

Ignis can’t speak, but the prickling of tears in his eyes is for once, not in fear.

They still go to a hotel.

But Ignis finds himself more relaxed, less fearful of what he knows must be inevitable. Because the museum was fun, and Ardyn was…entertaining. Leaning over him to murmur in his ear at nearly every artifact. Quite certain that’s actually an implement to clean glass bottles, not an offering to Ramuh. No wonder the civilization fell if they thought that’s what female anatomy looked like. Date’s incorrect, but what should I expect from a Lucian archeologist? It’s from the 9th century. He knew a lot, and he was ready and willing to impart this knowledge onto Ignis. And he was sarcastic, clever and mocking at every turn, so much so that he goaded Ignis into joking with him a few times.

The hotel is inevitable, but he at least enjoyed himself beforehand, and Ardyn, Ardyn. He’d touched him once, a hand on his lower back, slipping down for a moment to stroke his ass, and Ignis has squirmed and sweat. That was all though. And he wills himself to think of the rest of the evening as they check in, ride the elevator up to the usual floor – he knows now that Ardyn permanently has the same room rented out – hear the click of a lock as the door shuts behind him.

“When you talked to me on the phone,” he says then, finally, “you mentioned your stomach
showing already. May I see?"

_Inevitable_. He’d known, known all along, known as soon as he’d called Ardyn, that whatever they did, they would end up back in the hotel and the man would find an excuse for getting Ignis undressed so he could fuck him. He unbuttons his shirt frantically, pulls it off before Ardyn can say a word, and then the man stops him. He lays his hand on him. Ignis resists for only a moment before he relents, and he lets his partner, his _mate_, press gently around his stomach. He has to fight the urge to slap his hand away, to demand that he be _more gentle._

"As big as a grape," he mumbles. "The rest is just me. I didn't think it's show so much already."

"It isn’t showing. You only even notice because you’re looking for it and you’re half naked right now," he says it softly, almost lovingly, and the gentleness in his voice makes Ignis waver. "But you don’t have the pelvic structure as women do. Most male omegas don’t, so the uterus doesn’t sit the way it normally does."

"Nice to know that my body wasn’t built properly for this." _Bold words. Because he didn’t just take me to a hotel and fuck me. Because he’s helping me. He gives me advice and buys my medication and today he took me to a museum and and and he dares let himself smile._

And Ardyn sighs then, hand still on his belly. “I’d very much like to fuck you.”

Ignis freezes. Of course, of course. He averts his eyes, bites his lower lip and tries to breathe slowly. He’s survived this often enough now. At least today he got to enjoy the museum first.

“No?”

He blinks, still not daring to look at him. He can’t tell if Ardyn is asking him, giving him a choice, and he doesn’t know how to respond. It seems like a sick joke, and so he twitches his head once, more of a shudder than a proper shake of his head.

“Pity. What if I just used my fingers on you?” He leans in, breathing in his ear. “I want to hear the little noises you make right before you orgasm.”

He’s frozen, unable to even breathe, even as his insides catch fire and he can feel his skin getting damp, heat building in his groin and a dampness on his underwear. Ardyn inhales then, and he must be able to smell him, must take that scent as an answer to his question.

“I’ll go slow.”

_Slow_. He’s never gone slow. Every time Ardyn had brought him to a hotel since the marking, Ignis had had a dick shoved into him within a few minutes. Ardyn had rarely bothered to even try to arouse him before fucking him. _Slow_. Ignis doesn’t believe it, but he finds himself nodding weakly.

“And I’ll stop, if you wish. Just say the word.”

If being _slow_ was difficult to believe, Ardyn _stopping_ is impossible, and Ignis jerks his head towards him at this, eyes wide in confusion. _It’s a trap, a trap. It must be._ Every vein in his body is burning, screaming at him to run, to fight, because he’s about to be raped again. But he doesn’t run, and when he opens his mouth, throat raw and tongue dry in fear, he only says, “okay.”

_Okay_, like he believes him.

So he obediently steps out of his pants when Ardyn unzips them, tugs them down, and he pulls his
own underwear down with shaking hands, trying desperately to avoid looking at the man who is hungrily devouring him with his eyes. And he steps back a few paces and climbs onto the bed, willfully ignoring how Ardyn all but pounces on it beside him, how he curls once around as if searching, as if longing for Ignis to make a nest in the bed for him, as if why are you thinking that?

There's a hand on his belly almost immediately, a hum of contentment as Ardyn brushes against his cock, far from hard but not as soft as Ignis feels it should be, and Ignis holds his breath as that hand drifts further down, ghosts over the glands in his groin before pressing a finger against his entrance. A little damp, and then there is a push, that initial intrusion and Ignis is grasping tightly at the sheets, staring hard at the wall and trying to ground himself, to survive what's coming.

But the pain doesn't come. He doesn't push further, and after another moment of confusion Ignis shakily lets out the air he was holding.

"Just up to the first knuckle. I want you wetter first," he murmurs, and then he's moving his finger, sliding it, twisting his wrist as he does so that his fingerpad presses against the inside of Ignis' muscle. "You generate slick all along the sides of both uterine and anal canals during sex but most of it comes from right...here..."

Ignis squirms against him, heart pounding behind his eyes as he feels himself getting wetter, his entrance getting wet and slippery under Ardyn's administrations. He'd known that, known that –

most slick is secreted within a centimeter of his entrance, meant to serve as a lubricant – but having Ardyn say it makes him realize it in a way he'd never realized. It's almost pleasurable.

"Do you know much about your body?"

A quick shake. He'd tried to learn more but looking at anatomical drawings made him sick in a way they never had before. This is my body. This attracted the monster. This is not my body. This is his body. The best he could do was read, and he focused his energy there on reading about pregnancy, not sexual organs.

A sigh in response. "Unsurprising. Inside, you have a prostate as all men do, but you have a second gland that also causes orgasm when stimulated. Two different kinds of climax from the inside possible, as well as what happens if I play with your dick. And of course there are a further four combinations there. Male omegas are able to have a most unique sexual experience, supposedly superior to that which anyone else can experience."

"It," he swallows hard. He is having difficulty comprehending what Ardyn is saying. This suggestion that sex feels good and it feels even better for omegas, when all he knows is screaming agony and a longing for death. "Just hurt."

He clicks his tongue, makes a soft sighing sound that for a moment, Ignis wonders will turn into an apology.

It doesn't. And instead of apologizing, Ardyn just pushes his finger in as far as he can.

The now-familiar pain, though dulled to a twinge, makes him yelp, close his eyes against the tears he feels burning. He's going to fuck me now. He's just messing with me. He's going to take his hand back and shove his dick in and it's going to hurt, hurt, hurt while I get torn apart and I won't be able to breathe and he'll take my body away from me again and I..."

"Ignis," a harsh snap in his ear. "Calm down. Half the reason it hurts is because you seize up and all your muscles contract. You do it every time I touch you."
He can only whimper.

“The other half is because I’m very rough with you and you’re too small. But I might be able to be more gentle if you could relax.”

He doesn’t like how it’s his fault. He knows it is, has learned this over the last couple of months, but it doesn’t make it easier to hear. He didn’t have his guard up. He was stupid. He didn’t question his own behavior. He willingly approached Ardyn. He was the one who initiated physical contact. He tried to seduce the older man. Then he changed his mind. He tried to fight. He blamed Ardyn. But then he never told anyone. He never tried to get help. He kept it a secret because he knew if he told anyone, he couldn’t see him anymore, right? In his mind, he kept calling it rape when he is really just an omega with urges he can’t accept.

And as if Ardyn knows what’s going through his mind, he rubs his chin on the top of Ignis’ head, groans in his ear that he’s beautiful, that he smells divine, buries his face in his neck and nips at his mark, and with a flick of his thumb he begins massaging one of the scent glands in Ignis’ groin.

“Now you’re properly wet, and this is swelling now.” He does something with his fingers that makes Ignis yelp, fire exploding in his fingers and toes as he arches his back and pants. “If you’re properly aroused, it can get quite large, and it’s the most sensitive part of your body,” he rasps in his ear now, his voice low and needy. “And did you know? Once an omega is bonded, this gland only gets like this when they’re with their mate. This is a sensation I alone can give you.”

He’s rougher now, drawing his finger out and shoving it in rapidly, snaps of pain unable to keep up with the mounting pleasure though, and the words, the suggestion that he possesses him, owns him...

“Ah ah ah, don’t touch yourself.”

“But…” He doesn’t like the whine in his voice but right now, he scarcely cares. He hadn’t even realized he’d moved, had tried to touch his own cock until Ardyn had snapped at him.

“I want you to experience all the different ways I can bring you pleasure. If you touch yourself, it won’t be the same as a climax from this alone.”

He doesn’t like the pedantic nature of the words, the way Ardyn emphasizes that he brings Ignis pleasure, something that Ignis alone can’t do.

“Just relax and behave,” he smiles as he says it, but there is an edge to his voice now and Ignis feels something inside of himself shrink up, wither and curl up in fear. Do as he says. You should be grateful he isn’t fucking you. Your body is responding so just shut up and try to enjoy this. Your life will be so much easier if you let yourself enjoy it.

And with that comes a second finger, both roughly padding against that spot inside of him, not only thrusting into it but rubbing it, caressing it, and now as he pulls his fingers out he spreads them, dragging his nails down Ignis’ insides and tugging him further open. Like he’s preparing to fuck him, which Ignis should care about but he can’t. The pleasure is coming in rises and swells now, ebbing away less and less every time only to flood his veins more strongly than before. He’s making soft noises with every exhale, little sighs and whimpers. He turns his upper body, buries his face in Ardyn’s neck and inhales deeply at the same time the man growls low in his throat and maybe fucking isn’t so bad. He wants Ardyn, wants to kiss and mouth his cock and taste him, smell him, stroke the bulb at the base of him that could one day knot in him, wants to sit on him, slide down him inch by inch…
His climax is vicious, all-consuming, such violence tearing through his veins and short-circuiting on either end of his spine that he can’t even scream. He sees nothing, hears nothing, his entire world reduced to that sensation Ardyn has brought upon him and the man’s scent, all around him, inside of him, becoming him, and he doesn’t even need to breathe any longer.

There is so much sticky wetness between his thighs now while nothing on his belly that he knows he came from below as opposed to with his testicles, his dick still hard and needy. He remembers how a few times now, Ardyn devoured him, pulled his legs apart and sucked him, tongued him, drank down his slick and his come and laughed at his shame. He doesn’t think he’d be ashamed now. How he’d love that face between his thighs now…

“The upper part has more nerves.” A comment punctuated by a jab that makes Ignis cry out again, his body oversensitive and loose. “If you’re aroused enough, it’s so swollen that the head of a cock actually catches on it during sex, so even when pulling out between thrusts, you’d be getting maximum pleasure.”

He can hear the words, vaguely process them, but they make little sense and he can only aimlessly jerk his hips up and down a few more times, desperate for more contact.

“Do you want to try it today?” He hasn’t taken his fingers out.

It’s the second time Ardyn is asking him if he wants sex tonight. He clearly wants him, is desperate for him, but he’s asking, giving him the option. He wants me this badly but he’s still being kind. Ignis arches his back slightly, looks up at him and smiles weakly. He smells dizzyingly good, and his entire body is warm and loose and aching to be filled by him. He opens his mouth to acquiesce and then he remembers, remembers who he is, and he immediately tears his gaze away. “No.”

I’m not just your mate. I’m not just an omega. I’m Ignis. Ignis Scientia.

But as his eyes settle on the wall, he catches sight of the clock and realizes that it’s been nearly seven hours since Ardyn had picked him up. It’s approaching eleven PM and not once had Ignis considered his duties, his other life.

And he isn’t so sure anymore.
Chapter 3|6 - Regis, Ignis (*)

Chapter Summary

Regis has an uncomfortable dinner with his son, Ignis finds himself growing frustrated with Gladio, and Ardyn finally gets what he's truly wanted since the first time he saw Ignis.

Chapter Notes

Whew! This was probably my hardest chapter to date (you will probably understand why when you see how...unusual the Ignis part of this chapter is!). Regis and Ignis here. I would like to start including chapter summaries, starting from the first chapter, in the next couple of weeks, as I know the fic is getting long. As always, thank you so much for reading and enjoying! This fic started out as kind of a joke/throwaway, but has since grown to something weirdly important to me, so I am happy for the readers!

Part 3, Chapter 6 – Regis

It’s been too long since he’s had dinner with his son, and as he sits across from the boy at a table far too large for the two of them, he regrets not doing it sooner.

Because Noctis is angry with him, seething in such fury he is squirming in his seat as he pushes vegetables around on it. “Ignis cooks better than this and he’s only thirteen.”

No point in replying to that. He needs to get over his picky eating. “How’s Ignis doing?”

“Ask him yourself!” he snaps. “Why don’t you see him anymore?”

“So that’s why he’s been so angry, and he has a right to be. Ignis has been difficult to face recently, and not only because the boy has grown elusive. Regis has let down many a loved one in his life, but they rarely survive for him to have to look them in the eye afterwards. The simple truth is that he doesn’t know how to face Ignis. He let him live the last thirteen years of his life assuming he was a beta, never had his blood tested, never confirmed it, because he too had assumed. Genetics dictated him being an omega extremely unlikely, nearly impossible, and so he hadn’t worried about it. But he should have. He should see Ignis, summon him, but it’s difficult now. He’s been dealing with envoys from the Empire recently, envoys that often involve the Chancellor. He despises seeing the Chancellor, seeing his hands, knowing that he hurt Ignis with them; it’s difficult to see the boy after those meetings. And he’s ashamed of himself for avoiding him. “I’ve been busy. I’ve heard he’s been doing well in the Kingsglaive though.” Almost too well. Captain Drautos had grudgingly praised him many a time by now.

“He misses you. He’s stressed, thinks you’re avoiding him because he’s an omega. You won’t fire him, will you?”
This stops him in his tracks, and for one terrible moment he almost tells his son the truth. He can’t fire Ignis Scientia because he… “Never. He is always welcome here.”

“As my adviser.” It isn’t a question. A demand. The kind he used to make when he’d ball his fists and stomp his feet. Was it really only a few years ago, when he was that child?

“As your adviser. And there’s something else. Gladiolus told me that Ignis has been disappearing a lot lately.”

“Yea, his stupid exams,” he sighs dramatically without skipping a beat.

Regis narrows his eyes. He can believe that Ignis has been studying too much recently, but Noctis rarely answers any question quickly; it’s as if he rehearsed this. “Where does he go?”

“Dunno,” he shrugs and hesitates now. “Library I think. He’s always on me when he’s studying so I try to avoid him.”

He doesn’t want to have to ask this, doesn’t want to make his son pick sides, but something is off. He doesn’t know where else Ignis could be going, but he’s been strange ever since he manifested, ever since that man… “You’re not keeping secrets for him, are you?”

“Like what?” He snaps it out, his eyebrows screwed up and expression hostile, the way it always gets when he asks too many questions. And then he backs up, as if he realizes he got too emotional. “He keeps nestling now. Like keeps wanting new weird stuff for it so he goes shopping. Like blankets and then he goes to the arcade a lot, gets plushies from the claw machine. Says he doesn’t want people making fun about it.”

Kids. Would they really make fun of another kid because of that? But he knows it’s true. He can only imagine how difficult Ignis’ life has gotten at school, especially at that age. He wonders if he should increase the boy’s allowance so that he can buy what he needs to feel comfortable. Spoil him a little.

“He’s gotten real cuddly. It’s okay with me if he’s at the library all the time now. Less time in the ‘nest’ with him.” He makes quotation marks with his fingers at the word.

He can’t help but smile at that. Even before Ignis manifested as an omega, the two boys spent half their nights curled around one another, the older boy being at once a brother and a mother to the prince. I should have suspected, should have realized that he was exhibiting omega tendencies all along. But he hadn’t suspected, had only been grateful that Noctis had someone to care for him. Still, he keeps smiling. “Laying it on a little thick, huh?”

“Eh!?”

“You can admit enjoying it. I’m sure he spoils you even more now.”

Noctis blushes at that. “Maybe ‘cause he has to be both mom and dad to me now.”

There’s nothing he can say to that.

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Part 3, Chapter 6 – Ignis
“My dad’s not happy about that field trip, says it’s too long to be away from training,” Gladio grumbles.

“It’s only three nights.” It’s difficult to think about the field trip though, an extended trip for upper secondary students a month from now. The idea had come up suddenly, as if the school had recently realized they had some funds put aside they needed to use by a certain date, to go on a trip to Lestallum for politics, civics, and history classes. Ignis has never been; he should be excited, but right now he’s busy. He’s busy staring at the size of his biceps when he rolls his sleeves up. The arms of the school uniform shirts had never fit him very well. Those arms that Ignis knows have been around a dozen girls at least by now. **Have you ever thought about having sex with an omega? A boy?** But there’s no point in asking. Not only because he doesn’t dare draw attention to himself, but because he already knows the answer. **No, nope, not interested.** “I can ask the king to put pressure on him for you.”

Gladio laughs at that. “So casual. It must be nice, basically not having adults up in your face all the time and then getting the king to do whatever you ask.”

He could be offended by that, but he barely remembers his parents. He hadn’t really minded the solitude, the benevolent neglect of the king, until recently. And now, after all, he has a different adult in his face. An adult that the last couple of weeks he has enjoyed being around, so much so that the thought of a field trip is no longer very appealing.

That spark of attraction, the magnetism he had felt a couple of months ago when this man had first challenged him to a game of chess in the library, when he’d given him a key and invited him to his hotel room, has returned. Because Ardyn is not only attractive, but he’s intelligent, clever and sarcastic and rude in just the right way that makes Ignis laugh, smirk, feel like he has a companion. Ignis had always been a little awkward around people his own age, even kids a few years older, just as those same kids didn’t know how to handle him.

And they know how to handle him even less now, now that he’s an omega. The other boys can’t relate him to any longer, the last tenuous thread that allowed Ignis to connect to kids his own age has been lost. Now that Ignis is registered with the school as an omega, he has the option to avoid certain activities, such as using the boy’s locker room before PE or sports clubs. Not that he’s done that, not yet, hence him sitting across from Gladio as he nonchalantly tries to pull his school issue blazer over his shoulders now. It had crossed his mind that the school field trip might include a hot springs visit, which would leave Ignis in another uncomfortable situation.

He was told in no uncertain terms that he ought to take suppressants while in school so that he wouldn’t upset the other students. He wonders what will happen if it gets out, if he hits seven or eight months and he can’t hide it any longer. He wonders how ostracized he could be then. Just another reason to hide it, even if Ardyn didn’t care.

“Lemme think about the offer. Catch you later,” a sudden wave in his face, jerking him out of his reverie, and he flinches. A few months ago Gladio would have just slapped him on the back, but not anymore. Not anymore.

At least Ardyn doesn’t treat him like glass.

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Ardyn spends a lot of time in Insomnia over the next few weeks, enough that Ignis gets a little suspicious. That night of bodily education had given Ignis enough courage around him to dare ask. **“Shouldn’t you be back in Gralea?”**
“Do you want me to leave?”

Yes, yes yes. It’s suddenly a complicated question, a complicated answer. “I mean…”

“I haven’t taken a proper vacation in a couple of decades, so I had a bit of time coming to me.”
“How long have you been Chancellor?” He doesn’t exactly believe him, but he’s willing to play along.

He laughs at that. “Twenty years perhaps. Ten years military service before that and onto here from there. We don’t start at age thirteen in Niflheim, though.”

Thirteen. For the first time, he wonders what Ardyn was like at his age, what he was like as a kid, a teenager, a young man. He’s asked him by now, gotten his age. Forty-seven. Thirty-four years older than him. Three point six times his age. “So how long will you be here?”

Ardyn had let him go home that day, that first time he’d actually asked him things, had fingered him until he climaxed, had brought him right to his apartment in the Citadel at nearly midnight. Unfucked. And two days later he’d come again, given him another orgasm with his fingers alone, only to let him go again. Six times in three weeks.

But there had been two other times. Twice Ardyn had picked him up without taking him to a hotel at all. Once to another museum, once to dinner and a bookstore.

He’s still scared, scared of what’s growing inside of him, of what will happen when he can’t hide it anymore. He doesn’t trust Ardyn not to hurt him, not to kill Noctis if he doesn’t keep his word, and he’s still suspicious that he himself won’t survive the year, but he’s finding that he is relaxing a little. And he’s learning how to enjoy what happens to him behind closed doors. He remembers the brutalities this man has forced on him, still wakes up soaked in sweat from nightmares nearly every night, still flinches and trembles whenever Ardyn initially touches him, but he’s learning now that it can feel good, that if he behaves, Ardyn can be kind to him, he can have choices.

Not that they are really choices. He knows this, somewhere, but he is so desperate for any scrap of kindness, of agency, that he’ll pretend. After all, what has been happening to him recently feels good.

So now when Ardyn brings him to a hotel, to the room he is by now used to, he is trembling just as much in excitement as he is in fear. He speaks the moment the door closes behind him, the telltale sound of the lock clicking into place. It half bothers him, how Ardyn still does that, keeps the key in his pocket.

“Seventh one tonight?”

Ardyn smirks at him. “So you remember?”

No need to grace that one with an answer, so Ignis smiles at him, shrugs with his hands in the air. He’s learned by now that sometimes Ardyn finds him cute, so he might as well act cute.

And it works, because Ardyn positively grins then, leans against the wall and shows him too many teeth. “It’s easier to hit all three of your spots at once during intercourse.”

“That’s fine.” The words burn his throat as he speaks; he feels as if he’s betraying himself.

“No, it isn’t. Not with the way it has been.” He does that sometimes, just casually suggests that everything they had before was just sex, no big deal, something adults often do together.
Ignis is almost relieved at the comment. He can almost believe that Ardyn genuinely cares about him, that he actually feels bad for what he did, and that makes Ignis even more determined to show him that he can do this now. And so he asks, “Do… I mean. I want to…” He has to rub his tongue against the roof of his mouth, his teeth for a moment to find the moisture. “Can we have sex?”

Ardyn arches an eyebrow and stares at him. “Are you sure?”

“I said, it’s fine.” It’s not fine, and he isn’t sure, but he wants Ardyn to like him, respect him, wants him to keep being nice.

“I probably won’t be able to stop once I’m inside you, so if you change your mind…”

You never stop when I beg anyway. Because almost every time, he ends up begging, even though by now he knows it’s pointless. It’s just always hurt that badly, scared him that badly. So he looks him in the eye, struggles to keep the waiver from his voice. “I won’t.”

It’s enough, and Ignis can see from the hunger in his eyes that Ardyn has been waiting for this, has been sitting back, biding his time until Ignis came to him. He hadn’t wanted to take it slow, had wanted to do nothing but fuck him senseless every time they met, and still he waited because he wanted this. I’m walking right into this, playing his game even as he lets me think otherwise. But he can’t make himself care. I’m only an omega, after all. Ten weeks pregnant and alone but for the monster before me.

No, he can’t make himself care, can’t keep fighting this when lately Ardyn has made him feel good, has been kind, has let him at least feel as if he were in charge. So when the man leans forward, brushes lips against his mouth and murmurs something low and throaty and indecipherable, Ignis moans, he climbs half in his lap, drops his jaw and deepens the kiss. This has happened often enough now that he knows how to do it, and even if he’s young, small, he can almost keep up with Ardyn. Almost, because the older man grabs him then, squeezes his waist, his hips, his ass, pulls him close before jerking a hand up to touch his neck, stroke his mark, his swollen gland.

It’s tender, and he flinches a little. “Shouldn’t be so swollen all the time now,” he grunts, licks his lips and tastes Ardyn’s saliva. “If I’m doing this…” Because he’d read that if he engaged in sexual activities with his mate regularly, his glands wouldn’t get so swollen and he wouldn’t be so irritable, uncomfortable.

Ardyn grabs the edge of his shirt, pulls it up a few inches and strokes his belly. “This means you’re always…very hormonal. Usually omegas need sex a few times a week when pregnant to stay comfortable.”

It didn’t make me comfortable before. But he doesn’t say it. They don’t talk about it, those months of fear and rape. Just like they don’t talk about the pregnancy unless Ignis brings it up, a rule that Ardyn has just violated. So he glances at him nervously, uncertain, and in response Ardyn arches his eyebrows and pushes gently against his stomach. Until he’s suddenly swinging his body around, pressing his back to his chest as he unzips his fly, tugs his pants down and off in a way that makes it clear he’s done this many times by now. He pushes his body around with ease, reminds him again of who is in control.

“Do you want to come first? Relax a little before we begin? It will loosen your muscles.” He holds his face still with one hand, presses fingers into his mouth and strokes his tongue while he sinks two fingers of his other hand into him and Ignis arches, moans. He’s used to his fingers now, and he doesn’t wait long before pushing down on them, angling his hips so that Ardyn can touch him where it feels good faster. The fingers in his mouth aren’t new, but the sensation still sends
shudders down his spine. So possessive. He sucks on them and feels Ardyn laugh in his ear, a harsh breath that makes the hair on the back of his neck stand on end, his heartbeat pulse in his fingertips as he squirms and pants. He doesn’t want to orgasm first, just wants to hurry up with the sex before he has the chance to change his mind, but his mind is already fogging over and he’s having trouble finding words. The fingers in him are deeper now, spreading, and then Ardyn moves from his face, now has two hands around his ass, lifting his thighs as he sinks both index fingers in and pulls him wide. Ignis flinches at that, the stretch hurting. He can’t remember him ever having done that before, but there were times these last few weeks where he was…lost, elsewhere. It’s possible it happened.

“You get wet and loose so quickly now,” Ardyn murmurs hot against his throat. “Already dripping with slick and smelling so good,” a groan now, and Ignis is turning in his lap, frantically clinging to him, rubbing his cock against the man’s belly, against his erection, strings of slick following him.

Ardyn lifts him easily, hands almost entirely circling around his waist were it not for the slight bulge, which he has been careful with these last few weeks. He positions him above his cock, presses the head gently against his entrance, loose and slick as it is.

Ignis flicks a gaze at him for only half a second before immediately looking away. He’s excited, his cock hard and leaking, his heart pounding violently beneath his ribs, but he’s also terrified out of his mind. Because he knows he hasn’t prepared him enough. Because this man has hurt him at least two dozen times by now, has fucked and threatened him into cooperating, into asking for him.

Which he just did. But I want it. I genuinely want it. It doesn’t matter if he encouraged me, I… and then he feels that now-familiar pressure. He squirms nervously, holds his breath as the pressure increases, the heat of Ardyn’s dick now breaching him.

Ignis freezes up, every muscle in his body suddenly constricting as he gasps. And then he tries to jerk back, pushing hard against the mattress with his toes only to be ignored. Because Ardyn gives him a look and keeps pressing him down. Down. It’s the slowest he’s ever penetrated him and Ignis is dimly aware at how much Ardyn is trembling, at how he’s clearly fighting himself to not shove Ignis down, and he is grateful for that. Grateful for the lack of violence even as Ardyn keeps pushing into him, keeps forcing his insides to rearrange themselves to accommodate his bulk. I don’t…. This was a bad idea. He doesn’t want this any longer.


He’s never tried to comfort him before, and the slight gesture of concern makes Ignis whimper, and then he’s clinging to Ardyn, burying his face in his neck, rubbing against his mark. He craves the affection, the gentleness, and now he wants approval. He whines again, a low keening sound.

“I’ll move when you’re ready,” he murmurs then.

He’s letting him control things, giving him agency, and Ignis is desperate for this to continue. “I’m ready,” he whispers, voice choked with tears.

Ardyn doesn’t respond with words, only shifts his hips as he holds him to his chest.

He hits him immediately, hits the heavily swollen gland at the base of his uterine canal, pushed outward as it is by what’s growing inside of him.

He can’t make a sound, can’t breathe enough to emit even the faintest of gasps, and so he only stares at nothing, jaw hanging open as if seeking air. Ardyn takes over then, sweeps arms around
him and crushes him to his chest as he curls down and devours his mouth.

Ignis dimly feels hands on his ass, fingers curling around him and pulling him up and closer; he feels the drag inside of him, the head of Ardyn’s cock bumping against him as he shifts, and somehow he remembers what he’d said two weeks ago – the upper part has more nerves. If you’re aroused enough, it’s so swollen that the head of a cock actually catches on it during sex, so even when pulling out between thrusts, you’d be getting maximum pleasure – something only one’s mate can offer. Because Ignis can only ever be this aroused, his glands this swollen, for Ardyn.

And as he shifts again, drags further downward, he rubs against his prostate so soon after hitting him up above, and this, this makes him scream. Ardyn is deep inside of his guts, deep down his throat, gripping his hips so tightly there will be bruises, and then he’s biting him, sinking teeth into his neck and marking him again.

The sex is slow, slow and intense, unforgiving, all-consuming. At some point Ignis pushes against him, hands flat on his chest, fingers curling in the hair there, and he begins moving himself. His movements are jerky, erratic, unskilled, but being in charge makes him laugh breathlessly, lean down and purr against Ardyn’s lips as the heat curls and tightens around his veins and he feels more slick leaking out. He feels arms wrapping around him again. Ardyn sighs, murmurs in his ear that he’s too fast, that he needs to learn patience, that he needs stamina, as he grabs his cock and tugs hard as he thrusts up, stays, a slow grind inside of him. It’s all Ignis needs.

The orgasm is vicious, blinding, relentless, waves crashing against the insides of his skull. He doesn’t scream; he can’t as it takes him from both sides, front and back, from all three parts of him that Ardyn alone can touch.

There are words in his ear, an endless echo of mine, mine, mine, and even as he claws back from the fog of his climax after what seems like a lifetime of being separated from his body, his mind, his self, Ardyn is still thrusting up hard into him. Too sharp, too sensitive, his upper gland so swollen that every push is painful, jarring, a knife splitting him into two, skin from voice. He pushes against him, hands to his chest as he tries to find the words for him to stop, but then Ardyn’s hands are hard on his hips, shoving him down as he grinds up and comes inside of him, so much and so heavily that Ignis’ insides shudder and twitch, convulse again.

And then Ardyn relaxes, the strength going out of his limbs, and just as suddenly Ignis feels the need to comfort him, cuddle him and nuzzle his throat, rub his chin over his face and scent him, thank him for the fuck. And he does; he purrs and writhes against him until he feels the low rumble of half a laugh in Ardyn’s chest. He suddenly feels himself moving then, forcibly lifted up, feels the drag on his insides, so sensitive, still spasming in the aftermath. He shifts, half-sobs, starts to protest as he clings to his neck because he isn’t ready to leave him yet.

“I’ll knot if I keep you there,” he murmurs, hand on the back of his neck now with just enough pressure to still Ignis.

And he lets go. He wants that, doesn’t want that, doesn’t know what he wants and bursts into tears.

He half-stirs once, wakes up to stretch a kink in his leg and reposition himself. He can tell that Ardyn healed him at some point, the ache inside of him gone. Ardyn’s curled around him, holding him in a way he never had before. Because he’d always backed off as soon as he’d fucked him, as if disgusted by him. He’s warm and heavy, and he smells divine. We had sex. We had proper sex and it didn’t hurt that badly and he was slow and patient and loving. The knowledge makes him dizzy, suddenly more aware of the loneliness he’d experienced the last ten weeks than he’d ever
been. And suddenly nauseas, ashamed of what he’d just done, ashamed of how he’d cuddled and marked Ardyn afterwards, curled up in bed with him.

“Hafta go,” he mumbles.

“What if I want to keep you here tonight?” Ardyn whispers, voice low and dangerous in how it makes Ignis’ blood run hot.

He squirms against him, half dares to elbow him, kick him, but even now he hesitates to anger him, hesitates to somehow undo the kindness he’d just been treated with. He wants this to work. This has to work, because as disgusted as he is with himself, he doesn’t want the pain any longer. And so he stills, “People’ll ask questions.”

It works. Ardyn groans at that, mutters an expletive and sits up slowly. “Unfortunately.” A tap on his backside.

And as Ignis gets up, he glances down at the belly he must hide from the rest of the world and back at Ardyn, still lying in bed with his eyes closed, he realizes that confusion and shame are a bottomless pit, that every time he believes he has fallen as low as he can, the ground opens up beneath him.

But Ardyn is always there to catch him.
Chapter Summary

Prompto tries to lend a hand, while Ignis begins sinking into his new role.

Chapter Notes

Spent the last couple of weeks writing about 50% of every chapter left in Part 3 (four or five more depending on how I break it up). Part 3 continues to expand on the trauma and isolation Ignis is experiencing (so the grooming continues to intensify here), while Part 4 will take a different turn. At any rate, this chapter features Prompto and Ignis again! Next up, we see Noctis. Apologies for not responding to comments on the last chapter. I did read and appreciate all, but have been slow about responding, so I must get to it. Thank you so much for your continued support!

Part 3, Chapter 7 – Prompto

He was spying. He knows he was spying, knows he might get caught. But it still catches him off guard to end up face to face with Ignis Scientia.

Lady Lunafreya had replied to one of his letters recently, but only one, and her letter only mentioned Ignis under a false name. Like her letters were being read or something, screened. So he’d taken it upon himself to try and keep an eye on Ignis. Which has been really hard because Ignis stays out late, and he’s always jumping in cars and disappearing. Prompto got lucky today because he’d seen the boy by chance entering the Museum of Lucian Natural History with that creepy guy. Current exhibit was on photography of the elusive malboros. The admission fee nearly made him faint, but then he’d seen the sign about the affiliation with the Aurora Children’s Hospital. He only had to show his student ID, tell the woman at the desk who his mother was, and after a little wheedling and a phone call, he could get in. A big accomplishment, one he couldn’t normally do. But he had the prince to worry about; his adviser’s safety was off the rails.

So running into him only moments later as he entered the boy’s bathroom was a bit much. He wasn’t expecting it, and so it takes him a moment to stammer out a “Hello.”

Ignis, a good head taller than Prompto and half his width, shoots an irritated glance at him. He’d always come across as a little aloof. He then bows slightly, starts to slip past him.

But Prompto doesn’t want to let him go, and so he tries to play dumb. “Oh, you’re the prince’s fr… I mean. Adviser. Retainer?” He doesn’t have to even try to play dumb, apparently, and he blushed furiously.

He stops then. “Friend, adviser, retainer, all of the above.”

“Where is he?”
“Babysitter isn’t in the equation.”

He keeps waiting for him to smile. “I’m here for fun, too. I like photography.” Thank you, Astrals, for having the exhibit be something I’m into. I have an excuse. He gestures awkwardly towards the camera around his neck. “I know there’s no photos allowed in here but I mean. I just carry it.”

And that makes him smile, corners of his mouth curling up and his eyebrows raising. He has a cute smile. “I would pretend I hadn’t seen.”

This is not like the Ignis he knows, the Ignis he has watched behave as if he were twice his age, taking charge of the other kids. Maybe unsurprising, given how different his appearance is. He’d never say it, of course, but Ignis looks like shit. His face looks gaunt, his eyes sunken and sticky like he’s exhausted, beyond exhausted. He’s wearing a lot of layers even in July, a loose jacket over his uniform and a scarf hanging over his shoulders. And it flickers across Prompto’s mind that something is wrong. He’s sick. Or something.

“Are you all right?”

Ignis’ smile doesn’t fade, but he manages to look suspicious.

“I… do you need help?”

“Help with what?” He says it so fast, so viciously, that Prompto is taken aback.

“I don’t know. You just look tired…to be out.” It’s not that late, only 6:30 pm, but it is a school night and he knows that Ignis is preparing for the high school entrance exams.

And then that man is there, the one Prompto had photographed. He seems even taller, larger in person, black coat nearly sweeping to the floor and layers of scarves and a hood making him even more intimidating. “Friend from school?” he says quietly, and his voice is soft, like a liquid. It makes Prompto nervous.

“Yea he’s a grade below. Our classes did joint art projects sometimes.” Doesn’t skip a beat. Ignis is definitely as smart as the rumors say, smart and fast. Prompto hopes this guy won’t ask Ignis what his name is, because then it could get awkward.

He doesn’t though. Instead he directs the question to Prompto himself. “Ah, you look a bit familiar. Do I know your parents, perhaps?”

Prompto can only stare. He’s got an accent that he can’t quite place. The man is attractive. He can recognize that as a fact, and he understands a bit why Ignis was, is, attracted to him. But he also knows that it’s power. He’s manipulating everyone around him all the time. “Dunno.”

“You’re from Niflheim, no?” he says calmly.

“No, I’m not,” he snaps too fast, offended. “I’m Insomnian!”

“Oh huh,” he breathes out, still smiling in that empty way, and then he loses interest. “Come,” he murmurs then, leans low over Ignis. He doesn’t touch him, but the closeness makes Prompto’s skin crawl, as if he were the one being spoken to. It’s like he owns him.

And he watches Ignis shrink, ever so slightly, and turn to follow him. He shoots Prompto one last look, confused, angry, curious, desperate. He can’t place it, and as he’s still trying to figure it out he watches the red-headed man raise a hand and brush it against Ignis’ backside.
Maybe writing to Lady Lunafreya again isn’t enough this time. Maybe he should speak to the Prince.

**Part 3, Chapter 7 - Ignis**

He falls fast and he falls hard after that.

Ardyn all but lives in Insomnia. He picks Ignis up nearly every day, takes him out to dinner and events, answers his every question about anything and everything Ignis can think to ask, and then takes him back to the hotel for sex that Ignis sometimes thinks might be *lovemaking*. The sex continues to be good, gentle. For the most part, anyway.

He skips class. He stays out all night. He can’t control himself, can’t fight the dizzying intoxication he has unexpectedly found beneath Ardyn. They fuck so often Ignis loses count, their naked bodies entangled every moment they are behind closed doors. He’d even followed the man into the restaurant bathroom once, smirking mischievously at him as he’d locked the door, and Ardyn had lifted him onto the sink, ordered him to stay quiet, and promptly sucked his dick. And he fondles him in the car sometimes, making Ignis squirm and pant while the driver pointedly ignores the fact that a grown man is pushing a thirteen-year-old to orgasm in the backseat. There were other times, less comfortable, like when Ardyn had come on his face, rubbed against him until he couldn’t breathe and made him feel somehow more degraded than he’d ever felt. Or when he followed him into the shower and took him against the wall, bruises on his shoulderblades and a bump on the back of his head from the hardness of the tiles. Or when he’d produced a toy and ordered him to push it into himself, to leave it there while they went out for dinner to stretch him out before sex. Or the time he got too rough and fucked him without preparing him, like he used to do. But otherwise, he’s nice. And even then, he’s nice. Apologetic, gentle afterwards, suggesting that the pain and discomfort were never intentional.

Ignis doesn’t quite believe him, but he wants to believe it. He has nothing else to believe, no one else to trust.

The man threatens to take him back to Gralea more than once. Ignis never knows how to react to that. But he’s lonely. He’s terrified and anxious and Ardyn is the only person he can speak to about it, the only person who can understand. He might as well live up to the stereotype that’s been forced upon him. Whore. Slut. Controlled by his hormones, his urges, his needs. A useless hindrance to society. Only good for sex and breeding.

It’s almost easier to just accept that.

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Ignis is still sitting in his lap, off his cock but sitting in the slick and cum pooled between the man’s thighs. It would disgust him in another life, but he was so violently and abruptly introduced to the world of sex that he’s nearly immune to it now. He was never given the opportunity to be shy or squeamish. Except for whenever he thinks about how much slick he produces, even in the middle of class when he’s only thinking about Ardyn. He has seven pairs of specialized undergarments now, as he needs them every day. *A byproduct of this.* Just as the ongoing nausea, the exhaustion, the low-grade fever he’s beginning to think he’s imagining, the aches and pains and momentary bursts of blurred vision. All normal.

Ardyn’s stroking his belly. He’s been doing that a lot recently, more and more, brushing against him even in public to flick a finger out, press against the layers Ignis wears to hide it from everyone
else. It’s still easily hideable, probably not noticeable to others, but the swell is enough for the two of them. Ardyn can’t stop staring these days. “Think it’s a boy or a girl?”

The question startles him and he half-turns, squirms in his lap until he’s facing him. “Dunno. Everything I can find about how to tell without a doctor isn’t for...people like me.” Because it’s assumed omegas will be going to doctors regularly. Ignis has never asked him about going to a doctor; he’s too nervous to.

“I want a girl,” Ardyn pats his stomach, fingers his naval which is no longer so much an indent these days. He doesn’t ask what Ignis wants, perhaps because he doesn’t matter. The boy hasn’t dared ask if he still plans to kill him at the end of the pregnancy, even now that things seemed to have calmed down, seemed to almost be going well.

He could ask, but he doesn’t. “Why?”

“When we were at the natural history museum last week, and you were studying the photography exhibit while I was resting? A man saw me watching you, made the wrong assumption. He said he, too, had a son who was an omega, and he spoke of how difficult it was, of how he was always worried, even more so than he worried about his daughter.”

It’s the longest thing he’s ever said that wasn’t about sex or politics or history. There’s too much happening there. He’s learned these last few months to simply pretend he hasn’t heard many things Ardyn says, but he can’t resist, “Did you correct him?”

“No.”

Unusual for Ardyn, who clearly enjoys unsettling others, making outrageous claims and leaving the room with everyone startled and on edge. The fact that he didn’t suggests that Ardyn was put off by the situation. Rare. “Are you ashamed of me?”

The hand slides up his belly, his chest, neck, a gently threatening grip on his chin as Ardyn tilts his face up and brushes against his lips. “Are you of me?”

*Answer the damn question.* It bothers him that he doesn’t, but he likes the way Ardyn’s looking at him, the way that *he* seems to care what *Ignis* thinks. Ignis has gotten used to his feelings being irrelevant.

“No.” He’s more than ashamed; he’s terrified.

“You swear a lot, mention the Astrals. It’s kind of irreverent.” He’s curled against Ardyn, belly resting on his hip, cheek on his chest, the blankets a heap on top of him. It’s far too hot for so many blankets, but the air conditioner is on too high and Ignis is soaked in sweat from the sex and shivering. He likes the comfort of the blankets, even if Ardyn is still right next to him.

“Am I supposed to revere them?”

“Don’t you believe in them?” It’s brave of him, to ask such a bold question, but Ardyn has been more chatty with him recently and Ignis is desperate for the contact, the affection, the closeness he feels when the older man opens up to him.

“Whether I believe in them or not, they won’t go away. Only a fool refuses to believe in something that has a physical presence.”
This irritates him, somehow. The idiot knows perfectly well what he’s asking, and while even now, he can’t find the strength to even meet his eyes, to tell him off, to threaten him with all the armies in Insomnia if Ardyn does something sexual to him that he dislikes, he can find words on his tongue when they are just talking about nothing. “Don’t dodge the question. Do you have faith in them?”

“Faith, no. What about you?”

“If they had any power, this wouldn’t have happened. They would have protected me from you.” He says it smiling, says it to be funny even if he means what he says. His faith in the gods dwindled dramatically in the months that followed his first violation, and while things are better now, he’s still leery of deities that would allow such a thing to happen.

This makes him laugh, and Ignis flinches despite himself, despite having wanted to make him laugh. “It is puzzling, isn’t it?”

Ignis only grunts, shrugs in response.

“Let’s not talk about them any longer. In fact, I forbid you to talk about them in my presence.”

He nods quickly. He knows what it means to disobey him. Nothing that bad has happened recently, but it’s always in the back of his mind. Things can only go well for so long, after all this is his fault, and he doesn’t miss the flash of anger in Ardyn’s voice.

“Though I appreciate you no longer believing they can help you. They won’t. No one can help you but me.” Fingers curling around the back of his neck now, stroking his glands. It feels good and Ignis squirms, ducks and kisses those fingers, feels them slide into his mouth and then he’s sliding down, down into the sheets and there is a weight rolling on top of him and the only name he prays to is Ardyn Ardyn Ardyn.

- 

“You’ll be away from Insomnia for three nights, no?”

He nods, unsure where Ardyn is going with this but feeling the unease rising in him. He focuses harder on his math homework, something Ardyn had glanced at only to snort and roll his eyes. I can assure that that will not be useful even if you live a thousand years unless you make a point to become a mathematician, an engineer, an utter waste of that pretty clever brain of yours. A tap on the back of his head turning into a caress. He likes being praised by him.

“So nobody here would expect you to be around. It doesn’t appear as if anyone is making an effort to check in on you very often. You could make some sort of excuse to the school, and then they wouldn’t expect you either.”

“Why would I do that?”

Ardyn gently presses a hand to his mouth, pinches his jaw and shushes him. “You know why. So I can take you for a few nights. Perhaps to Gralea? Or anywhere else you are interested? I have a particular fondness for Galdin myself but…”

He gently pushes his hand away, knowing better than to be too assertive. “Maybe I want to be with my friends.” He regrets the words the moment he speaks them and purses his lips. He wonders if he should drop his left hand below the table, touch Ardyn’s groin as he’d learned to do when he snaps too fast, says the wrong thing. I’m sorry. Let’s have sex. I’ll suck your dick.
He barely has any friends. He’d never gotten on very well with kids his own age, but he was friendly enough and had boys he could joke with and relax with from time to time, but now the rift has grown to something that is no longer bridgeable. Gladio, who is bound to him out of duty more than anything these days, their orbits drifting ever since Ignis manifested as a beta. Noctis, who is more a brother than a friend, and so little besides. He likes Crowe quite a bit, and Nyx and Libertus when they aren’t being idiots, but they’re much too old for him to spend that much time with, and they aren’t his classmates. Immigrants, outcasts, the only sorts who will associate with an omega, and the sorts who don’t go to expensive, elite private junior high schools.

And Ardyn knows all of this; the look on his face makes it clear that he recalls all that Ignis had admitted to him over the months. He sighs, takes his face in his hands and leans in, kisses him softly. “I’m sorry.”

Ignis doesn’t know what he’s apologizing for.

- 

Ardyn had all but thrown him onto the hotel room’s desk when they’d gotten into the room, pressed him down onto his back and leaned over him and kissed him again and again, nuzzled and bit at his marking until Ignis had positively howled for him.

And then he’d carried him to bed.

The sex was good, as it had been these last three weeks. Minimal pain and no mention of the threats hanging over Ignis’ head. He feels drunk afterwards, braver than usual, and so he dares to ask Ardyn a question he’s been dwelling on.

“How do you heal me? I know you don’t use potions.”

Ardyn smirks at that, rolls onto his back and readjusts as he closes his eyes, sated and satisfied. “I have my own well of magic, though you’ve guessed that already, no?”

*Magic.* Ignis still hasn’t used his, not since that first night with Ardyn. It’s starting to complicate the Kingsglaive training, but he’s been to terrified to even try, as he fears it’s gone for good. But as far as he knew, only the king had any magic to offer out. “From who?”

Ardyn shrugs as best he can. “The Empire has its own sources. Not quite the same, but we have something. You know that though, the magitech and so on?”

“I didn’t think healing was possible…” Because it seemed too good, too pure.

“It is, though I have many other skills, too. I like illusions, myself.”

Ignis glances at him sharply. Illusions, so similar to the Lucis Caelum line. “Prove it.”

Only then does Ardyn crack an eye open. “I’m wearing one now. I always do, when I take my clothing off.”

“Faking the size of your dick?” The crude words spill out before he can stop them. He’s too relaxed, treating Ardyn almost like the way he treats Gladio. A friend. Wrong, so wrong. He feels sick for a moment, an overwhelming sense of vertigo as if he were leaving his own body.

But if Ardyn notices him pale, he doesn’t mention it. He only rolls over again, back onto his stomach, and suddenly he is *different.*
A web of lines cover his back, some thick, some thin, all raised and discolored. Clearly no simple illusion, not only visual but tangible, because Ignis has clawed that back bloody many a time now and never has he felt a thing. He traces the scars, for that is what they are, slowly, feels their edges, the bumps and ridges all over his back. It makes him shudder, knowing that the man who has hurt him so badly is so unexpectedly damaged himself. His Alpha. His bonded mate. He’d kept this secret from him.

“What are they from? What happened?” He asks, but he can guess.

“A whipping.”

“I deduced as much. But why?” and then, “I’m your omega,” he says indignantly. He doesn’t have to explain it. Omegas exist to care, to nurture. He should know all of Ardyn’s weaknesses and care for them.

“Then I’ll tell you someday,” he flicks a finger out, brushes against his chin.

For the first time, he can suddenly imagine a someday with him, a future not filled with pain and terror, and he laughs. He spreads his hands flat over that back and runs his hands up, squeezes Ardyn’s shoulders and slowly lays himself over that broad body, curls up against his warmth and kisses his neck. I’m your omega.

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As these three weeks pass, Ignis lets himself believe that the world is holding still for him.
Chapter 3|8 - Noctis, Ignis (*)

Chapter Summary

Noctis confronts Ignis about his concerns. Ignis discovers what it means to be fully bonded.

Chapter Notes

This one took a long time because of a few paragraphs in Ignis' part of the chapter... the rest of it was done ages ago but I'm still new to omegaverse fics so I am nervous writing certain parts ahaha. This chapter features Noctis and of course, Ignis! The grooming and abuse continue to intensify, and the fic will keep getting darker for the next few chapters/rest of part 3, as a heads-up. As usual, thank you for reading and commenting <3!

Part 3, Chapter 8 – Noctis

It’s getting harder and harder to keep secrets, especially with the way Ignis keeps skipping off all the time. Not even showing up to school sometimes, crawling back to the apartment after midnight, if at all. So he’s getting a little pissed at this point. Ignis barely spends any time with him now, which he would have loved six months ago. He’s not so sure now though, especially because of who he’s with.

As Ignis opens the front door, Noctis shoots him a dirty look. “You smell like that guy,” he grumbles.

Ignis freezes a moment, hands poised to take his scarf off, and for a moment Noctis thinks he looks scared. “What do you mean?”

“He’s wearing his cologne. Probably ‘cause you’re wearing his clothing.”

He relaxes then, and he’s obvious about it, like he was afraid Noctis was thinking of something else, which makes him think… “Are you doing more stuff with him?”

“I’m sharing his bed, if that’s what you’re asking.”

“Ugh,” he wrinkles his nose and turns away. Gross. He’d figured that was going on, but to hear it was somehow….dirty. He didn’t like that guy, not at all. He hurt Ignis pretty bad earlier, even if Ignis seems okay about it now. He doesn’t want to think about Ignis like that either. It’s almost as gross as thinking about his parents being like that, not that he remembers his mother that well anymore. Anyway, he hasn’t had the sex class in school yet, but he’s heard enough in class hallways and online chatrooms to know that omegas sometimes have trouble controlling themselves, that sometimes they make mistakes about boyfriends and aren’t so good about getting
out of it. So he’s a little embarrassed to ask, “Is everything okay?”

“I’m fine. He’s… spoiling me, and I’m happy right now.” Hands pulling the scarf up to his face as he hides the blush rising in his cheeks. It’s gross, seeing him like that, and a little sad, seeing him so happy over someone who made him cry. But Ignis has been happy recently, overwhelmingly so, which makes him smell nice. Comforting and safe and…

“Can’t you get pregnant though?”

“Uhn....”

Ignis acts instinctively, moving fast for once in his short life with a lazy leg. He jumps forward, pushes against Ignis’ shoulders and presses him back to the door before tugging his coat up and poking at his belly. Ignis is startled, slow to respond, and by then Noctis has his shirt untucked and even that pulled up.

He stares, unable to process it a moment. With that monster?

“You are. You are. You’re already pr-“

Ignis slaps a hand over his mouth so fast that Noctis is stunned into silence. He hadn’t even realized he was yelling. “Shhh, shhh… Yes, I am. Be quiet please, okay? We can talk about it but be quiet.”

He looks, sounds so scared that Noctis immediately obeys, and when Ignis drops his hand, he says the first thing that comes to his mind in a hoarse whisper. “Your belly button is flat. Can I touch it?”

Ignis looks pale but there is sweat beading on his forehead, like he’s really scared. And he’d been so happy only a few seconds ago. He nods once, then takes Noctis’ hand and gently presses it to him. His skin is warm, like he has a fever, and Noctis narrows his eyes. It feels funny, soft and firm at the same time. “It’s a little bump.” He’d always thought pregnant people got big fast.

“Yea it only really grows fast the last couple of months.” Then he’s tugging at Noctis again, pulling him away from the front door and down the hall to his bedroom.

A minute later they’ll settled on his bed, Ignis dropping his jacket to the floor and folding his legs beneath him as he scoots back towards the pillows. He puts his hands on Noctis’ shoulders and squeezes. “You can’t tell anyone. Please, please. I can’t let anybody know yet.”

Can’t, can’t, can’t. He still can’t understand this. Ignis being an omega has been kind of nice because of all the attention he’s been getting now, but being pregnant? That’s too much. And he’s thirteen. Acts older but he’s still a kid, right? “Don’t you hafta go to a doctor?”

“I went. I didn’t need anyone’s permission because I’m thirteen. Everything’s fine, I promise. Just… I don’t want to get in trouble.”

“You won’t. Dad never gets mad at me so I’ll tell him he can’t get mad at you either.” He’s pretty certain he’d be successful. He can protect Ignis for once, not like... And then “You gonna quit then? You can still live here.” Because it suddenly occurs to him that Ignis might stop being his adviser, might not have time anymore.

“No, no. I’m… I might put the baby up for adoption. He thinks he wants to keep it though, so we’re looking at our options. I didn’t want an abortion, but I won’t be trying to raise it; he understands my situation and age.”
Surprising. He narrows his eyes and wonders if Ignis is lying. He doesn’t lie a lot, only when he thinks he’s protecting Noctis. Which this sounds like. Way too much. “Why not? You’d be a good mom. Annoying though.”

“Because you’re my priority. And I want to finish school. I want…”

Too many surprising things are happening, and Noctis has to blink a few times, process what’s happening, to realize that suddenly Ignis is crying. Even weirder than him being pregnant. And very very scary, because Ignis always knows what to do. Ignis is always brave. Ignis always acts so much older than he really is. Which might be why he thought he could do this.

He awkwardly rubs his back, wonders if he should hug him.

“Keep it a secret. You have to, you have to, you have to…”

He worries it’s too big to keep a secret, but he’s never done anything on his own, never had to really step up and help anyone else. So he can do this. Though he also just wants him to stop crying because it’s really freaking him out. He knows this is bad, knows there’s something happening here that’s too big for him, too big for Ignis, but he wants to be brave and he wants Ignis to stop. “I’ll never tell anyone. I’ll be quiet.”

“Thank you.” Words half choked out because he’s hiding his face in his hands now, shaking he’s crying so hard. It hits Noct then that Ignis’ fear here is irrational, and he wonders if it’s really just the king that he’s afraid of.

Noctis really doesn’t know what to do now, so he keeps touching his back and awkwardly blurts out, “If that kid has red hair and glasses…. Poor thing.”

Part 3, Chapter 8 - Ignis

The world can only hold still for so long.

He thinks he can handle it, thinks he can adjust to this new life, this double life that can forever remain a double life, the two parts never crossing, never interrupting one another. A part of him nagged, sunk claws into his brain and tore at him whenever he slept. In the back of his mind is the memory of when he’d first been raped. He knows now that everything leading up to that moment had been wrong, inappropriate and dangerous, and Ardyn had even warned him.

It won’t work, it won’t work. He’s a demon who destroyed your life and now he’s controlling you. Because in sleep, he has nightmares, even right beside Ardyn in that hotel bed he has ceased to see as a place of torment. Something will go wrong eventually. It’s unavoidable. It’s only the way life is. Your fate as an omega who couldn’t control his urges.

Because even if Ardyn was genuinely kind to him, even if everything had been consensual all along, he is the Chancellor of Niflheim, a fact that he has had to try very hard to ignore. He’s the enemy, the mastermind behind a war machine intent on crushing Insomnia in the near future, as pleasant as he seems. Politics are politics. Ignis well understands nationalism, even if Ardyn’s comments seem to betray a certain affection for Lucis. Posturing for Ignis, perhaps, or maybe he can be swayed. Maybe being father to a child who is a Lucian citizen will change his attitudes. Maybe something good can come out of this after all. Maybe he can present his child to the King without shame.
This is what he clings to.

Last week, Ardyn had admitted to renting out the hotel room by the month, so even on nights he wasn’t in Insomnia, Ignis was welcome to stay. Ignis had never taken him up on that, though he had stopped by, once. Once. Had stopped by after school and let himself in and rubbed up against whatever he could, snapped selfies of himself in various filthy situations and texted them to Ardyn – come back to Insomnia – without a second thought. Ardyn made him forget himself and it was exhilarating.

It’s time to go back now, to spend the entire day there alone and do what he’s felt the urge to do ever since they had good sex. Ignis had already told his teachers he wouldn’t be in school, had forged a doctor’s note and mentioned that it was an omega appointment. That was all he needed to say; they didn’t ask omegas questions. Expectations for him had suddenly dropped, and his teachers never said a word to him about all of the missed classes recently. An alarming percentage of omegas, especially boys, dropped out of high school. Ignis had once hoped to the King’s General, but now he would be exceeding societal expectations by getting a high school diploma, or even getting into high school at all.

Which makes him feel less bad about skipping school. He’s ahead in all of his classes as it is, and he’s learning more from Ardyn than he is at school. Not just about sex, not just about history or politics or chess, but about himself. Recently he’s made Ignis feel good about being an omega. He’s skipping now because Ardyn’s coming back to Insomnia tonight and Ignis wants the hotel suite to be ready for him. He wants to surprise him.

With a nest.

He’s left things here. Clothing, especially fresh underwear, school books he didn’t want to drag home, homework. He collects what clothing he’s left there, what he still has in his backpack, towels in the bathroom from last night that hadn’t been washed yet, extra bedsheets from the closet, Ardyn’s clothes that he leaves in the closet now. Room service hasn’t been cleaning every single day at the older man’s request, which means everything smells nice. Very nice. And even though it’s the summer, Ardyn wears just as many layers as does Ignis, so he has a lot to work with. He collects everything, arranges it on the bed, rearranges and shapes everything until it’s to his liking, and then he curls up in it.

He does this four times before he feels that he has it right, and then he curls up to wait.

“I knew you’d be here eventually,” Ardyn only calls from the front door, the clink of keys falling to the table. “Waiting when I got here.”

Ignis isn’t sure if he’s disappointed or not. Predictable. He uncurls, realizing only then he’d been clutching his belly, and gets out of bed, steps into the living area. His mate is still standing at the front door, gently nudging Ignis’ 23-centimeter shoes with his own foot.

For a half a moment, because then he is in front of him and Ignis is half-stumbling back. Nobody moves that fast but for the King himself, not even Noctis. But he must have lost a few seconds somewhere, a momentary gap in his awareness just like all the others he’s had recently. So he smiles up at Ardyn and says nothing.

Ardyn gently catches his arm, pulls him in and inhales. “You smell even better than usual. A little
different. Did you…?”

He blushes. He knows he has a distinct scent, releases certain pheromones now. It’s normal, something all omegas and all Alphas experience, but he still can’t help but be a little embarrassed when someone mentions it. Even if it’s a nice smell, calming and comforting for most, sometimes arousing for Ardyn. It hadn’t occurred to him that making a nest would make him smell different.

“I made a nest. I had one at home, like a little one in my bed that I’d rest in sometimes. I wanted to have one here that I could share with you.” What he’d had in his head sounded better, more formal, but he’d gotten excited and forgotten everything. He waves his free hand aimlessly in the general direction of the bed, only to have both of his arms grabbed and sharply wrenched forward. Ardyn has him by the biceps, pulled in close as he leans over him.

“You nested for me?”

“Yes…” He glances down nervously. The hands on his upper arms hurt. It’s been a long time since Ardyn hurt him. Not quite true. The sex always hurts. But he’s careful now. He apologizes. This seems different, and it makes him squirm.

“I imagine it’s rather cute, a beginner’s nest,” but he says it gently, so unlike the way he is holding him, and then he is pushing Ignis back through the doorway and towards the bed.

He winces, and for a moment he feels a flash of panic because there is a hunger in Ardyn’s eyes that reminds him of that first time, when he... He shuts the memory down, and when he feels the bed against the back of his legs he sits, relieved at the momentary release of his arms as he rolls back onto the bed and curls into his nest. It smells good and suddenly his fear is pushed aside just as his memories were. Ardyn follows, pulls his legs up onto the bed and lays back before curling around him. Now he’s clearly making an effort to behave, to not move too quickly, to not grab Ignis, which leaves the boy purring and reaching for him, forgetting everything. He’s gotten very good at forgetting. It’s the easiest way to survive.

He wriggles against him, does what he can to be as close as possible and contentedly rubs his belly against Ardyn’s. Sixteen weeks, still small enough to hide, but large enough to be obvious when he’s naked. He likes this, likes it a lot, and he presses his face to the scar on Ardyn’s neck and sighs. Three of us, there’s three of us. For the first time, he thinks he might not be afraid of the thing inside of him. Hands rubbing up and down his back now, fingers slipping down the crack of his ass and coming away wet, slicked up. “Not yet,” he growls softly, digging his nails gently into Ardyn’s chest. “I want to enjoy this a little longer.”

Ardyn laughs, the growl low in his chest that Ignis can feel in his bones.

And he does enjoy it for another fifteen, twenty minutes until neither of them can stand it any longer, until they’re tearing into one another’s clothing and Ignis is laughing, nuzzling against him and nipping at his mark until the man sinks fingers into him.

The sex is exquisite, different than all the other times before because he fucked him in the nest, which somehow drove Ignis into an even greater frenzy. Strange, how the same act, the same base, animalistic act, can be so unique every time it happens. Only one thing doesn’t change, the way Ardyn growls softly when he pushes or pulls Ignis off of him, an act he never does quickly, as if unwilling to leave his warmth.

So Ignis waits for it, wriggles his hips and sighs and meets his gaze expectantly.
But it doesn’t happen. It doesn’t feel good anymore. It hurts, hurts badly, and it takes him a moment to understand. He’s knotting. Ardyn’s cock is bigger than his forearm as it is. He’s never seen his knot before, never dared to ask how big he could get. But he knows that he’s too small, that even his dick is too big, that no matter how prepared he is, even regular sex hurts a lot and he needs to be healed afterwards, so a knot might… *It must be an accident. He might not have realized yet.* It takes a minute to fully swell, maybe longer. He has time. “Stop,” he plants the heels of his hands against Ardyn’s chest and pushes. “Let me off.”

“Too late,” a snarl in his ear and hands suddenly pressing down on his hips, forcing him still as he keeps going. It doesn’t sound like he’s surprised, like he hadn’t realized it.

*He’s doing this on purpose. He’s going to fully knot.* He tries to breathe, tries to contain the rising panic, the growing pain. *It won’t be so bad. My body is made for this. We are compatible. I am carrying his child. I’ve learned to cope with the sex, my body adjusting, muscles loosening… but it’s impossible and his breathing picks up the pace, the shallowness. He feels agonizingly tight now, swollen, as if his guts were being forced out of him and for a moment the baby crosses his mind. He can’t handle this, and his voice cracks as he struggles to find words. “Why? Why? What’d I do?”*

“Nest,” he hisses. “Can’t control… it.”

*Nest. You did this, you excited him, reminded him in such an intimate way that you are his mate and you want to be with him, it’s your fault, you made him lose control just as you have every other time, just as you seduced him and made him want you again and again and…. And more pain, a sharper pain now, exquisite, things breaking free inside of him, and he’s terrified for the baby. He screams then, screams loudly, lashes out at Ardyn and tries to tear himself off.*

Ardyn can’t even lean away from him. He accepts the claws, the frantic shoves, and only snaps out, “Knots last anywhere from thirty minutes to an hour. You just have to wait it out. If you keep struggling you’re going to rupture something or hurt the baby.”

He doesn’t want to hurt the baby, doesn’t want to rupture anything, but the pain, the pain is worse than anything he’d ever felt before, worse than any of the sex they’d had, worse even than that first rape. His reaction is impulsive, reactionary, mindless, and he keeps struggling, forcing Ardyn to grab his wrists in one hand and a hip in the other, forcibly stilling him even as Ignis fights him.

It hurts, it hurts, as if his insides were being pushed out of him, crushed against his spine, up into his ribcage, against the skin of his belly until it bursts. The bodily abuse of a full-term pregnancy and birth occurring in a minute. He can’t stop screaming, reduced to the most base, animalistic reactions. Terror, one he knows won’t end for *over half an hour.* No rape he’s survived had ever lasted even half as long.

The air around him eventually fails him, and he thinks it might be better to not survive this.

- He’s drifting in and out of consciousness by the time Ardyn softens, deflates, and shoves him off of him. It’s not affectionate, not binding. Ardyn doesn’t kiss him, nuzzle his mark, stroke him, tell him he did good, speak to him – even his signature growl is missing – and Ignis can feel nothing through the pain but *discarded.*

He hears Ardyn swearing, hissing, and a part of him knows it’s because of *him* and feels bad for inconveniencing him. He failed him *again,* and it’s his duty as his mate to comfort him, isn’t it? But he can feel his heartbeat in his fingers, hear it, and something in his mind is protesting. *You’re*
“You struggled too much,” the voice breaks through his consciousness, “and you’re too damn weak and small. If the baby is hurt because of this….”

Help me, help me. He rasps out another sob when he suddenly feels a hand on him again, between his legs, and for one blind moment he fears it will happen again. Again. Another time will kill him. Ardyn really hurt him this time, ripped something inside of him. He knows this happened, knows something really bad happened and the only way he can get through it is if the one who did this heals him. He wants to ask, wants to beg, but he doesn’t have to, because there is suddenly a warmth, a familiar relief spreading through his veins, stinging and sparking throughout his body. He knows it for what it is now, magic, and he doesn’t care where it came from, only that it’s working. And he’s grateful. He wants to thank Ardyn, wants to be held by him because he knotted him, fully completed the bond between them, and then he healed him even though he hurt him.

And then the hand is on his belly, stroking and squeezing, and Ignis can only cover his face and whimper because he’d forgotten. Useless, unworthy to even be an omega just as you are unworthy to even be an adviser. You cared only for yourself and forgot, even as he warned you. The baby. “Is it…is it….”

“It’s alive. Fine.”

He would ask how he knows, but he can’t find the words. He’s only relieved, relieved. And guilty, because he brought this upon himself, upon his young. Somehow this makes him burst into tears again.

The pain across his face is so sharp, so sudden that it takes him a moment to understand that he’d just been slapped. Hit viciously. It’s been a long time since Ardyn had hit him, and never like this.

So now it ends, what fragile consensus they’d found these last few weeks. And something even worse than before can begin instead. He should have expected it, should have known that this would happen.

“Stop crying,” Ardyn snarls. “You think I want this? To be bonded to a bitchy little entitled teenager? I can’t fuck anyone else now. I can’t get it up. I can’t sleep around anymore. And now, now the only person I can fuck is an inexperienced child who can barely reciprocate-”

The anger terrifies him. He can’t even speak. You raped me, you raped me, this is your fault, you started this, he wants to scream, but he can’t breathe. Other words are choking him. But I seduced you. I called you. I marked you. I asked for sex. I nested. And still. I’ve been trying to reciprocate. I’m learning. You’ve been happy. We’ve had fun the last couple of weeks. I started to feel like…like I… What did I do?

Ardyn grabs his chin, jerks him back towards him. “You’re useless. Do you think this has been an enjoyable experience for me? I admit you’re a little fun sometimes, but I have better things to do than babysit a little slut who forced my body to depend on him. It’s been nothing but frustrating since you marked me. You might briefly sate my most base appetite but you aren’t satisfying. I’ve had to be so careful with you recently, and if I’m not, you not only break but you cry, you go limp, you scream. Just. Like. Now.”

He shoves him back so viciously that Ignis nearly falls off of the bed, Ignis who can only stare speechlessly at him.

“I thought omegas were supposed to be resilient, sturdy. You can’t even survive a fuck without me
pampering you afterwards, much less a knot. I need engaging sex, creative sex. I wanted so much to enjoy you that first night, but I didn’t want to be stuck with you. Now I can’t get it up with anyone else and I desire you every second. I should kill you. And if you don’t learn how to stop being such a baby, I will, infant or no infant.”

He’s frozen. He works his jaw once. So it was all a lie? So you didn’t actually enjoy these last few weeks? He can’t believe it. The happiness he’d felt with him. He’d thought it was genuine. You don’t mean this. You’re just angry right now. You’re just… but Ardyn should love him right now, hold him and take care of him because they just knotted and that’s supposed to be a sign of affection, isn’t it?

He’d trusted him, just as he’d done it before, and this is what happened. Ardyn is talking again, snarling and railing at him until a few words break through the haze. “Do you understand?”

He nods. He doesn’t even know what Ardyn is saying to him, doesn’t know what he’s agreeing to, but still he nods, keeps his head down to hide the trembling of his lip, the tears in his eyes, the painful beginnings of a bruise on his cheek.

He understands.
Chapter 3|9 - Verstael, Ignis

Chapter Summary

Verstael gets an alarming request from the Chancellor as Ignis discovers a new horror.

Chapter Notes

A quicker update than usual! I introduce Verstael here (poor weirdo) and torment Ignis a little more. Two more chapters in Part 3, which is probably the darkest part of the story. As always, thank you for the continued readership. This fic ended up getting much longer and meaning a lot more to me than I ever anticipated, and I’m happy so many have been reading. <3

Part 3, Chapter 9 - Verstael

They’ve scarcely talked in recent weeks. The Chancellor’s been missing in action, prompting increasingly uncomfortable questions from the Emperor. Do you know where he’s been? Why isn’t he answering his phone? You two are…close, are you not? He’s been remarkably calm about the situation, as if he’d known that eventually Ardyn would flake out and pull a vanishing act – in which case he’s much more intelligent than Verstael had ever expected – but he’s still clearly irritated.

Which makes Verstael irritated. He doesn’t like being disrupted, harassed, especially when it has to do with Ardyn. Who he knows has been in and out of Insomnia recently with his mate. Verstael had felt a strange dull twinge in his chest when he had first heard the news, when the redhead had calmly told him that he was marked by, supposedly even bonded with a male omega living in Insomnia. Men. Ardyn was so inclined, and yet he had never turned to Verstael for all of his clear posturing. Then again, from what he’d seen, the object of Ardyn’s affections, or obsessions, or whatever they might be, was a thirteen-year-old boy named Ignis Scientia, a boy who was very probably raped, so perhaps that’s how Ardyn was. Verstael doubted they were actually bonded, as that required a mutual relationship, and Ardyn only lied about it to make the whole affair seem more civilized. Disgusting. He didn’t want to be with him, didn’t want the hassle and inconvenience that came with a relationship, but he’d have liked some attention.

Not the kind of attention he is getting right now, which is the asshole intruding in his lab without a warning, flopping himself onto Verstael’s desk after knocking a few books off of it.

“How far into a pregnancy does one have to be for the baby to be viable outside of the womb?”

Peculiar question, but Verstael is used to that by now; much of what falls out of Ardyn’s mouth is peculiar, disturbing, inappropriate, or sarcastic, though he still manages to be offended or disgusted by half of what Verstael himself says. He shrugs, making a concentrated effort not to howl about the reports underneath Ardyn’s ass. “Normally, six or seven months perhaps. In my lab, I could
probably save one at five months.”

“Because you grow babies in test tubes.”

He scowls, uncertain about the judgment in Ardyn’s comment. “Why do you need to know?” But he can suspect. Perhaps he is really bonded.

“My stupid little mate is sick, but I don’t want him going to a doctor.”

I knew it. He can’t stop the questions falling from him, can’t stop the tangible heat of excitement he feels burning through him. Something new. Something different. “So he really is bonded with you then? Pregnant? Low sperm count not a problem these days? And what sort of supplement have you been on that can combat the Scourge?”

“Silence,” he smiles pleasantly.

He’ll deal with that aspect later; he knows Ardyn enough to know he doesn’t want to discuss it right now. There’s too much to take in right now after all. “Taking him to the doctor would get messy. He’s very, very young, and I suspect the baby is…abnormal.”

“Exactly. Just as you’d like, I expect.”

“So you’re asking how long you need to keep him alive.”

“More or less. I don’t care if he dies.”

He’s known Ardyn a long time, and the fact that Ardyn even mentioned it makes him suspicious. “What’s wrong with him, exactly? And how far along?”

A shrug. “He’s weak and feverish all the time now. Fatigued. When I pushed him about it he admitted that his joints are sore and loose, his grip weaker, his vision blurring out sometimes. Aches and pains everywhere. He’s been vomiting for months but it’s gotten much worse recently, and he has a deep cough now. About halfway along, little over four months. He had mild symptoms all along but for a time I thought it was…normal. He’s very good at pretending he’s okay.”

“Some of that sounds a little odd, but I admit I haven’t personally studied pregnancies in male omegas before.” Though he’d love to, especially if this was the mate of Ardyn Izunia. “He’s probably just stressed and not taking care of himself.”

“I’ve been a healer for 2000 years. I know when someone is dying, and I know when someone has the Scourge. Ignis…” he trails off. He seems vaguely distressed. “My healing skills these days are limited as it is.”

This again. He claimed time and again he could no longer cure the Scourge, only everything else, something Verstael was suspicious of. Though if his mate was sick and he wasn’t doing anything about it, perhaps he had been being truthful after all. He still pushes. “Do you want him to die then?”

“Lately he’s made me rather angry, and I nearly told him…things he doesn’t need to know. He made me slip. I find the whole situation rather inconvenient, and even if we are compatible, the size and attitude that come with his age are problems. Being unable to have sex with anyone else while he’s alive is more than inconvenient.”

“Is there a but there?”
Ardyn shoots him a look as if he were a cockroach found in the kitchen sink. “There might be.”

It’s clear he isn’t going to say anything else, clear he won’t admit to perhaps caring a little about the boy. He’d always been very careful when talking about him, even as he flashed photos of his mate, always avoided explaining how he met him, how he courted him, what he did with him when he went to Insomnia. Verstael can’t imagine a boy that age would willingly agree to any of this. He sighs and shakes his head. He can’t keep the judgment out of his own voice. “You’re placing a very cruel burden on a child, not letting him go to the doctor, and it’s doubtful he can carry to full term and bear a healthy baby. Male omegas rarely can in this day and age, especially at thirteen.” Though if he does…. What an unusual specimen it would be, and how unusual little Ignis Scientia must be.

Ardyn ignores this. “The baby is alive. I felt it last night. And you will ensure that it survives even if Ignis doesn’t.”

“Will you bring him to me then?”

That disgusted look again. But he doesn’t say no.

Part 3, Chapter 9 – Ignis

Two months ago, he hadn’t thought it could be worse.

But now it’s been twice, twice that he’s trusted this man only to be betrayed by him. If he hadn’t deserved the suffering before, he certainly deserves it now; nobody else would be so stupid as to fall for it a second time.

When he’d agreed to whatever Ardyn had said that last night, he hadn’t even heard him. But now he knows that he’d nodded in acquiescence to Ardyn saying he wasn’t going to heal him any longer. He hadn’t heard it them, but he hears it now in his nightmares. You’re so ungrateful, I don’t know why I do this at all. Maybe if you aren’t healed every time, you’ll build scar tissue and it will be easier for you to take me. He’d agreed to it, hadn’t he? Ardyn had reminded him of it the first time he locked that hotel door again after that night. It had been a good two hours after sex before Ignis could walk without whimpering, and he’d endured the throbbing pain in his backside, the stabbing jolts whenever he walked or sat, for two days until he was fucked again and it could begin all over.

And it still keeps getting worse. Because Ardyn has been growing more and more volatile, more violent and unstable, unpredictable. It’s clear that he is purposefully hurting him sometimes, being more rough than usual, fucking him in strange places in painful positions, leaving heavy bruises on his hips and upper arms and thighs that he doesn’t heal, slapping him if he makes any noise. He’s stopped massaging his glands, leaving them swollen and painful even after sex, and he no longer cuddles or holds him. It’s brutal, relentless, dizzying.

His only reprieve is when Ardyn lets him shower afterwards, limp to the bathroom as fast as he can, so that he can curl up in the shower and sob, the sound of the water drowning it out. He knows his mate knows that’s what he’s doing, but thankfully he allows him this one indulgence. And Ignis is grateful for it.

Just as he is grateful for the rare instances where Ardyn does what he wants him to, which he’s silently praying will happen right now. Not that he genuinely prays anymore. The Astrals are all but dead to him by now.
He almost doesn’t ask him, but he’s more afraid of going home like this than he is of what Ardyn might say. “My summer school uniform has short sleeves.”

“And?” One of those bored looks tinged with disgust that Ignis is so used to now.

“I…” he nervously fingers the bruises on his lower arms and glances up at Ardyn for half a moment. The ones on his thighs, his ass, his hips, his chest, he can hide, but not these ones. He wishes Ardyn would just do it, not force him to ask. “Please heal these.”

Ardyn sighs and grabs his arms, healing magic snapping through his veins until Ignis feels no soreness in his wrists, sees no markings.

“Thank you,” Ignis sighs, pulling away from him, and he means it. He did all of this to himself, and these tiny gestures of humanity from the person he forced to be his mate are all he can ask for anymore.

“You really gotta see a doctor,” Noctis murmurs, rubbing his back as Ignis leans against the wall beside the toilet, gasping for air. The first few times he’d thrown up in front of the younger boy, Noctis had balked. He still makes a show of holding his nose, but he’s adjusted to it quickly enough, and his concern for Ignis makes the older boy anxious. But at the same time it’s a relief, having this little bit of comfort.

“I really can’t,” he whispers finally.

“It’s not because you’re scared of my dad, is it? You’re scared of that guy.”

He doesn’t answer. There’d been a scene a couple of weeks ago, after the knotting incident when Ignis had come home a terrified mess, a scene Ignis has tried very hard to forget because he had scared Noctis, the worst thing an adviser can possibly be doing.

“We can protect you. I don’t think one asshole matters against the entire Crownguard.”

“Don’t swear,” he mumbles, relieved that Noctis allowed him to lapse into his old self for a moment. The sentiment is cute, but naïve. Noctis can never know that this asshole is the Chancellor of the one nation powerful enough to obliterate Insomnia, a nation very eager to do that very thing. Ignis fears the king trying to protect him just as much as he fears the king disowning him. “And it’s not that. He wouldn’t hurt me.”

“That why don’t you ever go to the bath with me anymore? You always used to say it’s important to go to the hot tub in the summer. Good for your health.”

Ignis groans. He hadn’t thought that Noctis, oblivious Noctis, would notice such things. “Even when we use the private tub, I can’t do hot baths with the baby.”

True enough, thankfully, and he’s grateful that Noctis asked a question he had a reasonable answer to. The younger boy is suspicious enough as it is of how sick he is. Because he’s also half-fainting often now, his legs giving out beneath him. It crosses his mind more than once that when Ardyn healed him after sex, he also healed the worst of the symptoms of the pregnancy. Because that’s all this can be. A difficult pregnancy. Even though on all of the forums and medical websites he browses late at night, nobody else seems to be having this many problems unless they have a severe chronic illness to begin with. He tries to tell himself that’s all it is. After all, lately he hasn’t been throwing up only because he feels sick. He’s been doing it on purpose because without being healed any longer, this is the least painful way to expel food waste. Idiotic. He knows it’s
dangerous, unhealthy, liable to cause permanent damage, but it’s not like he has long to live anyway.

Noctis only sighs, then passes him a glass of water. “Hurry up and brush your teeth. I’m tired.”

He wants to sleep with Ignis nearly every night now, nest or no nest, fuss over him more than he’s ever seemed to fuss over anything in his life, rub and poke at his belly and incessantly ask if he needs anything. The older boy has a sneaking suspicion it’s not because he wants to, but because he’s worried about him. Somehow, Noctis has become the caretaker to his caretaker.

Just another way Ignis has failed him.

Seventeen days after the knotting, Ardyn changes the game again. Because as soon as he pushes Ignis into the hotel bedroom he now sees every time he closes his eyes, Ardyn leans in towards his ear and whispers, “You bore me now.”

Ignis feels the inside of his stomach drop.

“Maybe I don’t want to touch you anymore. Maybe I don’t particularly need you anymore.”

“What?” He finally chokes out the word, instinctively touching his stomach.

“That thing should be able to survive without you soon enough. And…” And then he’s not Ardyn. He’s Ignis, and Ignis is staring at himself, a form of himself now speaking Ardyn’s words with his voice. He’s hallucinating. He must be. Because Ardyn must be able to use illusions. And he suddenly remembers the way Ardyn moved so fast the day he’d knotted him. There’s something wrong here. Very very wrong, but he doesn’t have the time to decipher it.

Ignis, Ardyn, whoever he is, touches his face now, and Ignis flinches away from the softness of the hand. Is he really so small, so soft and young? He feels old, adult, scarred and calloused and falling to pieces, and he wonders if Ardyn’s image of him is even accurate even as the man keeps talking.

“Because we are fully bonded, because you made a mistake when you tried to kill me, I can do this now with the same magic I used to heal you with. I can simply replace you, get close to the royal family. I can kill everyone you love. I can bring Insomnia to its knees thanks to your selfish little mistake.”

No. No, no, no. I brought this upon myself, upon Noctis, upon Insomnia. I stupidly thought someone else could save me from what I did, and now I’ve brought an even worse nightmare… There’s only one thing he can do. “Please. I’ll do anything. I’ll go with you to Gralea right now. I’ll be your whore. I’ll give you as many children as you wish. Just don’t...” Don’t use that illusion ever again. Don’t harm Noctis. Don’t hurt the king. Don’t destroy my world more than you already have.

“I can do all of that anyway. You’re in no position to bargain, boy.”

He doesn’t know how he finds the fire, the courage, to spit the next words. “Then why aren’t you doing it anyway? Why should I obey you when you’ll probably...kill everyone anyway?”

His mouth – or is it Ignis’ mouth? – twitches in a smile then, feral and dangerous but hardly angry, and Ignis remembers that sometimes, sometimes, Ardyn likes when he’s like this. “You don't know that I will. You only know that I will do so if you disobey.”

He can’t answer that, can only stare numbly at himself. He’d heard of illusory magic before, had
seen more basic versions cast by some of the Glaives, but this is something else, something unfathomable, reprehensible, blasphemous. Only the Astrals should have this kind of power. *Or people the Astrals have blessed.* He wishes he’d pushed Ardyn more about his identity when they were on better terms.

“And you’re cute. If you please me, I might forgive what you just said, as well as...this.” A finger to the mark on his neck. “I might let you live.”

*If you please me.* He doesn’t know what that means, and he knows that Ardyn won’t tell him until Ignis accidentally violates one of the unspoken rules, and then he will be punished, beaten and threatened.

He strokes his face gently then. “If I let you live though, I will take you up on that little offer you just so kindly extended.” And then his hands are wandering down his body, over his groin as fingers that Ignis had always recognized as his own are unzipping his fly, tugging his pants down and fondling him. He’s never felt so violated, and he is reminded again, and again, and again, that Ardyn can *always* make it worse.

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