**If You Want**

by **Evilpixie**

**Summary**

Wherein Bruce is an omega and Clark is his alpha and bond mate. But one decision turns their lives, at those of their pack mates, upside down.

**Notes**

As always; this story is set in the 'Omega Verse'. If you are unfamiliar with the concept please have a quick peek at this prior to reading. It really set me straight in terms of this whole thing. Also note that I have taken a few liberties with the trope. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to throw them my way.

Also, this story is part of a series but as before I am going to try and make it assessable to new readers as well so if you would like to jump in here, you're very welcome to do so. For those returning after 'In the Dark' and 'Ties that Bind', you are awesome.

I hope you enjoy!
They had been together three years when Bruce finally agreed to try nesting in Clark’s apartment. He’d never seen Bruce set up nest before and it was strangely intimate to be allowed to watch as he paced the length of the flat, moved furniture inexplicably from one place to another, and distractedly ran the curtains up against his neck; adding his scent to Clark’s and redefining the territory as theirs.

He knew omegas often did odd things when they were setting up a new nest. It was oddly comforting to know, in this at least, Bruce wasn’t any different. Clark watched as he spent two hours irritably moving a lamp from one side of the room and back, disassembled and rebuilt the dining table, and boiled an obscene amount of water which was left to cool before being tipped distractedly down the sink.

It wasn’t until he started to move the bed from the bedroom that Clark intervened.

“Where are you taking that?”

“The living room,” Bruce answered gruffly as he hauled the frame towards the door seemingly oblivious to the fact it wouldn’t fit.

“Why?”

He paused.

“I rather like it in the bedroom,” Clark said encouragingly. “It looks nice.”

Bruce seemed to consider this then shook his head. “It feels wrong.”

“It feels wrong?”

“Yes,” Bruce snapped.
“Care to elaborate?” Clark tried.

“It feels wrong. I... I can’t explain it. Just help me.” Resumed his haul.

With a sigh Clark pulled the mattress off, propped the frame under his arm, and flew out the large sliding glass door onto the balcony. Drifted in through a similar door into the living room and lowered the wooden structure onto the ground. Bruce walked in and stared at it, chewing his bottom lip.

“There,” he pointed.

Clark obeyed.

“Towards me.”

“Like this?”

“No, not directly... yes that’s...” he hesitated. “No, that doesn’t feel... move it over there.”

Clark did as he was told, secretly relishing Bruce’s obvious... omeganess. It was a rare treat to see the other man exhibit any conventional expression of his sexual caste let alone one so domestic.

He hadn’t expected the man to want to change furniture but, in retrospect, he probably should of. When setting up new nests it was common knowledge that omegas could do anything from paint walls, rip up floorboards, and flood bathrooms, to simply dust or make a cup of coffee. In offering his apartment as a nest he was offering it to Bruce to shape into whatever felt comfortable for his heat. Perhaps to do that he needed to make a rapid mark on how it looked so it wasn’t just Clark’s apartment but Bruce’s. A place with his own distinctive mark.

He didn’t mind. Not really. There was something secretive and sensual about knowing he’ll always think of that lamp as the one that bothered Bruce; something intimate and romantic in knowing he’ll be smelling their mixed scent every time the wind blew in passed the curtains; and there was something strangely erotic, almost voyeuristic, in knowing that in a week when he invited Lois and Jimmy over for dinner they would be eating off the table Bruce had taken apart and reassembled
while prepping for his heat.

“Left,” the man demanded irritably.

Clark complied.

“More.”

“Here?”

“More.”

“Here?”

A moment to consider. “Yes.”

He put the frame down and flashed into the bedroom to gather up the discarded mattress and sheets before flying back and dropping it into place. Bruce’s eyes lit on the bedding and the second Clark retreated he advanced to toy and tuck in the ballooning edges of the sheets. To Clark’s delight he also sank down and quickly rubbed his neck against the pillows, marking them with the rich scent of his preheat, before wandering off to glare at the lamp again.

There were entire websites dedicated to how annoying nesting omegas could be and endless jokes about slapping omegas and telling them to ‘deal with it’. It seemed stupid, childish, and inexplicably baffling. Omegas were rare and beautiful creatures and it was an honour to be able to not only share their heat but be allowed to watch them nest. Clark couldn’t imagine ever getting annoyed at…

“Hey!”

He flew out the window and caught the flying lamp. “This was a present.”

“I don’t like it,” Bruce growled.
“Well, I’ll put it in the closest. You don’t have to go throwing it out the window. What if it hit someone down there?”

Bruce’s look was withering.

“I don’t mind you destroying my things as long as you put them back together again.”

“The table was fine,” Bruce snapped. “I just needed to know how many parts it broke up into.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know.”

“Okay,” Clark drifted back into the apartment and quickly stashed the lamp safely out of sight. “Just don’t go throwing anything out the window, okay?”

“Are you telling me to ‘deal with it’?” Bruce sneered.

“No, I’m telling you not to throw things out the window.”

“Fine. You stop accepting… wrong gifts like that,” Bruce said and marched off to – worryingly – start pulling out everything from the fridge.

Clark felt his own wave of hormone induced uneasiness at the sight. He’d over stockpiled the fridge in a stereotypical alpha move but also specified it’s contents according to which days Bruce’s body will be able to consume what which in turn depended on how strong and how long his heat was. He didn’t mind Bruce pouring water down the sink but if he started pouring the milk…

He realised he was hovering, fists clenched at his sides, and bottom lip crushed between his teeth. With a conscious effort he dropped to the ground, turned aside, and tried to pretend he wasn’t watching with hawklike intensity to exactly what Bruce was doing with that food.
Four hours later the apartment was officially arranged to Bruce’s liking and he was sitting on the newly placed bed to watch The Grey Ghost reruns with a critical eye. Clark grudgingly admitted it was nice to sit on the bed and be able to see the majority of the apartment as he snuggled in beside Bruce.

“You know, I still don’t understand why you won’t nest at the fortress. It’s much safer.” He nuzzled beseechingly against his neck.

“You don’t want me to nest in the fortress.”

Clark frowned. “What’s wrong with the fortress?”

“Nothing,” Bruce rumbled. “You don’t want me to nest in the fortress.”

“Actually,” he replied defensively, “I do.”

Bruce dropped his head back against the headboard. “Clark…”

“Seriously, though. Why not? It’s so far away from anyone, it’s empty, and it has its own security systems. You’ll be safer.” He kissed the side of his neck. “I know it’s just stupid alpha instinct, and I know it’s too late now, but what about next time? It’ll make me feel better.”

“You want me to heat in the fortress,” Bruce said. “You don’t want me to nest.”

“I’m fine with nesting,” he countered. “I helped today didn’t I?”

“You’ve seen me nest in a new place now. I… do things.”

Clark chuckled and gently squeezed him in a friendly hug. “I have no problem with you moving things around, Bruce.”

“That’s not the problem.”
“What’s the problem?”

“Jor-El.”

Clark blinked. “I know you don’t like him but…”

“It.” He snapped. “I don’t like it.”

“Yeah… but…”

Bruce turned to glare at him. “If I nest in the fortress I’ll be forced to delete your father.”

Clark eyed him incredulously. “Forced?”

Low. “I’m not nesting with two alphas.”

“He’s just software.”

“And that software called me a possession.”

Guiltly. “I told him you were more than that.”

“And it called me prized possession.”

“I didn’t know you understood so much Kryptonian.”

“I’ve been listening,” Bruce muttered.
Clark thought of his mate speaking Kryptonian - *caring* enough to learn it - and with a low groan mouthed hungrily at the side of his neck.

“Not yet,” Bruce growled, and slapped him away.

“Oh, come on. You keep complaining about how tacky this is,” nodded at the TV.

“Not as tacky as not being able to wait twenty minutes for my heat to start,” the man growled.

“You’re a lot closer than that,” Clark promised.

A nervous look filtered across Bruce face. “What?”

“You’re radiating heat,” Clark explained, “your eyes are dilated, and your gland smells… so fucking good…” he leant forward only to be pushed away again.

“I’m about to spend four to five days being fucked by you,” Bruce snapped. “I don’t need to start early.”

Clark rumbled his appreciation and ducked forward to lick at his gland under his jawbone. Caught the faintest dose of the enriching flavour that was Bruce already mounted in preparation for the coming crest of his cycle. They’d been bonded for years now and their mutual addiction to each other’s hormones was as strong as it was ever going to get. Yet, every time he tasted Bruce he swore he tasted better. So rich, so powerful, and so dangerously alluring he could die chasing that scent.

Bruce shoved him. Hard.

“Hey, we don’t have to have sex,” Clark said. “Or you can top me.” He smiled as Bruce turned his head slightly. “We can do that thing,” he crooned softly. “I’m the omega, and you’re the…”

“I need to talk to you first.”

Clark blinked. “About what?”
Bruce visibly gathered himself and pulled a small packet from his back pocket. He dropped in on Clark’s lap and glared towards the screen; arms crossed, and gaze resolutely away.

Clark picked it up and frowned. “What’s this?”

“My contraceptives.”

Clark stilled. “W-what?”

“Birth control,” Bruce specified, avoiding eye contact. “The thing I take that stops me…”

“I know,” Clark said. “I thought you had an implant.”

“I did. I got it out two weeks ago.”

Clark studied him. “Why?”

He shrugged. “Made me feel sick.”

“And you want me to give you these during your heat?” Clark guessed. “I can do that. One a day, right? With food?”

“Yeah, if you want.”

“If I…?” The implications of what Bruce just said hit him like a planet to the face. He stared at the small white packet nestled in his palm, at the cheery assurances of wild sex followed by a child free lifestyle plastered along it’s square cardboard base, and through it at the collection of small pills bundled inside. One had already been taken. For today, he realised.

“It’s up to you,” Bruce muttered, still staring firmly at the screen.
“But… we… I… you never…”

Bruce’s hand clenched into a fist beside him. “You can if you like,” he snapped. “It won’t be hard will it? Just slip it into my food. Or just put it in my mouth and tell me to swallow. I doubt I’ll know the difference either way. You can manage that right?”

“…” Clark was still trying to remember how to breathe. “…”

Bruce finally rounded on him, eyes blazing and cold. “You can manage that right?” He sounded like an adult speaking to an impossibly stupid child… child. A child.

“If y-you want me too…?”

“I told you,” Bruce growled. “It’s your choice.”

“But… do you?”

“It’s your choice!”

“Do you?” Clark pressed.

“For fuck’s sake,” Bruce snarled and pushed off from the bed. Clark watched as he marched across the room, ducked into the kitchen, and pulled the milk from the fridge. Some small part of his brain recalled there was a purpose for that milk. That he should tell Bruce not to drink it all. Or tip it down the sink.

“The one time I want you to be a fucking alpha,” Bruce muttered under his breath, well aware he could hear and was listening. “Can bench press skyscrapers but can’t manage to be an alpha just this fucking once.” He gulped a mouthful of milk, frowned in distaste, and shoved it back in the fridge with a snarl.

Sudden loss of appetite, that small voice sounded in the back of his mind, a sure sign of imamate…
Bruce grunted and hugged his side.

Clark bolted off the bed and quickly pulled him against him. “Come on, come to bed, it’s okay. I’ve got you. We’ll talk about this later.”

Bruce shoved out of his arms. “I’m not going to forget this just because I get a little pre cram…” his face flushed red and he staggered back against the counter. “Fuck…”

“Look, we’ll talk about this in a few days when it reseeds,” Clark suggested. “It’s alright.”

“I don’t want to talk about this in a few days,” Bruce hissed. “I don’t… shit… give me your wrist.”

Clark tore off his watch and offered his bared skin to the other man. Bruce grabbed it, pulled it up to his face, and licked at the alpha hormone clinging to his skin. “Don’t let this,” he muttered around the action, “undermine the fact,” another lick, “that you’re a,” tongue up forearm, “useless fucking alpha.”

Clark frowned. Tried to ignore the fact that while Bruce collecting the alpha chemicals off his skin was helping stabilise his heat it was also bringing up a flush of warmth to Clark’s groin. His body’s greedy reaction as it registered the scrape of teeth and tongue against his flesh.

“That’s not fair, Bruce,” he rasped. “You can’t just… just spring that kind of question on me. I… I thought you didn’t want to.”

“I didn’t.”

“Then what the hell happened?”

“It felt…” he worked his way up to the inside of Clark’s elbow, licking, sucking, and nipping angrily at his flesh “…I don’t know… okay?” Sunk his face into the crook of his arm, still holding his wrist in his hand. “It… I still don’t know. I’m still…” his brow puckered as his mouth started slowly working up Clark’s bicep, nosing aside his sleeve as he went. “I change my mind every second… I need you… I need you to choose. I need…” an oddly soft touch of tongue along the contour of his muscle. “I need you to be an alpha for me… just this once.”
Clark hissed through his teeth and Bruce looked up, read the peaked colour in his cheeks, and tipped his head back; offering his neck. Finally. Clark took the invitation like a drowning man seizing onto a low flung branch. He leant forward, roughly nosed Bruce’s head up and to the side, and sunk his teeth into his omega gland; already swollen and colouring with heat.

Bruce gasped in pain and Clark forced himself to loosen his bite as the delicious, divine, delicacy that was his mate washed over his tongue. He wished feverishly in that moment that he didn’t have superpowers and could bite Bruce as hard as he wanted to; wished he could clamp his teeth down hard and to milk the intoxicating cocktail of spiked sex hormones, omega sweetness, and the natural captivating musk that was entirely Bruce with enough force to make his teeth ache.

Bruce’s whole body shuddered and he moaned; writhing against him as another wave of heat thundered through his body.

“Give me the pills or don’t give me the pills,” he grunted. His voice vibrating against Clark’s cheek. “Just tell me, whatever you do.”

Breed him.

The flood of animalistic alpha driven desire that washed through him at the thought was frightening. For a moment the gravity of the proposal didn’t matter, the implications didn’t matter, and the prospect of parenthood didn’t matter. All that mattered was Bruce, flushed and fertile, trapped in his arms and between the too hard clamp of his teeth.

With a growl he flipped Bruce onto the kitchen counter and pulled his legs up around his hips. Bruce was shaking now, skin radiating heat, and breaths heavy and broken.

“Clark,” he rasped. “Clark that’s enough… I need…”

Clark reluctantly released his hold on his neck and arched up to kiss him; sharing tongues and returning some alpha hormone with a messy lock of lip for all of the omega he had just taken. Bruce arched up against him, near blinding Clark in a mushroom cloud of heat, and sucked greedily at his mouth; gulping, biting, and sucking Clark’s tongue. At this point the exchange was just raising his heat for what his body knew would come next.

Clark sat up, tore Bruce’s pants off in a blur of motion, and was struck by the overwhelming scent of
his slick wet opening. Dripping. He was dripping. Open. Ready. Clark groaned and the man below him responded with a broken moan. He looked up. Bruce’s cheeks were red, eyes unfocused, and gland swollen purple under the fresh curve of his bite mark.

“Still with me?” Clark horsed.

“Yes, I… fuck…” he bucked beneath him. “Come on!”

Clark fumbled with his zipper, released his swollen cock, and pressed his head against the slick entrance of the other man. Entered him completely in one sure thrust. Bruce grunted and jerked his hips forward to meet him as his balls slapped against the wet skin of Bruce’s arse.

Clark leant forward, pillowed Bruce’s head on his forearm, and kissed him in the ugly, messy, way an alpha kissed to share the tang of hormones massing in his mouth. Bruce swallowed the invasion of tongue hungrily, pushed his own tongue into Clark’s mouth on the retreat, and wrapped his arms around Clark’s shoulders. The movement sent a new wave of his scent crashing into Clark.

God he… perfect… so… addictive, so dangerous, so beautiful…

When Clark drew back and nipped at Bruce’s neck again. Bruce ducked his head forward, hiding his gland under the line of his jawbone, and flashed his teeth.

Bruce… even in heat he was still… beautifully dominant. Even after all these years, after all the exposed inhibitions, all the blurred lines, all that they had been through together… he was still the fascinating, frustrating, man he had fallen in love with.

Clark obediently returned to their open mouthed exchange, rubbed his spare hand soothingly down Bruce’s quivering side, and rocked slowly but surely into him. Sped up as Bruce began grunting and bucking up against him. Broke his tempo and ground into him when the other man flinched around the swelling base of Clark’s cock tearing in and out of him. Came with a surge of heat and a long sure note of pleasure. He pushed as deep as he could into the other man and held himself there as his knot built and semen spilt.

Bruce hissed, bucked, and gnashed his teeth beneath him. Sweat beaded on flushed red skin, hair stuck to his brow, and his body trembled violently through either pleasure or pain.
“Hey,” Clark stroked the side of his face, “you okay?”

Bruce shuddered and turned his head blindly to lick at his fingers.

“Still with me?”

No response as he sucked Clark’s fingers into his mouth.

Clark smiled. “Guess not.”

That was okay. Bruce wouldn’t admit it but if he wasn’t on suppressants he usually dipped in and out of awareness like this during his heats. Sometimes only for a moment and sometimes Clark could cradle him for hours and all he would do was present his throat and snap demandingly at Clark’s lips. He guessed it was another symptom of being such a high level omega. There was a point the chemicals in his blood just became too thick to stay lucrative. It didn’t usually happen so soon but Bruce’s initial wave wasn’t usually so strong either.

Part of him loved seeing the loss of control, the trust that it took to allow himself that loss of control, and the distinctly omega behaviour he would exhibit only when in this state; especially the noises he would make. Another part of him missed Bruce being there, really there, with him during these times.

God, but Bruce’s preference for off heat sex was starting to rub off on him. Sex when it was all about want not need. About each other not each other’s hormones.

He gathered Bruce up and flew them to the bed. They crashed down on the mattress, bodies locked together, and he began a slow grind; pressing his still erect penis deeper into him and rubbing his knot against the tight pucker of Bruce’s entrance. Watched as Bruce’s eyes fluttered closed in a mixture of release and relief as his body began to dutifully absorb what it had been given.

The sharpened point of his cheekbones glowed a healthy red under a layer of sweat, his lips had swollen under their near constant attention and glittered wet and full in the dim tungsten light, and his eyes had shed their usual dark burn of destructive intelligence as they reopened to blink wantonly up at him.

He was the most beautiful thing Clark had ever seen.
A chiselled, angular, and perfectly imperfect masterpiece framed – just framed – by the primeval colouring of his heat. Because it wasn’t the smell of him, the taste of him, or the feel of his warm welcoming body wrapped around him and pressed under him… it was him. Just him. Just Bruce.

Clark couldn’t in that moment imagine anything more perfect that having him, holding him, and helping him through this for the rest of his life. Except maybe…

As his gaze began to lose the tunnel vision of orgasm he saw the rumbled sheets around him, the bunched pillows, and the discarded box of birth control he’d abandoned on the bed.

“Bruce?”

The man jerked at the sound of his voice and looked up at him under heavy lidded eyes. Eyes that focused on his lips with the intensity of a bird of prey spotting a field mouse. He lunged forward and attacked him in a tooth lined kiss, realised he couldn’t force open Clark’s lips, and with a tormented sound began to gnaw desperately at his closed mouth.

Clark sighed and allowed Bruce to penetrate between his teeth while he stared down at the abandoned box of medicine.

Bruce had said it was his choice. His choice. It seemed wrong that after so long being dictated by Bruce in all affairs to do with their relationship that the man now landed the most important decision completely in his hands. A choice he believed had been made years before they even met. A choice Bruce had made when he dedicated his life to his mission. To Batman.

Was it just hormones? Was it his heat? Would he wake up after a few days and regret giving him this control? Regret ever even suggesting he might want a family? Clark considered and rejected the idea. Bruce had said he’d gotten off his implant two weeks ago which meant he had to be thinking about this during the lowest point in his cycle. And, knowing Bruce, thinking about it meticulously.

By giving this choice to Clark he had admitted he didn’t have an answer, surrendered control, and left the one choice that should be ultimately an omega’s to his alpha. The irony was not lost on him.

Neither were the implications.
Between them they kept alive at least four identities; two of them secret, held two of the top leadership positions at the Justice League, and clocked in just enough time at the office to still be greeted by name; even if Bruce’s was plastered above the doorway. How could they begin a family like that? How could they deliver the attention a child deserved around their superhero lifestyle?

How could they do anything but try?

Because Clark wanted this. He wanted this with an urgency that spoke of his alpha instincts, with a desire to breed that clenched hot and heavy between his legs, and with a reserved honest sense of longing that echoed from deep within his chest. He’d always wanted children. Always. Even when his parents reminded him it was likely impossible because of his DNA, even when he’d dated Lana despite her alpha status, and even when he’d given up that dream to be with Bruce.

A dream that resurfaced in him; bobbed to the top like a cork bouncing naturally back to the surface after being forced underwater.

Children. Bruce and him. Theirs. A family…

Bruce was kissing him.

Not the hungry, desperate, abuse of tongue as he sought the chemicals in his mouth, but a passionate stroking of lip on lip. A kiss just like the ones they shared when not drowning in a cloud of pheromones.

Clark drew back. “Bruce! Hey.”

Groggily. “Hey…”

“How are you? Alright?”

Bruce twisted his head and rubbed his jaw and neck against the pillows either side of him; marking them.

“Bruce…?”
Breathlessly. “What?”

“About this birth control. I don’t know…”

A frown. “Birth control?”

Clark’s stopped. “Remember?”

Bruce blinked, focused on him, frowned. “The… one time I want you to be an alpha?” He muttered as if the words confused him.

“Yeah…” Clark encouraged.

Bruce seemed to warm to this like a tame animal to heartfelt praise. “I…” he paused to think. “You’re a… useless fucking alpha?” He tried hopefully.

Here but not here, Clark realised.

“Yeah,” he said softly and let himself slump down on top of Bruce. “Yeah, I am. That’s right.” He crooned softly. “Good work. You’re so good.”

Bruce purred and tightened his hold possessively around him, nuzzling into where shoulder joined neck to inhale Clark’s unique scent. He wouldn’t fall asleep. His heat was still too high. But while they were tied he was usually content to kiss, occasionally grind, and sometimes come traditionally as Clark stroked his penis. Half an hour later just when his knot began to subside Bruce’s soft shivering once more built to a violent trembling, his faint satisfied sighs melted into rough needy grunts, and a fresh flush of wet spilt down his legs. An almost perfect sync. They didn’t used to match so well, Clark recalled. When they’d first mated Clark often lost his knot before Bruce spiked or visa versa. Now they were bonded. In tune. Together.

They mated four more times before Bruce finally collapsed boneless onto the mattress and plunged without preamble into a deep drained dreamless sleep. Clark nipped him under the chin as he waited for his cock to shrink enough to slip out and then made a lap around the apartment; brushing against the exterior facing walls and doorways; marking the edge of his territory with a blatant warning.
It was a safety fence as well. If some emergency called him away and Bruce woke, no matter his state of mind, he wasn’t likely to wander beyond the boundaries set by his mate.

Once done, he gently stripped Bruce of his remaining clothes, washed off the excess sweat resting on his skin, and took ten minutes to carefully towel between his legs; removing the lingering slick before it could give him a rash. Bruce didn’t stir but his skin was still too pink and his heart too fast. The fundamental, natural, hormonally induced recovery sleep of an omega in heat.

Usually Clark would lie down beside Bruce after cleaning him; wriggle into his arms and drink in the scent of their mingled mating musk. The small white package still lying undisturbed on the mattress stopped him. A small, stark, reminder of what tomorrow would mean. Tomorrow would begin with a breakfast. It was up to him if that small white pill would be included in the meal. It was up to him… all up to him… and he was as lost as Bruce had been. As unsure. As torn.

It wasn’t the practical choice. It wasn’t the safe choice...

He turned away and scanned the room for more work to do. Noticed the TV was still on, now showing the late night news, and flew over to flick it off. Found a baterang hidden behind the screen. Frowned down at it and flicked to x-ray vision to scan the rest of the apartment. Three in the bathroom, eight in the living room, one in the vacated bedroom, and two in the kitchen. He wondered nervously if it was normal for omegas to stash weaponry while nesting and promptly queried the question into a search engine.

Not normal but not unheard of; especially in omegas who had a violent history, had been assaulted, or who had often experienced untended heats.

He grudgingly supposed Bruce fitted the bill.

He looked back over his shoulder at the sleeping man sprawled naked on the bed beside… swore and looked away. He needed to make this choice. Bruce had given it to him. Trusted him. Trusted him so completely he was willing to let him decide what would happen to his body.

Trusted him to chose if they were going to have a child. Trusted him without giving any overt inclination towards what he wanted.

Clark shed his clothes, jumped into his suit, and flew slowly around the world a few times before
finally deciding what he would do. What he had to do. Because he couldn’t act without knowing what Bruce truly wanted. He couldn’t take away his identity, couldn’t take away Batman, just to serve his own dreams.

He flew back to his apartment, Bruce’s nest, and finally snuggled into the man’s loose limbed embrace.

He knew what he had to do.

Bruce slept for nine and half hours.

When he woke Clark was ready. He watched as Bruce’s body shivered back into life, his eyes opened, and he touched the side of his neck in pain. The bite mark on his skin was an ugly purple red and swollen beyond his heat.

“Sorry,” Clark muttered.

Bruce grunted.

“Water,” he said and offered the bottle.

Bruce wordlessly took it and with obvious distaste downed the whole thing with practised efficacy. Clark had always been thankful for that. Most omegas needed a lot more encouragement to eat and drink during these short lapses in their heat. Bruce’s years heating alone had taught him the importance of rehydrating and reenergizing despite his protesting body. Considering his lapses were usually only between five to ten minutes after he woke it was a life saver.

“Protein shake,” Clark said when he was done and pushed the cup into his hand.

Bruce drank this with the same mathematical efficiency; the same applied method. Pushed the empty cup towards him when he was done and rubbed his forehead.

“Fuck…”
“You alright?”

“What happened?”

“The usual.”

Bruce stretched, flinched, and returned a hand to his head. “I feel like I’ve just been hit over the head by a crowbar.”

That was his fault. He hadn’t made sure Bruce drank enough water prior to going into heat. He’d been distracted… distracted by a little white box on the bed sheets.

“Here,” Clark took Bruce’s hand and dropped a pill into it. “Take that.”

Bruce’s eyes fixed on the small object and a reserved look filtered across his face. He didn’t move.

“Don’t you want it?” Clark asked.

“I don’t know.”

Clark tried to read him. Couldn’t. He’d never been able to read Bruce. Had never been able to see through the stonewall mask that stood between him and his mate. He had to wait to be invited in or left outside.

“Come on,” Clark said softly. “We don’t have much time,” he cupped Bruce’s hand in his and brought it up to the man’s mouth; tipped it’s cargo behind his teeth. Bruce’s brow pleated as he tongued the pill uncertainly. Clark flashed into the kitchen, filled a glass of water, and ducked back to press it helpfully against his lips. Bruce neither resisted nor aided him. When the water flooded his mouth his eyes flashed with the faintest flicker of pained regret and reserved relief before he closed them and swallowed. Clark withdrew.

“You didn’t want that, did you?”
“I… I don’t…” Bruce wiped his mouth on the back of his hand. “I… it’s…”

“Do you want me to give you one tomorrow?”

“I…” he frowned. “Whatever you want.”

“You know,” Clark said, “the whole dominant omega thing you do is actually kind of hot.”

Bruce looked up at him. Features masked.

“And I suck at being a dominant alpha. Because I just gave you something you didn’t want,” Clark studied him, “right?”

He looked away.

Clark sighed. “I have a lot of superpowers but mind reading isn’t one of them.”

“I want it to be your choice,” Bruce muttered. Quiet. Reserved.

Clark had his answer.

“It was paracetamol, Bruce.”

The man stopped. Eyes flicked to him.

“For your headache,” he clarified.

Bruce’s gaze flashed black with understanding. “You manipulative bastard.”
“Hey,” Clark held up his hands. “I learnt from the best, and I wasn’t going to impregnate you without making sure it was what you wanted.”

Bruce’s look could freeze oceans.

His face was also turning red.

“You’re about to peak and you still need to go to the toilet,” Clark reminded him.


Clark sighed happily and kicked off the ground to float on his back, pulled the birth control pills out of his pocket and tossed the box randomly away into the room. Allowed himself to marvel in the revelation. Bruce wanted a family with him. He wanted it. Perhaps he hadn’t even realised it. But he did.

Their relationship was exhausting to nurture but it was also the most rewarding thing Clark had ever done. It could be trying at times – especially when Bruce was in one of his pricklier moods – but it was still worth it because, Clark knew, Bruce was putting as much effort into it as him. They would fight, usually about small things, occasionally about big, and Bruce would get as frustrated as him, as tired, and yet every morning he was still there. Beside that simple fact nothing else seemed impossible.

Not even the prospect of a child.

When Bruce reappeared Clark zoomed in and stole a kiss before the man could object. “Do you want to marry me too?” Clark whispered. “Because I think my parents would…”

He’d expected Bruce to look angry… or half mad with heat. He looked neither. He looked afraid.

“Hey, you’re alright with this, right? If you want you can take the pill and forget this ever happened.”
“Do you want a baby, Clark?”

He considered Bruce for a long moment before answering. “Yes.”

“How long?”

He shrugged. “I’ve always kind of wanted kids.”

Bruce’s eyes met his. Alien in their open honesty. “But… a baby?”

Clark nodded dumbly.

“I… I’ve never wanted a baby before…” Bruce admitted. “It feels strange suddenly… I don’t know what… I’ve never really planned or… know… and the boys…”

Clark could smell his pheromones spike in an agitating sting of alarm. It triggered a responsive flush of protective battle hormones in him and he quickly swallowed them down. Bruce was afraid but it was not of anything he could blast away with heat vision. Turning alpha on him now wouldn’t help the situation.

“Why don’t we have a few, say five or six, see how you like it, and go from there?” Clark joked.

Bruce smiled, looked up and, finally, dropped his mask. Fear, uncertainty, and a familiar kind of grudging affection warred for dominance across his face. Among it all, like the cherry on top of a stack of multicoloured ice cream, sat a small but unmistakable spark of excitement. So much better than the remorse with a weary touch of stale relief that he saw after Bruce swallowed the pill.

“I think I’ll be okay with just one for now,” Bruce muttered. “If you want.”

As if following an unseen mark his body started to shiver, skin spike with sudden severe colour, and scent build to the alluring siren call of high heat.
“I do.”

Chapter End Notes

Firstly, thanks for reading and I hoped you enjoyed this double sized chapter! I certainly had a lot of fun writing it.

Second, I am still unsure of where I want this story to go and where to draw the drama (any feedback and ideas would be awesome). I know a lot of you were keen for an MPreg story, so am I, but I really don’t want to rush it and let you down. This means this story might take a while to really kick off a ground.

While I am figuring it out (as to keep me in the zone and fend off writers block) I am also going to be writing a prequel to this universe set before 'In the Dark'. It'll be coming a lot faster at first.

I'm sorry this is a shitty way to do this, I hope guys will stick with me and my messy writing processes! Thank you!
Chapter 2

Tim woke slowly; his mind lazily clinging to the tattered tail of a departing dream, and body returning to life bit by bit and with random stings of unprovoked pain.

He was naked, alone, and his heat was – finally – over. As usual its sickeningly slow departure left him feeling wretched; the acute ache inside him fading with an agonised unsatisfied lurch and limbs flimsy and weak. The air around him felt like a wet blanket, heavy with his own scent - the pheromones old and obscenely sexual - and the rank smell of stale sweat, slick, and come. Within the too soft embrace of the mattress the sheets clung to him with a sticky insistency that Tim didn’t want to think about.

With a groan he surrendered to his growing awareness and forced himself to sit up. Flinched as the hard rod of silicone and plastic inside him shifted. He’d forgotten about that. It was the first time Tim had used any kind of material aid during his heat and while it had helped a little it didn’t satisfy him as much as he had hoped. He wasn’t really surprised. An omega in heat responded to alpha hormones more than the physical invasion and despite replicating a knot a dildo couldn’t supply him with the alpha-charged semen that would naturally transform a heat into the mind-altering sexual experience he had heard so much about. He reached around behind himself, fumbled with the protruding knob - twisted it to remove the artificial knot - and pulled the abused sex toy out of his protesting hole.

It was stupid to think it could help him. It wasn’t even a full sized dildo. He had taken one look at what the online store had considered a ‘regular’ alpha male and forgone the whole idea for another two cycles. In the end he had settled with an alpha female with a smaller knot size designed to be ‘beta friendly’. It had still felt almost too tight before his heat hit.

A knock.

With a panicked gasp Tim grabbed the toy, thrust it between the pillows, and yanked the sheets up around his torso.

“C-come in.”

Alfred’s voice sounded from the hallway. “You will need to unlock the door for that to be a possibility, Master Timothy.”
“I… oh… one minute.” He swung his legs off the side of the mattress, stood, and clung to the bed frame as his knees threatened to give way beneath him. When he was sure he wasn’t about to fall over he picked up a discarded pair of boxers, pulled them on, and padded towards the door.

Alfred smiled softly when he swung back the massive wooden panel.

“Good morning, young sir. I hate to intrude, but are you fit enough to attend school today or would you like another day absent?”

Alfred was the pack’s head beta and, due to Tim’s lack of an alpha, was the primary person responsible for assuring his wellbeing during heat. Tim was old enough and sensible enough to feed himself despite his protesting body but Alfred still helped manage his life around the peaks in his cycle. He had kept Tim back from school when he was due to go into heat, had supplied him with food, water, and a locked door, and now was here to gently ease him back into normal life.

Tim frowned. “What day is it?”

“Wednesday.”

He frowned. “I’ll go.”

“If you need more time to recover you may have it,” the butler reminded him.

“I know. I… I’m fine.”

He tipped his head. “Breakfast is in half an hour.”

“Thanks Alfred.”

A small smile. “No need to thank me, young master.” Betas were the glue that held a pack together; diplomatic, versatile, and unthreatening. Alfred – unlike most people in the pack it seemed – conformed to the caste stereotype with a safe kind of familiarity. Simply happy with his hormonally assigned role in a way only the older people seemed to be.
Tim closed the door behind the other man and stared grimly into the dimly lit confines of his bedroom. He didn’t want to go to school. He wanted to spend all day lying in the foetal position until his body started to feel something close to normal. But he couldn’t. Last time he had taken extra time out after his heat Bruce hadn’t let him come on patrol. The other omega had angrily informed him if he wasn’t well enough to lift a pen he wouldn’t let him lift his staff. That in itself wouldn’t have been too bad except the newest addition to the pack, demon spawn Damian, had stepped forward with an earnest ‘take me instead, father. I won’t disappoint you.’

Not for the first time Tim prayed the brat would turn out to be an omega; just so he would know what it’s like. Not just the heats, or the aftermath, but the never ending battle to prove to Bruce he was upholding the man’s higher standard of their shared sexual caste.

Society’s stereotype still painted omegas as weaker, both in mind and body, than the other sexual castes despite all the positive changes the omega rights movement had implemented over recent years; most notably the overturning of the old inheritance exclusion laws. Bruce silently defied this old alpha elitist image in every aspect of his life – he didn’t even stand like an omega – and interpreted any weakness in Tim as his failure to do the same.

He had to prove to Bruce he wasn’t making his omegahood his excuse; that like the older man he would be better than the ‘higher ranking’ sexual castes. In some ways it was hard. In some ways he wanted to act like an omega and in others his body brutally reminded him he had no choice in the matter.

If Damian was an omega – if he was screwing up and not being perfect because of period pain, heat fatigue, or some other excuse Bruce didn’t accept – then maybe he wouldn’t seem so perfect. Wouldn’t be better than him at everything.

A biological son trained from birth to be the better Robin.

Tim swallowed that thought, told himself it was stupid, and resolutely set about getting himself ready. He drenched himself with floral smelling soap, showered, and pulled on the fresh clothes shoved into the back of his wardrobe. Before he left his room – his nest – he washed and stashed the dildo, pulled the sheets from his bed, and piled everything dirty into the hamper. It was a habit he had taught himself after seeing the disastrous state Bruce would leave his nest; still expecting Alfred to clean it without complaint.

Bruce spent so much time worrying about being a strong omega sometimes he forgot to be the considerate one. Either that or growing up rich had robbed him of certain simple niceties. Tim wasn’t one to call him out on it but he certainly wasn’t going to follow that example.
By the time Tim made it downstairs breakfast was already served.

“You’re late, Drake.”

He ignored the younger boy and slipped into his usual seat to blink around the near empty table in confusion.

“Where is everyone else?” He spoke to Alfred, ignoring the scowling ten year old.

“Master Richard is working on a case.”

“What about the boss?”

“Master Bru—”

“By that I assume you mean my father,” Damian interrupted. “He’s a high level omega. He has proper, long heats, not a day hiding in his room.”

Tim’s and Bruce’s heats had synced within the year of Tim presenting. Bruce always went into heat first and Tim a few days later. Tim was a low level omega and his heats only lasted a day or two. Bruce, by comparison, always stayed in high heat for four to five days. Tim’s late start into heat usually meant they finished around the same time. Because Bruce always liked to leave his nest a little early Tim was used to returning to a pack with the other omega already present.

“He’s usually out by now,” he commented.

Alfred nodded. “Likely he is but he will not be joining us this morning. He’s staying at Master Clark’s apartment this time.”

Damian snorted. “Kent has an apartment? One would think, considering how much time he spends here, he lives here.”
“Sounds like you want him to,” Tim muttered.

A dark look. “The closer he is, Drake, the easier it will be to slip kryptonite into his coffee.”

He made a face. “Right, sorry. For a second there I thought you were having an actual human emotion.”

“He’s the one that’s not human.”

“And yet Bruce chose him over your mother.”

Alfred. “Master Timoth—”

Damian’s gaze was black. “Don’t talk about my mother, Drake,” he hissed. “Yours left you at an orphanage.”

“To go into witness protection,” he said stiffly.

“And never came back,” the boy reminded him. “Not even when Bruce Wayne publicly announced he was adopting you.”

Wretchedly. “She couldn’t.”

“That’s quite enough of th—”

“Face it,” Damian continued, ignoring the older man, “she doesn’t want you.”

His hand balled into a fist. “At least she didn’t try to kill me.”

“My mother wasn’t trying to kill me!”
“I guess those hit men were just another sick kind of training then.” He said bitterly. “My mistake.”

Damian spat something at him in Arabic and Alfred stood; chair legs scraping against the tiled floor with a jarring screech.

“That’s enough!”

Both boys looked at him. The butler looked down at them with a frustrated frown and folded his arms before him. “Here I was under the impression the first two fought a lot.”

“He started it,” Damian said quickly.

Tim glared down at his food.

“It does not matter who started it,” Alfred told them firmly. “You two are brothers and would do well to remember that.” He settled back into his seat. “Unfortunately, young sirs, we are already running late so I would appreciate it if you could finish your meals peacefully so I may take you both to school.”


Tim looked mournfully down at the plate of scrambled eggs and grilled tomatoes. Food always smelt disgusting in and around his heat and despite the obvious quality of the meal his stomach turned at the thought of putting it in his mouth. But, he knew, despite his body’s protests he hadn’t consumed nearly enough over the past thirty hours. Eating now would kick start his body towards normality and failing to do so would leave him weak when it came time to patrol. If, indeed, they went out tonight.

By the time he had worked through the majority of the plate Damian had polished off two servings and was stuffing a packed lunch into his backpack. Tim showed Alfred his lunch money instead and followed the ten year old down into the garage to climb into the closest car.

Damian was dropped off first at the Gotham Academy’s elementary school and Tim was delivered to the doorstep of South Gotham High. Despite being adopted by the richest man in the city Tim had
never left the public school circuit; preferring it and the people within it over the stiff, almost
gergressive, formality of the Academy. It was easier to feel normal in this school. Easier to remember
why he wanted to be Robin in the first place; to protect not the distant population of Gotham City but
the people around him.

He moved through his routine like a rollercoaster car locked onto a predetermined track. He had
missed a math quiz, was behind on the science readings, and they had started a new era in history.
Mr Grant assured him he wouldn’t need to catch up with a lingering touch on his arm. He spilt the
paint in art class, choked down a lunch as an odd collection of friends chatted around him, and sat in
the back of the Spanish class as the teacher prattled obliviously to a non-responsive classroom. By
the time the bell for final period sounded he was starting to feel something close to normal again. It
was PE and there was only one omega class in the junior year containing a little over thirty students.
Contrary to popular belief it wasn’t the alphas that gave him the most shit for being an omega – at
least not in a high school setting – it was the other omegas.

“Are you sure you should be in this class? You’re not pretty enough to be a bitch, bitch.”

“Only dog that’s going to bite you has four legs and a tail.”

“Hey, rich boy, you look wrecked. Couldn’t find anyone willing to turn you bottom up for your
heat?”

“Fuck you,” he muttered as he pulled on the workout gear.

A chorus of laughter. “You’d like that wouldn’t you, homo.”

He ignored the petty jab, pushed past them, and at the coach’s instruction started jogging along the
track looping around the outskirts of the oval. Just like alphas omegas often challenged each other,
established a hierarchy, and would make sure those they considered below them understood their
place in the imagined pecking order. Tim was a low level omega and automatically put below those
with more potent pheromone output. It was instinct Tim had only recently really started to develop
and was more geared towards Bruce than the other omegas his age. They were partners but between
them existed an underlying animalistic understanding that, sexually, they were competitors. Two
omegas existing in the same territory and the older Tim got the more obvious it became. He wasn’t
sure if Bruce’s behaviour was shifting or he was instinctually reading the signs in a way he wasn’t
before. Despite his early presenting he was, in many ways, a late bloomer. A lot of his omega
instincts had only really kicked in this year including his interest in alphas.

His eyes flicked to the side to watch the other groups of students gathered on the oval. There were a
lot of beta classes as well as the almost exclusively beta cheerleading team on the field. Amid them he could see the alphas. They were still gangly and awkward with feet and hands that looked a bit too big for their bodies but strangely undeniably _interesting_ despite it as they knocked each other over in rough horseplay.

He saw a few turn their heads as the rest of his class joined him on the track; taking an evident interest in the higher level omegas. Tim frowned and looked aside. It shouldn’t bother him. Statistically, if he wanted an alpha, he still had ample choice. There were almost three times as many alphas as there were omegas both in the school and in wider society. But all the same he hated it. He had just got out of heat that morning, still smelt sweeter than usual, and yet they noticed the others before him.

When the final bell rung he changed, texted Alfred telling him not to pick him up, and caught the bus that went deeper into the city. It was a routine he followed roughly once a week and usually on days like this; days when nothing had gone quite right. He got off on the edge of the Narrows, cut through an alleyway, and jumped with a flip up onto the low hanging fire escape ladder in a move Dick had taught him. Despite the warm weather the metal was cool under his fingers. He scaled five floors, left the fire escape to edge around the side of the brick building, and climbed in the open window he found there.

The floor was missing most of its carpet, the TV speaking earnestly to an empty chair, and a gun lay abandoned in its holster on the floor. Muffled music sounded down the hall.

“Jason?”

Tim moved tentatively toward the sound, almost tripped over a discarded shirt, and called out again. When he got no answer he hesitantly pushed open the door at the end of the hallway.

A mattress sat in the middle of the floor amid a tangle of clothes, a laptop, and a smashed bedside lamp. On top of it two naked bodies writhed; mouths open and together, hands grasping desperately at exposed flesh, and pelvises working with a lewd wet smack of skin on skin.

Tim caught his gasp and ducked out of sight before either could notice him. Even if he hadn’t seen – hadn’t recognised – the two men having sex in the other room their scents now assaulted him with explicit vulgarity. The hearty musk of high level alpha almost drowning out that of the low level beta. Heightened and interwoven. Jason Todd and Dick Grayson.

He crept away from the open door, almost tripped over the shirt a second time, and climbed back out the window.
Jason was the closest thing to a brother Tim had and he usually found his way into the other man’s current safe house after a bad day. Jason neither welcomed him nor removed him in such times - nor did they usually talk much - but the simple presence of his fellow pack mate and friend helped more that Tim liked to admit. He’d missed him since he moved out of the manor.

He felt like he had been robbed not having that opportunity now.

He sat in the park for a few hours, not willing to return home just yet, and stared at some dried paint on the toe of his shoe.

By the time he came back to the manor it was almost dark. Tim walked in the kitchen door, took note of the empty room with a sickening mix of regret and relief, and moved through it to trudge up the stairs towards his room.

His relationship with the rest of the pack had been strained recently. Jason had moved out, Dick spent most of his time on ‘missions’, Alfred was caring but distant. Clark was family but still somehow wasn’t really pack, Damian didn’t merit a mention, and Bruce and he hadn’t gotten on as well lately.

The other omega no longer treated him with the same simple acceptance that he had afforded him when he first arrived at the manor. He knew it was just instinct; as he got older Bruce was subconsciously redefining him not just as a pack mate but a younger omega that shared his territory and was fast approaching breeding age.

Tim would be lying if he said he didn’t feel it too. The last few months he had wanted to show the rest of the pack he wasn’t a kid anymore; he was an adult omega and that meant… something. Something that agitated deep inside him. Something that made him want to be noticed… by as many alphas as possible.

It was just instinct, he was better than his instinct, but it still plucked at him with unsettling insistency. After a day like the one he just had it felt stronger; fingernails on chalkboard down the back of his brain.

He was almost at his room when Damian stepped around the corner, looked at him with detached distaste, and walked by. Something he didn’t know was being held taunt inside him snapped.
Tim dropped his backpack, spun on his heel, and hurled himself towards the boy. Damian grunted as he knocked against the wall, looked up at him with Bruce’s icy eyes, and smiled.

“You want to do this again, Drake?”

“I want you to show me some fucking respect,” he rasped.

The boy’s grin grew sharper, wider. “Hah!” He said something fast in Arabic and with a twist and kick broke out of Tim’s hold. “Tell me, why should I respect you?” He said as he shoved him back into the banister. “You’re just a low level breeder.”

“Yeah?” Tim snapped. “And what the fuck does that make you?”

“Better than you,” the boy replied crisply.

“You think just because your mother tells you you’re special you’re destined to be an alpha?” He straightened and in a move he had seen Jason do a million times looked to the side in dismissal; an insult graver than anything he could have said. “You’re stupider than I thought.”

Damian’s eyes flashed. “I’m better than you because I beat you, Drake.”

“You cheated,” Tim hissed.

“I won,” Damian replied.

“You used brass kn—”

“I won! It’s not my fault you cry about every time you’re on your period.”

This time Damian was ready for the attack. Tim gritted his teeth as the boy deflected his blow and returned with a swift kick to his knee. Damian had been trained in combat since he was four and was as brutally efficient as his father when it came to executing a move. He knew everything well enough to master and manipulate all the combat styles Bruce had taught Tim and was willing to do whatever
it took to win. Tim’s only real edge was his greater size which was an advantage he was not used to pressing.

But he wasn’t going to lose to the devil child a second time.

“What the hell are you two doing?”

Tim jumped back in shock and Damian used the distraction to push himself off the wall and into Tim.

“Damian!” Dick strode forward from where he had appeared, grabbed the boy by the back of his hoodie, and hauled him back with a sharp tug. “What the actual fuck guys?”

“Get off me Grayson,” the boy growled.

“Fine,” Dick complied, “but I repeat. What the actual fuck?”

“He attacked me,” Damian snapped. “I’m teaching him what happens when he makes that mistake.”

The beta looked up. “Tim? Is that right?”

Tim stared at Dick and felt a prickle of tears sting treacherously behind his eyes. “Yeah,” he croaked. “That’s right.” He turned pushed by the pair and walked into the room before either could see his weakness. The door made an impressive slam that left him feeling strangely savagely triumphant and also stripped him of what fragile control he had maintained up until that point. He sat on the edge of the bed, hugged his sides, and forced himself not to cry.

Dick came in ten minutes later, took one look at him, and put his discarded backpack on the floor by the door. “Was it his face?”

Through a tight throat. “What?”

“Damian’s face,” Dick specified and sat down beside him. “It’s infuriating, isn’t it? Like Bruce but
smug.”

Tim stared miserably at the floor.

“Want to talk about it?”

“About what?” He croaked.

“What happened,” Dick said patiently. “Why you attacked him. I am a beta you know; I am biologically wired to be a good ear when you guys get upset.”

Tim didn’t say anything for a long time, set his jaw, and looked up. “What’s it like to get fucked by Jason?”

The beta recoiled in shock. “What?”

“What’s it like to get fucked by Jason?” He repeated.

“I… I… because he’s an alpha? You want to talk about alphas?” Dick forced a smile. “Don’t they have sex ed at school for this kind of thing?”

Angrily. “I don’t want to talk about alphas, I want to talk about Jason. What’s he like?”

“W-why?”

Tim turned away bitterly.

“Is there an alpha at school that…?” Dick began carefully.

“No!”
A long pause. “Tim?”

“None of the alphas at school even like me,” he said a few treacherous tears tumbling down his cheeks. “The other omegas are fucking bitches, Damian thinks that he’s better just because he’s Bruce’s ‘blood son’, and if Bruce sees me now I am so fired as Robin.” He turned away as he felt his eyes sting with a fresh batch of tears. “And now I’m crying about it like a s-stupid bitch.”

“Okay,” Dick threw an arm around his shoulders and pulled him into his side. He smelt of soap, cut grass, and Jason. “Okay, it’s okay,” he muttered. “It’s okay to cry about those kind of things once in a while. Especially when they all stack up like that.”

He wiped his cheeks on the back of his sleeve. “I saw you two.”

“What?”

“Today.” A ragged breath. “I came over to Jason’s after school.”

“I…” Dick sat up as he realised what Tim was saying. “Oh… Oh God.”

“I thought you two were breaking up.”

“No,” Dick shifted uncomfortably, “not breaking up we were just… taking a break for a bit.”

“But the break is over now?”

“Honestly,” he said with a grimace. “I know it’s fucked up but I’ve never been real good at saying no to Jason.”

He looked up at him. “Why did you break in the first place?”

“You know, I thought you would grow out of this weird interrogation thing you do. Especially since,
you know, I should probably be the one telling you off right now.”

He looked aside.

“You should apologize for attacking Damian at some point.”

He didn’t say anything.

“I know he’s annoying but he’s really a good kid and he’s had a hard run. Plus he’s like, ten, and you’re fifteen.”

“Sixteen.”

“Right. So, it’s not okay for you to jump him like that.”

“He was winning.”

“That doesn’t make it okay.”

Tim bunched his hands into fists. “Tell him I’m sorry if it makes you feel better.”

Dick lifted an eyebrow. “Are you sorry?”

“Fine.”

“That’s not an answer.”

“I’m sorry,” he said.
Dick frowned. “You’re just trying to make me leave.”

“Yeah,” he rasped, “‘cause you’re not very good at this beta stuff.”

The man blinked. “Ouch. I thought you were the nice one.”

He sighed and ran his fingers through his hair. “I’m sorry I… I am sorry. I just… Today’s been really… it’s the day just after heat. It’s always harder.”

Dick’s smile flickered. “I wouldn’t know.”

That night Tim returned to his usual spot on the dinner table, sat, and stared forlorn at the empty seat opposite that usually housed their pack leader. Bruce wasn’t out of his nest. He wouldn’t have had nearly enough time to recover. If Bruce wasn’t out of his nest that meant Tim didn’t have to be either. They weren’t going on patrol. This whole day was for nothing.

“Excuse me,” he muttered and abandoned the table and his barely touched food.

“Master Timothy…”

“I’m not hungry.”
Dick leant against the single sink in the rundown flat and brushed his teeth. When he turned the tap the pipes rattled and water spluttered brown before it started to flow.

He hated this place. He hated that it was a different place from last week, and the week before that. He hated that he could hear the neighbours yelling across the hall, see the cheap insulation through a hole in the wall, and smell the rotting fish from the nearby dockyard. He hated the overshadowing presence of the Ace Chemical Plant, the amount of rats in the streets at night, and the homeless boy that begged across the road. But, most of all, he hated how at home Jason seemed here. How quickly and easily he had adopted this lifestyle, hopping from safe house to safe house. He hated that despite living on the lip of all criminal activity in Gotham Jason seemed more relaxed here than he had ever had at Wayne Manor.

It was like the manor, the house they had grown up together, had never really been more than a temporary resting place. That the childhood home he thought they shared was really just a stop over for him. A safe house.

Jason pushed in beside him, squeezed his arse, and pressed a toothy kiss onto the side of his neck.

“Fuck, I *belong* in that arse.”

Dick spat his toothpaste into the sink and shrugged off a second kiss aimed at his lips. “I’m trying to brush my teeth here.”

“Missed you so much,” the alpha rumbled.

He couldn’t quite swallow the smile that flickered across his lips. “Missed me or missed fucking me?”

A hungry growl and a kiss pressed against the corner of his mouth.

“Come on, Jay,” he wormed his way around so he was facing the other man, his hip pushed up
against the lip of the sink. “We’ve talked about this.”

“Shut up,” he tried to kiss him.

“No,” he turned away. “I’m not letting you do this to me again. I have things I need to do today. I’m not going to get trapped in here for another day of your heat.”

Jason frowned. “Alphas don’t have heats.”

Dick lifted an eyebrow. “You’ve been either trying to fuck or force-feed me for the last four days. And by fuck I mean the mean, top me knot me, kind of fuck.”

Stubbornly. “Alphas don’t have heats.”

“And you’re not exactly your usual witty self either,” he observed dryly.

Jason tried to kiss him again.

“Come on, Jay. No.”

He pulled back suddenly, violently. “Why? Are you planning on leaving again?”

A long pause. “For fucks sake.” He shoved him off and turned away to clean his toothbrush.

“Where you got to go so damn bad, huh?”

Stonily. “I was going to go and see if I couldn’t get Tim into the Teen Titans, actually.”

A long pause. “That’s still a thing?”
“Yeah.” He dropped his brush back into the glass and turned to look at the other man.

Jason looked like he usually did. Eyes dark and burning with unspoken animosity, shirt hanging loosely off the indomitable shape of his body, and face drawn up in stubborn, angry, lines. Despite the interior location he had at gun and a knife hanging off the back of his belt.

That was another thing Dick hated.

“You want the brat to be Robin,” the alpha said.

Dick frowned. “What?”

“Al Ghul. He always gives Tim a shit time and now you want him to take the kid’s place.”

Slowly. “I didn’t say that.”

“I became Robin when you joined the Teen Titans,” Jason countered.

“No,” Dick replied, “you filled in. I was still Robin.”

“Robin is with Batman,” he told him. “I was Robin.”

“No, you weren’t,” Dick heard himself saying. “Fuck. Why am I even arguing over this with you? I’m getting him to join the Titans because he needs to hang out with some people his own age. Teenagers. Superheroes. People he can talk to.”

Jason glared at him.

“And, you know what, if Damian does fill in for him…?”

“Take his place,” Jason growled.
“…what’s the big deal?”

“Being Robin is a big deal to Tim.”

Dick rubbed his brow. “He’s sixteen. Bruce is going to get him to make room for Damian soon and he’s not having a very great time as it is. Wouldn’t it be better if he had some kind of support network? Some other heroes his own age? Another place where he could still be Robin?”

“Except he won’t be Robin.” Jason snapped. “Damian will be Robin.”

Dick moved across the room, picked up the hairbrush, and started hacking at the tangle of knots left over from the night before. Keeping his face angled down he muttered. “He saw us the other day, you know.”

“Saw us what?” Jason grunted.

“What do you think? Saw us fuck.”

A pause. “So?”

“What do you mean so? I didn’t want anyone to know about us yet. Heck, I didn’t want anyone to know about us for weeks. Not until we figure shit out.”

Jason scowled. “He probably didn’t even know what we were doing.”

Dick sent him an incredulous look. “He’s sixteen not six.”

“He’s a kid.”

“You say that a lot but kids grow up. He might not even be a virgin, you know.”
“He’s a kid!”

Exasperated. “I was fifteen when I first had sex. How old were you?”

Jason stared at him.

Sensing victory Dick crossed his arms and smiled. “How old, Jay?”

“Sixteen,” he muttered and looked aside.

His lip twisted. “I rest my case.”

A stretched silence.

“But, seriously,” he turned his attention back to his hair, “I had a chat with him yesterday and he’s not having the greatest time of life in general right now. He and Damian are clearly not as,” he pursed his lips, “brotherly as we were, Bruce is putting him under a lot of pressure, and I think the other omegas are bullying him at school.”

“How do you know that?”

“He called them fucking bitches. You do the maths.”

Jason seemed to digest this for a moment before speaking again. “So you want to ship him off to some other pack?”

“What’s so wrong with that? It’s not like he won’t still be living at the manor or going to school here. Besides, he doesn’t have to go if he doesn’t want to. It’s just,” Dick shrugged, “a door I don’t think he realises is open to him.”

Jason didn’t say anything.
Dick dropped the hairbrush and ran his hand across his chin. He didn’t need to shave. Jason did. Even across the room he could see the shadow across the other man’s cheeks. Had felt it when he’d tried to kiss him. Part of him envied him for that. The sheer aggressive masculinity his alpha status afforded him. Dick wasn’t small, slight, or – in his opinion – particularly pretty but beside Jason people mistook him for an omega. Even Bruce and Clark were more ambiguous; Bruce was beautiful but in a way atypical for an omega – older, rougher, harder – and was broad and muscular enough to look like an alpha if he tried. Clark was less than two inches taller and at the low point in Bruce’s cycle, before Bruce’s heats, the two looked to have a simular weight ratio.

It didn’t bother him. Not really. It wasn’t surprising people, at first glance, categorised him incorrectly. Jason tended to treat him a bit like an omega anyway. He kind of liked it sometimes; the feeling of being always on someone’s mind, of being possessed, and cherished. That’s what bothered him. The fact that he liked it. He let Jason treat him like his breeder; let him fuck him, bite him, and knot him; and could never quite hide how much he loved it. Even if it made him feel wretched afterwards; like an omega substitute and not a beta partnered to an alpha.

“Are you going to be here when I get back?” He muttered.

Jason looked around the four walls and grimaced. “No.”

He sighed. “Thanks for telling me this time. Where is your new place?”

He shrugged.

“Come on, Jay.”

Bitterly. “You wanted to figure stuff out. You figure it out.”

“What? Just because I’m not letting you fuck me this very second you’re going to act like a baby about it?”

The other man glared at him. “No.”

“What then?”
“You’re fucking me around. I’m fucking you around."

“What the hell is that meant to mean?”

“You’re the beta. You tell me what it means.”

Dick stared at him. “Jason…?”

He looked away from him.

“Hey,” something inside him twisted. “I’m just… you know I’m still trying to factor everything in here, right? I mean, we’ve had a lot of issues and we’re clearly not over them all.”

“You always talk like that,” he snapped. “About issues and figuring it out and shit. I thought you coming back meant you were coming back.” A dark look. “Stupid, huh?”

“Jay, come on…”

The alpha ignored him, grabbed his jacket, and left through the open door. Slowly Dick moved towards the window and waited until he saw the other man emerge from the front door, light a cigarette, and make his way down the footpath; shoving aside an alpha coming the other way.

He still loved him. Despite the years they’d spent turbulently trying to adjust to the prospect of a relationship together, despite all the nights he’d spent lying under him hating himself, and despite everything that had happened between them. He had never fallen out of love with that boy. He was starting to worry he never would.

The first six months after Jason asked him on a date were the best. It had been like a whole new beginning full of simple time together, sex, and the allure of what could still be new love. Then Jason had shot someone. In the back of the knee. Nothing out of the ordinary. Not at first. It was a thug that had tried to kill Dick. Would have if not for that bullet. But then the fight was over, the man was down, and Jason had walked over and held the gun up to the man’s brow. It had been an execution. Deliberate. Angry. Final.
He’d been a killer, a rapist… but that didn’t make it okay. Nor were they the reasons Red Hood had pulled the trigger that night.

“You can’t kill for me, Jason. You… you just can’t.”

The silence that followed that statement had been heartbreaking. It was a denial. An unspoken promise that he would do it again.

They were apart for a long time after that. They’d only come back together when Jason sat down on the edge of a rooftop and told him about every person he’d killed. Told him the reasons. The good and the bad. It ended with a sentence tagged onto the end like a last minute addition to his speech.

“I think… I think I killed my mother too.” And another. “I think she’s dead because of me.”

Things had been slower after that. Tentative. Careful. But there was an honesty that existed between them that hadn’t before. Dick acknowledged what Jason was and Jason did the same. They came to know each others differences, their weaknesses, and failures. They learnt about what defined them and what separated them; among them the things they could never coalesce.

It was never as easy afterwards. They fought more and when they did it hurt more. But he loved him more too. So… so much more.

His beta instincts told him Jason was dangerous; a loose canon that could hurt him almost without even thinking about it. He should find someone safer. More constructive. Leave the high level alpha for the omegas… The faceless omegas he was terrified Jason wanted, needed, that he might be seeking out this very moment.

It was petty, selfish, but he couldn’t put it out of his mind. Jason was a high level alpha. High level alphas didn’t just… settle with betas. His instincts were clearly much stronger than any other alpha he’d ever been with; his alpha sex drive something they were both still grappling with.

Jason disappeared around the corner and Dick turned away from the window to pull on his shoes. The day was a blur but that wasn’t too strange anymore. He spoke to the Titans, worked on some cases, and trained with Damian after school. The boy was good. Terrifyingly so. He had also killed. Still killed. But somehow it was less real when you hear about a ten year old with a sword beheading Scooby-Doo style villains. Somehow that was easier to take into his stride than a man, a gun, and
He hated himself for it. Hated that he needed Jason to be better. Hated that he had only required if of him when Jason killed in front of him.

When he found Tim the boy was sitting in the study staring at his phone.

“Hey, Timmy. I got a proposition for you. Do you…?”

The boy glared at him like he’d just committed murder.

“I… um…” Dick trailed off. “I feel like I’m in trouble for something.”

“What did you tell Jason?”

“I…” his mind flashed through a string of disastrous scenarios, “nothing.”

“Liar,” he shoved his phone at him. Dick looked at the screen and frowned in confusion. “That’s a lot of friend requests…”

“That’s my PE class!”

“I… I’m still not following here. What’s happened?”

“My omega PE class,” Tim specified and snatched his phone back. “I take back my take back. You’re a terrible beta.”

Dick stared as the young omega stormed out of the room. “Gee, Tim, sorry for somehow making you popular,” he muttered under his breath and pulled out his own phone to send a bewildered apology to the boy along with the information on the Teen Titans. He doubted Tim would read it until later but he didn’t have the energy right then to figure out the best time to approach him.
He patrolled alone, saved seven people, and chased off a few kids boldly decorating the sides of shadowy buildings. It was two thirty and he was sitting on the edge of a tired looking office building when Jason found him. The man approached across the rooftop, boots deliberately scuffing on the cement, and came to a stop beside him. Dick looked up at him with an edge of unease.

“What do you want?”

Jason took off his hood, shook his hair out, and dropped something in his lap.

Dick took one look and lifted an eyebrow. “Are you absolutely sure alphas don’t have heats?”

“Shut up,” he sat beside him. “Eat it.”

Dick thought about protesting, dismissed the idea, and tore open the wrapper to sink his teeth into the chicken wrap he found within. There was an address written on the corner of the grease paper.

Dick read it, memorised it, and used his thumb to smudge the small line of pencil. “Thank you.”

Jason grunted.

“And I’m sorry too. You’re right. I am fucking you around with all this I just… I need to work through things. I know it’s stupid but…”

“I guess if I didn’t want someone fucking me around I shouldn’t have fucked a beta,” Jason muttered.

Dick flinched. “Don’t say that.”

Jason gave him a strange look.

“What did you do today?” He muttered.
“Nothing.”

“Really?” He took another bite. “Because,” spoken around a mouthful of food, “Tim is mad at me and I have no idea why.”

A pause.

“And,” he swallowed, “your name came up.”

Jason scowled. “You told me he was being bullied. I went and told the teacher not to let him be bullied.”

Dick stared at him. “Oh boy. No wonder he hates me. How many students saw you do this?”

“The class.”

“The class?”

Jason gave him a look detectable through the domino mask.

“You did this in front of the whole class?” Dick said, heart sinking. “Okay, that kid is never talking to either of us ever again.”

“Why?” Jason growled. “I didn’t bitch or nothing. I told that arsehole.”

“You told that arsehole?” Dick contemplated those words for a moment. “Please tell me that doesn’t mean you threatened the teacher.”

“I’m not that stupid.”

“But why would Tim get friend requests? Unless…” understanding struck. “Ah.”
“What?”

“You yelled at a teacher.”

“Yeah.”

“In front of a class full of sixteen year old omegas,” Dick specified.

“I wasn’t going to ask for a God damned appointment.”

“That’s beside the point.”

“What’s the point?” Jason muttered angrily.

“The point?” he cocked an eyebrow. “I think that would Timothy Drake’s big, mean, *high level*, alpha brother who is protective, unbound, and wears an awful lot of leather.”

Jason looked aside.

“Now Tim’s probably mortified on one hand and getting bombarded with fake friends on the other. Yep. He’s never forgiving us.”

“Eat.”

Dick swallowed a few more mouthfuls. “I didn’t even get to talk to him about the Titans.” Another bite. “And now he’s not going to want to do anything I suggest. Guess it’s a good thing I’m a beta that likes alphas because I suck at this whole mentor dash parent gig.”

“Did you fuck anyone?”
“Huh?”

“When you were gone,” Jason through tight lips.

Pained. “Don’t start that shit again, Jay.”

“Did you?”

“No,” he threw down the food. “Who the hell would I fuck? Why? Did you fuck someone?”

A hand reached out, seized his jaw, and pulled him forward to connect their lips. It was, as always, dizzying. Strong, alpha, Jason. When they’d first gotten together Jason had kissed like it was an attack. Hard and crushing. There was still a taste of that in the action; still a brutal edge to the movement in his lips. But, as in most things, Jason had learnt a lot since they first had sex. The delicious, deep, throttling kisses were held in reserve. Instead he kissed him firmly, wholly, but with only a flicker of tongue so Dick leant forward when he retreated; preserving the connection for as long as he dared.

“Fuck you,” he rasped as their lips broke. “I hate you sometimes. So damn much.”

There was a strange kind of reservation in the set of his lips as his replied. “I know.”

Dick sighed. “What are we doing, Jay?” A pause. “We’re just killing each other going around in this circle.”


A hollow laugh. “I don’t think I can anymore.”

“Good.”

And then they were kissing again; hungrier this time, with teeth and tongue.
Later he lay naked on his side on the mattress in Jason’s new safe house and stared out the window. Jason’s fingers were running through his hair, body against his back, and knot inside him. It hurt. Just enough to keep his body stiff and awake. Just enough to remind him that they’d had sex – that he’d loved every frantic second of it – and yet he’d let Jason treat him like an omega again; let himself be a substitute for the bitch that would one day lure him away.

Couldn’t think that… did think that… hated that he thought that. That he thought it every time they walked down the street and people looked at them. A beta with a young, fit, high level alpha. A non-viable couple. Young and stupid. Doomed.

Because, despite the years they’d spent together, despite their strange inexplicable addition they shared, there was still something missing; something intrinsic. Something Jason hadn’t given him, and he hadn’t offered in return. Something they needed to break out of the hopeless spiral they were caught in.

Jason kissed his cheek. “Go to sleep.”

“I can’t.”

“Yes you can.”

“If you weren’t so obsessed with knotting me I would,” he muttered pointedly.

Low. “If you didn’t keep running away maybe I wouldn’t be so obsessed.”

Dick turned his head to look at him over his shoulder. “What does that mean?”

A telling silence. “Just go to sleep.”

Chapter End Notes

Any guesses as to what they're missing? The key element that's really off base with them? I tried to make it clear without explicitly stating it but I'm not sure how well I did
in that regard.

Also, special thanks to Talie, Sarah, and SticksandBones for their epic comment threads in the last chapter! I had no idea where to jump on that bandwagon or what I could add to your already awesome ideas but, trust me, I was reading and loving every second. Don't be surprised if some of the things you talked about weave their way fairly deeply into some of the story to come. It really was a storm of brilliant brainstorming and I love you guys for it. :D
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bruce woke slowly.

The bed sheets were bundled around him in a haphazard mess and an absurdly large pillow was pressed against his face. As he rolled onto his back he was confronted with a strange room. Offensively white walls bathed in mid morning sunlight, large square windows punched through into the blue sky beyond, and a doorhandle glittered bright enough to burn his eyes. A collection of family photos and newspaper articles stood in frames on every available surface, a clean compact kitchen was on his left, and an aging TV was pushed into the corner on his right.

It took a moment for his sleep lagged mind to recognise the location for what it was. Clark’s apartment.

Memory began to return.

He sat up, looked around for his absent alpha, and then slowly – tentatively – reached down to run the palm of his hand between his hips and over the flat shape of his stomach. When he walked into the apartment days before he hadn’t been sure if he was going to go ahead with the plan. When he did he thought he would either get a definitive yes or no; a simple straight forward choice that would enable him to turn the page onto the next chapter of his life no matter what that page may hold. Clark was a good alpha. His bond mate. He should have known he wouldn’t make a decision without making sure this was really, truly, something he wanted.

Goddammed perfect bastard.

His hand came to a stop; resting over his abdominal. If an omega shared their heat with an alpha they left their nest pregnant one third of the time. If that alpha and omega were bond mates it was closer to two thirds of the time. Clark was an alien, however, so despite his ridiculous sperm count he wasn’t quite as fertile as the average alpha and Bruce had no idea how fertile he was considering his age and the years he had spent overdosing on suppressants.

He wouldn’t know until he got back to the batcave and did the blood test. The thought of sitting behind the computer screens and watching a loading bar, waiting for a single yay or nay on the question of his own possible pregnancy was both absurdly alien and terrifying at the same time. But, not knowing had to be worse. He’d never liked not knowing things and he hated the idea of existing
in limo as to whether or not his entire life had changed. Whether or not he and Clark were going to be fathers. He the bearer. Clark his child’s sire.

The window opened.

“God, I’m sorry,” Clark flew into the room, cape billowing behind him, and hair windswept back from his brow. “I thought I would be back before you woke.” He landed on the edge of the bed, took him into his arms, and pressed their lips together. It wasn’t sexual. There was nothing about sharing hormone filled saliva in the connection. Just warm lips, strong arms, and bodies brought together. Bruce held onto that kiss, onto that moment, until he felt Clark’s lips curve beneath his own.

As their kiss broke Clark ran his fingers down the side of his face. “You’re so beautiful.”

“You say that a lot.”

“Because it’s true,” he pushed Bruce down onto his back and climbed slowly on top of him, paving a path of kisses up his body. “You have no idea how perfect you are.” Paused to kiss between his hips. “No idea.”

“What happened?” He muttered.

Clark grimaced. “A plane crashed into one of Luthor’s drones.”

He grunted and reconnected their lips. Kissed him harder, tested the other man’s flesh against his own, and drew back. “Liar.”

Clark’s smile slipped. “What?”

“You’re weaker than usual. You’ve been exposed to kryptonite.”

“I… well…” Clark looked aside. “There was kryptonite on the drone,” he admitted.
“I hate that man,” Bruce growled and rolled them so he sat on top of him. He reached forward, worked his fingers into the seam on his mate’s uniform, and peeled off the bold blue Superman shirt. The boots followed and then the pants. The man looked glorious naked; all golden unmarked muscle peppered with black body hair, broad shoulders tapering down to narrow hips, and armed with a cock that was long and large even limp.

“How long will it take before you’re at full strength?”

“I’ll be fine,” Clark said. “You’re going to take longer to recover.” He shifted under him. “Do you think you can stomach some food tonight?”

Bruce grimaced.

A low laugh. “We’ll give it a few hours, hey?”

He hadn’t planned on it but soon they were kissing again and this time it was sexual. Clark was holding his hips, he was holding Clark’s wrists, and then he was riding him; savouring the deep delicious slide of the other man’s cock inside him and loving the way Clark looked up at him as if he were something dangerous, elusive, and yet still with eyes of a man in love. Bold, blue, and beautiful.

When he saw those eyes flick to his neck and back he reached down, hooked a hand behind his neck, and pulled him forward so Clark could sink his teeth into his neck. Restabilising their bond and overlapping his previous mark with a fresh one; a small soft pink crescent on his skin.

A bond meant a lot of things. It was an addiction; a simple dependence of each other’s hormones. It was a scent sensitivity; an ability to better read their pheromones. It was a pledge; an unspoken promise of togetherness. But, to them, it was just a simple expression of everything they had been through together. Of the years that had passed since their first angry, uncertain, coming together. Since the reveal of his sexual caste, their first bite, first kiss, and first time they had sex. Since they became friends with benefits, shared heats, and since the night he accidentally told Clark he loved him. Since meeting the man’s parents for the first time, since resolving that disaster with a second get together, and since they first developed the fragile beginning of the full bond they shared now. Since Clark’s messy and exclusively emotional – unlike humans Kryptonians did not form hormonal pack bonds – integration into his pack, since the man’s unofficial shift into Wayne Manor, and since the moment five nights ago when he had asked him if he wanted to impregnate him.

The agonising pleasure of being penetrated by the other man built with every movement of his hips until he was dripping wet, achingly full, and shuddering with need. Sparks of painful pleasure up his spine as Clark pulled him off him, turned him around and pushed effortlessly back in. His knot pushed Bruce into the arms of his orgasm; hot, fast, and tethered with an edge of exhaustion. After
heat sex always felt like that. Languid, slow, and easy but also weary and worn; his body open and ready but also sore from the days of abuse at the hands of his own hormones.

He slumped back against Clark and let the man shift him so they lay spooning on the queen sized bed. Clark’s back to the sun so he would be able to reabsorb what he lost and Bruce within the hot tangle of his arms.

One hand reached down to rest on his stomach again; a small reminder of what was yet unknown.

He needed to get back to the cave so he could sit and watch that fated loading bar march across the screen. Then, depending on what followed it, he would need to either hold onto the idea for two months or inform his pack. Alfred, Dick, Jason, Tim, and Damian… he would be the hardest. Damian had never accepted his relationship with Clark and rarely even acknowledged the other man. Beyond this he seemed to stake his claim as ‘blood son’ with a kind of aggressive pride.

The hand moved from his abdomen to interlace with his own. “Don’t worry about it, okay?”

“I’m not worrying.”

“I know this is… we haven’t even talked about this yet but…this,” Clark pulled their connected fingers down to stroke across his stomach, “is the most amazing thing you’ve ever done for me. I know how much you’re giving up for this. Thank you.”

He looked over his shoulder. “I’m not doing it just for you.”

A small curve of lip; not Superman’s media smile, or Clark Kent’s nervous grin but a lopsided quirk of lip that came from something deeper in him. Clark. Just Clark. The man he was behind the glasses and cape.

“Us then?”

“Us.”

“Can I…” Clark’s smile slipped. “Can I ask how long you’ve been thinking about this? How long
have you wanted a baby?’”

Bruce frowned. “I don’t know.”

An eyebrow arched. “You don’t know?”

He turned away and faced the opposite wall. “I was never meant to survive, Clark.” A long pause. “I was meant to die on the streets at the hands of some thug. I was never meant to live long enough to even think about having children let alone realise that… pretty soon I might not be able to anymore.”

“You’re not that old.”

A hollow laugh. “Selina robbed a bank the day after my heat last month.”

“So?”

“Her heat is always right after mine, she hates suppressants, and she doesn’t want children. Her heats must have ended.” A pause. “She’s forty four, Clark. I’m forty six.”

He remembered that night; remembered seeing Selina balanced on the rooftop with a sly grin and a bag full of cash. He had stopped, stared at her, and slowly processed what her presence there meant. She had never taken suppressants in her life, had often declared that she didn’t want children, and yet here she was looking as cheeky as ever but… different. He hadn’t noticed until then but even the potency of her scent had waned ever so slightly; her body’s hormonal response as it shifted gears; the retirement of her reproductive abilities slowly but surely cutting away the aggressive omega allure of her scent.

Seeing Selina that night had made him realise he was of an age where any heat could be his last. That had brought thoughts he hadn’t realised he was thinking to the front of his mind. He had given his life to Gotham but in a disarming injustice she hadn’t taken it. He was still alive and over the years he had amassed a pack – people he loved who looked to him for leadership – and for the first time he was thinking about a time after Batman.

If he was going to live he wanted...
If this was his last heat he wanted…

If he had a chance at a life he had never thought was his he wanted…

He wanted it.

He hadn’t even been sure until Clark gave him that pill but, for the first time in his life, he wanted a baby.

A piece of Clark and him he wouldn’t let down the way he let down the others.

“You know I wasn’t really kidding before.”

Bruce shifted against the other man. “Hm?”

“When I asked if you wanted to marry me,” Clark clarified.

A long pause.

He sighed. “You know why we can’t do that Clark. The media can’t know about us. They would find out about you.”

He hugged him against him. “We don’t have to do it legally.”

“But we have to do it?” He asked hopelessly. “I’m not leaving you, Clark. Isn’t that enough?”

Sadly. “Why don’t you want to?”

“Because it wouldn’t change anything,” he replied quickly. “My parents were never married, Clark. They couldn’t. Alpha and alpha couples couldn’t back then. My mother only changed her name after her parents disowned her. But they were still the happiest couple I knew.” He let that admittance sit
for a while before continuing. “It doesn’t matter, Clark. I love you. What are we missing that putting me in a frilly collar and pushing me down an aisle will give us?”

His fingers reached up to trace the bond mark on Bruce’s neck; a faded pink crescent resting over his omega gland illustrating the last time Clark bit him. “Nothing.”

“Exactly.”

“But it would…”

He groaned. “Please, Clark. Don’t ask me to humiliate myself like that.”

Incredulously. “Humiliate you?”

“Yes, humiliate me.”

“But…”

“You want me to force me into omega clothes, swear my obedience, and get bitten by you on an alter in front of my pack.” He let those words sink in. They had never kissed in front of the pack let alone been seen sharing a bite. It wasn’t that he was ashamed of his relationship with Clark – he was more than willing to defend it and wore the brand on his neck to prove it – but in a complete reversal from his public persona Bruce was, sexually, a private person. Clark wasn’t one of the alphas he locked lips with at parties, he wasn’t at his side for anyone but himself, and so they saved everything just for each other. He knew it bothered Clark sometimes. He knew Clark wasn’t shy exhibiting public displays of affection and had even in the past tried to instigate things of that nature in the presence of his pack. Over the years the man had never really seemed to realise that Bruce was honouring him by keeping the explicit evidence of their relationship behind closed curtains; it meant he wasn’t a show, a façade, or a bought alpha to be used to re-establish his playboy persona and be thrown aside. Clark respected his choice to keep it that way but he hadn’t ever fully accepted that decision.

“Can I move into the manor full time then?” Clark asked instead, dropping the issue.

Bruce looked down at his stomach. “I’m going to need you there anyway.”
He felt Clark’s smile curve against the back of his neck. “For the baby.”

“There isn’t a baby yet, Clark. I don’t even know if I’m pregnant.”

A meaningful pause. “I still can’t believe it, you know. I keep thinking this has to be some kind of dream. I never thought you would want to… that this was even an option between us. Thank you. Thank you so much.”

He didn’t say anything.

But he stayed. In silent sharing he stayed in his nest, with Clark, far longer than he usually did in the wake of his heat. Stayed for a few final hours of lazy love making before having to face the loading bar in batcave, his pack, or the repercussions of what the last few days with Clark meant.

When he did finally disentangle himself from the other man he dressed in clothes warm enough to tackle Everest and let Clark carry him back to the manor. It was breakfast and the moment he walked in the door Damian, dressed for school, sprung off his seat and wormed his way in between him and Clark. The most common expression of an alpha omega bond was in physical contact. Damian made his disapproval of their relationship overt by ensuring, in his presence, it wasn’t maintained.

Dick sat at the other end of the table, feet on an empty chair, and Tim was against the wall looking small, pale, and gaunt as he prodded unenthusiastically at his food. Alfred had stood to retrieve the extra meals required by their presence.

He took the food and – to his surprise – attacked it ravenously. His heat had ended a while ago so it made sense that his appetite could have returned normally but… Clark watched him with a raised eyebrow, Alfred had developed a sudden, targeted, look, and Tim glared at him enviously. Only Dick and Damian seemed oblivious; chatting about a new game coming out soon.

“Hungry, sir?”

He swallowed. “Moderately.”

“Good to hear it and how odd considering the point in your cycle.”
Clark’s gaze flicked towards him.

“I got out of heat last night,” Bruce said slowly.

“Indeed sir,” the butler said not sounding convinced. “That would explain it.”

Later that evening he moved down into the belly of the cave, took a sample of blood, and asked the computer to do a body scan. It took painfully long to process the results and then wade through the report that arrived on his screen after it was done. The scan hadn’t picked up any overt changes in his reproductive organs and his hormones were off their usual mark but not by so far. He was worried about this. He might not be able to get definitive proof until the date his period was due to start.

He raked his hand through his hair and swore under his breath.

The only thing worse than telling his family he was pregnant was the prospect of telling them he might be and was waiting to see. That, if he wasn’t, he wanted to try again next heat. At least with a pregnancy he had something other than just a haphazard mess of hormones and omega instinct; a proactive step in one direction; something to show for it.

What was he doing? How was he going to maintain leadership like this? How was his pack going to trust him and follow him when he was cowering behind the lines trying to breed after his prime? He had spent years proving he didn’t need to be protected or provided for because of his sexual caste and now he was, in a simple stroke, removing that assurance.

And, if he was pregnant, would he be able to maintain a physical dominance? Jason especially had challenged him in the past and was only truly brought to heel when physically put down. If Bruce couldn’t boast a physical superiority then would the young alpha start to threaten his leadership again? What about Damian? The boy shared a lot of pack behavioural traits as Jason and seemed to look up to him as exclusively his father. Losing that could shatter the foundations of the pack bond that might be developing between them. Then there was Tim. He had been an omega for years but only recently started behaving in a way that suggested adult omega instincts. There was a number of ways he could look at this. He could see it as a chance to become the lead omega, could look up to him as a role model and take it as evidence of his purpose in society (something still widely preached), or use it to undermine all he had tried to teach the boy about being an omega. About being strong despite his hormones, despite the bi-monthly betrayal of his body, and submissive instincts. About being better than a bitch.
An hour later Clark was in Australia dealing with a flood, Dick had left early for patrol, and the bat signal went up for the first time in a month.

Within ten minutes Tim was downstairs, suited, and standing beside him. His scent dampened until he bore the aroma of a shadow. Damian appeared to sit in the corner and glare at the other boy.

“Why aren’t you getting ready?” Tim said. “The signal’s up! Come on!”

“Do not presume to order my father around, Drake!”

“Come on, Bruce,” Tim said, ignoring Damian. “I bet you it’s that gang Dick was talking about. The one with gargoyle masks.”

“I…” Bruce felt himself back into the corner of his mind, felt the inevitability of the confession he was about to make, and in an instant knew how deeply it would shake the very foundations of his pack. These two in particular. Tim; the second omega in a pack of two that shared the caste, a boy clinging to the guise of Robin, and newly struggling with his own instincts. And Damian; the boy that seemed to take his strength from the fact that he was his father; respecting him not because of his leadership but because of their blood tie as well as a strange belief that high levels were superior.

And then there was the bat signal.

He looked over at the suits lined against the wall. Dick was busy, Clark was busy, Jason was busy… He might not be pregnant and even if he was it was just a trip to the signal and back; just Intel. It couldn’t hurt and he could wear heavier armour than usual just to make sure. But what if it required immediate attention? His eyes moved to Damian. If he took two Robins the likelihood of him even needing to get near a fight was minimised further. Just an hour or two. He would be back before Clark was.

Tim. “Bruce?”

“Damian.”

The boy looked up.
“Suit up.”

Tim stared at him behind the lenses of his mask. “W-What?”

“I need both of you tonight.”

“But… why?”

“Ha!” Damian’s grin was devilishly sharp. “You’re not good enough, Drake!”

Bruce shot the boy an icy glare. “Now!”

“Father.” He acknowledged and obeyed with one last triumphant look at Tim.

“What the hell are you doing?” Tim said. “I’m Robin!”

“I need more help tonight.”

“No you don’t! I can do it.” Tim stared at him. “Why don’t you think I can do it anymore?” He rasped. “I know I’m not as good a fighter as him but I’ve been Robin for years and I… I help with the detective stuff, don’t I?”

“I never said you couldn’t do it,” Bruce growled. “This is… personal.” He started towards the dampening baths.

“Personal?” Tim followed him. “I-I thought I was part of your pack.”

Low. “This isn’t about you, Tim.”

“Who’s it about then? Damian?”
“No!”

He shrugged off his clothes, refused to think about what Clark would say if he knew what he was doing, and knelt in the nearest bath to splash the scent damper over his skin. It didn’t take long for the chemicals to smother the luscious omega allure from his skin leaving him a simple blank; like no one existed where he stood at all.

“You’re the one that told Dick to try and make me join the Teen Titans aren’t you?”

“You want to join the Titans?”

A long silence. “No,” the boy said stiffly. “I don’t. I want to be Robin.”

He looked at him as he pulled his chosen batsuit off the display. “Dick suggested it then? That’s not a bad idea. You’re too attached to the Robin persona, that of a child. You’ll need to develop your own identity at some point. Now that Damian’s here…”

“That’s it?” The boy croaked. “Just… now that Damian’s here… what? You don’t need me anymore?”

Bruce shot him a hard look. “Why do you need this? You’re strong enough to make it on your own.”

“That’s not…”

Angrily. “You don’t need me to hold you hand anymore, Tim. Dick was in the Titans by your age.”

“Dick started when he was seven! That’s nine years of training. I’ve had three.”

“You’re not staying as Robin for another six years.”

“That’s not what I’m saying.”
“What are you saying?” He growled. “Are you asking for special consideration?”

“Special? No!”

“At Damian’s expense?”

“I’m not!”

He flashed his teeth as he turned back to the young omega. “Good,” he growled. “Now get in the car.”

Damian was ready and waiting by the batmobile when they approached; a sword hanging off his shoulder and a yellow hood added to the regular costume. Bruce ignored the brief fight they shared for the front passenger seat and climbed in, started the car, and left. Gordon had three bags of new evidence, a cold case that had become hot again over night, and information on a criminal mauver happening that night. He also lifted an eyebrow at the two boys standing on the other side of the roof from each other.

He cherished every moment of it. The suit, the grapple gun, and the feel of the cape hanging off his shoulders. Seeing the boys running on the rooftop either side of him, catching Mr. Freeze before the critical axis of his plan was put into motion, and even the crisp cold smell of the batmobile. It was over three hours before he made it back, quickly stripped the costume, and threw himself into the shower. He dressed, made it upstairs, and pushed into his bedroom just as Clark stepped in the window.

“I thought you would be in bed,” the man observed.

He slid his tongue along the edge of his teeth. “I couldn’t sleep.”

“I know why.”

A moment of silence. He knew where he’d been.

“Clark I…”
“I saw you start the tests when I left,” he stepped forward with a sorry smile. “I… I know this is stupid but I forgot it’ll be a while before you can really tell if it worked or not. I thought you would want to be the one to tell me but I know how much not knowing kills you and…”

His stomach twisted. He didn’t know. He thought Bruce had spent hours trying to find out if he was pregnant. He was about to tell him the answer. “Clark I…” he repeated. Voice edged with uncertainty this time.

“… you are.”

“I…” he swallowed, “am?”

“Pregnant,” Clark specified.

“You can tell?”

A crooked smile. “I can see it.”

“Oh…” that made sense. The man could see molecules on the moon. Of course he would be able to tell if he was pregnant just by looking at him. Of course… “Fuck,” he muttered. “Oh fuck.”

“Hey,” Clark wrapped him in his arms. “We’ll figure this out, okay?”

“I…” he stared at him, licked his lips nervously, and nodded. “Yeah. I… yeah.”

“It’s just a baby,” Clark said encouragingly. “Millions of people have babies.”

“It’s a zygote,” Bruce corrected him.

He made a face. “If you say so.”
He frowned. “No, Clark, not ‘if I say so’. That’s what it is. You wouldn’t call me a toddler or an elder. No, I’m a middle aged omega, vigilante, that used to abuse suppressants, that is a famous playboy, and that’s pregnant for the first time.” A pause. “With an alien,” he added.

Clark was smiling at him. Open and loving. He knew, in that moment, that he should confess where he had really been and what he had really done that night. But, right then, he didn’t want to fight. He just wanted to fall asleep with Clark and feel the heat of his body, the weight of his arms, and the bond thrumming strong between them like a string pulling them both together.

He would tell him… just… not just then. Not with the bed soft around them, Clark’s body hot against him, and the man’s hand on his stomach.

Not just then.

Chapter End Notes

Oh! Almost forgot. If you guys haven't seen it check this out: Mortified By You by SticksandBones based on chapter three. Thanks so much for jumping into this sandbox with me! :D
Chapter 5

Clark caught him a week and three days later.

He came back to the manor late at night, found it nigh on empty, and flew down into the cave to question the single remaining occupant standing behind an army of computer screens.

“Master Clark,” Alfred greeted him as formally as ever. “It is good to see you.”

“You to, Alfred.” He landed, walked the final steps to stand at the other man’s side, and analysed the footage. The batmobile was parked under a bridge, one of the bikes sat near an open drain pipe, and the police radio chatted low in the background. As he watched he saw Dick return to the bike, ride it to a new location, and disappear back into the night.

Wretchedly. “He’s out there, isn’t he?”

Alfred turned him and lifted an eyebrow. “I assume by that you refer to Master Bruce?”

“Yes.”

A small nod. “Indeed he is, sir.”

Clark cursed and rubbed his brow; angry at himself for not predicting this and at Bruce for going behind his back. He was pregnant, for God’s sake. He knew the kind of physical abuse Batman suffered and how that could impact an embryo. Why would he go out? Why would he risk it? Why wouldn’t he even talk to Clark about it?

“You’re worried about the pregnancy,” he Alfred said, voice crisp, clear, and confident in the hollow space.

Clark turned to him, stunned. “He told you?” He asked incredulously.

Alfred smiled. “I’m afraid not.”
Clark ran his fingers through his hair, letting the shock dilute and wash away the stiffness in his spine. “How did you figure it out?” He said softly.

The man pursed his lips. “His off cycle eating habits,” was the first answer, “his fast recovery from his heat,” was the second, “and this morning I discovered he hasn’t touched the omega hygiene items in the bedroom.”

Softly. “That’s it?”

“And, of course,” the butler continued, “once alerted to the possibility I noticed he removed the contraceptive implant from his arm.”

Clark sighed. “I can see where he gets the detective stuff from.” He couldn’t quite hide the bitterness in his voice.

“Indeed.” Alfred looked at him; careful and analysing. “The most important fact I have devised is not, however, that he is pregnant but – as the removal of the implant proves – that he is both aware of at least the possibility and endorsing the idea.” A pause. “Certainly, that is not something I would have assumed given his character and previous life goals but I think I can see, in hindsight, the development of the idea over the last few months and must guilty admit to find a fondness for the concept if this pregnancy is indeed something you and Master Bruce plan on keeping?”

Clark blinked. “I… yes… yes it is.” A forced smile. “You approve?”

“If I may be honest, sir; I can not think of anything more foolish or poorly timed. Neither of you have had anything to do with raising babies nor do your lifestyles beg for this addition.” His eyes were soft. “But, the same could have been said for me. I did not bear or sire a child but I cared for one from his birth through to present day and I would not wish to deny that joy – torturous as it is – onto anyone.”

As he spoke Bruce appeared pixelated on the footage with the duo of Robins in toe and climbed into the batmobile; a sleek black shape effortlessly blending with the shadows of the street on the dim grainy footage.

Clark stared at the feed and curled his hand into a fist. “Damn it,” he rasped, “I can’t believe he just… without even talking to me about it he’s kept doing this.” He waved his hand at the screen. “He could lose it just to be Batman a bit longer? After everything he told me? After everything I told
him?”

The butler looked at him for a while then reached out to press and hold a button on the dash. “When
do you plan on returning, Master Bruce?”

The man’s voice crackled over the speaker. “On route to cave now.”

Alfred nodded. “Very good, sir.” Released the button. “As always, Master Clark, I advise you to talk
to your mate.”

“I know, Alfred, it’s just hard when he never talks to me first,” Clark said, knowing he sounded
bitter but unable to stop himself. He was angry. Since Bruce’s heat he had been living in a strange
world of tentative, frightening, excitement bathed in open honest love. But then Bruce had, as
always, applied an excess of layers and complications to what should have been a simple process.
Not only had he seemingly taken an even more authoritative approach to leading his pack he hadn’t
made any move to tell his family of his condition or that Clark was moving in. What was so hard
about that? And now he found out he hadn’t abandoned the cape and cowl. What made it worse was
that he hadn’t even spoken to him about any of this.

Had hadn’t done a damn thing.

When the batmobile pulled up Dick’s bike pulled in right behind it with an addition on the back of
the saddle. Jason came home with Dick once every few weeks and it wasn’t too strange to see him
that night. The moment the batmobile stopped the doors sprung open and Tim zipped to the gun
adorned vigilante. Tim didn’t talk as much as he used to but still seemed willing to chat to himself as
long as Jason grunted in response here and there. Dick hung around Jason and Damian proudly
strutted from the car by himself; holding a pair of bloodied swords.

Bruce exited the vehicle last; lips thin, cape hugged around himself, and beneath the cowl eyes
flicking from Clark and down at the ground in front of him. Guilty. Caught in the blasted act.

Alfred stepped forward first, hugged the other man, and muttered in his ear. “Please be discreet, sir.
The pack is present. And congratulations.”

Bruce exhaled, pushed the cowl off his face, and pressed his forehead against the butler’s; a quick
reconfirming of pack. “He told you.”

“You don’t give me enough credit, sir.”
“You figured it out,” Bruce amended.

“That I did.”

He took another breath, pulled away from Alfred, and with brisk stiff movements approached where Clark stood off to the side in the cave. “Clark.”

He had planned to be as collect and in control as Bruce when he was pulling him to pieces; when Clark had done something to offend him.

“What the hell are you doing?” He snapped; unable to hide the bitter coil of anger inside him.

Bruce flinched. “The signal went up, Clark.”

Incredulously. “I’ve been nearby all night. I didn’t see it.”

“It was… nine days ago,” the omega admitted.

Clark looked down and rubbed his forehead. “Okay, forget about how stupid it is for you to be flipping off buildings and getting whacked over the head with crowbars right now and take a stab at explaining to me why it’s not okay for me to lie about Luthor and some Kryptonite hours after it happens but you can go behind my back for days.”

Bruce frowned. “You didn’t admit that. I figured it out.”

“That doesn’t matter,” he hissed, conscious of the pack gathering nearby; out of earshot but a few clearly noticing the confrontation. “What the hell is going on with you? Why haven’t you spoken to the pack? Why are you sneaking out? Why aren’t you talking to me? I thought this was something you wanted.”

“It is,” Bruce muttered, frown growing slowly but steadily across his face.
“Then what are you doing?”

“It’s been a week, Clark. Give me some time.”

“To do what? Be Batman for a month longer?”

Bruce looked aside. “I’m being careful.”

“It’s an unnecessary risk!”

“I save lives too, Clark. I’m not just doing this for fun.” He wasn’t looking him in the eye. “Besides,” voice low, “the embryo is likely stronger than I am.”

“What does that mean?”

“What do you think it means?” Bruce said, still not looking at him. “Unless I go up against someone armed with kryptonite it should be fine.”

“It’s only been a week,” he snapped. “I hate that you sent a seven year old into battle but one week?”

Brows lowered. “Dick would have gone after criminals with or without me. I kept him alive.”

“Is that the excuse?”

Bruce’s gaze rolled back around to him, pinned on him; now equipped with his usual blistering harshness. Slowly. “Don’t make this about the boys.”

“Why?”

“Hey, guys,” Dick approached. “Are you two alright?”

Bruce. “Fine.”

Clark looked at the floor.

“If you’re sure…” the beta muttered, retreating a few steps.

Clark stepped forward, took Bruce’s hand, and pulled him deeper into the back of the cave towards the room he usually nested in and away from the other man. “Look, I know you don’t like to share things especially to do with us but you got to tell them.”

“I will.”

“When?”

Bruce didn’t say anything.

“And you can’t go out like this,” he gestured towards the batsuit. “Not now.”

He frowned. “Gotham needs me.”

“I’ll take care of Gotham. The boys can take care of Gotham. You’re risking too much.”

“Likelihood is, Clark, this embryo can take a damn lot more abuse than I can.”

“And maybe it can’t! I’m not human. Maybe it’s weaker than usual. Crossing DNA can do that. I don’t know.”
“What about this innocent?” He pushed a finger gently against the other man’s abdomen.

He slapped him away. Hugged his sides. “Don’t push me, Clark.”

He lifted his eyebrows. “Don’t push you? I thought you were sure about this. I thought you wanted this!”

“I do.”

A long pause. “My mother had four miscarriages, Bruce.”

He looked up at him, met his eyes, and looked away.

“It does happen.”

“I know it happens,” he said sharply. “My mother had nine.” A pause. “Ten pregnancies in total, eight before me and one after. I was the only survivor but even I was a weak pregnancy. My mother was in near total bed rest and I was still premature.”

A stunned silence.

“You’re mother is a beta,” Bruce said slowly. “Mine was an alpha. I’m an omega.” Features hardened. “It’ll be different. This is what I’m bloody well designed for. Not fighting, not hunting, and not leading a damn pack. This.”

A trickle of icy understanding. “Just because you’re physically a better bearer, just because you’re exercising that ability, doesn’t mean you can’t be a strong leader.”

Slowly. “I know that.”
“They don’t follow you because of the cowl, Bruce. They’re your pack. They’ll respect you if you’re pregnant or not.”

Harshly. “Except I can’t fight, can’t stand up for myself, can’t even go into the field.”

“Neither does Alfred.”

“That’s different.”

“How?”

Bruce raked his hand through his hair. “You wouldn’t understand.”

It was a bitter blow. “Why?” He snapped. “Because I don’t have any pack instincts?”

“Yes, actually.”

“And you have too damn much!” He yelled. “You’re always worrying about the pack and never thinking about the family. They’re not going to overturn you just because you’re pregnant!”

“You’re pregnant?”

They looked to the side. Tim stood nearby, maskless, and staring at Bruce in shock.

Bruce stared at him; frozen. “What are you doing here?” He rasped.

“You two were fighting and if Dick wasn’t going to…” he swallowed, “really? Are you really?”

Bruce didn’t move. “I…”
“Like… are you going to keep it?”

“Tim,” Bruce tried. “I need you to understand that this…” he trailed off. “This is…”

“It wasn’t a mistake,” Clark filled in.

Tim’s eyes widened. “Oh.” He looked between him and Bruce. “Oh.”

Bruce turned back to Clark, glare withering. “This was not how this was meant to happen,” he hissed.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean…”

“What? To yell it out in the middle of the cave? To make me look like a disobedient hormonal bitch?”

“No!”

“Fuck you.”

He turned on his heel and marched back across the rock and metal walkways back towards where the rest of his pack was assembled, now coming out of the shower rooms in sweatpants with towels slung over their shoulders.

“Hey, Boss,” Dick said. “Everything cool over there with big blue?”

Damian eagerly sprung forward. “Do you require kryptonite, father?”

“No.”

The boy looked crestfallen. “Are you sure?”
“Yes,” Bruce said, not looking them in the eye. “I’m pregnant.” Then, without another word, he continued up the stairs into the manor still in near full batman regalia.

A pause. Dick looked back towards Clark and Tim, across the room to where Alfred stood, and then to his side at Damian and Jason.

“Shit,” Jason muttered.

“Okay,” Dick seemed reassured by that. “So I didn’t just go insane, right?”

Damian looked utterly horrified.

Clark approached sheepishly with Tim in toe.

“This is a thing?” Dick asked him. “Like an actual thing? Like a thing that will last nine months and result in a human being kind of thing?”


The acrobat stared at him. “Oh… oh fuck. Seriously? This is a thing? This is a thing. Okay. No. Okay.” He wiped his wet hair from his face. “You’re not laughing. This is a thing.”

“Shut up,” Jason growled.

“But,” a nervous look, “if he’s pregnant he can’t stay Batman forever.”

“He can’t stay Batman for the next nine months,” Clark said stiffly.

“Oh, and you were trying to tell him that. Okay, now I get why you were fighting. Bruce doesn’t like people telling him what he can and can’t do.”
“It risks the pregnancy,” Clark said miserably.

“Good!” Damian snapped, spun on his heel, and marched up the stairs.

“Oh boy,” Dick said. “This is… oh boy.” He sent Clark an apologetic look and followed the boy.

He was left with Tim blinking up at him owlishly and Jason; eyes black. In the background Alfred dutifully shut down the monitors; politely turned away from the scene behind him but obviously not indifferent.

“What are you going to do?” Tim muttered nervously. “What’s going to happen now?”

“How are you going to keep him from fucking this over?” Jason grunted. “Cause he will, you know. He’s good at fucking shit over, especially omega shit.”

“He wants it,” Tim said sounding unsure of his own voice. “It was planned. Right?”

A hollow laugh. “I don’t know if ‘planned’ is the right word for it,” Clark admitted wretchedly, “but we did… decide to try.”

“When?”

Guiltily. “Last heat.”

Jason snorted. “And I thought I was a shit alpha.” He moved towards the stairs with a gruff, “later kid.”

Tim hung beside him, still dressed as Robin, and looking uncertainly between the retreating alpha, Alfred, and him. “I… um… what do you think is going to happen with Batman now?” He said softly.
Clark shrugged. “He takes a break.”

Uncertainly. “Do I take a break too?”

He frowned. “You don’t have to.”

“But… we’re partners. I haven’t ever been on patrol without him.”

“I… I don’t know, Tim. We’ll figure it out, okay?”

“How?”

“I don’t know yet,” he admitted.

A pause. “Why didn’t you guys tell us?”

Clark heard rather than saw the shift in the other man’s clothes as Alfred looked up. Listening.

“I… you know Bruce he… he doesn’t like to talk about this kind of stuff.”

“But we’re his pack.”

“He… you know the way he is with… omega things.”

Tim hugged his cape around himself. “That’s just what Jason says because I told him… it’s not really… he’s a good omega. Really good. He’s just a really hard act to follow, you know?”

“You two aren’t in competition,” he said firmly.
“Yeah… I know.”

Tim was the hardest person in the manor to read and considering the cast of characters that said something. Clark tentatively left the boy and climbed up the stairs into the manor. Dick and Jason were in the kitchen talking in muted voices and loudly searching through the shelves on the fridge; their voices adding to the hum of strange discordant life coming from the manor. Downstairs Tim and Alfred were speaking as well and upstairs Damian had curled himself in the corner of the bathroom and was crying in great, heaving, unpractised sobs.

That was the worst.

But he would be the last person in the world Damian would want to see right now.

Clark gritted his teeth and continued at human pace down the hall to the massive wooden door that stood between him and Bruce’s bedroom. It was locked.

“Bruce?”

Coldly. “Fuck off.”

“Let me in.”

No answer.

He sighed, zipped outside, and hovered outside the bedroom window. Bruce lay in the bed under a mass of blankets and glared coldly out at him; no doubt seeing his silhouette in the moonlight.

Low. “They weren’t meant to find out like that.”

He leant against the window. “I didn’t mean for that,” he said, loud enough that Bruce would be able to hear through the plane of glass. “You know that. I was just trying to sort all this out, Bruce. You know that.”
"It was never going to be good, there was no version of this where they would discover this and nothing would change," he closed his eyes, "but it didn’t have to be like that. They’re my pack and now they probably think I’m a stupid hormonal bitch that needed my fucking alpha to tell me off before I told them..." he stopped, swore, and rolled over.

"I’m sorry, Bruce. I was angry.” Exasperated. “You’ve been sneaking out behind my back!”

Angrily. “It’s not bad to exercise during pregnancy.”

“No, don’t give me that. I’ve seen you on patrol. Forget the swinging and the kicking; you take hits. I’ve seen you take a damn shotgun hit to the abdomen. You got blown across the entire room and knocked unconscious on the far wall. What if that had happened tonight?”

“My armour…”

“Is not enough! Not for this.”

A pause.

Bruce sat up in bed, swung his legs off the side, and moved towards him to open the window. When Clark tried to fly in he shifted to block his passage. “I was planning on stopping, okay?” He hissed. “I just didn’t count on it being this… this hard. That signal went up last week and I… I just…” he closed his eyes. “I’m sorry, okay? I’ll figure something else with one of the boys.” His eyes snapped open. “But that didn’t mean you had to do that.”

He moved to close the window.


“Fucking hell, Clark.”

“I mean it, Bruce.”
“I said I would, didn’t I?” He snapped. “For fucks sake Clark, I get that I’ve fucked up. I know being Batman while pregnant is stupid. I know the kind of shit that I go up against better than you and, screw the shotgun, I get drugged. Fear Gas, Joker Toxin, even just Ivy’s poison I… I don’t need you to tell me I’m being a fucking moron, okay? I know that. I won’t do it again.” A pause. “That doesn’t mean I’m going to let you sleep with me tonight. My pack… I have to be strong in front of them and you made me look like nothing. Don’t you get that? Can’t you see for a fucking moment what you did to me down there?”

“I didn’t mean to!”

A dark glare. “Just go back to Metropolis.”

“I can’t I…”

His eyes narrowed. “You can’t?”

“I… you said I could move in and everything back there is in boxes.”

“Then take them out of the boxes!”

Clark stared at him.

Bruce rubbed his forehead. “Fine. Go sleep on the goddamned sofa. There are enough of them in this house.”

The window closed.

“Bruce!” He put his palm against the glass. “Bruce I…” he swore. This wasn’t how this was meant to go. He and Bruce had gotten better at fighting. He could even say they had gotten good at it. When they first got together they wouldn’t fight as often but when they did fight it would be disastrous. Now they knew when they fought their relationship wasn’t about to be destroyed. It made fights more frequent but also more uncontrollable; more likely to swing down a tangent.

Damian had stopped crying.
Clark looked through the walls and saw the boy slumped on his side asleep in the ensuite bathroom. With a sigh he drifted along the side of the manor, opened the window to Damian’s room, and floated in. Damian was trained not to ever be caught with his guard down and the slightest disturbance could wake him if Clark wasn’t careful. But, the boy seemed truly wrecked as Clark changed the temperature of his skin to that of the air and carefully manoeuvred the ten year old into his arms and then into the bed. Despite himself Damian had obviously had gotten used to Clark’s scent since arriving in the pack and didn’t wake even as Clark gently pulled the blankets over him.

He looked so much like Bruce… his features were slightly more angular around the eyes and the shape of his nose was different but otherwise his colouring was Bruce’s, as were his eyes, and even the shape of his eyebrows. That was their last big fight. Their last real fight that had really hurt.

He’d been away on a deep space mission when Damian arrived. When he returned Bruce had greeted him beside a boy that could only be his son. When he heard the story, heard how Talia al Ghul had drugged his mate, he was ready to find her and rip her submarine out of the water. But he didn’t. Bruce told him not to and that was the reason why they fought. Despite everything she had done to him – all the things he knew and all the things he had come to guess over the years – Bruce was protecting her. What made it worse was that they had never bonded. His reaction, therefore, was entirely emotional and not derived from instinct. He could have dealt with instinct. Bruce was a high level and that meant his instincts were stronger; Clark was used to Bruce’s instincts. He was not used to seeing his mate defend another alpha especially one that had drugged, raped him, and stolen his DNA. Because that’s what happened; he didn’t care what Bruce said. If he was so drugged he didn’t remember to wear a condom he couldn’t have consented.

It wasn’t Damian’s fault and he’d known that, belaboured the fact, but Damian loved his mother and wasn’t stupid; he knew Clark hated her and knew Clark was the most overt obstacle to his parents coming back together. That simple fact had so far prevented any kind of civil relationship forming between them.

He sighed, straightened, and quietly slipped out of the boy’s room.

Tim was making his way to bed, Alfred was setting up a wash, and Dick and Jason were still in the kitchen; arms around each other and bodies together.

Miserably he made his way down into one of the less used living areas and slumped down on the couch. He pulled off his cape to use as a blanket but didn’t bother removing the rest of Superman’s costume. Around him the now familiar sounds of the manor, the people within it, and their mismatched heartbeats sounded like an off beat song in his ears; no one quite at rest or quite where they should be; everyone thrown off canter by Bruce’s confession in the cave.

Clark stared through the walls at his mate. He’d flown into the cave with a series of goals; he wanted
to convince Bruce to put aside Batman, he wanted him to tell his family about his pregnancy, and he wanted him to reconfirm moving into the manor with him.

Winning a fight had never left him feeling so simply wretched before.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tim sat at the back of the classroom and scribbled spirals onto the bottom of his notebook. As usual, the teacher stood in front of the class and dutifully faced the wrong way; speaking in a shrill voice to the whiteboard as she wrote down word after word in distorted Spanish. Tim didn’t retain any of it.

Bruce was pregnant. Bruce. Was. Pregnant. He was going to get big, have a baby, and probably breastfeed. Bruce – Batman – was going to have a baby. The prospect was so alien to him he wasn’t sure if he really understood it or simply processed it like a computer processes data; decoding it and pragmatically able to infer things from it but unable to really comprehend what it meant. He couldn’t understand it. Not really. Bruce had never before indicated that road was one he wished to travel down or even one he thought of, at all. The process that must have gone through Bruce’s mind before he made the decision – Clark said it was a decision – to not only step away from his carefully constructed image but also, ultimately, his place in the pack wasn’t even… Tim couldn’t begin to think on it. Just the results of it.

Bruce would stay pack leader. That much was obvious. There was no other real candidate for the position and, despite everything; Bruce really did know how to make everyone pull in the same direction when they needed to. But he couldn’t continue to be the same kind of leader he had been until his point. Bruce lead not just in terms of authority but literally as well; if there was an obstacle or a danger he was the first to throw himself at it even if that sometimes meant putting himself into the line of fire. Now he would have to surrender the mantle of Batman and attempt to dictate proceedings from the sidelines. In terms of the family he had always maintained a physical supremacy that substantiated if didn’t wholly define his dominance. Without that he would need to rely on the rest of the pack to support him.

Not to mention the more physical change this would mean to the pack; an increase to the ever fluxing population of Wayne Manor.

The bell rung.

Tim slammed his book closed, shoved it into his pack, and stood. He flinched as the uncomfortable ache in his abdomen protested the sudden movement – he hated having periods – but slung his pack over his shoulder and joined the scrum of students pushing through the narrow exit. By the time he made it to his locker he was already dreading the final block. The freshman with the locker next to his had presented overnight and her previously childish aroma had been replaced with that of a beta; wholesome, aerial, and with a touch of spicy inflection that suggested a leaning towards alpha. Betas, unlike alphas or omegas, had no special sex hormone but rather smaller doses of the same hormones that were found in the other sexual castes. Dick was a low level beta and thus smelt a little bit like an
omega; the terminology of ‘low rank’ in this case a surviving remnant of the discrimination against omegas. This girl was a high level and thus leant a little towards the alpha dynamic without overstepping the mark that would mean developing the sexual abilities required of an alpha.

She noticed him looking and blushed.

“You smell nice,” he said encouragingly.

Her blush deepened. “T-thank you. So do you.” Her eyes widened in horror. “No! I didn’t mean… I… I’m a beta so I shouldn’t… I don’t! I… sorry!” She grabbed her books and fled down the hall.

Tim looked after her for a moment in confusion, switched out his books for his gym clothes, and trudged toward his final class. Since Jason trespassed onto school property the week before things had become easier if not more uncomfortable. The position of lowest ranking omega seemed to have been palmed off to one of the other students while he was cornered into gossip sessions with varies collections of his caste members.

“…is such a slut. No, I’m serious. She acts like a virgin but she is really not.”

“Oh! See Tim? Jeremy’s wearing a turtle neck and changes in the stalls now. Totally on the bite.”

“Probably Mr Grant.”

A chorus of giggles.

“Why do alphas always dress so ugly? Did you see Meg today?”

“I saw a video of your dad online the other day, Tim. He’s such a boss bitch. And so rich! I bet you have a million pools at that mansion. You should invite us over for a party.”

Tim pulled his shirt over his head. “He doesn’t live at the manor,” he spoke for the first time.

“Bruce Wayne?” She made a face. “Yeah, he does. Everyone knows that.”

“He means the high level alpha,” one of them whispered to another. He left them to their laughter.

He spent the next hour bouncing a tennis ball against the wall. He didn’t know what the next nine months at the manor would be like. He didn’t know what the presence of a baby would mean in terms of their pack. He didn’t even know if this would finally truly integrate Clark into the pack. Though the fact that the man hadn’t already despite spending so much time around them and being the full bond mate of the pack leader strongly suggested something in his alien make up inhibited pack bonds. But, most of all, he didn’t know what this meant for Batman and Robin.

What would happen if Batman took a break? To Bruce? To Gotham? To him? He didn’t know the answer. He didn’t know if he wanted to know the answer. He was scared of the moment that had to be coming where Bruce would stand up and declare the new direction and fighting structure of their pack; scared of where it would leave him especially since he already knew Bruce wasn’t happy with him in the red, yellow, and green.

When the bell rang a second time he ran into the locker room, changed before any of the other omegas could worm their way into his personal space, and met Alfred at the front of the school. It took fifteen minutes to drive to Damian’s school where the boy was sitting under a tree attacking the root with a sharpened stone. He climbed in beside him, strangely subdued, and neglected to do up his seatbelt until told. When they got back to the manor he vanished without a word into the labyrinth of rooms.

Tim didn’t see him again until dinner. The boy sat on the chair with his legs against his chest and poked angrily at the food; destroying it rather than transferring any of it to his mouth. Dick was doing something similar; the beta jabbed aimlessly at his plate and frowned unhappily at Jason who was out of his usual place on the table and sitting beside Bruce. As Tim watched the young alpha commandeered the spring roll plate and transferred some to the omega and watched with unguarded fascination as Bruce devoured the offering. It was not the first bit of food Jason had given Bruce that night. Clark had also noticed the exchange and chewed angrily at his bottom lip as he observed his mate accept another portion from the other alpha. Usually if Jason visited he only stayed one night but the discovery of Bruce’s condition seemed to have prompted him to lurk a while longer.

Bruce noticed the attention. “Dick,” he said gruffly, changing the point of focus. “You offered Tim a place in the Titans?”

The beta blinked. “Ah… yes! We never really got around to talking about it but I sent him a

He looked down at his food. “Why do you want me to?”

“Well, it’ll be good for you.”

“Says who?” Jason growled.

Dick looked up. “They were really good for me,” he said defensively.

“That doesn’t mean they’ll be good for Tim,” the alpha growled.

“It’ll be good for him, eh, you Timmy, to get to hang out with people your own age that are also in the superhero gig.”

He frowned.

“Except the Titan’s aren’t his age anymore, are they?” Jason hissed. “You’re twenty six. How old is Wally? Donna? Roy’s even got a kid now.”

“We do have a younger team now, you know?” Dick replied. “Raven’s pretty young and Wally’s bringing in a new speedster. He’s fifteen, Tim; you two will totally get on and he’s from the future. I’ll send you his number.”

“Why?” Jason pushed. “You trying to hook him up with some kid alpha?”

Dick looked at the alpha, exasperated. “Sure,” he said, voice dripping in sarcasm, “that’s exactly what I’m trying to do.”

“No one cares about your stupid team, Grayson,” Damian muttered as he stabbed at a tortured piece of carrot. “Not even Drake.”
“Hey,” the beta dropped his fork ad threw up his hands in defeat, “I think it would be a good idea especially now since Batman’s going offline for a while.”

“Batman’s not going offline,” Bruce muttered, looking down at his plate.

Clark frowned nervously. “Bruce…”

Dick frowned. “Wait, I thought you were taking a break.”

“I am,” the omega growled. “You’re going to be Batman.”

The room silenced at once. Alfred looked up from his meal, Damian left the long suffering carrot alone, and Clark looked at his mate like he’s just grown a tail.

Dick. “I’m sorry, what?”


“Hey,” the beta made a face. “What the hell does that mean?”

Tim’s mind worked at lightening speed. Bad. This was bad. Dick was the one trying to push him into the Titans and away from being Robin, Dick liked Damian, Dick wouldn’t let him keep being Robin. “Hey,” he said over the sudden tsunami of noise. “If Dick doesn’t want to be then you shouldn’t make him.”

Bruce saw through him in an instant. “I’m still the leader,” he told him across the table. Eyes painfully sharp. “I’ll decide who Robin is.”

He swallowed. “Okay.”

“… couldn’t even keep up with me,” Jason was snarling.
“I had broken leg during that mission you idiot,” the beta returned.

“I think it’s a good idea,” Clark pipped in with obvious relief.

“No it’s not. At least Todd’s a high level,” Damian interjected sharply causing Dick to look at him in shock. “Grayson’s just a low level beta.”

He blinked. “Ouch, little man, what did I do to you?”

“Just fact,” the boy said bitterly. “You’re a beta. Betas should be mid levels. Alphas and omegas should be high. That’s how you bring a pack into balance. Yin Yang. You ruin a pack by putting people like you into positions they shouldn’t be in,” his gaze shifted to Clark, “and by mating a good omega to a mid level alpha dog that isn’t even human!”

Bruce’s eyes flashed. “That’s enough.”

“Yes it is,” Damian agreed, “but you had to take it a step further and breed too. As if just letting something like that touch you wasn’t bad enough; you had to throw your rank away and run your bloodline through the mud!”

“Enough!”

The table descended into a sudden silence. Tim looked around the gathered pack nervously. Alfred looked both resigned and worried as he looked at the ten year old, Jason was glaring at Dick, and Dick for his part looked like he was still trying to process the situation. Clark was biting his bottom lip and turned towards his mate. Bruce looked at Damian with eyes so cold the pale blue burnt barren and bleak. Damian returned the glare with an identical one of his own.

The silence became heavier, uglier, until Tim was scared to even breathe; terrified of breaking it. Then Bruce spoke.

“Damian will be Robin starting next week and Dick,” Bruce’s eyes flashed to the young man, “will be Batman.” A pause. “If that is agreeable.”

Damian gripped his fork and looked down.

“You’re both more than ready for the role and I will be working with you from the cave.”

“But…” Tim spoke up hesitantly, “… what about me?”

Bruce looked at him for a long time, sighed, and looked aside. “That’s up to you, Tim.”

“But, I’m not Robin anymore,” he said slowly. “You just fired me… right?”

No answer.

“Right?”

Slowly. “Batman doesn’t need two Robins.”

He was done.

Later that night Tim sat on the stairs and stared at the carpet. He knew it was coming. He would have to be stupid not to have seen it coming. It still hurt. But, it didn’t hurt the way he thought it would. He thought he would feel cheated; like someone stole something from him. Like he’d been wronged. Instead he felt simply gutted. He’d been falling off this cliff for a while now, trying to save himself, but he’d failed. Hit the rocky bottom. Damian was Robin and he was back to being the boy that showed up on the doorstep three years before. Though he’d been a stray puppy back then. Now he was a gangly low level omega who just got overturned by a ten year old. Not good enough.

He felt the tears spill over his eyes and grimly wiped them away on the back of his hand.

When Damian walked up the stairs on his way to an abnormally early night he expected the boy to brag or boost instead he gave him a forlorn look and continued by him without a word. Dick came
next less than thirty seconds later, saw him, and knelt on the step just below his.

“You doing okay?”

“Yeah,” he lied.

“That was rough in there.”

“Yeah,” he said again.

“Do you…” Dick hesitated for a moment. “Do you still want me to give you the number of the other kid thinking about joining the Titans? His name is Bart Allen. He’s really an alright guy once you…”

a crooked grin, “catch up to him.” He paused. Tim didn't answer. “Eh, yeah, so can I?”

Tim nodded more to get rid of Dick then anything.

“Awesome. I’ll do that now.” He did. “You know, you’re a really good crime fighter and a bloody brilliant detective. Don’t let this stop you. I was fired too, you know.”

Once more. “Yeah.”

Dick stayed with him for a moment longer before giving him an impromptu hug and continuing up the stairs.

Half an hour later Jason walked up the stairs, took one look at him, and sat down beside him. He didn’t say anything. He didn’t need to. His presence was truckloads more comforting than Dick’s had been.

They stayed like that for a long time. Just sitting beside each other staring at the empty stairs; shoulders touching and gazes directed discreetly forward.

When Tim stood to leave he sent the man a grateful look.
“Thanks Jay.”

He grunted in response. When Tim tried to walk by him he caught his arm, stopping him. “Hey kid,” he swallowed and looked up at him, "you’re a virgin, right?"

Tim blinked. “What?”

Jason’s gaze was black in the shadowy stairwell. “You know, a virgin,” he pushed. “Dick doesn’t reckon you are but you are, aren’t you.” A pause. “Right?”

“I…” he was blushing. “You guys talk about me like that?”

Jason waited.

“I… I guess.”

“Good,” Jason let go of him.

He stood there. “What does it matter if I’m a virgin or not?"

“Alpha’s are fucking shit,” Jason said. “Don’t let them near you.”

Defensively. “They’re not all bad.”

Simply. “Yes they are.”

“You’re not bad,” he tried instead. “I think most alphas are more like you.”

Jason’s lips curled. “Yeah, that’s why I’m telling you to stay away from them.”
He stared at him. “You, um, don’t need to worry. I’m a low level. Alphas don’t bother me anyway.” He couldn't quite hide the bitterness in his voice as he spoke.

Jason snorted. “You’re an omega, Tim. That’s rare. High level, low level, it doesn’t really matter for you no matter what the little ‘blood son’ says. Besides, humans are visual too. Not everything is about scent and some of the high levels in your class were ugly bitches.”

He coughed through a horse bray of laughter. “They love you,” he said with a grin. ”They think you would fuck them if I brought them over for a pool party.”

“Yeah,” Jason frowned. “Dick figured that out.” He grabbed the banister and hauled himself to his feet. “But you’re not like them, and not like Bruce either; you look like an omega and you’re pretty. Pretty soon some dog’s balls are going to drop and they’ll be sniffing around.” A hard look. “Don’t let them touch you.”

He was smiling. Bruce would tell him to tell Jason he wasn’t property, would look at him in disappointment for obviously feeling flattered by the alpha’s protective behaviour, and even – if he were in Tim’s shoes – demand Jason show his neck and apologise. He would probably be right. But, just then, Tim didn’t care. Right then it meant more that Jason was treating him as something valuable than just cutting him adrift.

“You think I’m going to go out and seduce all the alphas on the Teen Titans,” he concluded. “That’s…”

“I think you’re a kid,” Jason corrected him.

Tim smile slipped. “Oh.”

"You're good, kid. Even if everything else around here is fucking itself up you've always been good."

Jason looked at him for a long time, roughly scuffed his hair, and left; heading up the stairs towards Dick’s room. Tim stood there for a while feeling strangely hurt. Stupid. It was stupid, especially after everything that had happened at dinner, to feel hurt over something so small and stupid as what Jason said. Especially when it wasn't even intended to hurt. Still... kid.
He rallied himself, forced his legs to carry him into his bedroom, and closed the door. He stood there for a long time, not even bothering to turn on the lights, and stared into the darkness. A strange mix of emotions rose inside him, slow, painful, and pulling from a series of places deep inside him. The strongest among them was anger. He was, he realised, angry at Bruce, angry at the omegas in his class, angry at Jason, at Dick, and Damian, and Clark for not doing anything, and the girl at his locker for not talking to him, and all the alphas that never noticed him.

Bruce didn’t want him to be Robin, Jason didn’t even want him to be an omega, and Dick just wanted him to join a team so he wouldn’t feel guilty about passing his costume onto Damian.

Fine.

Fuck them and fine.

He pulled his phone out of his pocket and moved to delete the message Dick had sent him. A thought occurred to him before he could.

He pressed the number and – before he could let himself think about what he was doing – called it.

It picked up before the first ring.

“Hey, yo, what’s up? You’ve reached the machine. Leave a message when I go beep! BEEP! Haha! Nah, actually it’s me. Just messing with you. Calling at five past midnight. That’s so crash! Whoever you are I like you.”

Tim looked at the clock. “Oh… I’m sorry, I forgot it was so late.”

“Haha! That’s awesome. You have a Gotham accent. Say, ‘I would like to send a letter’ and ‘that’s so beautiful’ and ‘you got chicken legs, spud’ and ‘the Batman investigation is ongoing’.”

Uncertainly. “Is this,” he checked the name, “Bart Allen?”
“In the flesh. But, actually, for you I’m over the phone. But I could get to Gotham in like a second. Where you at? I’ll come and we can hang out! There has to be so much fun stuff to do in Gotham.”

“I’m… eh… that’s not important.” He couldn’t say anything incriminating over the phone. “You’re thinking of joining the… team?”


“I…”

A thunder of air and a boy appeared beside him. “It’s an honour. You’re my favourite Robin, hands down, even if you were only just Robin for three years. The whole red thing was a better look anyway. Man, this is so cool. Is this your room? Hah! Love it! Love the house too. So big! Though you didn’t tell me big blue alien sun god one oh one was here. He almost saw me! That would not have been crash.”

Tim stared at him. The boy was lean, about an inch shorter than him, and wore a pale speedster’s suit minus the hood. His hair was a soft feathery brown and was windswept back from his face. He also smelt like an omega.

Tim’s heart sank. He hadn’t met a lot of omegas but those his age hadn’t encouraged him towards meeting more.

The boy – Bart – seemed to see something in his eyes. “Yo bro, what just happened? I thought you wanted to hang out?" 

“I just…”

His eyes widened. “You smelt me didn’t you? Of course you did! Omega vs. omega. What did grandpa call it? Pack hierarchy. That’s okay, you’re like one of my heroes anyway; you be top dog.” He tipped his head back; submitting to him in a flicker of a second before returning to position.

“Anyway, this is so cool! I didn’t know you were going to join the Titans then Dick spoke to Wally and said you might be interested! Man, I’m telling you, this isn’t in the history books. We’re in uncharted territory. You, me, and the Titans!”
“Wait,” Tim threw up his hands. “Wait a sec. I, um, I haven’t even decided if I want to join the Titans yet.”

Bart stared at him. “Like, why not? It’s like a little Justice League but with no Justice League. Or, wait, I get it. You don’t want to because it’s totally like a Justice League now, right? Like, all adults training teenagers and not really teenagers anymore. Man, I totally get that. I met this girl who said the exact same thing. Muscular blonde alpha chick. Wonder Girl I think her name was. Cassie. She’s so cool. And hot. Just saying.”

“I don’t…”

“Oh, man, I just thought of this. You know what we should do? We should totally make our own team. Call it, like the young Teen Titans and invite Cassie and that green kid. You’ll be the leader though, obviously.”

“Me? Leader?”

“Yeah, you can lead the team, seeing is you’re so good at that kind of thing.”

“I’ve never…” he muttered.

“This is such the best idea I’ve ever had! The Young Teen Titans!”

“But… it’s going to be just us?”

“Oh, you’re right Red! That sounds so much cooler. Young Justice!”

“No, I said ‘just us’.”


“No I… never mind.”
The boy laughed. “Man, this is so cool! I knew this phone call would be awesome the moment it rung. I just knew, you know? Like, deep in my stomach. And I was… ah!” He disappeared just as the door to Tim’s room opened.

Clark. “Tim?” He looked around.

“Yeah?”

The alien frowned. “Are you alone?”

He looked around. “Yeah?”

“I’m sorry,” Clark sighed. “I guess I’m just tired. Probably someone talking in the city the sound just travelled funny or something.” He smiled softly. “Are you holding up okay?”

Tim nodded.

“Good to hear it. I know that was a bit rough at dinner but…” he stopped and his eyes narrowed. “Who’s scent is that?”

“It’s,” Tim hesitantly sniffed the air. “Oh that’s just… one of my classmates. I, um, borrowed a shirt from one of them for PE today.”

Clark nodded. “Okay, cool. Sorry to disturb you.” A pause. “Thanks for taking everything in your stride at dinner. I know Damian didn’t have as much right as you to lose his lid. Thanks for being the better man.”

“Okay,” he mumbled.

Clark smiled, looked around the room once more, and left. Tim stared after him for a while, sat down on the bed, and jumped as his phone buzzed in his hand. He had a message from Bart who had somehow and at some point put his own name into his contacts as Bart-Man. Tim left his lip tug
upward in a small smile, slumped back on the bed, and began messaging the small strange speedster back.

Chapter End Notes

This is my first major divergence from the comic books. I call AU immunity! I hope you liked it.
“Look at me!”

Jason’s eyes opened. “What?”

Dick glared up at him. “Look at me when I suck you,” he hissed.

“I was,” Jason said stiffly.

“No, you weren’t,” the beta snapped. “Your eyes were closed.”

“I was enjoying it,” Jason muttered defensively.

Dick sunk his teeth into his thigh. Hard.

Jason flinched and growled; low and angry.

“Look at me,” the beta told him and with a glare swallowed the length of his cock.

Jason stood in the main room of his newest safe house, back against the wall, and the beta on his knees in front of him gulping angrily around his shaft.

He was good at it. He’d always been good at it. The first time he’d fallen to his knees in front of him, flashed him a cheeky grin, and put him in his mouth Jason had almost come straight away. When he had less than a minute later the beta had cocked and eyebrow in surprise, looked up at him, and let him fall out of his mouth.

“Told you I was good.”

He hated that. Hated that Dick was the first person to suck him off and he did it with such skill –
such practised knowledge – that he couldn’t even entertain the fantasy that he was the first person Dick had put in his mouth. He wasn’t even the first alpha. Wasn’t even the second. Probably not even the third. Probably wasn’t even close to third.

It was an ugly thought; made worse by the now unwavering eye contact between them and the hand fisting too tight around the base of his cock. Hard, angry, demanding.

Time passed. Too much time.

Dick frowned, removed his hand, and leant forward to take him in deeper. Deep-throating an alpha male was no easy task and yet that was something else Dick could do, and do well, before ever falling to his knees before him. But now he was taking him too fast and staying down too long. Swallowing around him but not drawing back for a breath.

“Dick,” Jason growled.

He didn’t move. Glared up at him. Face red and getting redder.

“Get off.”

He didn’t.

“You need to breathe you fucking idiot,” he grabbed his hair and yanked him back. Too hard.

Dick gasped in pain, fell back onto his arse, and coughed. “Screw you,” he rasped. “Why the hell aren’t you coming?”

“Maybe it’s because you’re making me stare at you,” he spat back.

Dick wiped his mouth on his sleeve, coughed again, and glared at him. “You didn’t used to need me to tell you to look at me. You used to like it when I sucked you off. Now I can’t even get you to come.”
“Really?” He sneered. “I thought Batman could do anything.”

Dick’s eyes narrowed. “Is that what this is about?”

“I doubt it,” Jason said bitterly, “because you started it.”

“I just told you to look at me!”

“You told me not to enjoy it!”

“Oh, I didn’t know looking at me meant you couldn’t enjoy it.”

“I was looking at you!”

Dick stared at him. “Fuck it,” he pushed himself to his feet. “I’m not in the mood for you right now.”

“Hey,” Jason growled, grabbed his arm, and pulled him back. “We’re not done here.”

Bitterly. “I’m sure you can finish it up on your own, or find someone else to help you out. Someone you can come for while you look at them perhaps?”

“What the hell is that supposed to mean?”

“What do you think it means you dump dog?”

He twitched and dragged Dick back towards the sofa against the far wall. “See,” he husked, “I’ve never understood that. You can call me dog however much you want but if I ever utter the word bitch I get put on my fucking knees.” He threw him onto the tattered cushions. “Stay there, Batman.”

Dick twitched. “Don’t call me that.”
Jason pushed him down, climbed on top of him. “Why the hell not? It’s what you are, isn’t it, Batman.”

“You would like that wouldn’t you?”

He stopped, stared down at him.

“Yeah,” Dick sneered. “If I was Batman, the real Batman, here on my back with you on top of me or me on my knees sucking your cock you wouldn’t look away for a goddamned second would you?”

“You’re still going on about that?” He rasped. “That was years ago.”

“Really? Because I thought it was last night. You know, the night you sat closer to him than his mate and fed him. Wonder what brought that on? Straight after he announced he was pregnant?” A hollow laugh. “I guess he’s not just an omega now but an omega open for business.”

“That’s fucked up.”

Dick glared up at him. “Yeah? You know what’s even more fucked up? That it’s exactly what happened!”

Face hot. “I didn’t feed him because of that!”

“I’m not a child,” the beta snapped. “I know why alphas feed omegas.”

His hands closed around Dick’s wrists. “Do you?” He rasped. “I fed my mother after her heats when she wouldn’t feed herself. Or when she was too high to feed herself. I guess that makes me an incestuous, raping, dog, right?”

A long pause. “I notice you’re not getting off me,” Dick said simply.
“I’m not finished,” he growled. *And you’re not started.*

A hollow, bitter, laugh. “Fine, I’ll let you close your eyes this time.”

Jason stared at him. “What the hell is wrong with you?”

“Me? Nothing.”

“You think I’m in love with Bruce?”

“In love? Oh no. Not that.”

“You think I want to fuck him?”

A telling silence.

“I don’t want to fuck him,” he growled.


“You’re the one that runs away and fucks other people! Not me!”

A long silence. “You’re hurting me.”

“Yeah? What do you think you’re doing to me?”

“No, you’re *hurting* me, Jay.”

“What does…?” He realised how hard he was holding the other man’s wrists. The amount of weight
he was using to keep him down. With a jagged curse he retreated, fell off the side of the sofa, and landed on his side on the ground with a loud thump and a pained grunt. His shoulder throbbed in pained protest.

Dick sat up and watched as Jason tried to put himself back together; hurt, humiliated, and still hard on the floor of his apartment. He pulled his pants up, staggered to his feet, and shot the beta a dark look.

“Fuck you.”

Dick stared at him. Watched in silence as he made his way across the room, grabbed his jacket off the floor, and strode towards the door.

Softly. “Do you want an omega?”

“No!” Jason yelled over his shoulder.

Dick stood. “Do you need an omega then?” A long pause. “You’re a high level alpha, Jay, and I know you’re not gay. And I know you. You’re very instinctual and you’ve been off balance for a while now.”

“That doesn’t mean…”

“Even if you hadn’t been practically trying to breed me the other week, threatening Tim’s teacher, or feeding Bruce you’ve been… omega orientated for… for a damn long time and you’re getting worse. Now you’re angry at me for being Batman? Like you wanted to the leading position – physically anyway – even though you haven’t been close to the pack for the last half year.” He swallowed. “It’s like you’re constantly on the verge of peaking and… that was Bruce before Clark, you know. He wasn’t as…”

“As what?” Jason snapped.

“He could control it,” Dick mumbled. “But you’ve always been more instinctual than him. Always a damn sight more. And that’s saying something.”
He glared at him. “You’re a real elitist prick when you want to be.”

Dick’s lips thinned.

“Yeah,” Jason snapped, “I’m an alpha. I’ve always been an alpha. Why the hell did you let me fuck you if you didn’t want an alpha?”

“Because I like alphas,” he muttered. “But do you like betas? You don’t do you. Not really. You don’t mind us but you go for omegas first. That was why it took you so long to even notice me.”

“You know that’s bullshit!”

“Look, Jason this is…” he swore and raked his hand through his hair. “Why is everything with you so complicated? Why do you have to make everything so hard? I hate it! I’m just… do you need an omega, Jason? Please just tell me.”

He met the beta’s gaze, turned his back on him, and left without a word.

He walked until he found some junkies slumped in a gutter giggling. He sat with them and listened as the oldest told him earnestly of his wife and the price of noodles. He didn’t say a word. Didn’t want to do anything in case it triggered the realisation that Dick might just be about to break up with him. Not leave like he did before. Not take a break. But break up. No. No he couldn’t survive that. Dick was too important. He hurt him and he hurt him back. He hated that was the cycle they seemed to be on but he… him so much. So much. Too much. But he always fucked it up because Dick was a whole level above; something so simply better he couldn’t keep up. Except that was bullshit. Dick was just fucking him over and he let him because the only alternative was to walk away and he would rather be fucked around by that bastard for the rest of his life than walk away now.

Even if Dick hated him, even if Bruce made him Batman over him, and even if he kept leaving. Because he kept coming back too. That was the moment he first really saw how special Dick was; when he came back for the first time after Jason had fucked him over and fought with Bruce. When he came back from Chicago. He was important before, important right from the start, but back then he just didn’t realise he would… leave.

Now he knew. Dick would leave and one day he might not come back.
He stood and left the ragtag collection of people in the gutter to make his way on foot through the city until he got to the entertainment strip. By the time he got there it was dark, small hordes of tourists and night clubbers were already trickling from the taxis, and the early sex workers stood in intervals along the pavement. He watched the scene long enough to learn what the popular clubs were, who was really drunk and who was just pretending, and which prostitutes were real omegas and which were betas with scent masks. Whatever omega scent mask they were using it was pathetic beside the beta one Bruce used to wear because they had to reapply it every half an hour; some using spray cans and others splashing the liquid scent on their skin. It was like the scent dampening pools in the batcave scaled down a few thousand times.

He stared at one of the ones he identified as an omega for a long time, then let his eyes trek between him and the beta beside him. They were both ugly.

He turned to the people standing in line outside a club. Even as he walked beside them they were too close together to work out which scent belonged to which body. It didn’t matter. They were all the same; a mess of different features but none of them arranged into a face he wanted to see.

When he walked too close to a group of omegas a wall of alphas appeared and pushed him on with ragged growls. Even out partying people travelled in packs.

He hated not being with a pack; being the lone wolf; but he was getting used to it. You haven’t been close to the pack for the last half year. He had needed to get out of the manor to exist away from Bruce, to live in his own territory, and have the freedom to hunt and patrol as his own leader. He missed the pack more than he wanted to admit but he was more at home in the city; loved the smells, the taste, and the crowded walls of Gotham’s underbelly. He felt at home existing here; more than he ever had at the manor. But his pack was there and that pack, despite how messed up it was, was the only pack he’d ever been a part of that he actually cared about.

His first pack, his father’s pack, hadn’t been worth shit. The gang of street kids he was a part of after that was a pack too but one with pack bonds weaker than cotton wool. He doubted he would even recognise one of those boys if they walked beside him now.

But, he thought wretchedly, even if he had stayed deep in the pack core Bruce wouldn’t have chosen him to be Batman. He was the least trusted pack member; the rouge alpha. He’d been fucking Dick for years and even he didn’t see him as anything other than the shit pack alpha. Why should Bruce? Why should it matter? Why did he have to fuck up what he had going with Dick over something so stupid? Why did it still matter? Still make him grind his teeth? Still make him hate that bitch for not thinking about him or Tim or anything other than constructing the most hormonally controllable team to fill in for his absence. A beta and a kid.
He didn’t care. *He didn’t care.* Not when Dick might… but he couldn’t think about that.

Dick tracked down and showed up to his new safe house four days later. He came in the window in the early morning before sunrise thankfully in a shirt and jeans and not in his new costume. Without a word he stripped, slipped under the covers, and fell asleep on the far side of the mattress.

When morning came Dick rose first, ate, and left without every uttering a word. He came back that night, and the night after. They had sex again the day after that and everything seemed locked back onto its predetermined track. The same loop they always went through.

“You know, Jay,” he muttered the next morning. “I’m stuck with you now. I mean it. I don’t think I could leave even if I tried anymore. I hate you for that. But I think this is… this, now.”

He tightened his arms around him. Waiting with his hackles up for the ‘but’ at the end of his sentence.

“I’ve been thinking… if you…” Dick made a face and tried again. “I’m Batman now and I know Bruce knocked you and Tim aside there without even talking about it, and I wasn’t fair on you the other night, but…”

*But.*

“I’ve been thinking, about us, and because I can’t walk away from you anymore we need to figure something out where we can both be happy and get what we need. Because I need you and you need…” he trailed off, sighed, and propped himself up on his elbows to look at him in the eye. “What if I got you an omega?”

The words hung like a riddle; spoken simply and openly but consuming a meaning that didn’t make sense. That he didn’t want to try and decipher.

“I’m with you,” he growled.

“Yeah, I know,” Dick said slowly, painfully, “but what if every once in a while I got you an omega?” A heavy silence. “Like, I have connections and there are a lot of omegas out there looking for a alpha to help them out in their heat without any teeth and,” he shrugged, “they’ll trust you if you come from me.”
Jason stared at him. “I’m with you,” he said again.

“I could be there,” he suggested gently. “We could do it together.”

Hopelessly. “You want me to?”

A layered look. “I want you to be happy with me,” he said simply. “I want you to get what you need and for us to get out of this downward spiral. I’m Batman now and twenty six. I can’t keep acting like a stupid teenager over this; you clearly need something more and I’m not going to let that come between us anymore. I’m going to let you have it and I’m not going to let that ruin what we have here.”

He stared at him. He wanted him to. “Dick…?” He’ll stay with him if he did. If he… but… “I thought… I don’t…”

“It’s okay, Jay.”

His insides were twisting, mouth dry, palms sweaty. “Really?” He rasped. This was okay? This?

Quietly. “Yeah.” A pause. “You’re more important than this, Jay. I… I don’t want to lose you over something so stupid.”

He wanted him to. Dick wanted him to.

To what? To fuck omegas? But he’ll stay with him if he did. And what if he was right? What if he was something Dick liked better if he did? Dick liked Roy and he was a low level alpha - Dick never hated Roy - what if he could knock down some of the alpha in his blood? Would that make him better? Like Dick? Like a low level? Better enough so Dick would stop fucking him around.

He wanted him to. Dick wanted him to.

Better. Dick said it would make them better.
He wouldn’t leave him anymore.

Still he couldn’t say yes. Not then. It was three days later in the kitchen in Wayne Manor when everyone else was gone and Dick was dropping some dishes into the washer when he did. He was hugging him, holding him, hardly letting the beta move when Dick spoke.

“Jason… about what I said the other night. Do you…?”

Too important… not going to lose you… not over this.

“Yeah,” he rasped. Forcing himself to speak.

Dick fell silent for a moment. “Yeah?” He whispered.

Again. “Yeah.”

“Okay… okay I’ll…” a deep breath, “I’ll deal with it, okay?”

He nodded. Hated himself for not being good enough for Dick without being palmed off; diluted with some omega.

“Thanks for…” Dick swallowed, “thanks, Jay.”

He didn’t say anything, didn’t do anything. Just stood there, held the man’s back against his chest, and didn’t let him go. Held him like that for a long time. Kept holding him even as the minute hand marched around the clock. It didn’t matter. Nothing else mattered because Dick didn’t try to leave.

He stayed.

That night they slept in Dick’s room; Jason slumped on top of the other man and scraped his cheek against his; constantly reaffirming their pack bond. Alphas and betas couldn’t form a mate bond so
he endeavoured to make their pack bond somehow stronger breaking the motion just to press his lips against Dick’s every once in a while. He couldn’t bite him – couldn’t lock him onto him with a hormonal tether – but he could do this. He just hoped it would be enough to show him… to make him see… everything.

Everything he couldn’t figure out how to say.
Clark’s hand was on his thigh, fingers between his legs, and thumb gently tracing slow circles in the fabric of his pants. As usual the alpha ignored his own instigating contact and chatted happily to himself about his blog, saving people, and packing up his apartment. Bruce grunted where appropriate and kept his eyes locked on the screens in front of him. Half showed possibly connected police reports, criminal profiles, and unsolved cases. A quarter displayed old cases, chemical compounds, and police records. The final quarter sat in the bottom right and showed the footage from the Batmobile, the security feeds from the building it was parked near, and the GPS track markers on Batman’s and Robin’s belts.

New. All the criminals they were going up against tonight were new. He hadn’t met any of them. Didn’t know how dedicated they were, how organised, how dangerous… didn’t have any profile to work off, any experience, or even an identity he could akin to the ridiculous new names. Nothing. He had nothing he could give Dick and Damian. He was useless. It was all on them. And until they walked out of that building he wouldn’t have any idea of what was happening or how the situation had unfolded.

He almost wished the police would report a crime worth calling in so he could open contact if only just for a moment. Just Dick’s ‘Roger that, boss’ would be enough. How did Alfred do this? They’d been in there for almost twenty four minutes. The lack of information on the criminal line up, the situation, and even how well Dick and Damian worked as a team meant he couldn’t even estimate if that was a long time or a short time. He didn’t even know that much.

“Bruce?”

“What?” He muttered, not looking away from the monitors.

Clark’s thumb stopped moving on his thigh. “I asked you a question,” the man muttered, hurt.

He sighed, ran his fingers through his hair, and looked at him. “What?” He said again.

“Do you want to go back to the farm for a visit or, if you don’t, can I invite her over?”

“Who?”
He frowned. “My ma.”

“Okay,” Bruce muttered, turning back to the screen. He thought he’d seen a flicker of movement in one of the security feeds. Nothing. Even when he rolled back the footage.

“Okay?” Clark echoed.

He grunted an affirmative and reset the monitors.

“Farm or manor?” Clark pushed.

“You decide.”

“Well,” Clark shifted in his spot in the air. “I actually don’t know which the better option is. I mean, if I invite her over here then she gets to hang out with the pack but I know she’s not really comfortable in this house and I think if everyone knows you’re pregnant and we invite her over and just tell her it’ll look like she’s an after thought. It would be nice to go to the farm for a few days and for it just to be us for a bit too especially since she’s there all alone most of the time but, at the same time, it would be a shame not getting your family into it.” A pause. “I was just wondering what you think is the better option or if you had a better idea.”

“You decide,” he said again, eyes on the screen. Twenty six minutes.

The alpha sighed. “If I do will you get angry at me for making the wrong choice?”

Footsteps approaching. Bruce pushed Clark’s hand off his lap and growled, low, in warning when the man’s palm hovered uncertainly in the air.

Clark’s brow pleated and he hugged his knees to his chest; hovering beside the chair Bruce sat him in a pair of faded jeans and a plaid shirt. Dressed for a persona that didn’t belong to either the Man of Steel or Clark Kent. Casual enough to have neglected his glasses and left his unearthly eyes exposed.
Tim walked around the corner, frowned when he saw Clark floating – it was hard to get used to – and moved towards the stairs.

Bruce pushed himself to his feet. “Tim!” He grabbed at the distraction.

The boy stopped, blinked. “What?”

“Train with me,” he said motioning towards the back of the cave.

“But… I just finished training,” Tim muttered, confused.

“Train with me,” he said again moving towards one of the sparring areas.

He sighed and followed. Clark watched from a distance as they shrugged off the extra clothing and began working through a basic warm up. Afterwards they fought; each hit hard enough to notice but not hard enough to bruise.

This was better. Easier. He moved Dick and Damian aside – let the issue of their situation sit in the back of his mind – for a moment and concentrated on just Tim and the boy’s smooth, straightforward, fighting style.

“Block higher,” he muttered repeating the last sequence of moves. “Both arms.”

“But won’t I leave my chest exposed?” Tim repeated the sequence again deliberately showing him how open the new suggestion left him.

“That’s what your legs are for,” he told him. “Go on the offensive. It’s more important to protect your head than your chest and take advantage of assumption.”

Tim didn’t say anything. Didn’t kick as they worked through the sequence again.

“Kick me,” he growled.
Tim paused. “I don’t want to.”

“Why?”

“If I kick you you’ll knock me over,” he muttered.

“If you kick incorrectly,” Bruce conceded.

“I can’t kick you correctly. I’ll need to kick hard. If I kick hard I’ll kick you in the stomach.”

A pause. “I can block you, Tim.”

“You don’t always.”

“I will now.”

The boy looked uncomfortable. “I don’t want to.”

Bruce gritted his teeth and walked away to grab his discarded jumper. “Fine,” he growled. “Dismissed.”

Tim frowned. “Don’t you want to…?”

“No,” he shot over his shoulder. Realised he flashed his teeth without really meaning to.

Tim shuffled back. “Okay…”

Across the cave the screen were still unchanged. It was almost forty minutes now.
Damn it.

“When are you planning on joining the Titans?” He said over his shoulder.

Tim’s lips thinned. “I’m not, actually.”

He frowned. “A team will be good for you, Tim.”

“Maybe.”

A long pause. Bruce moved to face him squarely. “You’re at the next step, Tim. You can’t stay in Batman’s shadow anymore. You’re good enough to move on.”

Sullenly. “Damian’s better than me.”

“No, he’s not.”

A hard look. “Don’t bullshit me, Bruce. I’m not a kid anymore. He’s been trained since he was three. Three. How the hell could I be better than him?” A long pause. “You didn’t even want me to be Robin when I started out. I know that. You didn’t think my fighting was good enough.”

“You hadn’t developed your own style of fighting when you started.”

“So? What does that mean?”

Bruce stared at him. “Dick,” he said simply. “How does he fight?”

Tim shifted from foot to foot. “He moves around a lot, he’s very acrobatic, and uses his legs a lot more than you.”
“Jason’s a natural,” Bruce continued. “He hits hard, fast, and knows how to beat down an enemy. He doesn’t relent, doesn’t leave breathing room, and adapts what he has learnt into his own street fighting style.”

Tim hugged his shoulders. “And Damian’s like you,” he said miserably. “He can do all the moves, changes style so fast, and can figure out what his opponent is doing straight away.” Bitterly. “He’s a better Robin.”

“Damian has a very one track fighting style,” Bruce corrected him. “He attacks with a powerful offensive but if that’s overcome he doesn’t re-strategise. He’ll keep fighting, keep getting up, and keep coming at something without thinking about it. It doesn’t take much for him to resort to lethal force. He is not ready to go out without a partner.”

“Okay,” Tim said; voice defensive. He didn’t believe him. Didn’t want to hear what Bruce had to say.

“When you started you didn’t have a style,” he continued anyway, “you were textbook. I was worried you wouldn’t do well in a real fight.” A long pause. “It took a while for you to develop a style but you did. You fight smart. You take advantage of what’s given to you and not just in terms of the staff or the shield; no one else has used the grapple gun as a combat tool before. You’re still the only one of us that can.”

When he’d first seen Tim pull out the grapple in a middle of a fight he thought the boy was overwhelmed and making a quick escape. Instead he’d fired it at a thug across the room, hooked onto the man’s bullet proof vest, and – using the man’s superior weight – had launched himself across the open space and into the offending man. Bruce’s own weight made it impossible to bounce between aggressors the way Tim did but he had adopted the practice of using it to pull away firearms that he couldn’t be disarmed with a disrupter. That wasn’t the only creative application of tools, environment, or fighting styles Tim had come up with. But, eclipsing all that was his detective work. Unlike the other boys Tim had a very good chance at becoming a master crime solver – not just a crime fighter – and was quickly becoming a skilled strategist to boot.

He was old enough, and ready, to move on and work not with a mentor but as part of a team. Develop his own identity.

Dick had been eager to do so. Tim was not despite being older and arguably more skilled than Dick was when he joined the Titans. Dick had wanted to grow up. Tim didn’t. He wanted to stay subservient, submissive, under a single dominant partner and that was not okay; that was omega instinct, abet in a childish form, but omega instinct all the same. The boy had to learn to be better than that, stronger; especially now that he appeared to be developing a real sexuality on top of his sexual caste.
Tim was at an age whereat he was defining who he would be for the rest of his life. Whether he would surrender to his base hormonal drive and expectations of society or whether he would grow to be someone better than that. Bruce wasn’t the only one that knew it either. Tim, unknown to him, had already started receiving invitations to Gotham high society more often and more regularly than even Dick. He was sixteen. That was the age of consent and with parental permission an omega could marry then too. In high society many did. Usually to much older alphas.

An unofficial system of arranged marriages between the richer families. Something that he might have been subject to if his parents had not died... he loved his parents but he was not ignorant. They were privileged alphas and he never received their reactions to his sexual caste. He liked to think their own discrimination as same caste couple would have made them kinder towards an omega child... but he couldn’t be sure.

He wanted to believe Tim was more attached to his intellect and integrity than the role of Robin – to his place beneath others – but, again, he couldn’t be sure. Tim’s instincts weren’t as strong as his own; the boy was a low level omega; but they were still there and he was holding onto them.

“You’re ready to move on,” he said. “Work as part of a team. Be stronger.”


“The Titans can do that.”

He kicked at the ground. “Maybe.”

Bruce looked at him. “You can’t keep hanging in Batman shadow.”

Bitterly. “Yeah, because I was fired.”

“Tim,” he said, low, in warning.

“I’m going to bed,” the boy said quickly. “I got a math test tomorrow.”
Bruce watched him depart. Returned to where Clark still floated, chin resting on his folded knees. “He doesn’t like you much right now,” the man observed quietly.

“He needs to be more independent and step up even if he hates me for it he’ll be better for it.”

“He doesn’t hate you,” Clark continued. “That boy still hasn’t really gotten over that little bit of hero worship he’s got for you. But I don’t think he’s feeling too fond of you right now. Robin was a big deal to him.”

He looked back towards the stairs and sat down in his chair. Forty four minutes. “He couldn’t stay Robin,” he said.

“Why?”

He picked the first lie he thought of. “Dick has never been Batman before and Damian is more than enough to keep him busy. Two Robins would be too much.”

Clark looked at him. “You’re really hard to read sometimes. You know that, right?”

He gritted his teeth.

“I mean it,” the alpha pushed. “You’re right; it’ll be good for Tim to join the Titans, to take the next step, but I have no idea if that’s really why you fired him. You keep telling me different reasons and they all work but I’m honestly not sure if they’re true or if you’re giving multiple answers looking for one everyone will accept. And it’s not just Tim either.”

Bruce scowled.

“I have no idea why I’m not allowed to touch you in front of your pack, not even allowed to hold your hand, but you still go to parties with alpha supermodels and Jason can even feed you.”

“Jason doesn’t feed me.”
Clark looked at him. “He did the other week.”

Bruce’s mind rewound until he pulled up the incident in question. Jason had fed him but the young alpha had done so with an almost childish innocence; chin slightly back showing that the action was submissive. An adult alpha wouldn’t usually do that but there was a generational gap between them, Jason often did behave more instinctually without really thinking about it, and considering their history Bruce wasn’t about to rebuff positive pack behaviour. Not with Jason. Not again. “You wouldn’t understand,” he said.

“Try me.”

“It’s pack,” Bruce told him. “You wouldn’t understand.” Clark knew human behaviour, he even replicated it, but he didn’t always comprehend what was intrinsically understood between pack mates.

Clark looked at him. “Dick didn’t look like he understood either,” he pointed out.

“Jason and I are high levels of the two more viable sexual castes. Dick’s a beta.”

“What does that mean?”

“I told you you wouldn’t understand...” His voice trailed off. There, Dick came out of the building first and Damian walked behind him. They were fine. Looked like they were arguing, but they were fine. They were okay.

Once they were in the batmobile Dick said something to Damian and tapped the side of his cowl.

“**Batman to cave. Anything else come through I didn’t get on the chatter?**”

Bruce held down the receiver. “No.”

“**Right. We’re done for the night.**”

In the background he heard Damian’s angry protest.
“It’s only twelve forty,” he reminded the beta. “You can still go out on patrol.”

“Sorry, boss.” Again. “We’re done for the night.” He cut the line.

“Damn it,” Bruce muttered.

“What does that mean?” Clark said softly.

“I don’t know.”

Clark floated closer to him. “Look, Bruce, I know you love me. I’m not questioning that. I just don’t understand why you don’t seem to want anyone else to see it. I know the media can’t know about us but what about your pack?”

“I wear your mark,” Bruce reminded him with a sharp gesture towards his neck. “I’m bearing our child. My pack doesn’t need to see us grope to know we’re mates.”

“I’m not asking to grope you. Dick and Jason will hold hands and…”

Bruce twitched. “We’re not talking about Dick and Jason.”

“Why? They’ve been a couple for…”

“I know!”

A long silence.

“You don’t like Dick and Jason being together,” Clark sighed. “I understand.”
“I keep thinking of this moment,” Bruce muttered. “This one moment. Dick had just turned fourteen and Jason was ten. Dick had hurt his leg on patrol the night before and Jason thought he should come out instead.” He stared at the footage streaming off the Batmobile’s outboard camera. “They were both in their Robin costumes, both still casteless, and God they looked so young... Dick called Jason a baby so Jason pulled Dick’s cape over his head and kicked his hurt knee. Of course Dick was bigger, stronger, and more experienced at the time so the move didn’t prove as smart as Jason thought it was. They wouldn’t talk for a week afterwards. Didn’t talk to me for two.”

“Didn’t let either of them come out with you?” Clark guessed.

“That, and neither liked being locked in the upstairs training room together.” He frowned. “At first all I wanted was for them to get along. Now I’m wishing they didn’t get along *quite* so well.”

“They’re happy, Bruce.”

“Are they?”

Clark didn’t say anything.”

“They were the kids and now...”

“They’re still your boys.”

“They were *the kids.*” He insisted. “Tim’s never really been the same in that way.” He ran his fingers through his hair. “They were never *my* kids, I know. That was my fault. I didn’t want any parental bonds so I kept them at a distance. But they were still... important. Even if I wasn’t there for them the way I should have been.”

“They never needed that from you,” Clark tried to reassure him.

He sent the man a dry look. “I don’t need you to lie to me, Clark. I know that isn’t true.”

“But...”
“Three days after I took Jason into this house he tried to establish a potential bond with me.”

Clark bit his bottom lip. “Like, the cheek thing? What’s wrong with that?”

“No,” Bruce touched his cheek. “That’s pack member to pack member. Usually to the pack leader. I would have accepted that. He tried to…”

“Did he try to bite you?”

“He was eight.”

“So what did he do?”

“He tried to sit on my lap, snuggle under my jaw, mark himself with my scent.”

“That’s…”

“It’s what children do to their parent omega.” Bruce’s hand curled into a fist. “He took one look at us and thought we were a family pack, not a working one, and I was the care giver, the child bearer, the one—” he caught himself. “The father,” he said instead. “Three days after coming into the pack he sought that kind of bond. Dick never wanted to replace the family bonds he lost with his parents. We were pack, a team, but I was never his father and that was okay. Jason was different. He was looking for that connection and as soon as he knew my caste actively sought it out.”

“You don’t know that had anything to do with caste,” Clark told him.

He shook his head. “His caregiver had always been an omega,” Bruce explained. “He didn’t know how to talk to betas and didn’t like alphas. He wouldn’t let me anywhere near him until he smelt my true scent.” A pause. “He gave me an opportunity to create a hormonal family tie between us and I rejected it.”

“Rejected it?”
“I would knock him down. Every time he tried to climb into my lap I pushed him off, made sure he landed on his back, and ignored him.” That had been a mistake. He hadn’t wanted Jason to see him as a parental figure, he hadn’t wanted to confirm to the stereotype of the caregiver, but if he’d let the boy bond with him in such a fashion Dick likely would have followed suit and today the two would have a brotherly bond; would never have even entertained the idea of a sexual relationship.

More.

Jason had been treating him like an omega but it was positive pack behaviour… and he’d rejected it.

“He was treating me like an omega and even though he wasn’t scenting we both knew he was an alpha and… I pushed him away. I kept pushing him away until he died.”

“Bruce…”

“And when he came back he treated me like a bitch, really did, for the first time. I taught him that. I taught him when he treated omegas right they disrespected him, pushed him away. I only payed attention to him when he was aggressive. Because I…” he looked aside and swore. “He still hasn’t unlearnt all that, Clark. Not all of it. Not even now. On top of that he’s a high level alpha, was always aggressive, and Dick’s… they’re old enough to make their own choices but they’re not happy. They’re killing each other.”

Clark didn't try and correct him. Just looked forlorn at the screen, arms around his folded legs and body a metre off the ground. "Will you develop at family bond with Damian? He doesn't do that."

"Perhaps."

"You'll have a parental bond to the baby when it's born," Clark muttered, almost to himself.

"So will you," Bruce reminded him. Bond mates shared their parental bonds and the fetus would draw Clark's hormones from Bruce's blood.

"If kryptonians can do that," the man said, dejected.
Bruce didn't have an answer for that.

The batmobile entered the cave with a roar of engine ten minutes later. The moment it came to a stop Damian was out of the car. Dick followed a moment later.

“…I told you!” The beta called after the retreating boy. “Intimidation is one thing, but there have to be limits.”

Without slowing or turning around. “Limits? *Tt!*”

“We step over the line and Gordon won’t hesitate to hunt us down!” Dick yelled.

“Let him try. I already promised my father I wouldn’t kill. Now I have to be nice to the police as well?”

Following him. “Being Batman and Robin isn’t about working alone and thinking with your fists! What about your detective skills? What about learning how to obey a direct order?!”

Damian spun to face the older man. “You’re not Batman! You don’t even fit the costume!” He turned back away from him. “Keep you clues, and your ‘detective skills’ and your limits. I’ll do this my way.”

Dick crossed his arms. “You’re ten years old. You have a lot to learn.”

“Then I’ll find a teacher I respect!” The boy cried over his shoulder.

Dick’s hand was a fist at his side. “Get back here, Damian! That’s an order!”

Damian was walking towards one of the bikes. Bruce moved. Intercepted him before he could reach it.
“Get out of my way, father.”

“Bed.”

“No.”

“Now.”

“I said no!”

“And I said now,” he took Damian by the arm and made sure the boy looked up to meet his gaze; unwillingly showing a bit of his neck. When he saw the angry embarrassed tug at the side of his mouth he pushed him towards the showers. A low growl. “You’re part of this pack now. You listen to me.”

Damian glared at him. “You won’t be so strong when you’re fat with it. Then you’ll have to rely on him,” he jabbed a finger towards Dick. “A directionless low level.”

“Move.”

The boy spat, spun on his heel, but obeyed. When he was gone Bruce looked over his shoulder at Dick.

“That’s an order?” The man repeated himself hopelessly. “I sound like such a fake.”

“I thought you sounded like Batman,” Clark said encouragingly.

Dick choked out a laugh. “Tell that to Damian or Gordon or… hell, they look at me like I’m another one of these psychopathic copycats.” He glanced at Bruce apologetically. “I don’t know if this is working, boss.”

He looked at him for a long time and nodded toward the showers. “Go.”
Dick sighed. “Sure, right. I guess we’ll talk about this some other time.” There was an ugly sliver of sarcasm in his voice. Bruce watched him go without a word, sighed, and turned back to Clark.

“This isn’t working.”

“Hey, they’ll get better.”

“What about me? Will I get better?” He raked his hand through his hair. “I hate this waiting.”

Clark looked down guiltily.

“This is so much harder than I thought it would be.”

Later that night he lay in bed beside Clark unused to sleeping so early. The man reached out and slid a hand across his stomach and over his hip, pressed a kiss onto the side of his face.

“Not tonight, Clark. I’m not in the mood.”

The alien paused. “Can I bite you?”

He frowned. “What did I just say?”

“I know I… it’s just I haven’t bitten you or had sex with you this week and…” he was starting to get cravings. They shared between them a full bond which equated to a strong hormonal addiction. Clark was after his next hit.

Bruce rolled his head to the side and looked at the ceiling as Clark sunk his teeth into his neck; not hard enough to break his skin but firm enough to re-establish his mark and trigger Bruce’s omega gland; giving the alpha a hard fast dose of omega hormones.

He groaned in appreciation.
Bruce let him stay attached to his neck longer than usual and then gently pushed him off. Clark sighed as his mouth left Bruce skin but sunk obediently back into the bedding.

“You’re so beautiful.”

“You say that a lot.”

“It’s true.”

Bruce rolled onto his side and grunted as Clark spooned in behind him.

“Clark?”

“Hm?”

“Smallville.”

“What?”

“Let’s go visit her.”

A pause. “Why not bring her here?”

“I need to get away from those monitors. Let Dick and Damian figure each other out without me for a week. Besides I haven’t been to Kansas since…” since Clark’s father had died the year before. That was the only time he had ever risked exposing them to stand beside his mate in public; a small funeral on a hillside under offensively bright sunlight. No one had recognised him. No one had cared to even look at the estranged mate of the man they were honouring’s son. His presence hadn’t mattered to anyone there but Clark. The alpha didn’t let go of his hand through the entire ceremony.

He grunted again – irritated this time – but grudgingly admitted he’d gotten used to Clark oppressive cuddling, and settled down to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks so much guys for your amazing comment threads the last couple of chapters! You guys are utterly awesome.

I know this is a bit of a boring chapter but I just wanted to touch some bases. I hope you like it regardless.
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tim blinked and looked up. “What?”

Damian scowled. “Grayson,” he said again; slowly, like a teacher talking to an incredibly stupid child. “I always knew he was a poor choice to replace my father as Batman and now he has proven it.”

Tim stared at him. “You’re talking to me?”

“Yes, I’m talking to you, Drake.” He crossed his arms. “Grayson thinks he’s got the authority to command me. He’s a low level, is the second beta, and thinks he’s a high level omega; the way he practically presents to Todd. Disgusting! The thing in my father must be inhibiting his cognitive abilities; I would be better off by myself than following that idiot around.”

Tim plucked uncertainly at the leather stitched armrest and licked his lips, unsure of how to deal with the boy sitting in the car beside him. “He’s just trying to figure stuff out,” he tried.

“What would you know?” Damian spat.

He frowned. “I’ve known Dick longer than you have.”

“Good,” the boy said. “Then you can inform me as to what his weaknesses are.”

“His weaknesses?” Tim lifted an eyebrow. “Are you really evil or are you seriously not hearing this?”

Damian sent him a dark look. “My father is to be gone for a week. I have an opportunity. I don’t intend to waste it. You can either help me or not. But, I’ll warn you; I’m a worse enemy than I am an ally.”
“Oh? And what would I get for helping you plot to kill a pack mate?”

“I don’t intend to kill him,” the boy snapped. “Just defeat him so I can prove I don’t need his pitifully inept mentorship.”

“Was that your mother’s rule? If you kicked your teacher’s buts you got out of school early?”

“Todd was the one that killed the teachers, not I.”

Tim’s smile slipped. “Jason did…? What teachers?”

“And for your aid I’ll consider reinstating you as Robin. You liked being Robin. I don’t need Grayson’s ‘detective skills’ to see that.”

“You think you have power enough to overrule our leader’s choice?” A bitter laugh. “I haven’t seen him put someone on their knees for years. This should be good.”

“Enough jokes, Drake. If I can prove to father that I am better than Grayson I’ll let you work under me.”

Tim stared at him. “You think you’re going to be Batman?”

“And you can be Robin,” he explained.

Tim laughed. Loud. “You’re ten! You think you can be Batman?”

Damian’s lips thinned. “So? If I am more skilled than Grayson should I not deserve the role?” He hugged his sides. “Besides, I thought you wanted to be Robin so what does it matter?”

“You sure you’d be happy with a pathetic, confused, directionless low level helping you out, Batman?” Tim said, crossing his arms across his chest as they pulled up outside Gotham Academy Elementary. “Or would I mess up your ying yang?”
Damian missed the sarcasm in his voice. “You learnt how to fight in less than a year, Drake. With the proper training I’m sure you could overcome the inherit weakness in your muddied caste. Grayson’s confusion as to his place obviously indicates my father isn’t skilled in this area but I’m sure I could help you in this regard.”

Tim lifted his other eyebrow. “Wow. Just wow.”

The boy blinked and scowled. “Don’t patronize me. As if you have had a better offer.” He grabbed his backpack and jumped out of the car. Slammed the door behind him. Tim watched as he merged with the swarm of uniformed students.

“Hear that, Alfred?” Tim called.

“Indeed sir.”

Tim watched the boy’s back as the car pulled away from the curb and continued deeper into the city towards the high school. Once there he thanked the butler, climbed out, and looked at the flat brown brick building cowering under the glare of Gotham’s jagged skyline. Unlike the Academy this school didn’t have a uniform and the mismatch of students looked less like an ocean of black coats and white collars and more like a shelf at a corner side grocery store; filled with a piebald collections of brands, colours, and purposes. A group of betas in cheerleading costumes were having a food fight, a senior year couple kissed up against the door, and a frazzled teacher looked at the car and the Wayne emblem on it with wide eyes.

Tim made his way to first period, arrived early, and doodled in the back of his book while he waited. Thought about Damian. He was still a little demon, Tim decided, but guiltily admitted none of this would be easy for him either. When Tim first became Robin he had both loved and hated it. Doing something – something real – beside Batman had been everything he thought it would be and more. Learning to obey every order, seeing people die – he still struggled with that one – and his aching muscles the morning after were all harder things to get used to. Damian wasn’t having the same issues he was having but he was having issues all the same.

He didn’t know what the solution was. Maybe Damian just didn’t want to be Dick’s Robin. Would that mean he could be Robin again? Or would Dick just need to prove his dominance over the boy? Could he? He’d never seen Dick act as the dominant in pack dynamics or disputes. He was the second beta and never disobeyed Bruce. Betas didn’t usually try to enforce pack hierarchy as much as alphas or omegas but they still could. Would Dick?
The teacher walked in followed by a line of students and began class. Math was easy. Tim liked math. He liked science more. History would have been fun if not for the teacher. He was never much good at art but preferred it to dancing or acting. Two strangers sat either side of him during lunch, the Spanish class was as uninformative as usual, and then he was outside the locker room mustering the will to endure another P.E class.

“Hey Tim!”

“Hey,” he muttered, not looking up at the omega at his side. They were still being nice to him. He thought they would be over Jason by now but…

“Wow, you’re really feeling the mode, huh? I guess it’s this Gotham weather. Seriously, I came through Metropolis twelve seconds ago and it was – how do you say it here? – beautiful. Come into Gotham? Smog, smog, smog, and a blimp! I didn’t know they still had those.”

Tim looked up in shock. “Bart?” He hissed.

“That’s me,” the speedster said happily. “Guess school finishes earlier out west. I was going to come over and we could go out as a team for the first time!” His hair was streaked back from his brow, eyes wide and bright, and wearing casual clothes over his speedster uniform poking out around the hems. Tim looked around the hallway nervously but no one noticed him or the boy that had appeared beside him.

“Why didn’t you just phone me?” He asked.

“Quicker just to come here,” Bart said with a happy laugh. “Anyway, I totally got a lead and I need your detective genius.”

Another look around. “I’m in school.”

“Oh? Do you like this class? I could totally wait until you’re done. I bet there is heaps to do in Gotham for an hour. How many batcaves do you think I can find in that time?”

“Don’t talk about that,” he rasped.
“Oh, right. How many hotdog stands do you think I can find? Not including the one in your house.”

Tim sent him an exasperated look.

“Oh come on, you’re the son of a billionaire. You’re not going to convince me you don’t have a hotdog stand somewhere in that place. Besides, if you want to hang out with your friends for a bit it might be weird if I just showed up. I mean, I totally have this Gotham speak down, right spud? But I’m way too tanned to blend in with these guys.”

“They’re not my friends.”

“You like P.E?”

“Hate it.”

“That’s crash! Let’s go now then.”

Tim blinked. “I can’t just skip class.”

Innocently. “Why not?”

“I…” a long silence.

“Come on, Tim! It’ll be so awesome and I bet you’ll get way more exercise this way than running around the track. Not that you need it. Big bats works you guys trim doesn’t he? Wow. Like, I have a super powered metabolism and I’m impressed.”

Tim stared at him. Remembered how he felt when he first phoned the other boy; angry at the pack, angry at himself, and desperate to do something that would get him out of the wretched situation he had landed in when Bruce ripped the metaphorical R off his chest. If nothing else the phone call had defiantly done that. Bruce had closed a door and here was a small strange omega propping open a window.
“Okay,” he decided at once. “Just let me,” he pulled out his phone and quickly texted Alfred. 

*Going to Jay’s. Will bus home. Thanks.*

He had never lied to the older beta before – not about anything serious anyway – but he wasn’t willing to discuss the situation with anyone of his pack in case they talked him out of it. He often went over to Jason’s and they wouldn’t miss him if he came back late; his last trip to the alpha’s house proved that.

“Okay!”

The boy grinned. “Crash! Jump on.”

Tim blinked. “What?”

“Piggy back, bro. I’m pretty strong and electromagnetic something or other means you won’t get hurt unless I run *really* fast.”

He looked around the now mostly empty hall. “Here?”

“Did you see me enter?”

“No but… isn’t that *really* fast.”

“Hah! Man, you have no idea.” The omega moved towards him, Tim felt his feet lift off the ground, and the world disappeared in a blur of motion. It stopped as suddenly as it had begun. He crash landed down onto the ground, grass leaving green smears on his jeans, and head spinning.

“Wha-?”

“Whoops, sorry, forgot. Where was the nearest batcave again? So you can suit up.”

Bart made a face. “Man, that’s the other side of Gotham.”

“It’s right near the school,” Tim protested.

“Yeah,” he nodded. “Like I said, other side of Gotham. I’m going to get muscles carrying you back and forth like this,” he observed. The world vanished for a second time.

The cave in question was little more than a basement below a block of apartments but it didn’t take long for Tim to hack the system and break in without it calling home. Once inside he set the security to allow Bart to enter, stripped off, and slumped down in the scent dampening bath pushed against the far wall. When he emerged the young speedster’s eyes widened.

“Man, you smell like nothing!”

“That’s the idea,” he told him as he towelled the excess moisture off his skin.

“Yeah, I know, but even the scent mask we use you can still smell someone it’s just hard to tell who that person is.” He shed his clothes, costume, and – unlike Tim – kicked off his underwear too before leaping happily into the pool.

He left the small strange speedster for a moment to step towards where the uniforms were displayed. To his disappointment he noticed his usual costume wasn’t on shelf. In fact, the newest Robin suits seemed to be Jason’s old ones. This was a neglected cave. To his shame even the suits designed for the fifteen year old alpha looked too big for him. He found a smaller one, long red sleeves that looked like it had never been worn, took a couple of Batman’s belts and a shorter, all black, cape that was attached to a batgirl suit he didn’t recognise. To his relief he found a collapsible staff on the weapons rack and moved into the showers to change. All the Robin pants were too long and dug into his hips so we switched them out for the bottom half of batgirl.

When he came out Bart was back in his clothes smelling his arm. “Man, this is awesome! You totally need to give me this formula. I’ll shower in it and sneak up on everyone. They’ll never see me coming.”

“Do they now?”

He clipped the extra light weight belt around his middle and started loading it with alternative accessories. When it was full he looped a second over his shoulder, crossing them in the centre of his chest. When facing unknown danger Bruce always wore heavier armour. Tim preferred to have extra tools and keep – to an extent – the lightweight advantage. He could never fight properly in heavy armour.

“Ready, Red?”

He looked down at himself. Noticed for the first time the mismatch of costumes had removed almost all yellow and all green from the costume. “I guess.”

In the next five hours he got used to hanging onto the back of the other boy, toppled a supervillian who he had never heard of, and disarmed a massive weapon under Central City. They stopped what seemed like hundreds of car accidents, hacked into an illegal surveillance system, and found a man pretending to be a monster in order to scare people away from a house he was squatting in. Tim was half expecting an ‘and I would’ve gotten away with it too, if it weren’t for you meddling kids’. Later he hacked the batcomputer – thank God Bruce was away and wouldn’t notice the inconsistency in the code – and found out about a disused Justice League base under a mountain in a place called Happy Harbour in Rhode Island. It didn’t take Bart long to find it, took Tim even less time to unlock the outdated doors, and even find and activate some old school transporters. What he couldn’t do was switch on the main power. Something had damaged the wiring and only an impossibly long lasting generator kept the doors online.

It didn’t matter. They built a fire amid the black screens, aging spaceships, and bits and pieces left by the League. Bart ‘scavenged’ some food and they spent the next few hours talking, laughing, cooking marshmallows, and trying to throw lollies into each others open mouths.

Bart had told him he needed him to do some detective work and – to Tim’s surprise – he was right. He’d somehow stumbled upon what looked like a string of possibly supervillian labs scattered all around the East coast; most of them in Metropolis but some appearing in New York, Gotham, and even one up in Chicago.

He fell asleep under his own stolen cape, woke up at the crack of dawn, and – frantically – transported back to Gotham, made it back to the manor, and climbed in his bedroom window and under the bed sheets five minutes before Alfred knocked on his door; calling him down to breakfast.
The day was a carbon copy of the one before. Damian was disturbingly unabusive in the car ride to school, the classes marched by, and when he went to P.E Bart appeared with a too wide grin and a bag of spicy chips. It was only too easy to abandon his omega class in favour of the strange speedster that seemed not to get omegas weren’t meant to get along so easy.

*Going to Jason’s house again.*

On the third day Cassie arrived.

Tim scrambled to his feet as the strange alpha walked in through the door, blonde hair a mess around her head and spilling below her shoulders in playful curls. She wore red overlain with gold plate armour akin to what he’d seen Wonder Woman wear on the news and had a knotted whip hanging off her hip.

“I got to hand it to you, little guy, when you said secret base I thought you were talking about your basement or something.”

Bart zipped to her side in a flash. “But you came?” He said and wriggled his eyebrows. “Do you want me to invite you over to hang out in my basement some time? It’s really dark in there but I’m sure we can find something to do.”

The alpha looked down at the omega in surprise, thrown by the strange behaviour.

Tim cleared his throat.

“Oh yeah!” Bart sent him a wide, airy, smile. “Red, this is Cassie, the wonderful Wonder girl, and Cassie this is Red. He totally found this place. Well, actually, I found it but he found out where to find it which is kind of like the same thing.”

“Red?” Cassie echoed.

“Robin,” Tim corrected her.

“Robin?” she said in surprise.
“Red Robin,” Bart combined the two words with familiar ease.

“Wait,” she held up her hands. “Are you Bat Clan?”

He shifted on the spot. “Yeah.”

She swung at the speedster. “Why didn’t you tell me we had some actual brains in on this operation?”

“Hey,” he ducked, “not all Bat’s are braniacs you know.”

“Is he?” She quested pointedly.

“Oh, totally. It’s so awesome; he’s been figuring out what all these secret labs are and has almost solved it. Some crazy mathematical equation involving mobile phones, kryptonite, and voodoo bat magic.”

“There’s a pattern to their construction,” he explained. “Whatever they have they don’t have unlimited transport options for it and each lab appears within a radius of the one prior. There also seems to be large doses of kryptonite radiation which can distort mobile phones and so by accessing a number of satellites and using a backdoor into the wireless grid…”

“See,” Bart interrupted. “Voodoo bat magic.”


Tim was uncomfortable around her at first. She was an alpha, mid level edging towards high, stood head and shoulder above him – dwarfed Bart – and was covered in corded muscle that didn’t even begin to speak to the power behind her punch. On top of that there was a strong earthy heat to her scent that left his mouth dry and palms sweaty on the job. It was that scent paired with her forward friendly nature that motivated him the next day to stay late and let his scent mask wear off in her presence. Not that he smelt that good beside Bart but…
She turned to him in shock. “You’re an omega too?”

He felt his cheeks head around the corners of his mask. “Y-yeah.”

“Well, now I look like such the gay best friend. Hanging out with two omegas.”

He stared at her. “You’re gay?”

She snorted. “Imagine an island guarded by alphas that look like Wonder Woman wearing about just as much clothes and ask yourself; if you were an alpha, how would you not be gay?”

“Wonder Woman isn’t gay,” he reminded her.

“A fact I’ve never been able to explain,” she said with a sigh. “I mean, seriously, how?”

Tim pointed at Bart zipping back and forth across the darkened space of Mount Justice. “Don’t you think you should tell him?”

She rolled her eyes. “Believe me, Rob, I’ve tried.”

He smiled but looked aside at the name. “Call me Tim.” Bruce would gut him for giving away his secret identity so easily but, at that moment, for the first time since he came to the manor, he didn’t care what Bruce thought.

The following day she came with Bart to pick him up before class, smiled at the startled class of omegas, ripped a massive robot in two with her lasso less than an hour later.

*Hanging with J.*

He’d never met an alpha solely interested in other alphas before but neither had he ever met an alpha who he so wanted not to be solely interested in other alphas before either. He watched her fight;
muscles well defined and quivering with battle lust, breasts heaving within the confines of her costumes, and eyes flashing bright and alive. Her hair was a mane around her face, stomach flat, and her hips were wide enough to emphasise her femininity but not aggressive enough in their girth to suggest anything but an alpha. Bart was right; she was…

“…so hot,” the other omega whispered to him as they watched her rip a door off a car and use it like a shield.

“Gay,” he whispered back.

He slammed his hands over his ears. “Totally, not crash dude! You’re meant to be on my side here.”

“Your side?”

“Team omegas-for-hot-alphas-should-be-straight,” he said with a crooked grin. “Duh.”

That night they found a large red robot in the back of Mount Justice. Tim put it back together, jump started the circuitry, and had the honour of meeting Red Tornado who seemed happy to give advice, observe their impromptu sleepovers, and fixed the powerlines. It was strange to think but, out of nowhere, they had a secret base almost as well equipped as the Watchtower; admittedly a bit out of date but still more than enough for him to work with.

Going over to Jason’s.

Cadmus labs. Something called project N.O.W.H.E.R.E. It didn’t look like much but it fit the bill. Probably some supervillain with some half cocked plan to kill Superman that thought they were a much bigger fish than they thought they were. It wouldn’t take them long to get in there and remove whatever weapon they had; likely just a chunk of D grade kryptonite locked onto the front of a harpoon. He’d seen it before.

A phone call from Alfred.

“You’ve been missing a lot of dinners, Master Timothy.” A pause. “I am aware this pack hasn’t been as harmonious as it should be of late but we would very much appreciate your presence.”
He mouthed tomorrow to his two team mates and returned to the manor to smile shyly at the man he’d been lying to, an exhausted looking Dick, and Damian sitting as far away from everyone else as the table allowed. Clark and Bruce were still in Smallville and Jason – mercifully – hadn’t decided to visit this week. Alfred spoke to him a lot during the meal; looking at him with barely masked concern as he prompted him to talk about school, briefly about Jason, and asked with a frown if he was alright.

He nodded.

Dick laughed. “I’m glad someone is,” the beta said. “I hate capes. Did I ever tell you that Alfred? I hate them. Sure, the memory cloth is useful but, man, the way that thug grabbed me last night. I swear my neck is broken.”

“Father would have used the cape’s quick release,” Damian sneered.

Dick closed his eyes. “Yeah,” he said, wearily and rubbed his brow. “I guess he would of.”

“If you’d done that it…”

“If you had obeyed orders I wouldn’t have to swing so low over those thugs to save your sorry arse,” Dick snapped.

The next morning riding to school Damian glared at him with Bruce’s pale angry stare.

“Will you stop that?” Tim muttered after five minutes. “Blink or something.”

“Oh, how good of you Drake to notice me,” the boy spat.

He watched him wearily.

“Don’t think I haven’t noticed the moment I made my proposition you’ve been avoiding me.”

“You Batman and me Robin?” He said.
The boy’s hand clenched into a fist. “I acknowledge Batman and Robin may not be an ideal fit for what I had in mind but you could have just told me you didn’t want to. You didn’t have to go laugh about me with Todd!”

He stared at him. “Jason?”

“Yes!”

“I didn’t say anything about that to Jason,” he told him honestly.

“Don’t lie to me, Drake. You’ve been training with him. I’m sorry I thought you wanted to be Robin not Todd’s cheap bitch knock off.” He climbed out of the car before it had pulled to a complete stop and slammed the door after him.

That day Tim only got through his first two periods before he called Bart. By midday they were at Cadmus labs and shortly afterwards they were in the massive facility under it. They found the weapon. Not D grade kryptonite strapped onto a harpoon. Not even close.

“Is that…?” Cass sounded horrified.

“Got to admit,” Bart said. “I wasn’t expecting on finding this here.”

“He’s scheduled for termination,” Tim said as he dragged up information through his security breach. “Get him out of there.”

Cass obediently stepped forward and pulled apart the walls of the pod. He woke almost immediately, sat up, and looked at them. Clark. A young Clark. A young Clark with the same blazing blue eyes and sure straight features he was used to. A young Clark with hair that didn’t curl at the ends, with a slightly sharper jaw, and with slightly blunter cheekbones. A young Clark that looked a thousand times more alike to his leader’s mate than Bruce and Damian. But he didn’t smell like him. The scent pouring off the frowning boy was shaper, harsher, and stubbornly stronger. Defiantly alpha but with an earthy, elemental, undertone like a storm just before it rained. Clark’s strange airy alien scent was still threaded into the musk but it was undercut and overcome with a much more grounded, aggressive, human allure. He was spiced with the subtle overlook able exoticness, not defined by it. He was also a high level.
“Who are you?” Young Clark asked.

“We’re your rescuers,” Bart declared loudly. “Which, seriously, has not been an easy task by the way. This place was meant to be a low down dig. There are men with ray guns, monsters, and a whole bunch of metas out there.” He raked his hair out of his eyes.

“Bad guys,” Cassie muttered, not looking away from the young Clark. Her shoulder was burnt, knuckles bruised – which considering her powers was an impressive feat – and lasso wrapped around her arm ready to be used. “I hate bad guys.”

“It’s okay, Wondergirl,” Bart said. “Our rescueie can totally be our rescuer. He can blast them.”

“Blast them?” Young Clark muttered.

“Yeah, heat vision. You know, with your eyes.”

He frowned, confused, and after a moment his eyes began to burn a blistering red.

Tim dove to the ground a moment before the beams shot out into the room; slicing through the machinery stacked at the other side of the lab and burning twin gashes in the wall beyond. Young Clark closed his eyes, gasped in pain, and blinked in shock at what he had done. Bart had moved Cassie out of the way and the pair now stared at the surprised looking Kryptonian.

A strange satisfied look passed across his face and he looked between them. “What else can I do?”

“Let’s get out of here,” Cassie said.

“He comes with us,” Bart insisted as she pulled him towards the exit.

Young Clark frowned and looked at Tim.
“Come on,” he said. “Follow us.”

“Be careful what you look at!” Bart called out. “And what you breathe on! And the distance between you and the ground!”

“Shut up,” Cassie hissed.

When they got back to Mount Justice Bart and Cassie started arguing about what they were going to do with the boy still following them and looking around with blatant fascination. Red Tornado watched with interest but didn't intervene apart to robotically state; “you are early, Young Justice.”

Tim frowned, checked the time on his phone, and swore. It was almost the end of last session.

He looked up at Young Clark who was now watching him with blistering blue eyes identical to Clark’s but somehow inexplicably more intense. This was big. Some villain had managed to clone Superman. They had cloned Superman. Or something. No matter what this was not just big. This was the biggest thing he’d ever seen in this job; this could be Justice League big. Safety and security of the planet kind of big. Because if some villain could clone Clark… that was bad.

But, at the same time, he hadn’t seen any other than this one and this one didn’t seem bad… not really. This was Justice League bad but it wasn’t Justice League this second bad.

He looked down at his phone, took a breath, and typed the words before he could think about it.

_Hanging out at Jason's house. Thanks Alfred._

Chapter End Notes

  There was so much I had to do today... so much.

  You all knew this chapter was coming. I hope you enjoyed it!
Chapter 10

Three things happened the first day they arrived back at the farm in Smallville.

First, less than an hour after Bruce’s feet touched the ground Clark heard the new, tentative, heartbeat sounding small and soft from inside the cup of his left hip. It had been a long time since a sound stopped him in his tracks, but that did. The simple subtle shift in the soundtrack of life coming form his mate. One of the most unbiasedly beautiful things he had ever heard. Two heartbeats coming from one person.

He had never noticed how long it took for the cells already moving within a pregnant person to get enough force and consistency behind them to create a solid beat. Now, he doubted he would ever forget the weeks of silence before that tiny heart finally started sounding.

Second, during dinner as he waited to see if Bruce wanted to make the announcement here or later, his mother stood, collected a glass of ice from the fridge, and gave it to the omega. Bruce took the offering, sniffed it, and began happily munching through the frozen cubes.

“I may not have a pack,” his mother told him at Clark’s bewildered look. “But I’m still a beta and I took care of Jonathan’s sister through all her pregnancies so I know what’s what. He’s been looking at that freezer for the past hour.”

“Pregnant people like ice?” He muttered, taken aback.

“Occasionally.”

Realisation hit. “You know?”

A fond smile. “It was not hard to figure out, Clark.”

“How?”

Bruce interrupted. “I imagine it was a combination of our surprise visit and your behaviour,” he looked at Clark. “You’ve never been good at secrets.”
Martha laughed. “You can say that again. Though dear, it was also your face, in all fairness.”

Bruce frowned. “My face?”

“You’re flushed,” the woman explained. “I have never seen you carry a hint of colour before but you got colour now, boy.”

She was right. Bruce had more red in his cheeks than usual; a slight but still there rosy glow above the prickle of his three day old stubble. The man caught him looking, rubbed irritably at his cheek, and sunk his teeth into another icecube.

The third thing that happened happened in the barn when his mother was out with her friends. It involved an empty horse stall, a hungry look, and Bruce on top of him growling ‘dirty cock slut’ in his ear. Bruce didn’t instigate sex as often as Clark, probably less than a third of the time; but when he did it was always rougher, faster, deeper; a sheer unchastened expression of his beautifully dominating sexuality. Especially when he topped him. It left Clark feeling deliciously used and utterly wrecked; the effort of staying in control of his powers when Bruce was on top of him like that – when he was pulling him apart at the seams – enough to drain him of any extra strength he thought he had.

Clark was grateful Bruce had sex with him during the day because, since he’d stepped back from the role as Batman, he spent most of the night – especially the hours he would usually go on patrol – distant and isolated. Clark knew he was worrying about his boys. He had seen the way his mate watched the GPS track points and how his eyes flashed when Dick phoned him the first night to check over some details on a case. He knew Bruce has put aside an awful lot for this and knew how much that hurt.

He had lost a lot over the few years they had been together as a couple. Pa had died, he was beaten almost to death by Doomsday – would have died if not for Bruce – and he had left the Daily Planet after years of working there. He had loved that job, still missed it, but his lowered position in the company meant he had to really fight to get the stories that meant something and the changing face of the paper as it regained its place as the city’s leading newspaper meant it was no longer a place that felt right for him to stay in. He worked as an independent now usually writing for a blog. The money was terrible if there was any money at all but over the years he had accepted – as hard as it was to swallow at first – that just because he was the alpha didn’t mean he had to be the main breadwinner. The man gave him money and also took back without question when Clark returned what he’s borrowed even though he was sure it was like dealing in pennies for Bruce.

Despite all of that, the hardest loss had been his Pa. He could fly around the world in thirty seconds
but he couldn’t save the man who had raised him. Not from his own body.

Through all of it Bruce had stood by his side; a pillar of support. So, that’s what Clark intended to be in return. Not just a mate but a partner; there to be with and help Bruce as he needed it.

The next day Bruce trained him – re-establishing basic combat techniques and how to fight without using his strength – as his Ma watched from the veranda. The session was interrupted when Bruce stopped suddenly, walked without a word into the house, and knelt by the toilet heaving.

“You okay?” Clark muttered.

Bruce nodded numbly.

“Did you?”

He shook his head. “I just feel…”

“Okay,” he sat beside him. “Do you want some ice?”

Bruce’s lips twitched up. “You’re such a useless alpha,” he said fondly.

Ma produced some raspberry leaf tea with ginger and Bruce spent the rest of the day pouring through criminal cases like a machine while Clark wandered up to Pa’s grave with his mother.

“You know,” the woman said as they hiked slowly up the hillside. “I never thought he would be the type. I know he has his pack and he did raise those boys but Batman bearing a child,” she shook her head. “No, I never thought you two would show up to my door with this surprise.”

“Is that bad?” He muttered, helping her over a protruding stone.

“Oh goodness, Clark, of course not,” the woman puffed. “It is a surprise but it is a wonderful one.” A small laugh. “Not all babies fall from the sky.”
He grinned. “Thanks, Ma.”

“Oh no, I’m not Ma anymore,” her cheeks balled up under her eyes like apples as she returned his smile. “I’m Grandma, now.” They made it to the top of the hill, walked across the road, and into the Smallville Cemetery. It was a small place. The Catholics were buried on the other side of town and there were a lot of families choosing to bury their loved ones elsewhere. Still the space was cluttered with aging graves adorned with flowers and tokens. The newest was his father’s.

“Jonathan would have cried for joy when he found out,” she said as she carefully placed a handful of flowers against the headstone. “He always wanted children – we both did – but he was raised in a family with an alpha and an omega parent. Grandpa Jerry, God bless him, bore eleven pregnancies in his lifetime. Did you know that, Clark? It must be hard to imagine since you never met most of them but your father had all of thirteen siblings. To him children were what made a home.” She shook her head. “Fourteen children. If that’s not an all American family pack I don’t know what is. I would have pitied them if Joe and Jerry hadn’t loved it so much.” Her eyes grew distant. “My parents were betas so I wasn’t so lucky. I knew how hard it was for betas; how unlikely.” She turned to him. “I’m so glad you and Bruce have this option, Clark. You can just decide to have a baby and don’t need to worry. As they say, God blessed betas the best but the greatest gift he gave out elsewhere.”

When she left to look at the other graves he folded his legs under himself, hovered low by the headstone, and told his Pa that his mate was pregnant the way he imagined he would when he was younger. Then, hating how rehearsed it sounded, he continued.

“He’s pregnant, Pa. He’s just… I still can’t really believe it. I heard the heartbeat for the first time yesterday. He has no idea… no idea how amazing it is what he’s doing for us. I mean, of course he does, but he just accepts it. I still can’t even really get my head around it.” He closed his eyes. “God, I am so in love with him.” A deep breath. “I know I’m never going to be as good at this whole parent thing as you and Ma were. No where near as good. But I’m going to try.”

Two days later Bruce asked him to take him to the fortress. He wanted to get information from the crystals about kryptonian pregnancies, physiology, and development. They flew to the nearest teleporter, bounced to the Watchtower, and moved to the next pad to shoot them down into the artic. Bruce followed him in and walked straight through the projected form of Jor-El to start sorting through the crystals.

“Greetings, Kal-El,” the phantom said in kryptonian. “Gre—”

“English!” Bruce called out as he moved behind the control panel. “Find me all the crystals relating to kryptonian pregnancy.”
To Clark’s surprise the fortress obeyed and quickly presented him with a collection of different shards.

“And informational relating to kryptonian biology,” the omega added as he started heaping the alien data into his backpack.

Jor-El stood sagely in the corner and thankfully made no comment until Bruce had filled his pack and was getting ready to leave. Despite the fact the fortress was a far more powerful computer Bruce had figured out a way to make the batcomputer read the files stored on the crystals; with Clark acting as interpreter when needed.

Bruce stood to leave.

Jor-El spoke. “Is there anything else you require, my lord?”

Bruce stopped, lifted an eyebrow, and looked at the alien image floating beside him. “When I asked you to make it stop calling me a possession, Clark, you didn’t have to go quite that far.”

Clark frowned at the appreciation. “I didn’t tell him to do that.”

Bruce’s eyes narrowed. “You didn’t?”

“No.”

A thoughtful pause. “Give me information relating to the social and cultural relevance of pregnancy on Krypton,” he added, collected the extra couple of crystals, and left. Once back at the farm he started decrypting them with the eagerness of a child opening Christmas presents. When he hadn’t gotten nearly as much information as he wanted after the first twenty four hours he took most of the crystals back to the fortress and used Jor-El to access the information. Clark left him to it, relived that – whatever had happened – Jor-El was at least no longer likening his mate to furniture or a pet.

That night at dinner Bruce had sat down grinned victoriously and said. “I found out why you don’t pack bond.”
Clark almost choked. “Bruce! I… why do you have to always bring that up?”

“Kryptonians don’t have packs,” his mate had continued eagerly. “You have something closer to *hives* serviced by a whole lot of alphas and…”

“A queen bee?” Martha suggested.

Bruce grinned. “A single fertile bearer close enough to what we would recognise as an omega,” he confirmed. “One omega for every house. All the alphas in the house sharing a mate or a parent bond to it. Kryptonian omegas can have multiple mate bonds but alphas can still only have one.”

Clark stared at him.

“The council General Zod tried to overthrow was the council of omegas. All the different house heads.”

“But then why did Jor-El call you prized possession before?” Clark countered.

Bruce lost his smile. “Kryptonians seem to have invented their own sexual caste of sex slaves; artificially created beings of half a brain made for the sole purpose of entertaining the alphas when they didn’t have the honour of serving the omega. They were unfertile and while I was on birth control Jor-El must have identified me as one of them.”

A pause.

“But,” Bruce continued. “This social structure explains a lot of kryptonian history.”

“Does it?” Ma asked, brows pleated.

“Yes. Naturally kryptonians only have two sexual castes and if there is a fertile omega present in a fortress all the children will present as alphas. The only way for those that would be omegas to become omegas is to either kill the omega or leave the nest and establish their own ‘house’.”
means that since the dawn of time kryptonians expanded aggressively. Only when you had covered
the entire planet did you run into a problem. A dense population meant the number of omegas got
very small very fast so you switched to artificial birth to continue growing the population.”

“Could you not refer to them as ‘you’, please?”

“And then,” Bruce purred, “that lead to the clone wars, the creation of that extra caste, and the
mining of the planet’s core to try and supply the mass population.”

“Which in turn sped up the planet’s destruction,” Clark finished for him. “Yeah, I get it.”

Bruce frowned. “I thought you would be interested.”

“I guess.” He had when he was younger latched onto his alien origins and sought out his kryptonian
heritage. Now it just felt like a barrier between him and everyone that really mattered to him; the part
of him that was unlike anyone else, that denied him the ability to hormonally bond with Bruce’s
pack, and meant he could never hold Bruce as hard as he wanted to. He was a wasp running with
wolves trying not to sting anyone along the way.

That night in bed Bruce sat toying with his phone and stared out the window. “You know something
else about kryptonians,” he muttered. “They have multiple births. Really multiple births. Your mother
was an alpha so we can assume that somehow resulted in her bearing just one child but the
‘omegas’,” he said the applied the word loosely, uncomfortably, “they gave birth between five to
fifteen children each time.”

Clark stared at him, shocked.

“Please tell me I don’t have fifteen babies in me,” Bruce said simply.

He shook his head. “Just one.”

The omega sighed in relief, turned to him, and with a look gently pushed Clark’s chin back; asking
for a submission. Clark complied.
“You like this, don’t you?”

“This?”


Bruce grunted. “I admit it’s nice to think not all bearer castes across the universe are submissive by nature.”

“So you do like it?”

A pause. “I liked it more before it occurred to me your submissive behaviour is probably instinctual too.” He looked at him; pale eyes bleak. “I liked to think you kneel for me, not some alien instinct.”

His lips curved. “I don’t fall to my knees every time an omega walks by, my lord.”

A savage smile. “No, you don’t.”

When they left to head back to Gotham he promised Ma he would see her next week and she promised she would come down and spend some time in the manor sometime. Nothing much had changed since they left but Dick looked like he’d aged a couple of years, Damian had been put on the bench to recover from a bullet that had almost burst through his armour, and Tim seemed to have forgone the manor and was spending a ridiculous amount of time either texting or over at Jason’s.

He caught the boy looking at the crystals Bruce was still decoding with a critical eye. He, like Bruce, clearly loved secrets that could be unearthed and figured out. He had helped Bruce design the mechanism that made the alien technology workable with the computer. Clearly Tim hadn’t lost any of his fascination.

He couldn’t blame him. Bruce’s discovery had pushed him back towards his alien heritage and made him – however unwillingly – contemplate the mechanisms of an all but extinct race. He found himself spending more time in the fortress than he had in years just asking questions.

“Why did you send me to Earth?”
“Krypton was…” Jor-El began.

“Why Earth?” he stared into the ugly alien eyes of the hologram. “Was it because alphas are ‘kings’ here? Did you want to give me a better life?” He didn’t look away. “You obeyed the council but you’ve told me my entire life they were wrong. They wouldn’t listen to you, refused to see what was happening around them… Did you want a world where the omegas didn’t have that kind of political power?”

Jor-El hovered, silent as a shadow.

“If Krypton was like that,” Clark moved slowly through the rationalisation. “If the alphas were in charge – you and mother and Zod – you would have left the planet. You would have survived.”

“We followed the lords,” Jor-El began slowly, “because they were Rao’s gift of life; of future. Yet they robbed Krypton of hers. After Zod’s defeat their influence was strong. No one was willing to listen to anyone but them especially not another radical alpha from a house without a current lord. No one wanted another rebellion. If but one of them had heeded my warning people would have listened and you, my son, would not be alone.”

“So you sent me to a place where they’re not lords,” Clark said. “A place where the bearer caste was socially made to be subservient.”

“I sent you to a place where you could be strong,” the hologram reminded him. “In every way. Without question.”

Sometimes he hated Jor-El.

“What happened to the omega of the house El?” He asked afterwards. “Lord El?”

“Sometimes it would take decades for a new lord to rise from our ranks once one has died.”

“Had it been decades?”
“Yes. My brother had a child that, had she grown older, had the potential to maybe present as a lord. But that will never now be known.” The hologram frowned. “Your mother also had that potential. It was why she left her house to come to a house without a lord. In the end it was in vain.”

“What were the bearers so important when Krypton was using artificial reproduction?”

“Tradition, Kal-El. Many conservative opinions stated without the lords we would be lost; leaderless. A citizen’s place was below the lords performing their born purpose.” A deliberate silence. “You are our salvation, Kal-El; you can be anything you desire. A hope fo—”

He’d heard it before. “Bruce is my mate, Jor-El. Not my lord and not my possession. He’s my partner. And he’s carrying our child.” It was so different from how he had spoken to the grave of the man who had raised him; how he had told his real father the news. “You sent me to Earth. Here I am an alpha, not a citizen, and he is an omega, not a lord. I don’t want to be the last son of Krypton I want him and I want to be happy. You know what a human omega is; you know the society we’re in. The only reason you called him a possession was to try and get rid of him. The only reason you called him a lord was to try and lead him to uncover this information to make me get rid of him. That’s not happening, Jor-El.” He stared into the ghost’s impossible blue stare. “I love him.”

The apparition returned his stare. “He is a poor choice.”

“He’s my choice.” Angrily. “He’s the best choice.”

“You call him a partner, my son, but he is a lord; he rules his house with aggressive authority and you let him. You let him oppress you.”

A hollow laugh. “I am anything but oppressed, Jor-El. Like you said; strong in every way without question.”

“One day,” the alien said slowly, “he will ask something of you that you know is wrong. You may be trying to save people, maybe a whole planet of people, and he’ll tell you to stay and you won’t have the willpower to disobey.” His stare was unblinking. “If he’s not your possession, Kal-El, he is your lord. We are none of us above our instincts. Not even the children of Krypton.”
“What the hell were you doing?! I told you to—”

“I was doing what needed to be done.”

Dick’s hands tightened around the steering wheel. “You disobeyed my direct order and almost got yourself killed!” He yelled. “Again! This isn’t a game, Robin. These guys aren’t going to go easy on you because you’re a kid.”

Damian crossed his arms over his chest. “I was dealing with them.”

“When I tell you to stand down you—”

Louder. “I was dealing with them!”

“I think that’s—”

“Y, I don’t care what you think, Grays—”

Dick’s teeth clenched. “That’s it.” He hissed, slammed on the breaks, and swerved off the road into an empty lot. The batmobile growled as it drew to a halt on the weed ridden dirt; spoilers folding back into the body like the wings of a dragon.

The boy snorted. “You think you can frighten me by pulling over to yell at me? Such cheap tricks may have worked on you but I am not so easily intimidated.”

Dick kicked open the door, walked around the rumbling vehicle, and brought up the other side of the batmobile to grab the boy and haul him out. Damian yelled in protest as he was dragged away from the car. “What are you doing?! Let go of me!”
“You’re not listening!”

Damian broke out of his hold with a quick twist and kick. “Never lay your hands on me again, Grayson! Do you hear me?!”

“Batman.” He spat. “I’m Batman now and you’re Robin. You’re still damn new at this and despite all your training you have a very long way to go. But you won’t get far because you keep trying to get yourself killed!”

“I know what I’m doing!”

“No, you don’t!” Dick yelled. “This isn’t your grandfather’s stronghold anymore; these guys aren’t going to fight with honour or take it easy on you because of your fucking family tree! If I hadn’t come when I did you would have died tonight. Do you realise that? This isn’t the first time either. The sniper last week. The penguin thugs before that. Pyg before that. I’m not doing my job because I’m spending all my time saving you. Because you don’t listen.”

Damian’s hands balled into fists. “If you think I’m holding you up then maybe you should give Drake the costume back,” the boy told him through pinched lips. “I never wanted to be your stupid little helper anyway.”

Something inside him clumped thick and bitter at the back of his throat. “You wouldn’t last ten minutes out here without me. Not until you learn that there isn’t a Lazarus pit under your feet. When I say stand down, you _stand down._ When I tell you to back me up to _back me the hell up!_”

“Or?”

Incredulously. “Do I really need to answer that question for you? Look at what happened to Jason. When Batman gives you an order you obey it. This isn’t a blasted game.”

“I know.”

Dick stared at him. “Do you? Do you really?”
“Yes!” the boy yelled. “And when Batman gives me an order I do obey it. I listen to my pack leader. I listen to my father! That doesn’t mean I have to grovel to a low level second beta just because you wear his pants.”

The lump at the back of his throat coiled black with anger. “Is that what this is about?” He rasped. “You think you’re above me?”

The boy spat. “I know I’m above you, Grayson.”

“No,” Dick snapped. “You’re not.”

Damian crossed his arms over his chest and glared at him, chin down. Defiant. “Fuck you.”

Before he fully realised what he was doing Dick moved forward, knocked aside the boy’s defence, and grabbed the front of his uniform. Held him.

“Don’t talk to me like that!”

“You’re not my boss!”

“Don’t you…” he realised what he was doing, how he was holding him.

Dick had never felt the need to change or effect pack hierarchy. Prided himself on that fact. Alphas and omegas were the ones that always wanted to establish and fight over the pecking order. Not betas. He was happy being the second pack beta behind Alfred not because the man was physically superior – he wasn’t – or because he respected the butler – he did – but simply because Alfred got there first. He had been with Bruce longer so he was the first pack beta. Dick was the second. It was easy. They didn’t need to bring power dynamics into it. Dick had never felt the need to substantiate himself that way. Bruce accepted betas into the fold without question, the Teen Titans had boosted him to a leadership position more or less out of respect for his mentor, and he and Jason had never felt the need to really establish a pack hierarchy between them. He didn’t need the pecking order to feel good about himself. He didn’t… but he couldn’t let Damian think that meant he could disobey him. Not on the field.

“Get off me!”
“You listen to me,” he said, voice losing its strength. “You… listen, okay?”

What was he doing? He didn’t want to put the boy on his knees. Part of him deep inside recoiled in horror at the idea. Bruce had never put him on his knees and had only done it to Jason when he was older. He shouldn’t have to do it. He wasn’t so bad a Batman that he needed to humiliate his Robin like that. Bruce put Jason on his back when he was very young – a child’s submissive posture – but Damian was too old and skilled to allow himself to be manipulated into that position. God, what was he doing? He’d never even seriously growled before and now he was affirming dominance? But he couldn’t back down now or it would be affirming submission. But he couldn’t actually put him on his knees. Could he? He’d never been dominant in his life. Not pack wise.

“Just listen when I tell you to do something,” he rasped, desperately hoping the boy would agree and he wouldn’t have to make good on his physical threat. “You have to, okay? I don’t want you to get hurt and…”

Through gritted teeth. “You’re not my father!”

“That doesn’t have anything to do with it!”

“Get off me!”

“Listen to me!”

“No!”

He grappled with the boy, grunted in pain as Damian kicked him in the knee, and sunk his finger’s into the boy’s hair; dragged his head back to expose his throat.

He couldn’t put him on his knees, Dick rationalized hopelessly. He just couldn’t. He’d never done it before and Damian was ten. Ten. But if Damian wouldn’t respect him until he’d proven he was a higher ranking pack member – God he hated this – then he hoped this would be enough. Just make him show his throat. Growl a bit or… whatever Bruce did when someone was a little out of line.

He was having a hard time remembering what exactly Bruce did just then. All he could see was the
boy, flushed and snarling, head forced back, and eyes hidden under the mask.

“Listen to me,” he rasped. “When I give you an order...”

Hoarse. “Let go of me.”

“...you need to obey it.”

“Fuck you! Let go of me!”

“D-Robin I...” he couldn’t do this. He was shaking and sick to the stomach. “I need you to just.... Just...”

“F-fuck you...”

“Just...”

“Fine! Fine I’ll...” he stopped resisting, showed his neck, and Dick let go feeling rotten to the core and weak at the knees.

“God I... sorry,” he told the boy weakly as Damian turned away and wiped his face on his cape. Shit, had he made him cry? God. “Sorry I...”

“You’re not meant to do that,” the boy rasped, not looking his way. “You’re meant to growl. That’s what happens with these dominance things.”

“Look, I’m sorry I... I know that. I just thought... fuck. You know this is just about Batman and Robin, right? This isn’t about the rest of the pack or anything. It’s just... I need you to listen to me. I’m not going to sit back and watch you die.”

“Why?” Damian croaked. “It’s not like I’m not replaceable.”
“That’s not true.” He looked around the empty lot. “I know Tim was pushed aside,” he added quietly, “but…”

“I wasn’t talking about Drake!”

A heavy silence.

Dick stared at the boy’s turned back and with a sickening lurch realised the meaning behind that statement. Softly. “He’s not replacing you.”

“No,” the boy replied without turning around. “You can’t replace something you never had.”

“You’re his son.”

“He didn’t even know I existed,” Damian hissed. “I’m not like Drake and his mother. I’m not so foolish as to think he wanted me.” A green gloved hand fisted at his side. “But I thought when he let me be Robin that he might find an ally in me. Hah!” A string of words in what sounded like Arabic.

“Damian?”

“He just wanted to make sure I looked the part before he passed me along to an over ranked low level!” His shoulders shook.

Dick didn’t say anything.

Damian looked over his shoulder, saw him watching, and turned away again sharply. “This explains it though,” the boy continued, voice a rough rasp. “If I’m ranked below you why would he want me? He’s a high level even if he lies with an a-alien.” A dry, wracking, sob.

Dick had never felt so wretchedly useless in all his life.

The strange costume weighed awkwardly on his shoulders, the batmobile sat beside him with its doors hanging open, and in the distance he could hear the dull sound of the highway. Damian’s back
was to him, shoulder’s hunched under the yellow of his cape, and hands balled into fists at his side. If not for the small sounds escaping him Dick might have thought he wasn’t crying.

It felt like an eternity before he finally took a step forward, followed by another, and then a few more.

“Hey,” Dick said softly and then, not knowing what else to say, just repeated it. “Hey… hey, it’s okay. Hey.”

“Grayson.”

He swallowed, hands hovering uncertainly at his sides. “Let’s get back to the cave, okay?”

Damian didn’t move.

“It’s been a rough night,” Dick was saying hopelessly. “Alfred will have some food still warm for us if we’re back before two thirty. He’s always good at that. It never tastes like reheated stuff either. Like that pasta the other week? That was the best, right? And not saying anything mean about omegas but I was kind of glad Timmy and the boss weren’t there. You’ve seen the way they put it away in the middle of their cycle? It’s scary. Like, Bruce is one thing but Timmy is tiny and can eat so much.” A pause. “But yeah, as I was saying, Al will certainly have something good.”

“I don’t know why he bothers,” the boy croaked. “You’d be happy with just cereal.”

“You say that as if that’s strange,” Dick said, relieved he was responding at all. “What kind of soulless person doesn’t like cereal?”

Silence.

Dick reached out and put a hand on his shoulder. “Let’s get out of here, hey?”

Damian didn’t respond but he moved when lead forward; head down and cape hugged around his body like a shield. His face around his mask was red and lips pulled into a fragile impersonation of his usual defiant pout. For once he didn’t ask if he could drive. Dick, in that moment, hated himself.
Hated himself in the same way as he did when he failed one of Bruce’s missions or woke up and saw a hickey on his neck in the place of an omega gland. Hated that he wasn’t good enough for those around him. Damian, Bruce, and Jason.

They drove in silence.

“What do you think it’s going to be,” Damian muttered as they pulled into the cave.

He killed the engine and turned wearily towards the boy. “What?”

“It. What do you think it’s going to be? The baby.”

“Oh…” Dick hesitated as he saw Bruce and Alfred approach the parking bay. “I don’t know.”

“What if it’s a girl?” The boy said, so quietly Dick had to strain to hear him.

“That would be… nice I suppose,” he answered uncertainly.

“What if it’s a boy?”

“I… um… think that would be okay too. I haven’t really thought about it.”

“What if it’s a twin?” The boy pushed.

Dick shrugged. “I guess it could be.”

“Twins run in families,” Damian muttered.

“So it’s probably not then,” he said encouragingly. “I don’t know of any twins in Bruce’s family.”
Damian didn’t look up. “I’m a twin.”

A sudden silence.

“What?” Dick heard himself rasp.

“I’m a twin,” Damian repeated. “I have a brother.”

“You…. What?”

“Identical,” he continued, not looking at Dick and unhurried despite Bruce and Alfred’s approach. “We split in two in the artificial womb my mother built when hers failed. She only wanted one heir so she removed him.”

“Oh…” Dick said. “That’s…”

“I thought she’d gotten rid of him but I was wrong. She just froze him and thawed him out when I…” he hugged his sides. “She showed him to me when she put him back in the growing jar. I needed to do better in my training or he would replace me. Then she did something to him so he was born like an adult. He still smelt like a baby, no caste, but he’s big and he killed superhumans and… I guess he did better than me because mother gave me to father after that.”

“Oh…” Dick heard himself say again. “Oh… oh fuck.”

Outside Bruce spoke a clear voice command and the batmobile opened obediently; doors lifting up and inboard computer chirping in response. Dick turned to look numbly between the father and the son trying to process the information he had just received and figure out what that meant he had to do next.

“Damian,” Bruce rumbled. “Shower, food, and then bed by four.”

“Bruce,” Dick quickly chimed in. “Don’t send him to bed yet, I want to…”
The omega’s glare was so cold it burnt.

“I…” Dick’s stomach rolled. “I um…”

Damian didn’t look up, climbed out of the car, and moved towards the showers. As he entered Jason existed; hair wet, towel over his shoulders, and track pants bunched and knotted around his waist. Alfred’s eyes lit on the alpha with a strange kind of intensity.

“Master Jason is with us tonight, sir?”

Low. “I know, Alfred. He came in twenty minutes ago.”

“Bruce,” Dick said. “I need to talk to you about Dami…”

“Training area.”

“I think this is…”

Gaze hard. “Move.”

He stopped, swallowed, and stepped back towards the padded area. “Okay, I’m moving, but seriously I need to talk to you about this.”

Bruce was looking at him strangely. Angry but reserved. Like a wild animal watching a stranger in its territory; carefully distinguishing if the intruder was a threat or merely passing through.

“Wait,” Dick realised what that look meant. “You saw Damian and I…” he would have seen what had happened if he was watching the screens but he wouldn’t have heard. The batmobile sent video feed back to the cave but did not broadcast sound. “Look, Bruce,” he tried again; “I really need to talk to you about what just happened.”

“Batman does not affirm dominance over Robin, Dick.”
A long pause.

Dick threw back the cowl. “He wouldn’t listen to me, Bruce. I needed to.”

Again. *Batman does not affirm dominance over Robin.*

“You did it to Jason all the time,” he countered quickly.


“But…”

Firmly. “Batman and Robin are casteless. They’re symbols. Not just people in masks.”


“Show me your neck.”

Dick stared at him in shock. “What?”

Bruce’s eyes were bleak, barren, and blisteringly pale; framed within the black rim of his iris. “You have never affirmed any kind of dominance, or even submission, in this pack.” Bruce said angrily. “Twenty minutes ago you did. Aggressively.” Eyes still cold, fingers twitching towards a fist. “Being Batman doesn’t give you any more authority in the pack. You have control over the cowl but I am still the leader.”

“I know that.”

“Show me your neck.”
Incredulously. “I didn’t challenge you!”

Glare intense.

The cave around them was quiet except for the soft chatter of the bats and Jason who was watching the exchange from a distance with obvious interest. Being told to publicly submit was humiliating; that was why it was an effective chastisement for challengers to pack hierarchy. But just as he had never dolled out the punishment he had never had it given to him either.

“I know you’re the leader, Bruce! I’m not challenging that! I just want to talk to you about your son! I didn’t mean to put him down like that I just… he’s not listening but that isn’t even the issue here.”

“No,” the man agreed. “It isn’t.”

To his relief Jason’s attention was stolen by Alfred as the butler moved in to speak with the alpha.

“I didn’t mean to,” he implored the man. “I’m just on the edge of my rope here and I don’t want your son to die. Can’t you get that?”

“He needs to follow you out of respect not because you’re above him in the pack. As long as the costumes are on that rule applies.”

Dick yanked off the cowl and raked his hand through his hair. “For fuck’s sake Bruce. I’m a shitty fucking Batman, okay? Is that what you wanted to hear from me? The pressure of just having to work under the cowl is killing me and I can’t get my Robin to obey me without losing my shit.”

“You are more than capable. You have worked as a team leader before and are more prepared than I was when I first put on the cowl.”

“No I am not! Fighting crime was never about… I’m not… I’m not Batman, Bruce. I don’t know if I can keep this up. Not unless Robin respects me and not the way you did.”
Bruce opened his mouth to reply.

“Where the fuck is Tim?!” Jason stormed down into the training ring, hands fists and eyes terrifyingly dark. Alfred followed at his heel.

“Upstairs.”

“He isn’t, Master Bruce.”

Eyes hardened. “What?”

“Where is he?!”

“I don’t…”

“You’re standing here bitching about Dick not treating you like a pack leader when you’re not even leader enough to know where the hell your pack is,” Jason hissed.

Bruce’s lips thinned and in a moment he looked exactly like Damian had before. Sullenly swallowing something bitter and painful.

“Master Jason,” the butler said gently. “I’m sure he’s alright. He has returned every night he has been out late.”

“He could be in some fucking gutter,” the alpha snarled. “With some alpha or villain or any-fucking-one!”

“Tim’s been sneaking out?” Dick realised in shock. “Tim?”

Dick knew teenagers weren’t always obedient. Heck, Wally had told him just yesterday they had to ground Bart for skipping school and staying out sometimes all night. He himself had snuck out of the manor a couple of times and he figured Jason had as well. But somehow he had never expected it of Tim.
“I was under the impression he was visiting Master Jason,” the butler said carefully. “He has been doing this for a time now and I was beginning to suspect but he has always been in bed every morning ready for school.”

“He’s not in bed now,” Jason said through his teeth.

“But he has never failed to return, sir.”

“He’s a kid! And an omega! He can’t just be out there by himself!”

“Jason,” Bruce began.

“Don’t talk to me like that,” the alpha said sharply. “You may be my useless fucking pack leader but you’re not my father! You’re not Tim’s dad either. Not really. If you were you would give a damn. But you don’t. You never do! Why the hell do you want a kid when you don’t give a shit about the ones you already got?”

“Back off,” Bruce growled; low, dangerous.

“Defective fucking bitc—”

“Back off!” Bruce shoved Jason away from him.

The alpha stumbled, swore, and turned back to Bruce. “You stupid—”

Dick was at Jason’s side before he even realised he was moving. “That’s enough, come on,” he said softly. “We got to get Tim back. This isn’t getting Tim back. You want the same thing. Let’s work together here.”

Alfred was beside and saying much the same thing to Bruce; defusing the situation before the pair could damage their relationship just because tempers were high. Sometimes reining in unnecessary fights seemed like one of the most vital roles the betas played in this pack. Especially between their
two high level members.

Bruce sighed. “Come on, Jason. Let’s go and wait for him.”

The alpha glared semi suspiciously at the omega but moved to follow him.

“H-hey,” Dick protested weakly. “I still need to talk to you.”

“Not now, Dick,” Bruce said over his shoulder.

“I… okay.”

He watched them leave feeling utterly useless for the second time that night. Damian had just made it out of the showers and looked in confusion at the scene before him.

“Father I…”

“Bed, Damian.”

“But…”

Bruce and Jason left. Dick moved over to the boy, sighed, and leant against the wall beside him. “I’m sorry, hey? Tonight’s been shit on you.” A pause. “I’ll talk to him, okay? Tell him you’re not feeling good and about your brother.”

“I can handle myself, Grayson.”

“Yeah, I know, but he should to just… just because.”

The boy snorted. Didn’t move. He wore the baggy grey tracksuit that had been left in the locker and his wet hair was dripping down his face.
Dick sat down beside him. “Tim’s missing.”

The boy blinked. “Drake?”

“He’s been sneaking out.”

A shallow nod. “To Todd’s.”

“No but that’s what Alfred thought too apparently.” Dick shook his head. “That’s such a shit lie. It’s just because he’s so honest all the time that he got away with it. I had to invent Titan meetings to the point where they were on the database and Bruce still caught me.”

Damian looked at him. Didn’t say anything.

“Hey,” Dick said with a forced smile. “Want to wait up with me?”

“Father said I had to be in bed.”

“He did.”

A long pause.

An hour later they sat on the roof of the manor and watched as Tim darted across the lawn, climbed the side of the house, and through the window of his bedroom. Moments later the light turned on and he heard Jason’s voice travel through the night to be undercut and interrupted by Bruce’s authoritative growl.

“Poor kid,” Dick muttered.

“He deserves it,” Damian informed him simply.
“He was probably just sneaking out to hang out with friends,” Dick protested.

“He shouldn’t have been caught.”

A hollow laugh. “I guess that’s the way it goes.” He looked over at him. “You know, I really didn’t mean to… do that to you before. Bruce is right. Batman doesn’t do that kind of shit. Any decent mentor wouldn’t do that. Heck, I don’t do that dominance stuff. I don’t know why I thought I had to. I just… I’m shit at being a teacher.”

“I don’t need a teacher.”

“That’s what Batman and Robin is.”

“I thought we were meant to be partners.”

“Well, that too.”

“Why can’t you just be…” the boy struggled to find the right words. “Nightwing dressed at Batman? Nightwing wasn’t so bad I don’t think. Or, at least, be a different kind of Batman.” He hugged his knees to his chest. “I hate it when you try to pretend to be my father. I like you better now even if you are a low level.”

Dick looked at him and choked out a strangled laugh. “I’m going to ignore that. But, man, you have no idea what I wouldn’t give just to be Nightwing dressed as Batman but… it’s different. The cowl has different rules to it. I can’t just act like I used to.”

Weakly. “Why?”

“I… I don’t know.”

Damian didn’t respond.
It was beautiful on top of the manor; the Gotham skyline glowing on the horizon and grounds lit by an eerily large moon. He could see the bats zig zagging across the smoggy – almost starless – sky and hear the sea beating against the distant cliffs.

“I don’t know,” he said again.

Chapter End Notes

Just a few things:

a) I am aware I've changed Damian's and Hertic's relationship here a bit. I hope the divergence isn't too annoying. b) sorry this is so late and maybe not what you were hoping for. And c) and I hope you're all enjoying this story despite the fact that it's a bit bigger, slower, and glugger than the last ones. A lot more is going on and there is a lot less direct conflict to show for it.

Thanks for reading and thanks so much to those that have been taking the time to comment! They've really helped me these last few weeks. :)
Tim sat sullenly against the wall, legs hugged to his chest, and waited until they were finished. It was the first time he had ever seen Bruce and Jason properly agree on something and even then they weren’t doing it well; constantly on the verge of redirecting their anger from him towards each other.

“Where the fuck have you been?” The alpha barked, interrupting the omega and earning an icy glare which he ignored. “Who the hell have you been running off with?”

“I was just fighting crime,” he muttered defensively.

“Alone?” Bruce growled.

“You told me I wasn’t allowed to do it with a partner anymore,” he reminded him bitterly. “What did you think I would do? Just quit?” It wasn’t exactly a lie. Not really. He hadn’t explicitly said he was spending the time away from the manor alone. It wasn’t his fault if they interpreted it that way.

It wasn’t that he wanted to keep Young Justice a secret. The impromptu team of teenage superheroes were his friends and they were doing a good job. Saving lives. He had actually planned on telling them once they had a few more super villains under their belts. He just didn’t want to give Bruce and Jason anything when they were standing over him like he was just some kid who had broken the rules. As if he had to tell them where he was, what he was doing, and who he was with at all times. He was sixteen and had been having heats for three years. That was longer than any of the other omegas in his grade; some of which wore bites and even promise rings. Omegas married at his age. He wasn’t a kid anymore no matter what Jason thought. Nor was he a weak little baby bitch that hadn’t figured out how to take care of himself and his hormones like Bruce thought.

“Why the hell didn’t you tell us?!” Jason yelled.

“Because you’d tell me not to,” Tim told him slowly, defensively. “Or make me join the stinking Titans.”

“Why don’t you want to join the Titans?” Bruce said, exasperated.
Quietly. “Because I don’t.”

“They were good for Dick.”

“I’m not Dick.”

Jason swore and began pacing again.

“No,” Bruce growled. “You’re not. You’re not ready to work alone.”

“What would you know?” Tim muttered.

“I know enough to kn—”

“You fired me!” Tim yelled. “You can’t just do that and tell me what to do. You’re not my boss anymore!”

Bruce stared at him in shock.

“You’re a kid,” Jason hissed.

He glared at the alpha. “I’m sixteen.”

Jason opened his mouth to say something, stopped, and turned away with a ragged curse. The corners of Bruce’s mouth tightened, and fingers twitched at his side.

“You’re done,” he said simply.

Tim blinked up at the older omega. “What?”
Jason looked at Bruce and back to Tim. Didn’t say anything.

“You’re not going onto the streets solo anymore. Not until you can prove to me you are ready.”

Jason stood; silent at the omega’s side.

He approved, Tim realised with a jolt. Jason thought Tim wasn’t good enough to be a crime fighter solo; that he should be locked in the manor rather than allowed to take care of the streets by himself. He expected this from Bruce but Jason had always been on his side. The big brother that would give him a cigarette if he asked now turned into another looming authority.

“And because you’ve proven you can’t be trusted you’ll be restricted to the school and manor for the time being,” the man continued; voice low with a strange rasp hitched onto the end of his words. “That’s it.”

Tim stared at him in disbelief.

Jason stayed quiet.

He didn’t hear anything else the pair said before they left the room. He didn’t need to. It was the same stuff they had been saying since he climbed in the window and saw them standing either side of his bedroom door like guards of an ancient tomb. Jason swearing and yelling and Bruce expertly undercutting him in low, dangerous, tones. They thought he was a child they’d put in his place; never even considered he might be lying because they still considered him the same Tim that had appeared on the doorstep almost four years ago. A stray puppy.

He climbed into bed after they were gone and texted Bart. His phone buzzed a hairs breath after he sent the message. One good thing about being friends with a speedster; they texted back quickly.

They got me.

Me too. Totally not crash.

Figured when you didn’t show up today. Nothing could stop a speedster from being where he
wanted to be… except other speedsters.

Yeah, they actually made me study science as if I ain’t totally the science bomb. Feeling the mode. YJ do anything cool?

A couple of robberies and then we just taught Conner how to play the playstation.

Awesome old school, bro!

The new playstation. Tim corrected.

Again. Awesome old school, bro!

Since they had rescued him Conner had been living in Mount Justice, watching the news, and following them out on their impromptu missions set up by Red Tornado. He’d found a name when Tim borrowed some kryptonian crystals Bruce had and gave them to the young clone. Jor-El, embodied in the alien technology, had called him Kon-El and refused to say anything else no matter what Tim tried. There was a character on a daytime TV soap opera Kon had been watching while they were gone named Conner and the boy eagerly adopted the name. It seemed appropriate to assume a last name of Kent.

Tim still didn’t know what to make of the young super in their midst. Conner had quickly integrated himself into their group in a strangely aloof kind of way; like he was semi participating and semi observing. Their strange secret none of them quite knew how to share.

The odd, occasionally curious, alien boy that looked at his world with utter unguarded fascination and at Tim with a fiery blue intensity that left him feeling wholly disarmed but still… okay. While he looked at him anyway.

He didn’t tell Bart that he’d left Kon and Cass snuggled together and giggling on the sofa.

Jason picked him up from school the next day on Dick’s bike to the noisy appreciation of his P.E class and trained with him – a little too roughly – all afternoon. The next day he was retrieved early from class by Alfred and trained with Dick and Damian off to the side in the batcave. He watched as the pair slowly began to figure out how to fight together; bickering the whole while. That routine held firm for the next nine days.
Nine days wasn’t long. It wasn’t even two weeks. But nine days later Tim sat in Jason’s apartment and listened to Dick and Jason speak in low tones on the fire escape and missed Mount Justice.

“…if you want to find a guy instead then…” Dick was whispering.

“That would take longer?” Jason muttered, holding a lit cigarette but not lifting it to his mouth. Just letting it burn down towards his fingers.

Uncertainly. “Yeah…? I mean, I don’t know as many guys so we’d have to wait a bit longer.”

“A guy,” Jason told him, voice rough and forced.

Dick blinked. “Really? I… I’m sorry I just thought either would do. I didn’t know you had a… okay. No, okay, I can do that.”

Tim wore his P.E gear and neither the beta nor the alpha had noticed the faded pink stain across his shirt. The novelty of his big alpha brother seemed to be wearing thin and one of his classmates had spilt her slushy on him with a performed ‘oops’ earlier that day. To her credit the teacher had actually bothered to put the girl into detention which was a step up but he couldn’t help but thinking a simple shove would have worked better.

“Hey,” Dick said softly.

Out the corner of his eye Tim saw Dick rock up onto his toes to push a kiss onto the alpha’s lips.

“It’s okay,” the older man said. “I don’t mind. We’re okay.”

“I know,” Jason muttered. Dropped his cigarette untouched over the railing. “I know.”

As if on an unseen mark the sky blazed with colour and the bat signal emblazed itself across the murky orange cloud cover.
Dick sighed. “I got to go.”

“I’ll take care of the kid.”

Tim’s hand curled into a fist.

“Kay.”

When Jason walked inside alone Tim spoke. “You don’t need to take care of me, you know. I’m not
going to kill myself on the toaster or anything.”

The alpha gave him a flat look. “You fucked off.”

Bitterly. “So?”

“We’re your pack, Tim,” Jason growled as he moved by him towards the open kitchen.

Again. “So? You never tell anyone where you’re going or when you’ll be back.” He said and shifted
uncomfortably on his perch on the very edge of the sofa.

“I’m different,” Jason replied.

“Why?” He crossed his arms. “Because you’re older?”

Stonily. “Yeah.” Jason pulled a couple of plates out of the overhead cupboards, dropped one, and
cursed as it smashed against the ground with a loud clatter.

“Dick moved to live with the Titans when he was my age,” Tim protested, ignoring the broken
crockery.

“Dick’s different,” the man said through tight lips and threw the surviving plate into the sink.
“Why?”

Jason kicked open the under the sink compartment and knocked aside a heap of old cleaning products. When he didn’t find what he was looking for he straightened, leant against the counter, and ran his hands through his hair. “You always ask so many stupid fucking questions.”

“Maybe I’m stupid then,” he muttered. “Because I still don’t know the answer; why?”

Low. “Shut the hell up.”

“No. Why can’t I spend some time out? Why do I have to tell you guys exactly what I’m doing?”

“Because you’re a kid!”

“I’m not!”

“You think sixteen is old enough to do anything?” Jason snarled. “It’s not! All you do when your sixteen is fuck, get fucked, and fuck up and then you have to spend every day after trying to make those you fucked over look at you the way they did before but they never really do just because some stupid thing you didn’t even realise until…” he trailed off, kicked at the shattered pieces of plate, and swore. “So fucking stupid.”

Tim twisted his hands in his shirt. Forced himself to speak. “I didn’t actually go out solo,” he confessed quickly. “I wasn’t really alone.”

Jason’s eyes flashed as he looked up; the blue of his iris so dark his gaze looked black. “What?”

“I’m not stupid. I’ve been going out with friends. I had back up. We even have an old Justice League member helping us out. It’s like a new team. Not the Titans; our own thing and it’s really cool actually I… we’re doing a good job.”

The alpha glared at him across the room and for the first time Tim understood why they called alphas
dogs; he looked on the edge of feral, lips twitching back to show his teeth, and shoulders hunched in a way that made it look like his hackles were raised. “Who?” He growled; the sound coming from strange places in the back of his throat.

Tim felt an involuntary shiver run down his spine at the intrinsically alpha sound. “What does it matter?” He muttered, refusing to let himself look away or lift his chin to the older pack mate.

Low. “An alpha?”

“It’s not like we’re having sex.” His fists were tucked under his arms and bunched in the fabric of his shirt. “I’m still your pretty little virgin that needs to be saved from the school bullies and can’t go anywhere unless someone’s with me.” He thought about Conner and Cassie giggling on the sofa. “I’m not sleeping with them so it doesn’t matter.”

“It matters a fuck ton.”

“Why?”

“Because you’re an omega!”

He stared at him. “So is Bruce.”

“He’s older than you, knows his shit, and he still got tricked by the first alpha pretending to be his friend.”

“He picked Clark,” Tim reminded him.

“Bullshit he did.”

Defensively. “Clark’s a good alpha.”

Angrily. “There is no such thing as a good alpha.”
“What about you?”

Jason glared at him. Cold. Bitter. “There is no such thing as a good alpha,” he said again. “If there was then Dick…” he looked aside. “There is no such thing.”

Tim looked down at the floor, no longer able to hold the other man’s intense glare. Thought about the way Clark used to happily wait up for Bruce, the way Cassie looked at Tim with quiet resignation as Bart curled up on her lap, and Jason kissing Dick with a desperate, honest, and almost aggressive affection. He thought of Conner ripping apart some super villain’s robot and then sitting in the wreckage with an almost bewildered smile on his face, looking at Tim. He thought about Conner watching TV for the first time, trying to keep up with Bart’s chatter, and telling Tim he had the best costume and making one of his own in the same colours. In contrast he thought of the omegas from his P,E class crassly demoting alphas to walking cocks, the cold impersonal dismissal Bruce had given him when he fired him from the role of Robin, and even his own hesitantly unhappy reaction when he’d first met Bart. “You don’t know anything,” he told Jason. He knew there were bad alphas and good omegas but by his experience the least dependable sexual caste was as far from alpha as possible.

Jason opened his mouth to speak but was interrupted by a brisk knock at the door. The alpha swore, picked up a gun on the kitchen counter, and tucked it into the back of his belt.

“Don’t move, kid,” he told Tim with a stern glare as he marched down the corridor and opened the door.

Kid.

Tim’s fists were trembling with a strange sickening anger and throat dry. Jason had called him a kid and he’d bowed his head. He’d bowed his head. He hadn’t even meant to but he’d dropped eye contact when Jason’s glare became too intense. An admittance. An acceptance. A submission no matter how minor.

Jason was growling at however had knocked on the door. Who ever it was stuttered weakly back; clearly not expecting an angry, built, high level alpha.

“… being very loud… do you have an omega in there?”
“That’s none of your fucking business!”

“… no I just… if they’re nesting this isn’t the best place to have a heat. The walls aren’t scent proof.”

Tim stood and walked around the corner so he could see the two. “We’ll be quiet,” he said. “Sorry.”

The man blinked at him, clearly shocked to see him. “You’re… you in high school?”

“He’s my brother,” Tim said. “I’m not going into heat.”

Jason spoke over his shoulder. “I told you not to move.”

“But…”

Growled. “Go back.”

Tim backed obediently out of their eye line, moved towards the sofa, and – without even realising what he was doing – continued past it and climbed out the window. Moved quickly, quietly, as he scaled down the side of the building and then jumped in a taxi within ten seconds. He was angry, scenting stronger than usual, and trying not to think about what he was doing as he told the man an address. His phone buzzed in his pocket less than a minute later. He turned it off and realised he didn’t have his wallet.

“I… um… I don’t have any money.”

The taxi driver looked in the mirror. “Bitches always think you can fuck your way out of paying for anything.”

“I wasn’t…”

“Save it.”
The man pulled over and kicked him out. It didn’t matter. He didn’t know what address he had given him anyway and could make his way on foot to a bat bunker where he could get a bike that he could drive to the nearest teleporter so he could… he was going to Mount Justice, he realised. He was running away… just for a while, but he was.

He hadn’t planned on it but as soon as he knew that was where he was going he moved fast. Made his way across the Diamond District, moved to the other side of the street when he noticed a few stray alphas turn their heads towards him as he passed, and ran along the rooftops for the last quarter of a kilometre till he reached his destination. It was almost sickeningly easy, disobeying both his pack alpha and his pack leader. A small, simple, expression of rebellion. It didn’t take him long, once he had the bike, to make it to the nearest major base Bruce had set up and boom from there to the mountain.

He arrived back to base, frowned at the dim lights, and felt his heart sink. What if no one was here?


A crash from the other room. “Tim?!” Conner scrambled out of the corridor and stared at him. As usual the intensity of his unearthly gaze brought a prickle of colour to Tim’s cheeks. It wasn’t polite to stare directly at omegas; the action predatory and easily interpretable as aggressive sexual interest. When looking at alphas prolonged full eye contact was often seen as a challenge for the same reason. Conner didn’t seem to have caught onto the nuance yet. Under his scrutiny, it occurred to Tim that he had neglected to change into his costume and still wore his abused P.E uniform.

“Hey,” he said, embarrassed.

Conner stared at him in wonder. “You came back.”

He frowned and opened his mouth to speak but suddenly the other boy was in front of him and pulling him into a crushing hug; skin hot against his and scent scorching; musky, agitated, and strong.

He wriggled in the alpha’s embrace. “You okay? You smell like you’ve been freaking out a little.”

The boy drew back, looked him nervously from head to toe, and gently touched a new bruise he’d got on his arm training. When he seemed satisfied he hadn’t changed he started towing him back into the body of the cave.
“Bart still hasn’t come back,” he began, “and Cassie had to go to the island.”

“You’re here alone?” Tim said.

“Only because Tornado is on a mission.”

“Why didn’t you go along?”

“Because this is where you come back too,” the boy told him. “Everyone always comes here. Every day. I waited for you.” Pitiably. “You stopped coming. I thought you’d left.” They moved into the old training room Bart had set up as a living area. A massive fridge was pushed into empty weapon racks, a pile of blankets, mattresses, and sofa bits sat in the middle of the room, and a number of gaming systems sat lost in a mess of abused cords.

“Didn’t Cass tell you we got grounded?” Tim asked.

“Yeah.”

A long pause.

“You have no idea what that means, do you?”

Conner looked at him uncertainly. “To prevent a pilot or an aircraft from flying. To run a ship aground.”

“Um… yeah… not exactly.”

Defensively. “That’s what Tornado said.”

“My pack said I couldn’t come,” he specified instead.
Conner stared at him. “No we didn’t.”


The boy looked at him in unmasked betrayal. “You have another pack?”

“I… no, this isn’t a…” he stopped. Realised what the other boy had said. Realised the implications of it. “We’re not a pack, Conner,” he told him slowly. “We’re a team, we’re friends, but we’re not a pack.”

His brow puckered. “Why not?” Hurt.

He licked his lips. “Packs need… pack bonds, a leader, a pecking order…”

“You’re the leader,” he said simply. “I protect you. That’s a bond and a pecking order.”

Tim made a face. “You know that doesn’t make sense, right? The leader shouldn’t need protection.”

Conner twitched unhappily. “Yeah, they do. Not just anyone can lead, you know. You have to keep the leaders safe.”

Incredulously. “Says who?”

“I just know.”

He shook his head. “That’s some weird instincts you’ve got there.”

“It’s true!”
“Okay, if you say so…”

A pause.

He didn’t want to go back to the pack tonight. He didn’t want to deal with Bruce and Jason yelling at him again, or Alfred’s layered looks, or even just Dick and Damian watching from a distance. Least of all he wanted to do was run into Clark and try not to spot all the minute differences between the older alpha and Kon.

Conner frowned at him. “You’re pink.”

“I…” he reached up and touched the stained front of his shirt. “Just a little.”

The boy reached forward. Fingers ghosted down his chest. “And sticky.”

“I spilt something.”

“That’s gross.” To Tim’s shock Conner pulled his own black and red shirt up and off, exposing golden skin and a washboard of muscle. “Wear that.” Spoken like an order. So much for him being the ‘leader’.

Tim took the shirt, hesitated, and turned around before pulling off his shirt. Omega males usually wouldn’t show their chest in public but Bart was more than willing to strip down to naked in the showers and walked around in nothing but a pair of boxers afterwards. It felt stupid to act conservative with the alpha was used to that from a higher level omega than him… especially if that alpha cuddled with gay alphas anyway.

“You should leave your other pack.”

“I can’t just do that, Kon.”

“Why not?” He heard him move closer. “Are you the leader?”
“No.”

“Second?”

He grimaced. “Honestly, I’m pretty much bottom of the pecking order,” he said simply, looked over his shoulder.

Conner was gazing at him hopefully now. “Then you should join this pack.”

“They’re my family. I can’t just run away.”

“Tell them to join this pack.”

A sad smile. “It doesn’t really work like that.”

Connor looked wounded. “You’re going to leave again, aren’t you?”

There was no defiance, no anger, in the statement. Just a strange kind of reserved unhappiness. *There is no such thing as a good alpha.* Bullshit. He didn’t know what kind of self righteous shit Bruce had fed Jason, what he’d been through, or why he had such a scathing opinion of his own caste but – in that moment – the word ‘good’ described Conner better than anything else in the dictionary. Simply and completely.

“Yeah,” he muttered. “But…” he didn’t want to face Jason. Didn’t want to deal with the ugly messed up way the pack was functioning right now. He knew he would burn for this later but… “I could stay tonight.”

Conner’s face lit up. “Really?”

“Yeah, I mean, just sleep here and go back tomorrow morning. We’ve done that before.”

They climbed onto the pile of pillows, blankets, and mattresses and Conner grabbed two playstation controllers before throwing a blanket over Tim and flopping down beside him.
“L-last time I left,” Tim began too fast as they started a game. “You were sitting with Cassie.”

The boy looked at him. Still too forward, too direct; the impossible glacier blue of his eyes frighteningly overt.

“Like…” Tim struggled, “you know she liked alphas. Did…?”

“She kissed me.”

He shuffled uncomfortably on the mattress. “Seriously?”

“Yeah.”

“Was it… good?”

“It tasted weird.”

Alpha saliva. “Like,” Tim pressed, “good weird or bad weird?”

Easily. “Bad weird.”

“Oh… so you…” he become instantly intrinsically aware of Conner’s scent flowing off the too big shirt around his shoulders and the alpha’s bare skin an inch away from his own. “You don’t like alphas?”

Kon looked down at him, eyes blistering bright, and still turned directly towards him. “Guess not,” he answered with a crooked smile.

It was such a simple statement, could mean so many things, but for some reason Tim accepted it. A part of him he realised didn’t want to fight this. Didn’t want to question or to analyse. For the first time in his life he wanted to… allow. Just allow something to happen without heaping it with
questions or concerns.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks so much to everyone who has taken the time to comment! I was pretty stressed at the end of last chapter so those reviews were really awesome to receive and (as always) jam packed with some awesome ideas, notes, and links. Thank you and I hope I wasn't curt in any of my replies. You guys are the best.

I hoped you liked this chapter!
Bruce lay on his side under the warm weight of Clark’s arm and stared out the half open window at the pale line of sunlight sneaking along the far horizon. Gotham still glowed, the last of the bats flew lazily across a slowly paling sky, and the first spill of magic hour sunlight began painting the tips of the distant buildings in oddly clean light; an almost eerie marriage of night and day.

It was hauntingly beautiful; offensively so. A sight his nightly activities usually stole from him. A sight he was witnessing now from the confines of his own bed with his mate draped over him like a blanket. A sight that felt sickeningly wrong; sheltered and safe to a suffocating extreme like the world wrapped in Styrofoam.

He hated it. Hated that he was here to see it, hated that he couldn’t escape it, and hated that he hated it. That he wasn’t strong enough to accept without complaint the path he had chosen for himself when he asked Clark if he wanted to have a baby. He knew it would be hard. Right from the very start he knew it would be hard. But he hadn’t thought it would be like this. He had thought the worst thing would be putting Batman aside; ignoring the black pit of anger inside him, the memories, the nightmares… He hadn’t thought…

“…run your bloodline through the mud!”

“…not even leader enough to know where the hell your pack is.”

“You won’t be so strong when you’re fat with it.”

“I didn’t challenge you!”

“Why the hell do you want a kid when you don’t give a shit about the ones you already got?”

“You’re not my boss anymore!”

“Defective fucking bitc—”

… hadn’t thought his pregnancy would come at the price of his pack’s respect.
He didn’t know the exact moment he lost control. But he had. He could see the threads of disorder that led back to the announcement in the cave, to the assigning of Dick as Batman, and even the effective radio silence during his week at the Kent farm. But he had still been a leader then. He hadn’t been a good one, he knew, but the pack had still been there. They weren’t there now. No one in his pack barring his mate – who wasn’t really part of the pack – and Alfred – who was arguably ranked above him due to their multi generational family bond – was standing by him. Damian thought him as nothing more than a soiled vessel that he obeyed merely because Bruce maintained a physical authority over him, Dick was bringing pack members into line under him and refused to willingly stand behind him, and Jason only followed him when Bruce was going a direction he approved of; aggressively substantiating his own budding authority when Bruce didn’t act the way he wanted.

Tim seemed to be in the process of leaving the pack all together.

He was watching his pack fracture and disintegrate in front of his eyes and there was nothing he knew to do to stop it. He had spent all his life trying to be something. Something worth while. Strong. But after all these years he had failed. He was the same boy he had been in Crime Alley – skin seeping in the ugly unfamiliar scent of omega for the first time – that was so unthreatening, so weak, that he didn’t even deserve a bullet.

Jason’s unfinished insult ran through his mind like a carnival ride locked onto a sickening loop. *Defective fucking bitc—* Broken. Useless. Unworking omega. Despite everything that had been said between them that was the insult the hurt the most. An omega was meant to be nurturing. Was meant to be able to take care of those they were looking after. Was meant to do that instinctually. Effortlessly.

He knew he had never been a real father to Jason, he wasn’t the best leader, but… defective. It meant he hadn’t made himself strong. He’d just broken himself trying. He knew Jason had just said that in anger. Knew he was just trying to hurt him… but he was terrified the young alpha was right. That all his life was just a futile exercise, a pathetic and petulant cry for change; to stop crime, to end injustice, to make himself something someone thought was dangerous enough – strong enough – to pull the trigger for.

But now he was being left alone in another ally… not a good enough leader, not a good enough father, not a good enough omega… not worth it. Not worth it and too stupid to see it; too stupid and arrogant to think if he couldn’t do this how could he possibly raise a baby? Because if he was worth while his pack would still be behind him. They would be standing with him, listening to him, and not falling apart the moment he removed his immediate physical dominance.

*Defective bitch.*
The body behind him shifted. The hand on him twitched.

Sunlight was starting to creep into the room which meant Clark would wake soon. When he did he would smell Bruce’s distress. They were bond mates, attuned to each other, and the other man’s super senses made it only too easy for him to pick up on emotional states from Bruce’s pheromone output alone.

He could pretend it was a nightmare or an unsolved case keeping him awake, he’d done that before, but he didn’t want to deal with Clark just then. He didn’t want to deal with anyone.

Bruce slipped slowly out from the other man’s embrace, pulled on the first clothes he found, and made his way mindlessly down into the cave. It was deserted and caught in the bizarre moment in time post Batman and Robin’s late return and pre Alfred’s clean up. Dick had left his Batsuit in pieces between the Batmobile and the showers, the bin was full of and surrounded by energy bar wrappers, and Damian’s sword had been thrust through a nearby training dummy. Bruce bypassed all of it and moved into the small room at the very back of the underground base. The walled in space was built into the rock, an unnoticeable feature pushed to the corner of the vigilante’s lair, and usually served as his nest when he was in heat. Unlike other nests he had used over the years this one had never been invaded, violated, or given to him by an alpha. It was his. A space of the cave reserved just for him. A preserved piece of the cave as it used to be before Batman became a family affair.

Bruce fell onto the bare mattress and stared sightlessly at the cold stone wall. Somehow this sight was easier to look at than the impending sunrise. Familiar in its formidability.

He lay there for what could have been moments or hours before the weight of his own nauseatingly sweet omega scent started making him feel sick.

He barged out of the room into the mercifully still empty cave, stripped off his clothes, and slumped into one of the scent dampening pools. It was a small, strange, mercy to be able to breathe the naked air; stripped of the omega presence that followed him around like a shadow.

Without thinking he climbed out, moved toward the costume storage lockers, and climbed into the first assembly clothes he found. Worn, abused, and hanging oddly off his frame. He hooked a pair of sunglasses into his collar and yanked open a metal medicine draw to start clawing through the compact cans within. The names of what they were had been printed on side of the containers. Mid level beta number fourteen. Low level beta number twelve. Mid level omega seven. High level omega eight. Mid beta one… that’s the scent he used to wear as Bruce Wayne before… High beta four. High beta two. Mid alpha ten. Finally.
He grabbed the false scent, sprayed it on every part of him until the can was empty, and dropped it with a loud clatter onto the stone at his feet. It took a moment for the chemicals to activate with the open air. Once they did he inhaled the constructed alpha aroma, coughed, and looked in the mirror. Frowned. Smears concealer over the bond mark on his neck.

He hadn’t left the manor since Clark took him to Smallville. He hadn’t planned on leaving it that day. He didn’t let himself think on it as he drove one of the more neglible cars in his garage into a massive car park and boarded the train into Gotham Central with a mob of exhausted workers. His disguise was poor; substantiated only by the ragged clothes, scent mask, and neglected regrowth of facial hair; but it worked. No one looked at him; another unemployed alpha that had probably jumped the gates to get into the station. The polar opposite of the flashy, immaculate, playboy omega occasionally featured in the gossip magazines.

Two stops before he got off an omega boarded with two twin boys trailing behind him and a wide eyed baby girl on his hip. He was also pregnant. Just showing. The simple white shirt still had the ‘Men’s Maternity’ tag on under the collar. Bruce’s stomach rolled as he realised he was only a few weeks away from that himself. How long would it take for the media to get a photo of him once he was? Magazines always talked about imagined ‘baby bumps’ but even if no one paid attention at first soon enough they would and he would have to stand up and lie. He couldn’t reveal Clark without putting both his pack and his mate at risk; a pair of glasses wouldn’t hide much under the spotlight of the gossip press and Superman had enemies.

He would tell them he didn’t know who the alpha was. It was the simplest solution. Bruce Wayne’s reputation was made to be scandalous – it wouldn’t be a leap to associate that image with an unplanned pregnancy – and he had already been in the newspapers once for an illegitimate child. One he sired. After the heat of that gossip a surprise, bondless, pregnancy would be almost tepid. At least, that’s what he would hope.

The omega noticed him watching, turned his eyes down, and ushered the children through into the next carriage. Naturally nurturing. Functioning.

People would ask questions. Perhaps not to his face but they would ask. They would ask why he wasn’t searching for the sire, why he didn’t want the child to have an alpha parent, and why – if it was an accident – was he keeping it? Bruce swallowed the sickening dryness in his mouth. Why was he keeping it? Why, when he was clearly so unprepared, did he still pretend he could do this? When he had already proven he couldn’t nurture the way this required? When he couldn’t lead his pack, couldn’t take care of the boys, and couldn’t even think of a way to turn everything from what is was now into the way it should be. A dry heave. He still wanted this but he didn’t even know if he wanted this because he wanted a child – a piece of Clark and him – or if he wanted this to try and prove to himself that he was strong enough not to back down or give up or… God. He wouldn’t believe that. Couldn’t. He wanted this. He did. He… his stomach rolled again.
He staggered off the train as it stopped, shoved through the crowd of people already pushing to board, and made it to a garbage bin bolted between the platforms just as the first foul taste of sick frothed onto his tongue. He coughed as his body forcibly removed what little he had left in his stomach. It was watery, burnt the insides of his lips, and tasted of bile. There wasn’t much.

He heaved until it was dry and painful, coughed, and spat.

“Need a hit, spud?”

“Fuck off,” he growled.

“Yeah? I got crack, fear, glass, and the V stuff. Gets all you doggies to wag your tails. Tastes nice, makes you nasty.”

Venom. The kid was selling venom. He didn’t know that was back on the streets.

“Fuck off,” he said again, flashed his teeth this time.

The boy backed off. “You already nasty. Get it.”

No one liked angry alphas. Angry, unemployed, possible withdrawing junkie, alphas were downright dangerous. An alpha could do that. They could be at the very end of their tether and still be seen as something formidable. A beta has less room for error. An omega had none. At the first sign of weakness an omega was immediately seen as something fragile, precious, and frightened. Not something anyone could possibly expect to fight back or lead. He’d seen it happen more times than he cared to count. He’d seen it happen to Selina. Seen her knock out a fistful of men only to purr and tip her head back – a mockery of submission but enough – and be allowed to approach her next victim fully armed. She used her assumed weakness as a weapon and she wasn’t alone. The Joker was an omega that killed hundreds but at the first false cry for sympathy he would be put back into low security in Arkham, given the opportunity to escape, and be allowed to twist the mind of yet another doctor like Harleen Quinzel; a mid level beta that was so enamoured by the idea that something so special would ask her to guard, protect, and care for him she unwittingly abandoned everything she had to be his pawn. Something. If omegas showed weakness they were immediately demoted to a thing. If they weren’t strong all the time; if he wasn’t strong… and he wasn’t. He was...

He wasn’t like Selina. He couldn’t let people see him as weak. He was a pack leader. Even if he was an omega. Even if his pack was falling apart. Even if, after all these years, he was still just a defective bitch too pathetic, under it all, to even push away that mask.

He coughed up another mouthful of bile, took in a shuddering breath of air, and straightened. Swallowed the painful lump at the back of his throat.

Strong… had to be… all the time… even if he wasn’t.

He wandered aimlessly around the city until he found a stand selling something that smelt like it might stay in his stomach. It didn’t taste as safe as it smelt but he managed to swallow most of it before giving up. It gave him enough energy to forget about everything else and contemplate his immediate surroundings. The V stuff. He found another dealer and bought a sample of the venom. It was coming in pill form which was something he hadn’t seen in years. It wasn’t as strong and the effects were minimal but it was still highly addictive and could be used as a gateway drug especially now that street fighting was making a come back. He pocketed the substance, noticed the changed position of the sun in the sky, and forced himself to eat another meal.

Afterwards he found some bottled water and just drank, threw up again, and drank some more.

He knew the moment his scent mask began to break. The sticky sweetness of his own aroma interweaving with the slowly fading false scent like a foul after taste. The betas walking by looked at him uncertainly before they continued on his way; trying to smell if he was an alpha with some omega scent rubbed off onto him or the other way around. The longer he waited the more came to the latter conclusion and began approaching.

“Are you okay, mister?”

“Do you have pack around here somewhere?”

“I can get a car…?”

“Fuck off.” It didn’t work as well as it had under the alpha mask.
“Are you in bond withdrawal?”

“I think he is. He has no bite.”

He growled, low and threatening. “I said fuck off.”

“It’s okay, sir. We’re just trying to help. You don’t look well and you’re alone out here.”

Another looked at him with narrowed eyes. “You look like… Are you…?”

He shoved roughly by them, found a taxi that took him to the car park, and drove back to the manor.

“… never came back,” Jason growled at Alfred as Bruce shuffled by; ignored. “How could you have taken him to school if he never came back?!”

“He came down to breakfast, young master. Perhaps he was merely sleeping in another room?”

“Or another house.”

Bruce closed his eyes. Tim. Another shard falling away from the others. Coming to age in a way he was terrified would do nothing but hurt him.

He made his way down into the cave and analysed the venom. It was a simple puzzle. The compound similar to one he had seen and documented before and carrying with it traces of irradiated chemicals and clay. It was the soil signature from the warehouses beyond the dockyard and it was fresh. The chance that the chemists hadn’t moved on was high. When Dick came down he passed on the information.

The acrobat looked stricken. “…the location was in the composition? Shit… I’ve been working up the chain on that for days.”
“You didn’t tell me venom was back on the streets.”

“You were out of town and then I fought with Damian and…” a meaningful pause. “There’s a lot I haven’t told you, Bruce. Some of it shit you need to know.”

Reserved. “You don’t need to report to me. You’re Batman now.”

“Yeah, and clearly I’m doing a great job of that. But this isn’t about Batman. It’s about Damian.”

It hurt finding out how much Talia had changed for the worst since he’d entertained the possibility of love with her. But, unlike the venom, this was no easy fix. Talia had disappeared after Damian’s sudden and unexpected arrival into his life and he was already making every effort to find her. It was a desperate move; almost token. When Talia didn’t want to be found she, like her father before her, would be as insubstantial as a half forgotten dream. Only now he knew she had taken a second son from him. One she had already hurt beyond what she had done to Damian.

“Hey, are you alright?” Dick’s strange, sickening, echo of the betas in the street.

“Fine.”

Uncertainly “Are you sure?”

His hand curled into a fist. “Yes.”

“If you’re…”

“Bruce!” Jason came down the stairs. “I need talk to you!”

“Jay…” Dick began gently once the man made it across the cave to the computer bank. “I don’t know if now is the time.”

Jason frowned.
There. That was it. They’d seen some piece of the weakness in him and now he was too fragile to stand up to an angry alpha.

“What is it?” He rasped. “What the fuck is it?”

Dick looked nervous. “Come on guys, do we have to start this again?”

“What?!”

“It’s Tim,” Jason began angrily. “He left again last night.”

The beta frowned. “He was with you last night.”

Jason’s eyes darkened. “He left. And he’s not just going out on patrol by himself. He told me he’s going out with friends.”

“That’s a relief,” Dick said honestly.

“He’s going out with people,” the alpha hissed, speaking as if the other man had missed an obvious point. “We don’t even know what fucking people.” Turned back to Bruce. “What are you going to do?”

He swallowed the dangerously dry taste in his mouth and turned back towards the computer. “I’ll find out if a team...”

“No,” Jason grabbed his shoulder, pulled him back around to face him. “I don’t give a shit about that. What are you going to do about Tim? Not his ‘team’. Him. How are you going to make him stay here?”

Bruce stared at him. “Get your hand off me.”
“Then answer me!”

Dick sighed. “Seriously guys, that’s enough.” He pulled Jason’s wrist away from Bruce. “This doesn’t even make any sense anymore. You want the same thing.”

“But I’m the only one trying to get it,” the alpha said sharply. “What the fuck is he doing?”

“Jason…”

“Your grounding didn’t work! He ran away! What the fuck are you doing?!”

“I don’t know!” Bruce yelled; the sound ripping out of him with gut wrenching force. “Why the fuck do you think I know what I’m doing? What have I ever done that gave you that impression?” Hands balled into fists at his sides. “What is it that makes you think I know anything about being a decent father?!”

The pair looked at him in stunned silence.

“Is it because I’m stupid enough to think I can do a better job with someone I give birth to?” A hollow laugh. “You know I can’t. Even I know I can’t. I can’t even go to bed without wanting to get back into the damn suit. If I can’t put a fetus first for nine months how the fuck am I meant to put a child first for years?” He swallowed. “I can’t. So what is it, Jason? What makes you think that I would be any less of a defective bitch for Tim than I was when I was meant to be taking care of you?”

Dick looked horrified. “Bruce…”

“I don’t know what I’m going to do,” he rasped. “I never did. I never even planned on having a pack let alone kids. I was meant to die. I was meant to die and that would have been it. But now I have a family and a pack and I don’t have a damn clue about how I’m going to take care of any of y—” he stopped as his stomach gave a sickening lurch, heaved, and brought his hand up to cover his mouth.

The beta’s eyes widened as he realised what had happened. He dashed off to the side and came back carrying the bin. Bruce took it in his arm, turned away, and spat what little his body had left to turn back against him into it.
“I didn’t know you were getting sick,” Dick said softly, uncertainly.

Bruce didn’t turn back around. Stared at the plastic coated rim of the container. “I’ve only been vomiting today,” he muttered.

Nervously. “Is that normal?”

“It’s just been one day. If it persists that’ll be strange.”

“Okay, as long as you’re okay.”

“I’m fine.”

“Good. That’s… that’s good.”

Bruce looked over his shoulder.

Jason stood nearby looking utterly unsure of himself and Dick hovered unhappily behind him.

This wasn’t what he wanted to happen.

“I know things are a bit shit right now,” Dick began.

“Shut up,” Jason muttered.

Bruce was secretly grateful. He wasn’t in the mood to be reassured and lied to. He didn’t need Dick to pat his head and tell him he was a good, strong, leader and would be an even better father. He didn’t need to pretend he hadn’t just exposed a whole host of weaknesses and was already being re-evaluated in their eyes; silently but surely redefined as hormonal, emotional, and weak. Not someone Jason would fight with, not someone Dick would follow, not someone worth while. He didn’t blame them.
He dropped the bin and turned numbly towards the batcomputer.

“What are you doing?”

“Finding Tim’s team,” he forced out the words. Tried to think of nothing but the keyboard and the mission.

It was another cruelly easy puzzle. If Tim was fighting crime with people his age – a likely assumption – then it was a teenage superhero team. Now days costumed vigilante work was a kind of stardom and new groups were spotted quickly, especially if they were young or ‘edgy’. The information he was looking for popped up after a simple media search. There was a new Rhode Island based teenage superhero team featuring what looked to be a red Robin. He found some footage taken from a bystander’s phone and zoomed in on the figure in question. The image was blurry and pixelated and the Robin character facing the opposite direction. It was impossible to tell for sure… and then the Robin pulled out a grapple gun and bounced between android antagonists in a move Bruce had seen hundred of times before. Tim.

“Who’s he with?” Jason pushed.

Bruce returned to full view. Focused on the most obvious figure.

“That’s Wondergirl,” Dick said. “She tried out for the Titans but decided she didn’t want to join.”

A boy in a red and white suit appeared beside the blonde in a blur of movement.

Dick paled. “And that’s Impulse. Bart. He’s Barry’s grandkid. Wally tried to get him to join the Titans but…”

“Just like Tim,” Jason finished bitterly. “You introduced them.”

“I… no… no they… I mean, I gave Tim Bart’s number and I guess Wally might have introduced Bart and…”
A movement caught Bruce’s eye. There was a forth character in the background wearing what looked like civilian clothes and ripping the robots apart as if they were made of paper. He swung the aim of the zoom at the unidentified subject; back half turned towards them and profile lost in the poor quality footage.

“I have no idea who that is,” Dick said before the question could be asked. “No super strengths applied for the Titans except Wondergirl.”

“Castes,” Jason demanded.

“Bart’s an omega and Wondergirl’s an alpha.”

“That one’s the alpha?” Jason snarled, jabbing his finger towards the glittering gold girl. “That one?”

A long pause.

“Can I be devil’s advocate here and remind everyone that we wanted him to join a team of superheroes in the first place?” Dick said. “Isn’t this kind of way better than him running out onto the streets alone or whatever he told us he was doing? Like, I get that he was grounded and it’s not okay just to run away for a night and he should have told us ages ago but at least he’s, you know, not out there alone trying to figure shit out. Cassie and Bart are good kids.”

He closed his eyes and ran his hand through his hair. Dick and Jason were working around him. He shouldn’t allow that. He should regroup, turn around, and be a damn leader.

“It’s not what I wanted and even if it was I don’t give a shit,” Jason snarled. “He’s a kid!”

“They’re all kids.”

“He’s an omega!”

“So is Impulse. Look, and I know there is some scarier shit waiting out there for omegas and he is pretty young but, seriously, I don’t think this is bad. Besides, look, Tim’s leading them.”
Bruce’s eyes snapped back to the screen. He was. Not in a way that suggested deliberate dominance – it didn’t even really look intentional – but they were following his lead and if Bruce looked at the formation he recognised it. It was sloppily performed and fell apart when something unexpected happened – unpractised – but it was one Bruce had taught him; a Justice League structure. They were fighting according to Tim’s design and when they finished they retreated with him. It wasn’t a pack but he was the team leader.

The video ended.

Dick and Jason were still arguing.

“…does it matter?! He’s safe.”

“Bullshit he is! He practically showed me his neck without meaning to last night. If she growls he’ll *kneel.*”

“You don’t know…”

“You’ve given that dog two bitches and you think she’s not going to fucking take that? He’s a kid. He doesn’t know how to deal with this shit. He’s only just getting his full blasted adult instincts in *now* and you throw some alpha at him!”

Dick stood, thin lipped. “Do you have any idea how fucking stupid you sound? I know that. I *know.* I’m just trying to…”

Bruce turned. They both fell silent. “Don’t look at me like that,” he hissed. Pushed by them and climbed the stairs. When Tim came home he let Jason yell at him, let Dick comfort him, and let Alfred talk to him. Afterwards the boy looked at him; wearily waiting for him to lay down some new punishment. He didn’t have anything to give him. He didn’t have an ounce of strength left in him to construct any semblance of authority or control. It wouldn’t have mattered even if he did. Tim had been skipping school, hacking the Batcomputer, and sleeping over at a base disused because it was known to dangerous super villains. He was a team leader. He wouldn’t listen to Bruce.

That night he pulled the blankets off his bed, dragged them down into the cave, and threw them onto the undressed mattress in his nest. The small, safe, room where the sun wouldn’t reach. Clark joined him an hour later, eyes soft and touch gentle. Bruce sunk gratefully into the heat of the other man’s
embrace, buried his face where shoulder joins neck, and clung to him as he breathed past the lump in his throat; ragged, broken, and painful. Eyes burning and wet. Clark seemed to know not to say anything. Just held him. A pillar of support.
Tim stood at his locker and listlessly unloaded his books from his bag. Around him the hallway was awash of students travelling from one class to the next; filling the air with an incomprehensible muddle of chatter.

“…failed the test.”

“…don’t think he…”

“…want to kill that…”

“…look so good…”

A fresh PE uniform hung in front of him smelling of factory processed soap and lavender. It wasn’t the same one he had worn to Mount Justice. He’d left that one behind after waking up less than an hour before Alfred was due to call him for school under the unconscious weight of the young alpha.

“…wish my hair would…”

“…in the café down…”

“…want to smoke…”

“…is so scary…”

He’d had to shower for twenty minutes to get Conner’s scent off his skin, snuck past the still sleeping alpha, and used the transporter boom tube to get as close as possible to the manor. He had learnt from the last time he had come back late and climbed in through a different window. It hadn’t stopped him getting in trouble with everyone but Bruce once he arrived home from school.

“…hate these shoes…”
“…oh my gosh; she just…”

“…omega perfume not actual…”

“…health and safety bullshit…”

That had been what hit him the hardest. He didn’t mind Jason’s yelling, or Alfred’s stern speech, or Dick’s good cop routine. He didn’t even mind Damian’s smug look as he watched from the sidelines or Clark’s distant disapproval. But, when Bruce had looked silently at him – eyes so reserved they belonged on another person – and turned away without saying a thing, it had hurt.

“…Mr Grant said…”

“…I hate history…”

“…got to finish…”

“…thousand words…”

A month ago he was Robin and Bruce was Batman. They had been partners. He knew Bruce had always thought he gave into his ‘inherit omega weakness’ too quickly, had trained him brutally sometimes because of it, but he hadn’t thought he could ever disappoint the man so much that he would write him off entirely. He hadn’t thought…

“…who’s that?”

“…wish I had a…”

“…does he look like…?”

“…love the shirt…”
“…Superman?”

“Hey.”

He looked up and stared in shock at the boy leaning against the locker beside him. Broad shoulders, sun kissed skin, and a slightly too sharp grin spreading across his lips; the victorious smile of a hunter standing over a fox den.

“K-Kon?” Tim began. “What are you doing here?”

“Finding you.”

“How did you…?”

The clone held up Tim’s still stained pink PE shirt he had left at Mount Justice; the school logo printed on the breast above a line of narrow no nonsense font. South Gotham High School.

“Oh…” he hadn’t known Conner understood what Gotham, or even high school, was let alone connect the short string of words with Tim at a certain place at a certain time. It wasn’t the first time the boy had surprised him like that; he acted so ignorant sometimes it was easy to forget there was an awful lot he did know and, armed with a frighteningly powerful investigative mind, he was quick to fill in the gaps.

Conner’s grin spread. He knew he had defied expectations, knew he had surpassed what he thought of him, and knew he had proved himself to Tim. The emotions were so readable they might as well be inked onto his features. An invigorated instinctual satisfaction.

Tim blushed under the intensity of that look, looked down, and blanched when he saw what the boy had on.

“Oh, fuck,” he croaked. “You can’t wear that, Kon.”
The alpha touched the black and red S emblazoned across his chest. “I always wear this.”

“I know but…” he looked around the busy hallway. Saw a few eyes looking their direction. “You can’t wear that here!” He hissed.

Stubbornly. “He’s wearing one.”

A young beta walked by on his phone in a superman shirt.

“That’s different.” His stopped, swallowed. “You’re showing your eyes as well.”

Conner’s smile slipped. “My eyes?”

“You’re eyes are…” he looked up into the burning blue orbs shining with unearthly colour; still looking directly down at him with almost unblinking intensity. “…people will notice them,” he forced himself to continue. “Especially with that shirt and especially with how you look.”

“My look?”

“You look like Superman,” he whispered frantically. “A lot like Superman.”

“I’m his clone.” Thankfully spoken low enough not to be picked up by the bystanders lurking on the fringe of the hallway. “What else am I meant to look like?”

“Not even Superman looks like Superman when he’s in public and out of character, Kon.” He said under his breath. “You can’t look like that when we’re not in costume.”

Conner frowned. Clearly this meeting hadn’t gone as he intended it. “I don’t have any other clothes,” he muttered defensively.

Tim looked hopelessly into his locker. He didn’t have anything that would come close to fitting the other boy. All tests had shown Conner to be physically sixteen going on seventeen. He was roughly the right height for an alpha that age but was more filled out and far more powerfully built. Not only
was he bigger than Tim he was larger than most of the alphas walking in the corridor around them.

“Turn your shirt inside out,” Tim suggested and grabbed some sunglasses from his locker. “And put these on.”

The alpha grudgingly obeyed.

“We have to keep who we are secret, Kon,” he whispered. “Otherwise we could get into trouble.”

“ Aren’t you already in trouble?”

He stopped. “I’m not actually sure… and this is different kind of trouble. Like, grounding is one thing. Getting shot at while you’re trying to sleep by super villains is something else.”

Conner’s lips thinned. He understood.

The hallway around them was starting to empty of students.

“I… um… I need to go to class, Conner.”

Simply. “I’ll come.”

“It’s an omega only class.”

Silence.

“Perhaps it’s best if you go back to base.” He suggested. “Bart will be back in a few days and I’ll swing by then and we can hang out.”

“No.”
Tim shifted from foot to foot. “No?”

“You snuck out,” the alpha said. “I found you.”

“So? What does that mean?”

The alpha’s lips twitched unhappily. “I found you. We could hang out or something.” A pause. “I bet if we tell Bart he’ll run away from his school too if you want. You don’t have to go to that class.”

“I do. I…” he raked his hand through his hair. “Look Kon, I’m worried I’ve really messed up big with my pack. I don’t want the school to phone them and tell them I’ve been skipping class as well. Because I have. A lot, actually. And it’s kind of, not okay.” Jason’s anger, Alfred’s lecture, Dick’s reassurance, and Bruce’s disregard. The look in his eyes that didn’t belong on the man he knew. Cold. Reserved. Defeated. Like Tim had failed him – like he had failed Tim – in some fundamental way. No matter what Tim didn’t want to give the man more evidence to substantiate that dismissal. He wanted, despite everything, for Bruce to consider him worth it; even if he’d let him down, even if that meant Bruce yelled at him, he still wanted to be good enough for Bruce not to simply put him aside like one of the special baterangs he could never get to work.

Conner was looking sullen and hurt behind Tim’s glasses.

He picked up his clean PE clothes and closed the locker. “I got to go.”

“Wait,” the alpha’s hand landed on his shoulder. Warm and heavy. “Are you sure you don’t want to be a pack with the team instead?” A playful, slightly lopsided, smile. “We don’t care if you skip school and you can always sleep over.”

“That’s not the way it works.”

“I know.”

Conner leant forward and, before Tim could object, rubbed his cheek against his. It was a pack bonding activity usually performed by betas and usually directed towards the pack leader. He wasn’t a beta, or a pack leader, so this should be awkward… but something inside Tim tickled with
instinctual awareness. Potential. He and Conner had the potential to form a pack bond. He had only just really started forming an obligatory pack bond with Damian due solely to their close proximity and had never even felt the inkling of a potential bond with Clark. Yet there was a potential bond between him and Kon. It was there. They had only known each other for a couple of weeks but it was there.

“I know the way it works,” Conner told him. “I know about packs. We could be a pack.”

“I…”

“I would follow you. Protect you. I could be your first alpha.”

“You mean first pack alpha,” he corrected him.

The bell rung.

“Fuck Kon I…”

His grin was back; sharp. “You got to go to class.”

“Y-yeah.”

The hand slipped off his shoulder. “Go.”

Tim stared at him a moment longer, swung his pack over his shoulder, and ran down the hallway towards the gym. Most of his class were walking out of the changing rooms by the time he arrived. He changed fast, didn’t bother to swap out his shoes, and jogged out to join the rest of the omegas assembling lazily along the edge of the track. Laps. Good. He felt inexplicably revved up – twitchy – like he needed to get some energy out.

“…last week but this time I’ll time you,” the teacher finished. “I’m starting the timer now.”

Tim jumped onto the track first and put some distance between him and the main body of students.
He was at the furthest point of the track, right at the apex of the curve at the end of the oval, when Conner appeared standing on the edge of the oval.

He slowed. “Kon, what are you doing?”

“Just watching,” the boy answered, took his hand, and pushed something into it.

“I’m being timed,” Tim told him.

“Then keep going.”

The boy pushed him along the track and Tim reluctantly obeyed. Looked down at what the alpha had pushed into his hand. A chocolate bar. Despite himself he felt a smile tug at his lips as he bit into the treat before it could melt in his hands. When he got back the teacher gave him his time, noted it down, and sent him on another lap. This time he playfully pushed Kon away as the boy moved out to intercept him. The alpha shoved another chocolate bar into his pocket with a defiant pout and Tim fished it out, considered throwing it back, but unwrapped and ate it instead. Conner beamed.

After a drink and a stretch Tim raced onto a third lap. This time Conner didn’t move out to meet him but just stood on the very edge of the course and balanced a fresh chocolate on his knuckles. Tim ran past him, expecting an interception, and doubled back when he didn’t get it. Conner watched him as he snatched the food and continued on his way but didn’t say a word.

By the fourth lap he ran straight to the alpha – cutting across part of the track – and, ignoring the bar in his hands, grabbed the box protruding from his pocket.

“Hey!” Conner snatched it back, spilling a number of rainbow wrapped chocolates onto the ground. Tim caught some as they fell and sprinted away, waving the handful of stolen candy over his head victoriously. The teacher looked at the timer in surprise when he arrived and seemed to be about to protest when he took off on his fifth lap.

Kon was waiting for him, arms crossed, and lips twitching involuntarily towards a smile as he saw him approach. Tim noticed he wasn’t offering anymore chocolate bars and defiantly took one of the ones he had stolen last lap out of his pocket, ripped open the wrapper, and bit off the top. The alpha stepped forward, grabbed the back of his shirt, and pulled him off the track.
“Hey,” he protested playfully. “I’m trying to run here.”

Conner had dropped the glasses when Tim had stolen the candy and his eyes were unshielded; looking down at him. “Yeah?”

“Yeah,” he said with mock seriousness.

“Yeah,” Conner breathed.

Before Tim realised what was happening the other boy’s lips were against his.

He froze.

It was his first kiss and he didn’t know what to do. Conner’s lips were warm, wet, and a touch of tongue gently encouraged him to open his mou— the taste of the alpha’s saliva hit him like a hurricane. God. He tasted like an exotic delicacy. Rich and hearty; spiced with an unplaceable alien sharpness and a sinfully sexual tang. But it wasn’t like eating; it was like smelling something, inhaling it, but not actually having it. Dark and delicious but unsubstantial. Unsatisfying. Leaving him deeply, strangely, hungry.

Conner pulled back and Tim felt himself arch upward until their lips came apart with a soft wet sound.

Tim stared at the alpha, instantly aware of his hitched and ragged breathing and his fist bunched in the other boy’s shirt. He also realised his tongue had just been in Conner’s mouth. His tongue had been in Connor’s mouth. His tongue. That wasn’t a little kiss. That was a big kiss. A tongue kiss. A… how had that…?

“You like that?” Conner whispered in wonder.

Breathlessly. “Y-yeah?”

“Really?” The alpha licked his own lips. “It’s so strong and kind of bitter, right? I don’t really like it.” Alien eyes flicked back to him. “But you smell sweet. I bet you would taste so much nicer.”
Tim looked at him.

Connor blinked, realised what he’d just said, and his cheeks heated with colour. “Wait, no, I didn’t mean… I meant your kiss would be better.”

“Omegas don’t have hormones in their saliva.”

“I know, but I mean if you did you would be way nicer.”

“If I did I would be an alpha and I wouldn’t be sweet,” Tim reminded him.

“If you were an omega that did,” the boy specified.

“Did what?”

“Kiss like an alpha. Have hormones in your saliva.”

“That wouldn’t work,” Tim said shaking his head. “Alpha saliva is made so an alpha can bite an omega. Mark them. Omegas don’t bite alphas.”

Defensively. “Maybe they should.”

“But they don’t.”

A pause. Conner was looking down at him. “I just kissed you,” he said.

Tim’s stomach twisted. “Y-yeah?” A pause. Tim remembered where he was and jerked out of the other boy’s arms. “I… I should… I got to finish this lap.”
He finished the track, came to a stop in front of the teacher, and looked across the field at the figure of the alpha waiting for him.

“You should sit down for a while, grab some water,” the teacher suggested. “You’re already finished your fifth lap. Most of the class are on their third.” He’d forgotten to pace himself to his classmates.

“Okay…” he muttered and stepped to the side to work clumsily through some basic stretches. His stomach was in knots, hands shaking, and knees weak. Conner had kissed him. He had… he’d had alpha saliva in his mouth. Alpha’s only produced alpha saliva when they were aroused. Kon had been – was – aroused. He’d done that to Kon. He had… God, what was he going to do now? He would be lying if he said he hadn’t noticed how fiercely good looking the other boy was; like Clark but younger, sharper, and armed with an arsenal of expressions he had never seen on the older alpha’s face.

The most terrifying thing, however, was the knowledge that Conner would have sex with him if he let him. He knew that suddenly with simple surety. Conner wanted to have sex with him and he… He had never really been interested in a specific alpha before let alone had an alpha obviously interested in him. But why was Kon interested? Bart was a higher level omega, balancing right between mid level and high level on the charts but thanks to his superpowers outputting enough pheromones in his scent to easily smell stronger than his true blood potency. Yet Conner had never even seemed distracted by the other boy nor had Bart taken a break from flirting with Cassie to notice the other alpha among them. The heterosexual alpha. The high level alpha. The alpha that he had been taking food from, had slept beside, and kissed… because Conner had kissed him but he had kissed back.

“Fuck…” he whispered. “Fucking hell.”

One of his classmates knocked into him as she came off the track. “Slut.”

It was the girl that had poured a slushy on him a few days ago. “Piss off.”

A cruel smile. “What’s your rich bitch daddy going to say when he hears you been going arse up for a common kid?”

“I… what?”

“We can see you over there,” she jabbed a finger towards Kon. “Acting the little whore.”
He straightened from his stretch. “Don’t call me that.” Other omegas were walking off the track; stretching, drinking water, and noticing the confrontation.

“Why not?” She sneered. “It’s true. You’ve always wanted the alphas over there to pay attention to you but been too chicken to go up to them. I bet you had to pull down your pants before one pricked up their ears, right? That’s the only way a low level lik—”

He hit her. He did it with just enough force to hurt – but not bruise – and at a rough enough angle to throw her off balance. The kind of hit Bruce would unapologetically deliver during a training session.

She stumbled back, fell, and stared up at him in shock.

“You don’t know anything,” he told her bitterly.

She scrambled to her feet with a jumble of curses and charged at him. It was almost too easy tripping her up a second time. The third time wasn’t really necessary but something inside him was telling him this wasn’t just a fight. This was him proving himself. This was him upgrading his status beyond that of his scent. This was important.

“Tim!” The teacher noticed what was happening and started towards them. “What the heck are you two doing?!?” They broke apart as the woman stormed between them. “That’s enough or I’ll put you both into detention! You hear?!”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Sorry miss.”

“I swear it’s easier teaching alphas. You over there and you over there. Don’t look at each other, there you go. I expect better from you both.”

Tim turned away and noticed several things at once. The omega classmates behind him all either tipped their heads back slightly or lowered their chins and glared at him defiantly. He wasn’t the top omega but he’d jumped up the pecking order. A lot. They weren’t the only people that had noticed.
A small group of betas stood nearby, having been caught in the process of running over to break up the fight, and four alphas leant against their hockey sticks looking directly at him with predatory interest. Conner had also moved closer but hung back; observing but not finding reason to intervene.

His glasses were still off; gaze blazing in the afternoon sunlight.

Tim looked away. Swallowed.

The teacher didn’t send them for another lap and instead kept them for stretches and warm down activities until the final bell rung. Tim didn’t bother to change, grabbed his bag from the locker room, and headed for the parking lot; limbs shaky and stomach in knots.

“I’m still grounded,” he said the moment the alpha materialised beside him. “I can’t go back to base.”

“Okay.”

“I mean it, Kon.” He was hugging his bag to his chest. “I need to go home.”

“I’ll come.”

A pause. Tim laughed; nervous but honest. “Okay, so you think I’m just going to climb into the car with Superboy beside me and absolutely nothing bad will happen because of that.”

“I won’t let anything bad happen,” the alpha told him.

Tim sighed. “You know, it’s probably time you met Clark anyway.”

“I don’t care about Superman.”

“Really? Because you watch him on the news everyday and ask a lot of questions.”
A stubborn silence.

“Besides, I guess if anyone’s going to not freak out it’ll be Alfred.”

They walked off the school grounds and he scanned the gathered vehicles for the familiar sleek black car. Frowned when he didn’t immediately see it among… oh fuck.

“Shit, Kon, get back.”

The boy frowned. “Why?”

“Just do it!”

Jason stood beside Dick’s bike, arms crossed, and face turning as he scanned the students streaming by him. Introducing Kon to Alfred was one thing. Introducing him to Jason was another thing all together. This is a high level super powered alpha I found in a bad guy base that just kissed me and wants me to runaway with him to form a new pack. I slept with him after I left your apartment but it’s okay because we didn’t have sex even though I’m pretty sure he wants to and I want… I want…

The alpha caught his eye… and Kon was still beside him. God, he was going to be in a kryptonite chastity belt within the hour.

“Get back,” he told Conner again, hoping Jason wouldn’t notice the boy standing at his side among the tidal wave of students.

“He’s part of your pack, isn’t he?” Kon had followed his eye line. “The first pack alpha?”

“The pack alpha.”

“He doesn’t look so tough.”

“Seriously, now is not the time for an alpha measuring con—” Jason’s eyes moved to Conner. Tim saw it all happen step by step like lines on a script. It was disbelief at first. Even with the sunglasses
safely returned to position Jason had been around Clark too long not to immediately recognise the Kryptonian facial structure, colouring, and body shape. Then there was a brief moment of confusion – a flicker of a frown – and after that something seemed to register with Jason; to click into place with sudden, violent, clarity.

“Jason, let me—”

“Get the fuck away from him!”

“No, guys, it’s—”

Kon growled. “Get back, Tim.”

“H-hey,” Tim tried. “He’s just—”

The young alpha dragged him behind him.

Jason. “Get your hands off him, freak!”

“Go away!”

“It’s okay, Kon. He’s pack.”

Jason reached them and moved to seize Tim’s wrist.

Conner shoved him, hard.

“Kon!”

The older alpha staggered back, rolled, and landed on the balls of his feet. His lips twitched, teeth flashed, and a low growl spilt from the back of his throat. Around them the students parted with
shrieks of surprise, muttered comments, and confused explanations.

Jason’s eyes were so dark they looked black. “Get your hands off my pack.”

Conner started forward.

“No! Kon, stop!”

The alpha shuddered as if an electrical current went through him and looked back at Tim in surprise.

“But…”

“He’s my pack, man.”

“I thought…”

“You can’t just attack my pack.”

“But he…”

“Come on,” Jason growled and moved forward.

“Wait, Kon, here,” he pulled his phone out of his bag and shoved it towards the young alpha. “I’ll ring you, okay? You know how phones work, right?”

Sullenly. “I’m not an idiot.”

Jason grabbed his arm and started pulling him away.
“I’m just asking, you know, because there is heaps you don’t get,” Tim said quickly.

Kon snatched the phone. Bitterly. “I get just fine.”

Jason hauled him away before he could respond. They drove in silence back to the manor where the alpha parked the bike. Tim wasn’t surprised when the man grabbed his arm once they were off the saddle. Had expected it.

“Did he hurt you?”

Quietly. “No.”

“You’ve been with him?” Spoken with barely contained anger.

He shifted from foot to foot. “I’ve been hanging out with him,” Tim specified slowly.

Through tight lips. “He’s the fourth fucking member of your team.”

“I…” he didn’t know his pack knew about Young Justice yet. “I guess.”

“What the fuck are you doing, kid?”

“Nothing.” Quietly. “I’m not a kid.”

“You’ve been hanging out with another Superman and you think that’s nothing? You didn’t even tell anyone!”

“He’s okay.”

“He’s an alpha!”
“We never had sex,” Tim informed him, throat tight.

Jason opened his mouth to say something, stopped, and scowled.

“He’s not going to hurt me.”

“You don’t know that!”

He hugged his sides. “No,” he said hoarsely. “I don’t. But I can’t just live my whole life hating every alpha I see until I’m forty and some accident reveals the perfect mate. I can’t do that. I’m not like Bruce. I don’t want to do that.” He swallowed the sudden painful dryness in his throat. “I know Bruce thinks I’m not worth anything because of it, and I don’t know how I’m going to fix that, but…” Softly. “I want to be an omega.”

Jason yelled. “It’s not about being a damn omega!”

Tim turned away as a tear fell down his cheek. Damn it. Damn it.

He hadn’t meant to cry. He didn’t know why he was crying. He…

“Bullshit it isn’t,” he rasped. “It’s always been about being an omega,” a pause, “or a beta, or an alpha. That’s what it’s always been about. Alphas are bad, omegas are weak, and betas just fill the gaps. Which is f-fucking bullshit by the way. Because you’re good, and so is Kon, and Cassie, and Clark. And Alfred and Dick are important. And Bruce is strong. He’s so strong. And so is Bart even if he likes being an omega.” He took in a deep, broken, breath of air. “I want to be like that. I want to be an omega and be okay. I… but Bruce hates…”

“But you’re my kid brother,” Jason said simply, dejectedly.

Tim stared at him in shock. Jason had never called him brother before. Not really.

The alpha looked down. “Why do you have to fuck that up now? Why can’t you just be a kid for a bit longer?”
“I… I don’t want to be a kid anymore, Jason.” He wiped his eyes on the back of his arm. “Bruce and Dick were right. It was stupid of me to want to just stay Robin forever. I’m better than I thought I was. I can do it with a team. Whatever the hell Red Robin is, whatever Young Justice is, it’s not bad.” A long look. “We can still be brothers… if you want.”

The garage door opened and a sleek black car moved in among the other vehicles. Damian jumped out of the backseat before it had pulled to a stop. The boy’s Gotham Academy blazer hung out of the top of his backpack; one sleeve waving listlessly behind him as he stormed by. Alfred climbed out of the car wearily, took one look at Tim, and frowned.

“Are you sirs alright?”

“Yeah… we’re fine.”

“Don’t let that alpha fucker near you,” Jason hissed.

Tim stared at him, hopelessly.

“I fucking mean it. Don’t let him trick you into doing shit either because he’ll try. He’s a carbon copy of that alien arsehole so he’ll be good at tricky shit.”

“I thought you didn’t mind Clark anymore.”

“I don’t, but he’s still an alien arsehole that tricked Bruce.”

“Look I’m,” Tim felt his cheeks heat as he noticed Alfred approach. “I’m not just going to have sex because someone else wants me to have sex, okay?” He whispered. “I’m not that lame.”

Jason opened his mouth to say something. Stopped.

“I know I’m not what this pack is used to when it comes to omegas,” he continued, “and Bruce doesn’t want anything to do with me right now but, fuck Jason, I don’t know what I’m going to do. I have no idea. I’m just trying to figure it all out. And Kon isn’t bad. He’s good. Really.”
Alfred came abreast with Jason.

“Are you sure you’re okay, Master Timothy?”

“Yeah, Alfred. I’m just…” he looked at the alpha. “I’m fine.”
Clark stared numbly at the boy sitting stiffly on the edge of the sofa. He – Conner – hadn’t noticed him beyond a passing glance. He probably didn’t recognise Superman behind the glasses, damp fringe, and baggy plaid shirt. Just another stranger crowding into the room with him. But Clark couldn’t look away from him. He was his… what? His clone? His enemy? His brother? ... His son? He didn’t know, wasn’t sure, and it was killing him. What did this boy – Conner – think of him? Was he a mentor that abandoned him? A distant and detached DNA donor? Someone to overthrow? Someone to look up to? God, had he recognised him and just not cared? What if Conner in the weeks he had been alive simply never made himself known to him because he didn’t want, need, or require anything he could give him? Worse; what if he simply wanted nothing to do with him? Hated him? Perhaps more terrifying; what if he wanted everything from him? What if he did want Clark to be a mentor to him? A father? Clark had never done that before. Had never been that before. He was just adapting to the possibility of that with a baby and now he had a teenager; grown, alpha presented, and sitting in front of him.

Bruce had done this four times, Clark reminded himself. Dick, Jason, Tim, and Damian were all children he had brought into his pack and his life without question. Seemingly without even a moment of hesitation. He had just stepped forward and… Clark tried to take that step. Leant into it. But his feet didn’t move. Couldn’t… How? How could someone just step forward and know what to say, what to do, and what was expected? How did Bruce know? The first child Bruce had ever adopted – Dick – Bruce had no right to; he didn’t have any connection to him at all; and yet he had not just stepped but barged forward – through the press, the social workers, and detectives – and given the boy a home. Clark had connections to Conner, was practically identical to him, and yet here he was struggling to figure out how to step forward. To step up.

“…have come to us immediately,” Alfred was telling Tim.

“I know.”

“I hope you do,” the butler continued briskly as he bandaged up Damian’s wrist. “This is a serious matter, young master, and I can’t condone the behaviour of you and your team in regards to it. Not only could you have gotten yourselves hurt you could have and have hurt others,” a pointed look towards Conner and Clark. “Not informing us of this young man’s presence was incredibly selfish and, might I say, astoundingly stupid.”

“I know,” the boy repeated miserably.

“I am tended to, Pennyworth,” Damian informed him and tried to pull his hand free.
“You are not,” the man said sternly and continued wrapping the swelling joint. “And, Master Damian, might I just add it was also not too bright of you to use your fist to test our guest’s super powers.”

“It attacked me!”

“You know as well as I that’s not what happened.”

“I thought you were Tim,” Conner muttered, gaze fixed on the omega in question sitting across the room beside an angry looking Jason. “It was just a hug.”

“I don’t look anything like Drake!”

“Just because we told you to come over doesn’t mean you have any right to touch him,” Jason growled.

Conner didn’t say anything.

Clark understood. From a distance, through walls, and at super speed it was only too easy to mistake one person for another when not paying close attention. He doubted Conner was expecting a house full of people with near identical colouring when he came either. It was an easier mistake than one might think. Clark had once come back after a deep space mission, seen Dick bent over and digging through the fridge and thought it was Bruce. The acrobat had looked at him, stunned, after he had entered and approached.

“S-sorry. I thought you were...”

“Seriously?”

“You looked...”

“You call him beautiful? How are you even alive right now? Like, no kidding, he doesn’t mind that? I always figured he would either be super business like and no pet names or you would be calling him sir and master.”
Silence.

Dick’s smile was fiendishly delighted. “Oh. My. God.”

The beta looked at him now and then nervously back at Conner still gazing beseechingly towards Tim.

“I have little doubt the Justice League will require you, Wonder Girl, and Impulse to report to them directly,” the Alfred continued with a look towards Clark.

He nodded once. Conner was a potentially uber-powered being bred by unknown super villains. If that wasn’t reason enough to assemble the league potentially dangerous behaviour by young heroes wearing their symbols was something that needed to be addressed. The league usually made it very clear which teams they were affiliated with and which they weren’t. Young Justice were sidekicks, clearly had a number of connections with core league members, and even used a name that suggested some connection with the league. Politically, this was almost as dangerous as Conner could have been.

Tim shifted uncomfortably beside Jason. “I guess…”

“This is the first time you have been in front of them so I won’t imagine it’ll be too damaging but this is your superhero reputation on the line, Master Timothy. If you lose it you will never get it back which will forever inhibit your ability to work on a team or without harassment by the league.” Wearily. “You really need to consider the morals of a situation especially while in costume.”

“Now I am tended to,” Damian insisted.

“In a moment… yes, there, now you are tended to sir.”

Damian snatched his hand back, leapt off the chair, and strode out the door with a withering glare at Conner.

“I, um,” Dick shifted nervously from foot to foot having – like Clark – neglected to take a seat in the ornate drawing room. “Are you sure there is nothing I can, eh, get you Conner?”
“Don’t fucking feed him,” Jason growled.

“I just…”

“No,” the young alpha said. “I just want to talk to Tim.”

Jason. “You can talk from there.”

Conner’s hand balled into a fist. “Alone,” he added.

“No goddamned way.”

“Guys…” Dick said nervously.

“Now is not the…” Alfred added his voice.

Conner’s stare was as cold as ice. “Why doesn’t he tell me that?”

“It’s okay, Kon,” Tim mumbled.

Clark frowned. Kon? It was likely just a coincidence. Just a nickname. But it sounded just like… “Kon-El?”

Everyone looked towards him and with a lurch Clark realised he had spoken the name aloud.

“That’s what the crystals called him,” Tim said.

“I don’t give a shit what called him,” Jason snapped.
Conner was looking at him now, frowning, and then blinking in shock. “You look like me.”


Conner’s eyes flashed with understanding. “Superman?”

A forced smile. “Call me Clark.”

The silence that followed was thick and heavy. Conner frowned at him, looked back at Tim, and then down at his hands. “Clark,” he mumbled. “I guess that equals Clark Kent when you put it together. Hi, I, um, think I was made to take your place if you die. That’s what they used to say, anyway.” A pause. “I was made after Doomsday, I guess. From the blood on his fists.”

“Oh,” was all Clark could think to say; a shiver running down his spine at the mention of that monster. “I suppose that makes sense.” That fight still felt terrifyingly recent; one of the only times in his life he had been mortally afraid for himself, not just the people around him. But if that was true that meant Conner had been developed, designed, created, and grown in the past year. There were not a lot of people on the planet who could do that and fewer still who had the money, resources, and motivation to covertly assemble those people together.

The door opened and Bruce walked in, shoulders stiff, and features drawn. Dick and Jason saw him and looked down in time; awkwardly adverting their eyes. The omega noticed the movement and a flash of bleak black emotion snaked bitterly behind his eyes.

“Master Bruce,” Alfred stood and irritably straightened the man’s shirt. “I trust…”

Dangerously low. “Get off me.”

The butler backed away, surprised. “Sir…?”

Bruce ignored him and looked around the room. Took note of Tim and Jason sitting in the stiff leather couch against the far wall, Dick standing nervously by their side, Alfred in one of the two chairs around the coffee table, and Conner alone on the sofa opposite them all. Finally his eyes came to rest on Clark hanging uncertainly in the middle of the room. The man approached him, pressed his
forehead against his, and for the barest sliver of a second trusted his weight to Clark. *Support me.* He obeyed. *Always.* Then, as suddenly as Bruce was with him, he was pulling away and looking towards the strange boy staring at him from where he sat.

“Y-you’re the…” Conner began uncertainly. “I mean… you’re the leader right?”

The omega paused, studied him.

“You’re pregnant,” the boy added in amazement, his eyes sinking to the man’s abdomen. “I’ve never met anyone pregnant before.”

“You have Kryptonian instincts,” Bruce observed.

“I do?”

“He does?” Dick said.

“What’s Kryptonian instincts?” Tim muttered.

“But you’re not a clone,” Bruce continued. “You’re a high level alpha, Clark’s a mid level alpha, and while your scents are simular they are still different. Also, I don’t sense a bond with you. If you had identical DNA to my mate I would interpret you as bond mate.” A pause. “I want to find out what you are. Do you consent to a paternity and blood tests?”

Dumbly. “Okay.”

“Good.”

Bruce sat down beside him, pulled a small box out of his pocket that looked suspiciously like one of the compartments on Batman’s belt and pulled a swab out of it. Conner obediently opened his mouth when instructed and blushed as Bruce swipe the inside of his cheek. Once done the man tucked the sample away, produced a small needle, and a lead lined bag. Clark knew what was coming and backed up.
“This part, um, might hurt Kon.” Tim called out uncertainly.

Jason crossed his arms and smirked. “Don’t suppose you’ve ever felt pain before, huh? This should be educational for you.”

Conner sent the other alpha a dark look but didn’t answer.

Bruce aligned the needle with a vein, worked his fingers into the small pouch, and produced a flat shard of kryptonite. Bruce’s pack occasionally made jokes about kryptonite. Lois did as well. But, kidding aside, kryptonite was not something ever used lightly. Contrary to popular belief the stone didn’t just sap his powers but was also physically sickeningly painful to be near. A pain that would build to agony if left in his presence. He felt it the moment it was removed from its bag; the gut wrenching ache as the radiation struck and slowly started to poison him.

Bruce was quick. He took the stone and swiped Conner’s skin. The young alpha jerked as if he had been burnt and gasped in relief when the stone disappeared back into its leaden weave bag. Clark shared the sentiment.

“Damn it.”

“What?” He panted.

Bruce showed him a bent needle and fished in his compartment for a second. “He’s more resistant than you. I’m going to need to do that again.”

“He’s more resistant than me?”

“Yes.”

“Again?” Conner echoed unhappily.

“Yes.”
This time Bruce held the kryptonite against the boy’s skin for three seconds. Clark flinched. Against him three seconds on skin near vein contact with that grade kryptonite would be torturous. Conner’s brow puckered, lips peeled back, and he let out a pained breathless cry. The moment he made that sound Bruce moved. This time the needle came away straight and with a sample of blood.

“Why would he be more resilient than me?” Clark muttered, leaning against Alfred’s chair.

“Speculatively speaking,” Bruce growled. “My first assumption would be human DNA.”

He packed up his samples, stood, and moved to exit.

“That’s it?” Jason stood. “You’re done here?”

Without looking towards him. “Yes.”

“No you’re not!” The alpha pushed forward. “What about Tim, huh?” Intercepted Bruce at the doorway. “What about Tim and him? What are you going to do about it?”

Simply. “You don’t need me for that.”

“Yes we do!”

Bruce’s eyes flashed. “Don’t lie to me.”

Conner watched the confrontation with narrowed eyes and then looked back to the other omega left alone on the sofa.

“I’m not lying,” Jason hissed. “You’re the pack leader. Do something.”

“What?” Bruce spoke briskly; bitterly. “I have no doubt Alfred has informed Tim on the repercussions of his actions as Red Robin in regard to Superboy and that you have spoken as to the
repercussions of Timothy Drake interacting with Conner Kent. We have both of us already made
clear our opinions on the subject and that as long as he is part of this pack we disapprove of his
uninformed absences. What the hell do you expect me to do?”

“Disapprove? Opinion? He’s a fucking kid. We told him not to leave! You grounded him.”

Conner looked back to Bruce at this; an unhappy pleat between his brows.

“And he left,” Bruce finished. “I failed. What else do you want from me, Jason?”

“You didn’t fail,” Tim muttered hopelessly. “I… I know I’m more like… omega like but I’m still
trying to be a strong omega and…”

Bruce laughed; horse and painful. “You’re a stronger omega than I am, Tim.”

Stunned. “What?”

“You’re strong enough to lead, to start another pack.”

Conner. “You know about that?”

A shared intake of breath.

Jason rounded on the other alpha. “What?!“ The cry echoed.

Bruce looked at Tim; reserved, pained. “You are.” Not a question.

Clark gazed dumbly at the scene unfolding before him; struggling to think up something to say that
would make this situation better. That would help Bruce and his family the way he kept promising
himself he would. Nothing. He couldn’t think of anything. What was worse; no one expected
anything from him. He was among them, stood in the middle of them, but despite the years he had
spent as a family member he was as outside the pack as Conner was.
“You’re sixteen!” Jason yelled at Tim. “Sixteen year olds don’t start packs!”

For once Dick looked to be in total agreement with the other man; brows drawn forward, right hand over his mouth, and gaze locked onto the boy.

“I’m…” Tim began.

“Why not?” Conner interjected.

“Especially not with an alien arsehole,” Jason hissed.

“Let us try to keep this civil, Master Jason.”

“Jesus, Timmy,” Dick muttered. “You can’t just start a new pack. You can’t just… Pack bonds aren’t just thrown away, you know. Friendship groups always act a bit pack like but an actual pack; that’s different, Timmy. So different.”

“I know,” Tim said, palms open towards them. “It’s not like that. I swear.”

“It’s an emotional, hormonal, pledge of dedication,” Dick persisted. “One you can spend years trying to get rid of and it’s still there hurting you when…” he trailed off. “Fuck, Timmy, you have no idea.”

“I’m not starting a pack,” Tim rasped. “We were just… Kon thought…”

“You started this,” Jason snarled, jabbing a finger towards Conner. “You tried to make him run away with you!”

“Yeah,” the boy answered, unembarrassed; eyes locked onto the older alpha. “I did.”

“You little fu—”
“Jason!” Dick hauled the other man back. “Don’t! He’s not pack, a guest on our territory, and has superpowers for God’s sake. That is like the definition of bad ideas.”

Conner remained sitting looking smugly towards the other alpha.

Bruce was gone. Clark blinked at the spot he had previously occupied, looked through the wall, and sped through the argument to catch his mate in the hallway beyond. He hadn’t noticed him leave. No one had. There was something intrinsically wrong with that; the fact that Bruce had just turned around, walked out, and not even Clark had noticed.

“Hey,” he hovered beside him. “Where are you going?”

Bruce didn’t answer. Eyes forward and features set.

Clark had never been able to see through his mask; had never been able to read him when Bruce decided he didn’t want to be read. But, he could tell when Bruce was hiding something; when he was wearing that mask, and right then his uncharacteristic actions spoke louder than any expression he could have made.

Clark sighed, landed in front of him, and pulled the man into a stiff hug. “You’re not okay, are you?”

Hoarsely. “I’m fine.”

“You always say that.”

The man shifted uncomfortably in his embrace. “I have to get to the cave.”

“Why?”

“To run these labs.”
“You have to do that right now?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

No answer.

“Is this why you’ve been sleeping in the cave too?” Clark muttered uncertainly.

Since Bruce’s migration down into the cave he had approached Alfred and together they had tried to quietly find out why the man had moved. It wasn’t unheard of behaviour for an omega to sleep or spend time in their nest outside of heat though there wasn’t much information on it as most omegas nested in their bedrooms to begin with. A nest, he had learnt, wasn’t just the place an omega had their heat in. While an omega could nest in a lot of different places they usually had one real nest; an ultimate safe space. In times of stress, anxiety, depression, or uncertainty an omega might retreat into it when not in heat.

To his knowledge his mate had never done this before.

“That has nothing to do with…” Bruce broke off as his voice drew to a raw and painful note. “F-fuck, Clark,” a hand fisted in his shirt, “isn’t it fucking obvious? I know I’ve fucked up. Do I have to stay and watch my pack fall to pieces too? Do I really have to witness that? Is that what you’re asking me to do right now?”

“Your pack is still there, Bruce. They’re not leaving.”

“Don’t lie to me.” Bruce hissed. “Tim’s been talking about forming a new pack. People don’t just form new packs unless their old pack isn’t doing what it’s meant to. People don’t leave good packs. The rest of them are staying but they’re not staying with me. Not anymore. Not now that I’m…” A pause. “What kind of leader can only lead when they’re physically powerful? I lost control the moment I couldn’t brutally enforce my authority. What kind of leader is that?”

Clark didn’t know what to say.
“Let them figure out who the new leader is,” his mate rasped. “Because it’s not me anymore. If I was only the leader because I was the strongest then I never deserved to be the leader in the first place.”

“It’s not like that,” he tried. “They follow you because you are a leader, Bruce. You lead and care for people naturally. It’s the same reason why the league follows you.”

“They follow you.”

“They follow us.”

The body in his arms shifted. “God, I wish it was… I wish I could…” Bruce rocked back, looked at him for a long moment, and leaned forward to press a kiss onto Clark’s lips. Raw, dry, and strangely breathless. A sexless expression of togetherness; of support; of their bond stretching beyond a simple mutual addiction.

Their relationship was sexual long before it was romantic. Yet, despite that, this kiss felt like they were stepping out of a jungle and back onto a well worn path; something intrinsically familiar and safe; as innocent as a child’s memory and with echoes of the friendship they had shared for years before their haphazard coming together. “I wish everything was that easy,” Bruce whispered as their lips parted. “As easy as just… stepping forward and…”

“Easy?” Clark choked out a laugh and pushed another kiss onto his cheek. “Stepping forward is the hard part. I couldn’t even step forward in there and…” he closed his eyes. “You have no idea how strong you are, Bruce. No idea.”

The man looked at him.

“I mean it.”

“I’m not strong enough for them,” Bruce said simply. “It’s better if I just leave. Then…”

“No!” Damian streaked out from around the corner and darted over to worm his way in the middle of their embrace; elbowing Clark aside.
“Damian,” Bruce muttered.

“Can I come, father?” The boy’s voice betrayed him; tight and higher pitched than usual. “Wherever you’re going, can I come? I promise I won’t do anything. Please. I’m still with you.”

A frown. “I’m not going anywhere, Damian.”

“Yes you are. You just said you were. The pack’s falling apart and you’re leaving.”

“That doesn’t mean…” Bruce began.

“I know what it means when people leave!”

A deafening crash and muffled chorus of raised voices from the other room. Bruce looked up; eyes alight, and moved to take a step. Damian intercepted him.

Frantically. “Please! I know you don’t need me and I know I’m not a high level like you or mother or brother but…”

“You know your caste?” Clark muttered, stunned.

“I’m not an idiot,” the boy spat at him. “I can’t be anything good if mother…” Bruce tried to move again and Damian stood in front of him; stopping him. “I-I never stopped following you. Not really. I swear.” He moved as Bruce tried to take another step. “You’re my leader. I’m not like them. I’m still part of your pack. If you’re going I could protect…”

Bruce picked him up.

Damian tensed as he was taken off the ground, looked at the man in shock, and clung to him as he was carried back down the hall and into the drawing room. There was nothing comfortable about the way Bruce carried Damian. Nothing familiar. The boy hung stiffly from his arms and blinked back at Clark with wide silver eyes, legs hanging long and limp, and fists tightened uncertainly onto Bruce’s shirt. The omega held his cargo with two hands, kept his face resolutely forward, and didn’t embrace him. Yet, when they moved into the room, neither seemed quite willing to let go of each other;
looked down with near identical frowns when Damian finally slid slowly back to the floor.

The scene in the room that awaited their return was alienated from the one they had left.

“… an accident,” Conner said fisting two pieces of the sofa he had been sitting on.

Jason. “Yeah right, freak.”

A blazing red look. “It was!”

“Clark.” Bruce nodded towards the boy.

He bobbed his head in acknowledgement and took a step forward without thinking about it. *A step forward.* Stopped, breathed, and took another. The pack all started talking at once when they saw Bruce; Jason growling, Tim pleading, Alfred informing, and Dick chiming in where he could. Clark ignored them and pitched his voice for the red eyed boy standing alone on his side of the room.

“Hey…”

Without looking at him. “Leave me alone. You’re with *them.*”

“They’re not really bad, you know.”

“You didn’t see it,” Conner hissed. “Tim wants to be with me but that alpha won’t let him come over. I just want to talk to him. I’m not going to hurt him. I’ve been hanging out with him for weeks. He was the first thing I saw without the pod around me. Smart, nice, and good. I wouldn’t hurt him. Not ever.” Conner hugged his sides, still not looking away from the young omega across the room. “But you don’t care. I saw you out there with the leader. You’re his mate; he *said* so.” A deep breath. “You’re with them,” he said again.

“I like to think so,” Clark said. “Though sometimes it’s hard. I can’t exactly pack bond.”

“Tim and I can.” He said, surprising Clark. “I felt it. And Bart, and Cassie too. We could be a pack, I
don’t care what they say, and I know Tim doesn’t really want to but we could. That means something. I just need to tell him that. I just need… he’ll get it if I tell him.”

He could pack bond, Clark realised. Bruce was right. If Conner could pack bond he couldn’t be a full kryptonian. He wasn’t a clone; through an unknown mechanism he wasn’t sure he wanted to contemplate the boy before him was, biologically, his son. He had a son. He was standing beside him, talking to him, and yet he still wasn’t sure what he should be doing; what Conner expected – required – of him.

“I just want to talk to Tim,” the boy insisted. “That’s the only reason why I came here. I want to talk to him.”

“I’m sure he…” Clark began.

“Why can’t we just talk for five seconds?!”

Tim looked up at that, slipped under Jason’s arm, and started towards them.

“Hey!” The alpha made a grab for him but ran into Dick instead. The two fell to the ground in a tangle of limbs narrowly missing Damian as they crashed into the carpet; the air filling with a colourful collection of curses.

“Tim,” Conner smiled; warm and slightly desperate as the other boy approached. “I knew you would…”

“Give me my phone,” the omega demanded.

“I… sure…” he pulled the phone out of his pocket. “But…”

Tim snatched it. “I told you this was my pack.” He said through pinched lips. “Why the hell did you have to come here and do this?” He kicked at a piece of the destroyed sofa. “Why would you do that to me when I told you this was my pack?”

Conner’s expression shifted. “I… I’m sorry?”
Tim shot him an icy look. “No you’re not!” He snapped. “You’re only saying that because I’m yelling at you! We invited you here as a pack. You can’t just come in here, tell them you’re trying to make me run away with you, challenge my pack alpha on our territory, and smash the furniture! You think they’re just going to let me work with you again now? You think this is all going to just go away? I trusted you, man. You told me you weren’t an idiot.”

Hesitantly. “I’m not.”

Tim shoved him. Hard. Conner had the decency to stumble back a step.

Tim. “Then what the hell?! This is my pack! My family! You were meant to come here and show them you’re a good guy! Not… whatever the hell this is!”

Jason hung back having clambered back to his feet and watched proceedings with a tentative and almost hopeful look on his face; gaze flirting between the teenage alpha and omega standing before him.

“I just wanna talk to you,” Conner tried.

“Why, Kon? So you can say more stuff to get me into more trouble? Make the team look worse than it already does? Or maybe I’m not totally grounded and you want to make sure to finish the job?” He turned his back on him.

Jason. “Hey, k—”

“I’m not a kid anymore, Jay!” He pushed by the stunned alpha, marched by the two betas hanging uncertainly behind him, and stopped to give Bruce a layered look the other omega seemed to understand before leaving the room. Conner stared after him; gutted and confused.

“But…” he muttered. “But…”

With a deep, shuddering, breath Clark rallied himself and stepped forward.
He wasn’t a part of the pack – not really – but he was a part of the family and Conner was in however small a way a part of him. No matter what, son or not, clone or not, weapon or not, that meant something. Something that meant he had to step forward even if he didn’t know what to say, what to do, or what would come of it. He had to not just because of the pack, or Bruce, but because whatever else this boy was he was also family.
Chapter 16

Jason sat on the steps leading from the cave and watched the pair linger quietly by the monitors. Bruce and Damian stood beside each other, an arm’s length between them, and bodies composed in twin postures of singularity; arms crossed, faces forwards, and shoulders hunched. But the way they moved and looked at each other echoed of a newfound awkward awareness. They didn’t hug. Jason had learnt the hard way Bruce didn’t do parental bonds and could count the times the man had voluntarily embraced him on one hand. He didn’t know how to just hug. Damian, on the other hand, didn’t know how to just be hugged. But, what they were doing now seemed to be their equivalent of it; the gap between them strangely more wholesome – more just air – than it had been before.

“…feeding the venom to the kids at the place Drake came from,” Damian was saying. “Grayson says a lot of the street fights were really just the children…”

Jason watched the boy edge an inch closer to the other man, face aimed resolutely at the wall of monitors. Fucking brat. Jason fisted his jacket pocket; looking for the cigarettes that weren’t there. He should have guessed Bruce’s aversion to parental bonds wouldn’t extend to biological children. If it did he would never have decided to get pregnant. A baby and their bearer were born with a family bond. There was no way around that. Bruce wouldn’t become a bearer if he didn’t want that.

Damian looked up at Bruce as the man said something. “…Father?” Father.

He had never had a parental bond with anyone in this pack. He had something with Tim but it wasn’t the same; more like a clause in their pack bond. This person is your little brother. Don’t let him hurt. It wasn’t the connection a parent had with their child or a child with their parent. Not really. The only real family bond Jason had ever had was the one he shared with his mother. She had bore him, taken care of him, and occasionally let him crawl into her lap. In turn he had taken care of her after her heats and when she was too high to do it herself. Sometimes she pushed him away, sometimes she hit him, but that was okay because evidentially she would hug, nuzzle him, and do all the things that would mean she was an omega and he was her child. Bruce never did.


He sent him a withering look.

Dick grimaced. “Okay, I’ve seen that face before. Don’t ask don’t tell. Message received. I just… you know with all this business with Tim I wanted to make sure you were taking it alright. I know you two are really close and he’s, well, growing up all at once and that’s scary from where I’m
sitting so I can’t imagine what it’s like for you.”

“He’s still a kid.”

“But, is he really?” Dick stressed. “Really?”

“Yes.”

Pointedly. “Were you really a kid at sixteen?”

“Yes.”

“You told me you had sex at sixteen,” Dick said quickly.

“Yes.”

A pause. The beta’s eyes locked onto his face. “What does that mean?”

“Nothing,” Jason answered.

The other man studied him for a moment longer, sighed, and ran his fingers through his hair. “You’re a real open book,” he said; voice weighted in sarcasm. “You know that right? Like seriously, you and Bruce have that in common. You’re so readable.”

Jason watched as Bruce showed Damian how to adjust his stance to fight with a wounded wrist. Didn’t say anything.

“Hey,” Dick continued after a pause, voice tighter and higher than before. “Are you, um, doing anything the next two days?” A momentary pause. “Like, I understand if you want to hang with Tim a bit after what’s happened and everything. Or if you’re doing some Red Hood vigilante something that you don’t want to drop right now.”
“No.”

“No?” Dick plucked at his sleeve. “Like, no as in you’re not free? Or as in, no you have nothing on?”

“I have nothing on.”

Nervously. “How about tonight?”

“No.”

“No like…?”

“I have nothing on,” he repeated angrily and looked back towards him. “What? You want to send me undercover or some shit?”

Dick stared at him for a moment too long before he reached into his pocket and clumsily pulled out his phone. The screen had smashed at some point in the last few days but still managed to throw up an image. “Look,” the beta tapped into Facebook. “I found another omega. A guy this time.”

Jason didn’t move.

“He’s really cool, actually, and I’ve known him for a while so he trusts me.” Dick held up a picture. “Here’s the story; he’s actually partnered up with another omega but since they synced they don’t share heats anymore.” A pitched laugh. “It seems funny but they outsource and then just go back to being committed couple for the next two months.”

“Funny,” Jason echoed numbly.

“I-I guess if it works, right? And I guess we’re doing something kind of simular now even if we’re doing it together.” He licked his lips. “Here’s the thing though; I know it’s short notice but he’s going into heat early tomorrow morning and he wants to meet you before so he invited us to stay the night at his place.”
Jason felt the muscles in the back of his neck twitch. “The night?”

“Tonight.” Dick clarified. “To, um, start early I guess. I don’t know. I’ve never done this whole omega, heat, hormone deal before. Do you usually have sex before the heat? And heats doesn’t usually hit all at once, do they? I mean, when do you know to start fucking?”

Jason shrugged.

“I guess it’s just hormones, instinct, and stuff then,” Dick muttered. “So, yeah, I don’t really know much about that.” Voice strangely haggard. “I figure this’ll be pretty interesting for me actually. I mean, I’ve never really seen an alpha and omega mate before. And because I know what you’re like with me I’ll be able to see how you’re dif—” he coughed, swallowed, and continued. “—ferent. How different you are with him. Because he’s… you know.”

An extended silence.

Jason stared at him, reached forward, and fisted his hand in the other man’s hair at the back of his skull. Pulled him forward and crushed their lips together. It was like most kisses he had with Dick; fast, hard, and open. But, this time, there was a taste of breathlessness; desperate, needy, and painful. Dick’s hands touched his chest almost as if they were about to push him away, tugged at his jacket, and reached up to cradle his face; pulled him forward until the press of their mouths was painfully hard.

“-Tt- Would you bond breakers not do this in—”

Dick’s mouth tore away from Jason’s. He was on his feet less than a second later. “Don’t call us that! Don’t ever call us that!”

Damian staggered back, stunned. “It’s just a saying, Grayson” he muttered defensively as he came to rest down a few steps. “Lots of people say it.”

“Don’t you ever fucking say it!” Dick yelled. “Hear me?!”

Bond breaker was considered a mild slur commonly applied to betas that partnered with omegas. It
usually didn’t extend to betas with alphas because, due to the low numbers of omegas, a lot of alphas did partner with betas. Omegas were rare enough as it was. It was a shame to ‘waste’ one on a beta. Alphas were seen as less of an issue. Even so, Jason had heard the words whispered since he started going out publicly with Dick. Never paid much attention to it. Never thought it was a big deal. But now Dick’s hands were balled into white knuckled fists and were shaking at his sides.

Bruce walked up behind Damian, put his hand on the boy’s shoulder, and without a word towed him upstairs; leaving them alone.

“He’s such a brat,” Dick hoarsed over his shoulder once the others were gone. Didn’t turn around. Didn’t face him. “Good kid, really, but such a brat. We went on patrol last night and he broke this guy’s finger by ‘accident’ because he thought the way he spoke to us was annoying. I mean, it was annoying; he was one of the guys that act like we should be scared of their lawyers. He’s dealing venom to kids and he thinks lawyers are going to help him against Batman? But that’s beside the point.” A deep breath. “Such a brat.”

“Yeah,” Jason agreed.

Dick turned around. Looked at him. “So, about tonight,” he said. “I’m going to have a shower and then there is some stuff I need to do but if you want to meet in the garage at eleven we can leave then. I’m not going on patrol for the next few days so this is actually pretty good timing even if it is short notice. The GCPD is getting real hot on the streets and now that Bruce solved the whole venom, street fights, and missing kids’ thing we’re actually sitting pretty.”

“Can I come with you?” Jason heard himself say.

“On patrol? Didn’t I just say I’m not going out?”

“No.”

“You mean out to this guy’s apartment? Yeah, I think that’s kind of the idea.”

“No.”

“No? You mean…” Dick blinked and looked at him uncertainly. “You mean to the shower?”
“Yeah.”

A pause. “Okay,” the beta said. “If you want.”

They didn’t have sex. That wasn’t the intention of tailing the other man around for the next few hours. He stood with him in the shower, lay on his bed as Dick worked through God-knows-what on his laptop, and sat beside him as he yelled at someone over the phone. It was fifteen past eleven before eventually Dick stood, took one look at him, and moved down towards the garage.

They took one of the aged old cars – the cars not officially registered to the Wayne household – and Dick drove. He chatted to himself the whole way; about Tim, about the alien not-clone, about Damian, about Bruce, and even about their leader’s pregnancy. “Be good if it’s a girl,” he said. “And a beta. We don’t have enough betas in this pack and we really don’t have enough girls. Any, in fact. Like, one more guy and we’ll look like Paradise Island for boys.” A small, strange, laugh. “Wow, that sentence came out weird. You know what I mean.”

“We have enough betas,” he muttered.

“Do you know what the ‘perfect pack’ ratio for betas is?” Dick jumped in, seemingly happy he responded to something at all. “Fifty percent. One beta for one of anything else.”

“We have enough betas,” he said again; looking out the window and watching the lights pass overhead. It was raining. Not enough to turn on the windscreen wipers but just enough to be visible beneath those overhanging street lights; small pinpricks of water tumbling through the sky.

“Well,” Dick said. “I, for one, like betas. Love them, in fact. I would be fine if we filled the pack up with betas. More than just one for everyone else.”

“Pack is big enough.”

“I’m not proposing new alphas.” The other man stressed. “You’ll still be the sole pack alpha. I’m just saying I wouldn’t mind more betas.”

“I would.”
“Why?” Dick said. “Don’t you like betas?”

There were layers to that question. He could hear it in the sudden silence that followed its utterance; see it in the way Dick stared straight ahead as they passed through another intersection; smell it in the slight frightened shift in the other man’s scent.

“Betas are fine,” he said awkwardly. “It’s just… pack is big enough.”

“The pack is going to get bigger when the little Superbat is born,” Dick said, sounding oddly relived. “Part of me still can’t really believe he’s pregnant, you know.”

Jason turned back to look out the window. Watched the sleek black business district evolve into the closer familiar streets of the Narrows and then into low flat apartment blocks as they moved north of the city centre. The building they stopped in front of had an elevator that didn’t smell too bad. It seemed to take an age for them to climb to their intended floor. The doors chimed and opened into a sparse corridor.

Neither of them moved.

“This, um, this is it, Jay.”

“I’m following you,” he told him softly.

They stayed standing staring out into the hall beyond until the doors slid shut with a chime.

Spoken so softly it was almost inaudible. “Kiss me, Jay.”

He stepped forward, backed Dick against the wall of the elevator, and pushed his lips against his. The beta gasped; his voice painfully sweet as they crushed their bodies together. After a while the interior the lift went dark; the lights on a timer. It didn’t matter.

“W-why didn’t you fuck me in the shower?” The beta stammered as Jason began kissing, sucking,
and biting his neck; rough and angry. “Why didn’t you, Jay? God, why? That’s – ah! – all I needed. Just a fucking fuck in the shower. That would… that would have been enough.”

“I can fuck you now,” he husked.

A hollow laugh. “It’s time for you to fuck someone else now.”

He ignored him, wedged his leg between Dick’s, and reached down to yank open the front of the other man’s pants; groping and fumbling in the darkness.

“God, Jay,” a hot breath against his face.

He reconnected their lips, felt rather than heard Dick’s groan as he tasted the prickle of alpha saliva starting to fill his mouth, and ground into him. They slotted together like two pieces of a puzzle; groin to hip and hip to groin. Perfect in its crass simplicity; friction, open kisses, and a mess of hands trying to find each other in the darkness. When those hands started to know their way around him Jason grabbed the wrists attached to them and pinned the other man back against the wall. Just a fraction to high. Dick would have to stretch up just onto his toes, would arch his back too keep balance around Jason’s leg, and tilt back his head to keep their mouths together. Jason didn’t need to see it to know how he would look; stretched shivering muscle, splayed legs, and pulse beating in his neck.

Dick whined; the sound muffled against Jason’s lips. He pulled back so he could hear. Dick always made the best sounds. He could produce anything from a throaty grunt all the way through to a squeal if Jason worked him right. But despite all the different songs he had made the other man sing for him over the years this one was still his favourite; the needy, desperate, hot gasps and soft cries just like he had made when they had first had sex. If only he had known then what he knew now they wouldn’t be here; if he had known how important Dick was, how perfect, even if he was a prick too… if he had known all that he wouldn’t have fucked up right at the start – he wouldn’t have looked away from Dick not for a second – and Dick would still trust him. They wouldn’t be here. They wouldn’t be doing this.

The lights turned on.

Ding!

Dick’s eyes flew wide. He shoved Jason off him just as the elevator doors opened and turned away;
fumbling with the front of his pants. “Fuck,” he hissed. “Fuck.”

“Dick?”

The beta stiffened, looked over his shoulder at the newcomer, and forced a smile. “H-hey.”

Jason glanced at the man standing uncertainly outside the elevator doors. He looked around Dick’s age with a narrow face, blonde hair, and bony arms poking out of a too large shirt. He was also an omega, unbound, and sickeningly similar to the photo Dick had shown him earlier.

“I…” the man hesitated and looked at Jason. “I was just coming down to see if you guys were here.”

“We’re here,” Dick said still facing the other way and trying to subtly tuck himself away. “Sorry we’re a bit late. We were…”

“I’m an omega,” the man said simply, passively. “I can smell what you were doing.”

A pause. Dick laughed nervously. “Omegas have superior scent. I forgot that.” He managed to zip up and turned around. The omega stepped back after a estranged moment of silence and they both shuffled stiffly out of the elevator.

Jason stood silently through the introductions and let the omega shake his hand when Dick said his name. The man tipped his head back slightly as he did so; flashing his throat in submission before adding a shy smile to the mix.

“Dick didn’t tell me you were a high level.”

“You’re not,” Jason observed bluntly. Spoke in a way that showed his teeth more than strictly necessary.

The man flinched and shuffled back a step. “I-I guess not.” A pause. “Um, I’m actually starting to nest right now so I would really like it if we could get back into my ne—apartment.”
Dick’s smile looked frozen onto his face. “Sure.”

The apartment was a lot like the ones Jason had been hoping between the last half year but more lived in. Family photos sat on a small table beside the sofa, a stack of bills spilt out of an inbox on the kitchen counter, and a massive mattress lay in the middle of the room under an unzipped sleeping bag.

“Where does you girlfriend go for her heat?” Dick asked as Jason shuffled in behind him.

“She used to have an alpha she knew she used to stay with.”

“Used to?”

“Well,” the man absently moved a bowl of fruit from one surface to another, “actually, after her last heat she decided she would rather stay there than come back here.”

Dick stopped. “She left you?”

A small nod.

“You’re single.”

“Is that a problem?”

Dick waited slightly too long before replying. “No.”

“It is for me. I hate being single.” He frowned and put the bowl back where it was before. “I think I’ll get an alpha. I love omegas but, you know, it’s just simpler with an alpha. Easier. I might even get one as hot as your boyfriend.” He looked towards Jason. “Though I doubt it.” The second his gaze was away from Dick the beta’s smile fell away like a light switching off. When he looked back it returned tight and toothy.

“Good luck with that.”
After a while the omega went to have a shower, Dick nervously started checking the contents of the fridge with a list he had on his phone, and Jason sat down on the sofa to watch the late night news playing muted on the TV. He felt sick, his mouth was dry, and every muscle felt ridged. When the man returned he looked between Dick and Jason and slunk slowly towards him. Moved slowly to his knees as he approached.

The shower had washed away all the smells of the day and the scent rising from his skin now was strong, sweet, and heightened with just a frayed edge of approaching heat.

“Hey,” he shuffled forward, now kneeling in front of him, and nuzzled beseechingly at his knee. “What do you do, Jason?”

“Nothing.”

A pause. “Lot of alphas like that now days,” he said. “I’ve seen the lines at the unemployed office. It’s not right.”

Dick was watching them from across the room; pretending to still look at his phone.

The omega shuffled closer and pressed his body against Jason’s calf. “What do you want, Jason?”

He growled. Instantly the man threw back his head and folded his arms behind his back; the kneeling posture of submission. He’d never had someone kneel to him before. Not really. People only knelt like that when offering profound expressions of submission either at the resolution of a pack dispute or… an omega offering themselves to an alpha.

The man seemed to read something into his silence, smiled, and began to climb into his lap.

“Jay…” Dick moved behind the sofa in an instant, swept Jason’s head back, and pushed a fast, frantic, and upside down kiss onto his lips. Jason let himself move forward in his body until the kiss was all he was focusing on; all he could feel. When Dick pulled their lips apart they kept their faces together; breath mixing, cheek on cheek, eyelashes tickling his jaw. “Why didn’t you shave when we were in the shower?” The beta whispered; hand running through the stubble on the side of his face.
“I was watching you,” Jason answered.

A pause. “Watching me?”

“Watching you,” he echoed.

Dick wanted this, Jason reminded himself. Dick needed him to dilute himself on an omega. He needed to be less of an alpha; because his high level was hurting Dick. He was hurting Dick and he didn’t want to hurt Dick anymore. Dick wanted this. I’m not just going to have sex because someone else wants me to have sex… Tim’s words echoed in the back of his mind. I’m not that lame. But it wasn’t that easy. He was the same age as Tim was when he first had sex with Dick. Dick didn’t know it. He had been physically eighteen… or was it nineteen? It didn’t matter. He had been sixteen by all the years he could remember and he’d fucked up. He had fucked Dick, turned away, and now Dick didn’t trust him; left, fucked him around, and it was all because he was too stupid when he was sixteen to see him. Really see him. He needed to pay the price for that, he needed to fix that, he needed Dick to stay with him. Dick wanted this… and he needed Dick.

The omega kissed him. A tongue against his lips; trying to taste the inside of his mouth.

He turned his head down and to the side with a low growl.

The man jerked back. “No bite,” he said quickly. “Dick told you that, right?”

He hadn’t meant to turn his face towards his omega gland. He’d just turned away from the kiss. He couldn’t have bitten him right them anyway; not in the way an alpha bit and marked an omega. He didn’t have near enough alpha hormones in his saliva.

“You told him that, right?”

Dick. “I… I didn’t think…”

“I won’t…” Jason rasped. “I didn’t mean… I just don’t want to kiss.”

“But, I get your alpha hormones from kissing you,” the omega protested.
“And I get your omega hormones from biting you,” Jason bounced back.

“I’m the one that’s going to be in heat.” Spoken as if he were simple. “You want my hormones but I need yours.”

“I’m going to fuck you, you stupid bitch,” Jason snarled. “That’s how you’ll get my fucking hormones.”

The omega cringed away from him and once again assumed a posture of submission; this time he didn’t look so happy about it.

“Jay,” Dick said softly, climbing onto the sofa beside them; eyes soft, affectionate. “It’s okay. You don’t have to kiss. That’s fine.”

“I know.”

“This is for you. Just what you want.”

“Don’t give me that bullshit,” he rumbled and shifted under the omega. He was lighter than Dick and under his flimsy clothes his body was slimmer, softer, and no doubt unscarred. His pants did little to hide the obscenely overt flare of his hips or tuck of his waist. Tim and Bruce didn’t look like that did they? They had hips, he knew. They’d all seen each other naked when they changed and showered after patrol. But somehow the omega figure was… more natural – inoffensive – on them. It wasn’t obvious on Bruce at all and seemed to flow naturally into Tim’s build. Just another part of their bodies and not the explicit, insistent, invitation now grinding down into his lap.

Bruce and Tim were beautiful. He had never felt sexual attraction towards Tim and it had been years since he looked at Bruce that way. But they were beautiful. He knew that. He wasn’t blind. Most omegas, most people, most everyone was ugly. This omega was ugly. He was ugly. Dick was beautiful; the most beautiful person he had ever met.

He could hardly smell Dick over the chokingly thick scent of the omega crushing against him. Couldn’t really see him as he moved in behind the other man. Couldn’t even reach him; touch him. He wished he was back in the elevator with him, back in the shower, back three years ago having sex with him for the first time. If he could go back and not be so stupid Dick would never have stopped trusting him. If he could do this Dick would trust him again. If he could... he wouldn’t have
The omega had stopped moving and was looking at him – right at him – with simple understanding.

He leant forward, whispered in his ear. “There is an all hours pharmacy across the street. Do you want to pick me up some suppressants instead?”

He nodded numbly.

The man rolled off him and Jason was up in an instant, hands shaking, stomach rolling, and heart hurting.

Dick looked at him in shock. “What are you doing?”

He couldn’t do this. Dick would leave him but he couldn’t do it. “I have to go,” he croaked, straightened his jacket, and moved towards the door.


“I…” he searched desperately for an excuse. “I… I’m going to hang out with Tim tomorrow. I forgot. I need to make sure he’s…” his voice was betraying him; too rough, too raw, too painful. “… alright.”

Dick stared at him in confusion. “Tim?”

He pushed by him, fumbled with the lock on the door, and escaped the oppressive scent of the omega’s apartment.

“Hey!” Dick followed him. “What are you doing man!? You can’t just leave now! I made a promise. You’ve got to take care of him.”

“I don’t have to do shit,” he shot over his shoulder. Pressed the button on the elevator. When it didn’t open straight away he moved for the stairs instead.
“You asked for this,” Dick told him angrily as he followed. “You fucking asked for it. This was meant to make us better. I wouldn’t be hurting you anymore. We both get what we need. What the hell happened to that?”

“What do you think?!” He yelled over his shoulder, moving down another flight of stairs.

“Don’t make me go through this again,” the beta snarled, voice broken and echoing in the stairwell. “Don’t you dare make me have to go through this fucking process again. Of picking a mate for you again! Do you have any idea how hard that is? How much I’ve fucking hurt myself doing this? Now you’re humiliating me just because he’s not a high level. Just because he doesn’t want a bite!”

“That’s not it!”

“Then what the hell is it? I’ve given you so many fucking outs on this, you arsehole, but you keep just… will you fucking stop for two seconds and look at me!?”

He spun around. “There! I’m looking at you!”

“Good!” Dick stood four steps up from him, hands shaking, and face red. “That’s all I want,” he rasped. “You to look at me and be happy.”

“I always look at you.”

“Yeah, I know. You look at me in the shower but only tell me when you’ve got an omega on you. What the fuck is that about? It’s like you’re throwing me a goddamned fucking bone. Good work, Dick. You got me an omega. Now I’m going to show you I give a fucking shit about you; even if it’s just a little.”

“That’s not what it’s like!”

Through gritted teeth. “Bullshit it isn’t.”
Jason’s throat was painfully tight and contracting around a lump of bile. “Fuck you,” he spat. Turned and continued down the stairs.

The pharmacy had wood over the hole where a window used to be, bars between him and the cashier, and a homeless girl lurking in the isles under the shadow of a massive hoodie. The man behind the register straightened as he saw Jason and his hand fell behind the counter. He ignored him, grabbed fistfuls of the first non prescription suppressants he found, and paid without asking for change.

Dick was sitting outside the apartment buildings; both hands in his hair and elbows resting on his knees. Jason dropped the plastic bag of medicine into his lap. Dick flinched as if he’d been burnt.

“Give that to him,” he said in a voice that didn’t sound like his own.

“I hate you,” Dick whispered. “So much.”

“I know.”

He looked up. “Why do you do this to me? Can’t you just tell me you hate me?”

“I don—”

“Don’t lie to me! Just tell me the damned truth for once. Why the hell are we here? Why are you doing this to me?”

“I love you, you stupid fucking cunt.”

Dick stared at him for a long time; boxes of suppressants spilling across his lap, shoulders shaking on every exhale, and hands hovering either side of his head halfway between running his fingers through his hair and a defensive boxing posture. “What?” He sounded sadly confused.

Jason turned away before the burning itch in his eyes could betray him. “You’re so fucking stupid.” He shot over his shoulder. “You hate me? You want me to hate you? Go and fuck off already. I don’t need this shit.” And then he was walking away, legs moving on their own, and hand clawing
at the empty pocket in his jacket. No cigarettes. At his belt. No gun. At his pants. No knife. Nothing. His wallet was gone too, part of his brain registered. The girl in the store had stolen it.

He found an old car nosing out of an ally, broke the passenger side window, and hotwired it. Drove until he found an ugly park shoved between two stern grey apartment blocks. He pulled into it, attacked a tree until there was blood and bark on his knuckles, and lay down on the patchy grass. Stared aimlessly up at the sparse stars spotting the sky above him. Breathing hurt, his cheeks were wet, and there was a painful ache in his chest.

He should have fucked the omega. He should of… he loved Dick. He said that. It was true; he loved him. He hadn’t known he was in love with Dick. How long had he been in love with Dick? It didn’t feel like a new thing. Something old. Worn. A scar. A scar he’d had for so long it was just a part of him. Wouldn’t recognise himself without it.

But Dick didn’t love him. Dick hated him. Somehow that didn’t stop him loving him. Didn’t do a damn thing to take away the sick feeling inside him.

“Stupid fucking cunt,” he croaked; echoing his previous statement. Wasn’t sure if he was talking about him or Dick. “Stupid fucking cunt.”

When he got back to the manor the house was asleep except for a dim light on in the kitchen. He entered through there and stopped when he saw Bruce with his laptop and Damian asleep in the seat beside him. The omega looked up and frowned; scented the air unhappily. He probably still had the omega’s scent on him, Jason realised.

“It’s nothing,” he growled and hugged his sides. “I’ll shower.”

Quietly. “Are you okay?”

Jason stared at him.

“You smell stressed.” Damn omegas and their sense of smell. Damn them. Damn them.

“I had a bad night,” he whispered.
Bruce didn’t say anything. There were more in that silence than words could tell.

Jason stared at him. At the strange look on his face and the unfocused glaze over his eyes as he gazed at the laptop screen. He thought about he had said in the cave last week. Thought about the way he had looked when he had tried to walk out after taking blood from the not-clone two days ago.

“Are you okay?” He tried the other man’s question awkwardly.

Bruce looked up. Features set.


Bruce shifted slightly and before Jason could think about what he was doing he approached, slumped down in the chair beside him, and leant against him; head face down on Bruce’s shoulder and body a clumsy weight on him. The omega stiffened, moved as if to shove him off like he used to when Jason tried to climb into his lap when he was young, but then slowly relaxed. Deliberately accepted the contact.

Neither said another word.
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Tim spent years working with Bruce as Batman and Robin, had known the way Dick moved before he had ever met the man – had used that knowledge to uncover the Dark Knight’s identity – and had seen up close the creation of the new batsuit. He had trained for hours with both of them, lived with them, and even knew their favourite foods; Bruce had never quite been able to hide his appreciation for the mulberries Alfred shipped over from England – Clark had originally thought them blackberries and had been so silently sad when Bruce would relish the berries from the butler but not any he brought him Tim had been compelled to tell the man his mistake – and Dick unembarrassedly ate Cheerios at all times of the day. He knew them both. Knew them well. Knew them like someone knew pack. They were his pack. Despite that, he had no idea who was sitting on the other end of the table from him; who had entered with the rest of the heroes; who was looking at him now through the familiar shape of the cowl.

Batman sat among the panel of Justice League members; lips set, cape hugged around his shoulders, and face angled down. Wonder Woman was beside him leaning back into her chair with practised authority, Clark was beside her in full Superman regalia, and Flash fidgeted at the edge of the line up. Their mentors. Also joining them on Bruce’s other side was Green Lantern, another Green Lantern, Green Arrow, and Captain Marvel.

“…unsupervised and unsanctioned superhero activities while using identities and symbols affiliated with…” Arrow was reading monotonously from a piece of paper.

Dick. It had to be Dick. Dick was Batman now, right? It had to be Dick. But was Dick part of the Justice League? He was one of the leading members of the Titans who were affiliated with the League but did that give him right to sit in here? Beside Wonder Woman, Superman, and the Lanterns? Or was Batman just given permission because he was officially Robin’s mentor? The current figurehead of bat branded vigilantism? It was a possibility. Perhaps most people on the panel weren’t even aware of the cowl change over. It had only happened fairly recently, after all, and the League wasn’t something Batman participated in very regularly. It could be Dick and they just didn’t know. Or was it Bruce? Was Bruce sitting silent and scentless across from him?

“…failing to inform the League on potentially highly dangerous hostile interactions with super criminal organisations unknown and the discovery and affiliation with a likely uber powered meta…”

Which would be the better outcome for him? Should he hope to be looking at Dick or Bruce? He wasn’t sure. The short answer would be Dick. The man had seemed the most forgiving of Young Justice and Conner so far. But Dick also seemed more likely to manhandle him into doing something
he didn’t want to do; in particular he wouldn’t put it past the beta to put him back into his old costume and tag team him with Damian for a while. A solution which might have seemed attractive a month before appeared repulsive now. Bruce, while he closed doors sometimes, wouldn’t shove him towards something he didn’t want. Would he?

“…of petty theft in regard to a number of claims made by the inhabitants of Happy Harbour and the items found – wait,” Arrow did a double take and reread the line, “you guys stole some stuff? What did you steal?”

“Whoa, totally not crash dude,” Bart protested, “I may have scavenged some items to make the home base a whole lot more homey, you know, because you guys left it pretty moded, but I didn’t steal anything. No body was using any of it. I swear, that playstation had only been played once or twice max and there was dust on it and no one could eat all the food—”


“Hey it’s okay,” Arrow continued. “I mean, do I really have to read all this sh—eh—stuff anyway? They already know it. We already know it.”

“Obviously you don’t,” Flash snapped back.

“Oh come on, man. I do now. They stole some stuff, didn’t tell us about busting out their friend over here, and did some superhero stuff.” A pause. “Don’t look at me like that. I’m not saying what they did was right but do we have to be so bleeding formal about it?”

“Can we not argue about this in front of them?” the speedster muttered angrily.

Wonder Woman sighed, leant forward, and – ignoring the people around her – looked at each of them in turn. “Why did you do it?”

Cassie sat directly opposite her beside Tim in her usual superhero gear; half emblazed red and gold Amazon armour and half casual clothes. Bart was beyond her on the very edge of his seat, Conner in the chair after him with his face aimed resolutely down, and Red Tornado at the other end.

Cassie twisted her lasso nervously around her fingers as she spoke. “I just thought it would be like the Teen Titans but… just us. I… I’m sorry, Princess, I understand our mistakes. We were really just
trying to have our own team.”

“Don’t call me that, Cassie.”

Mumbled. “Okay.” She looked up. “But, we’re really sorry. Please don’t make us get rid of Young Justice. It’s just… we’re doing a good thing, really. Or, we’re trying.”

“They were,” Tornado added; voice robotic and sounding in serval pitches at once. “While they have many customs that the League did not they were still, in essence, a superhero team. Beyond this, the Superboy never showed any dangerous or negative behaviour towards the team mates.”

“I wasn’t going to hurt them,” Conner muttered looking down at his feet. “I don’t hurt people.”

“I know, Conner,” Clark jumped in.

Without looking up. “Then why do they have to report me? That’s what they’re really in trouble for, isn’t it? You already punished Bart and Tim for skipping school and stuff, you guys wouldn’t assemble just because we stole some stuff…”

“Scavenged,” Bart insisted.

“…you’re angry they didn’t take me to you first.” Bitterly. “I’m not one of the bad guys.”

Clark. “We didn’t know th—”

“Did you have to be reported before you became a hero?” He interrupted. “Before you formed the Justice League? Just because you got powers?”

The silence that followed was sharp and inexplicably dangerous.

“Things were different back then,” one of the Green Lanterns – black without a mask – said slowly but firmly. “But we have rules now, Superboy, and everyone is safer because of it. This business is one where teenagers can work in and have help to grow up to one day be independent heroes.
Perhaps even part of the League.”

Conner frowned at the injustice of it, hugged his jacket around himself.

“Superboy can be forgiven for his involvement in this,” the Lantern continued. “He was unaware and, thankfully, ultimately a positive force. You three have mentors, packs, families, and have been doing this long enough to know there is responsibility that comes with being a superhero; with wearing those symbols. You can’t commit crimes, no matter how minor, and you can’t endanger the lives of the people by releasing and leaving an unknown meta.”

“I was fine,” Conner muttered miserably; sullenly.

“As for you, Tornado,” Wonder Woman continued. “I would like to know your reasons why. Why did you stay with these children and not return to the League? Why didn’t you report them?”

“In them I was hoping to regain a piece of humanity, of reason,” the robot said easily. “They are all good people.”

“Whether or not they are good people is not being called into question here,” the Lantern insisted.

“Except for me,” Conner added bitterly.

“Hey, Jay-Leaguers,” Bart began again. “So, apart from my bro boy Supes here we were all about to join the Titans anyway.”

“You may have been about to join the Titans,” Flash told him.

Surprised. “But, Wally said I could.”

“Wally and I were in disagreement on that.”

Hurt. “Why? I’m way faster than him and I did all the—”
Exhausted. “We’re not talking about this right now, Bart. The fact is you didn’t join the Titans and now you’ve proven why that would have been a bad idea.”

“You skipped school,” Flash interrupted him, “by your own account convinced Robin to do the same, and formed a team with two super powered alphas; one you found in the lab of an unknown super villain.”

“I’m. Not. A. Villain.” Conner growled; still not looking up from his feet.

“I didn’t say you were, Superboy,” Flash amended quickly.

“It was my choice to skip school,” Tim protested at the same time.

“As if you never skipped school, Barry,” the masked Green Lantern muttered.

“Will you guys stop undermining me here?” the man called out.

“Stop saying stuff that isn’t agreed upon then,” Arrow rebuffed.

Flash’s hands snapped into fists in a blur or motion. “Bart’s my grandson, our sole pack omega, and he’s fifteen, goddamn it. I’m not going by blasted League procedure here. There are two super powered alphas here!”

“Is that bad?” Captain Marvel spoke up for the first time; voice tight and nervous. “Like, I thought it was okay to be a superhero omega now.”

“It is okay. That’s not what I…” Flash stopped, swore, and threw back his hood to run his gloved fingers through his surprisingly blonde hair. “That’s not what I said.” Despite the different colouring Tim could see fleeting bits and pieces of Bart in his features; the distance between his nose and lip, shape of his eyes, and texture if not the colour of his hair.
“They just wanted friends that weren’t older then them.” Marvel continued. “Cuz that’s why you did it right? That ain’t really bad is it? Like, I can kind of get that, you know. The Titans are all older. They should have said something to you guys, and about Superboy, but the team isn’t actually a bad idea is it?”

“How did you know that?” Tim heard himself ask in astonishment. “About the ages thing?”

“I, eh, well, I can kind of understand and,” he blushed, “you called yourselves Young Justice so… yeah.”

“Enough,” Wonder Woman said sharply, looked back at them. “What do you want to happen now? Do you want to go back to working solely with your mentors?”

“No,” Cassie said quickly and blushed. “I mean, I love working with you but…”

“That’s okay, Cassie.”

“I don’t want to be just Robin,” Tim spoke; his voice sounding more confident than he felt. “I don’t want to be just Robin.” A deep breath. “Not anymore.” At Batman. “I know I did before but I was wrong and you were right.” The sentence applied to both Bruce and Dick. “I’m happier with a team; with my own identity; and I can do it. I know we messed up but we’re ready.” Softer. “I want to do this.” It had been a confession he hadn’t yet been able to admit to himself but, in that moment, it rose almost unbidden to his lips. “I don’t want to be Robin anymore.”

No response. He was starting to think it wasn’t Bruce or Dick but a cardboard cut out.

Bart. “Hey, yeah, these guys and I are doing good, man.”

“Good,” Kon echoed pointedly. “All of us.”

“We can not not punish you,” Wonder Woman informed them bluntly. “You have, as sidekicks, failed to respect our insignias and, as young heroes, failed uphold the responsibilities we have intrusted in you.” A pause. “I ask again; what do you want to happen now?”
An uncertain silence.

She sighed. “Very well, please step outside. We need to talk about this.”

They all stood to leave as if on a single spring board.

“Not you, Tornado. Please, I want to talk to you further.”

“As you wish.”

Tim twisted his cape nervously in his fist, looked at the other three teenagers, and back at Batman; still silent by Wonder Woman’s side. Nothing in the man’s posture – whoever he was – invited him to linger longer in the Spartan room.

The hallway beyond was stark, still, and silent. Cassie’s boots echoed on the steel floor and Bart’s unhappy twitching became somehow overtly obvious. Tim didn’t blame him. He had never been to the Watchtower before but first impressions left something to be desired. This place was what he used to imagine the inside of a robot looked like when he was young; clean, practical, and brutally efficient. Mount Justice was simular but the rocky walls, the aging machinery, and the signs of their inhabitation – and Bart’s scavenging – had made it feel closer to home. The batcave, likewise, while functioning still had enough signs of human for them to feel natural within it. The Watchtower, as far as he had seen, did not.

“I seriously did not think that was how this was going to go,” Cassie muttered as she sat down against the far wall. The moment she was on the ground Bart was on her lap. For once the alpha seemed to accept the omegas presence without question, hesitation, or resignation. “I don’t know how I expected it to go, if I’m honest, but it wasn’t like that.”

Conner sat down beside her and Tim paced a few more times before joining them. When he tried to sit to the right of Kon the alpha gently waved him away and pulled him down on his left so he was between him and Cassie.

“Hey,” he complained weakly. “What gives?”
“It’s an alpha thing,” Cassie interrupted Kon before he could say anything. “I can’t really explain it but trust me; it feels so much better when the omegas are in the middle of a group.” A pointed look at Bart.

“Fine,” the speedster rolled his eyes and slumped from her lap down beside Tim so the two of them were pressed almost uncomfortably between the two alphas. “There, you happy? Omegas in the middle.” Despite himself Bart seemed to calm once wedged between them; his nervous unhappy twitches dialled down and features less frozen.

Without a hint of sarcasm. “Real happy.”

“Yeah,” the other alpha agreed. “That’s better.”

Cass and Kon fist bumped over their heads.

“I never heard of that before,” Tim mumbled after a pause. “The omega in the middle thing.” But now that he thought about it he knew Jason did it. Not aggressively, probably not even consciously; but when everyone was together especially out of the territory he would push the pack into a formation where he and Bruce – and Damian – were always boxed in the middle. He supposed it made sense for the rule to expand to children as well as omegas; an ancient instinct to protect the bearers and the next generation.

“It’s just a thing. Even the guys in there are doing it,” Conner said and nodded to the closed door.

Batman was in the middle, Tim realised. That meant Batman was an omega. That meant Batman was Bruce. He digested this information. It wasn’t really surprising and, he reminded himself, it was what he wanted. If it had been Dick he probably would have spoken up about the whole ‘pack’ thing which by the looks of it was something that really didn’t need to be said in front of Bart’s grandfather. But, the other man’s silence through the meeting hadn’t left him with a lot of hope for their ‘verdict’ either.

Time passed.

“Hey,” Conner shifted beside him; the heat of his body and warm weight of his unmasked scent enveloping him in his strong safe presence. “I’m sorry, you know, about your pack and all.”
Cassie and Bart looked at him, and aside.

Tim shrugged. “No big deal,” he said softly.

“Yeah it was. I knew they were your pack and that meant you weren’t going to… I just wanted… it was stupid. I messed up.”

“Me too.” Tim let those words hang for a moment. “Not just with my pack. I was meant to be your guys’ team leader and I really fucked that up.” He raked his hand through his hair. “They’re right, you know. We were stupid. If we didn’t steal any of that stuff, if we didn’t just find and leave Kon, and if we told them we were forming a team it would have been okay.” A slow, steadying, breath. “So stupid. I wrecked Young Justice just because I was angry at my pack. Just because Bruce fired me.”

“Young Justice will never be wrecked,” Cassie corrected him quickly. “It was the best few weeks of my life.”

“I second that,” Bart chimed in.

“Me too,” Conner added and slowly, gently, picked up Tim’s hand in his own; interlaced their fingers.

“It’s the only few weeks of your life,” the speedster reminded him.

A flicker of a smile across the boy’s lips. “That too.”

Tim looked down at their interwoven hands and felt a prickle of a blush began to creep across his cheeks accompanied with a nervous knotting flutter in his stomach. The same feeling that had sprung to life waking up under the weight of the other boy’s body, sitting across the room from him in the manor, and kissing him on the edge of the school track. But, in the cold empty corridor, the comfort he drew from the connection was worth any fleeting embarrassment and uncertainty.

Kon’s smile softened and spread as Tim squeezed his hand in return.
“And,” Bart lifted a finger pointedly. “I just wanted to say, I seriously don’t get this ‘stealing’ business. Like, what is with you twenty firsters? You have to own everything you touch. If you’re not using something why would it still be yours? You don’t need it. That guy might need it. One plus one equals two, right? It’s not like I took anything that people were selling, or using, or nothing. Why is this even a thing?”

“You picked the century.” Cassie told him, unsympathetic. “Got to roll with it.”

“Yeah,” he wrinkled his nose, “I picked the ‘golden age’ of omega rights and my grandpa is still more angry that I ran away to hang out with alphas than skipped school or ‘stole’ anything.”

“Golden age of omega rights?” Tim muttered in surprise.

Bart grinned. “Whoops. Spoilers. But, yeah, totally. I arrived the day omega inheritance exclusion ended and it’ll only be a few years before omegas are fully integrated into and given equal opportunity in the military; in case you’re looking for a career change. Plus, as far as I could tell, this was before the… well, before everything started to mode, you know?”

Uncertainly. “Not really.”

“The way I figure,” Bart continued, unfazed. “No matter what things would be better for me here. Even if you guys have no concept of sharing, scavenging, or the idea of on a needs basis.” A pointed pause. “Then,” the omega continued, “you now, if I saw something being all super with the supers maybe I could even change history. Like, fix stuff.”

Conner frowned. His hand tightened around Tim’s. “Fix what stuff?”

Bart shook his head. “Bunch of stuff, man. Whole bunch of stuff.”

Tim knew that tone of voice. He had learnt to recognise it in his years living in the manor. Had heard it a lot over the past few years. It was the simple, reserved, sound people made that invited no more questions. He never thought he would ever hear it from Bart.

It felt like an age before the door opened and they were asked to re-enter the room. When they sat down Batman – Bruce – spoke for the first time. Five words that hit him like fists to the gut.
“We are ending Young Justice.”

Chapter End Notes

I can not begin to express how much your comments have meant to me so far. I just wanted to take the chance to tell you all, yet again, how amazing it is to hear from you all and discuss this story. Every time I've been feeling unsure or unmotivated you guys have sprung in to pick me up. Thank you so much for sharing this world with me.

As always: you are awesome. <3
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Putting his costume back on felt exactly like it should; like falling back into the arms of a lover; like submerging into the safety of a second skin; like sinking into the shadows until only the barest hint of him was detectable to the outside world. It felt like a suit of armour that would encase and protect him not just from any physical blows but from exhibiting any weakness against prying eyes. Because, with the armour came the superego; and Batman had no weakness.

He used that knowledge to steady him and drive himself forward as he swept back into the Watchtower after his weeks of absence, ignored the interested eyes of the League members he passed on route, and settled himself among the panel of selected members and mentors that would decide the fate of Tim’s budding superhero team. The rest of the assembled heroes looked up as he entered. Diana smiled and Clark looked visibly relieved to have an excuse to untangle himself from Arrow’s conversation and take his seat. The rest of them took that as an invitation and quickly picked their places; leaving one chair open for him. In the middle. Typical. But sitting in a line like this it afforded him a place of power so he didn’t complain. Also the familiar behaviour helped crush the lingering knots in his gut as he thought not just about facing down the teens but the confession that would have to come afterwards; his long delayed admittance to the League of his pregnancy.

The members of Young Justice arrived shortly after and the verdict twenty minutes after that. He delivered the news when no one else seemed willing to do so – we are ending Young Justice – and went on to explain the reasoning, restrictions, and allowances they were giving them.

“You’re integrating us into the Titans?” Cassie said, stunned.

“If you’re going to be working as a team you will be doing it on League terms,” he told them. His voice was Batman’s; low, throaty, and cold. The character he needed to be in that moment. Just to give him the extra strength he needed.

“With supervision,” Barry added stiffly, “and after three months suspension,” a look at Bart, “and only after you’ve proven you can be trusted.”

The teenage speedster squirmed in his seat. “But, hey man, us as Titans?”

“You lead us to believe your only objection to the Titans was the lack of members your own age.” Bruce growled. “If you all are integrated at once as a younger division of the team that will rectify
that issue, allow you to still work under adult authority, and learn from the other Titan members. You will be safe, supervised, and supported.”

“After your three month suspension,” Barry reminded them angrily. “And only if you prove yourself trustworthy. That means no more skipping school, no more running away, and no more stealing.” His gaze fell directly on the young omega.

“What about me?” Conner muttered; all the hostility gone from his voice in the wake of the verdict to be replaced with open, strained, hope.

Clark jumped in. “I’m guessing you’re not going to want to join the Titans until the others can?”

A small nod of agreement.

“Then we’re moving you to Smallville to undergo some power testing and training as well as enrolling you into the high school. I’ll be spending time with you there.”

“You can stay in the manor when you don’t have school,” Bruce added and Clark smiled thankfully.

No one in the Justice League had suggested anything better and despite protests from Barry, Oliver, and Billy they had concluded integrating the teenage team into the existing teenager team was the best way to move forward. Young Justice had proved they were skilled fighters if not responsible enough to operate entirely alone. It wasn’t surprising. The Titans had never been an entirely independent team and in the early days the League had suffered for not having relationships with other groups and authorities. Nothing could exist entirely alone.

The teenagers filed out of the room and the League slowly stood, started talking, and peeling off pieces of their costumes. Hal dragged his chair beside Bruce, ignoring the dark look he sent him, and slumped down beside him.

“Man, you’re cold as ice. I don’t think I could do it. This whole parent gig, I mean. What’s the kid’s name?”

Bruce waited a little too long before replying; thinking, in a flush of sickening shock, that Hal was referring to his pregnancy. “What kid?” He rasped.
“Your kid.”

Bruce stared at him.

“Robin,” Hal specified. “Or is it Red Robin now?”

“Tim,” he answered. Thankful.

“He’s your second sidekick?”

“Fourth.”

“Sh—Wait, does that mean that one’s your son? The one that was in the news?”

“No, my son is the fifth.”

“Jeez, man.” He shook his head. “I’m telling you; I couldn’t do it. Mentor. Parent.” A pause. “This your trouble maker then? The hard one?”

He thought of Dick and Barbara sneaking out to nightclubs and waking up in the same room, Jason smoking in a Robin costume he hadn’t quite grown into, and Damian locking Alfred in the storage rooms only to self righteously attack the hedges with his sword when told not to. “No.”

Hal frowned. “Oh.”

Barry appeared beside them in a blur of movement. “I can’t promise Bart will be okay to join the Titans in three months,” he told Bruce bitterly. “He still has no damn self preservation instinct when it comes to this kind of thing and can’t do what he’s bloody well told.”

“He’ll be fine!” Arrow called. “Did you see that news footage? He’s fucking fast, maybe as fast as you, and knows how to use his speed. Like, when he jumped out at that bystander…”
“I don’t give a damn,” Barry growled. “He’s an omega, we don’t have any pack alphas to protect him, and he has absolutely no bloody clue what this century is like. And don’t start,” he snapped as Hal opened his mouth to protest. “Not all omegas are bloody Batman.”

He vanished in a whoosh of air.

Bruce stared at the empty spot beside him for a moment and let the cowl cover him. He was Batman. He was stronger than his caste. He had to be. Always had to be. Otherwise he would stop being that exception; stop being something other than the hordes of omegas that were so weak they needed alphas to protect them.

“Don’t mind him, Bruce,” Oliver approached. “He’s still the new grandpa figuring stuff out.”

Behind him Billy fidgeted unhappily with his cape.

“Hey,” he archer continued, “I haven’t seen you in a while and I noticed you were off the call list but still on for consultations and meetings. Did you break an arm or something?”

“You checked for me on the call list?” Bruce rumbled.

“I… I just noticed. But, yeah, you’ve not been at anything League for the last couple of months and I thought with the way they were speaking in the freak beat it sounds like someone else might have been covering you. Batman’s been less scary but Robin’s been more. I figured you must need to be patched up again. Feeling better?”

“The freak beat?” Hal lifted an eyebrow; the motion almost lost behind his mask.

“I—eh—mean Gotham criminals,” Oliver corrected himself. “You know; the ones that end up going out of the city but keep connections and only hang out with other Gothamites. Like they’re Joker fans but don’t like to live anywhere the Joker might actually get them.” A meaningful look. “Yeah, those guys.”

Bruce looked for Clark, caught himself, and deliberately turned his gaze toward the floor. He didn’t need his alpha for this. Clark had already helped him too much over the last week. He had stood by
him when his pack had fallen to pieces, turned him back around when he tried to leave, and never once doubted his ability to lead. It was instinct – Kryptonians answering unquestioningly to their ‘lord’ omega – but that unquestioning, loving, support had been enough to pull himself together, continue trying to be the person his pack needed, and suit up to come and face the League; even if it still felt like a fragile façade. Because, at the back of his mind, he still couldn’t shake the understanding that for his pack to fall apart so completely just because of his pregnancy – just when he lost his physical dominance – he can’t have been the kind of leader they needed. The kind of leader his father was. The kind of leader an alph—couldn’t think that. That was just what everyone said. Alpha the leader, omega the breeder. It wasn’t true. He wouldn’t let it be. He would do both. He would bear a child and lead a pack and somehow that would prove… prove to the world, to Joe Chill, and to himself he wasn’t weak because he was an omega.

“Which is it?” Oliver pushed. “Leg? Arm? Or something a bit more close to home? I cracked my skull, broke my collarbone, crushed an ankle, bruised my pelvis, and shattered two ribs in the same night one time.”

Hal snorted. “How did you do that? Shoot yourself with that dumb boxing glove arrow?”

“Hey, what did that arrow ever do to you? And, actually, it was—”

“I’m pregnant,” Bruce muttered.

Beat.

Hal burst out laughing and punched him playfully in the shoulder. “That’s why I love you Bats! You’re cold as ice but you still know how to crack a joke.”

Oliver stared at him, a flicker of an uncertain smile moving on and off his lips, and eyes dancing towards Clark who was in the middle of an animated conversation with Diana and Tornado. Billy’s head had snapped around as if on a wire; eyes wide and mouth hanging half open. He stood, frozen, halfway to the door.

“Seriously?” The Captain called.

“Nah, Bill,” Hal waved his hand. “We’re just kidding around.” He turned back to Bruce. “So what would this be?” He joked. “Number five? Six? Ten?” A low laugh. “You’ll make your omega quota at this rate. Who’s the sire? Is it one of those alpha supermodels I always see you with whenever I go
online?” A heavy wink. “That’s what they always say about you, you know; Bruce Wayne’s always knocked up with some porn star’s love child.”

Oliver was looking at him with unsettling intensity.

“It’s Clark.”

Hal’s smile grew uncertain and Oliver shot the alien a quick look as he turned around, hearing his name. “Bruce?”

“Okay,” the Lantern threw up his hands. “You’ve got me going now. How did this happen? Sex Pollen? Pink kryptonite? An unexpected heat induced by curious aliens?”

“He’s my mate.”

“He’s your…” a nervous, laugh. “Like, seriously?” Voiced laced with slowly failing disbelief. “Since when?”

“Four years ago,” Oliver muttered.


“But, he’s been with you for your heats since the Watchtower redesign.” Oliver protested.

An awkward silence.

“Bruce?” Clark said again. “What’s going on?”

“How do you know that?” Bruce growled.

Hal’s smile dropped like a stone. “You’re not kidding, are you?”
“I…” Oliver seemed to realise he had revealed too much. “I just… I was looking out for you, you know. I mean, you had just come out to us as an omega, there was all that stuff with the press, and then Superman started… look, I know you two clearly care about each other I just wanted to… in case something went down I wanted to know so I could be there for you.”

“For me?” Bruce snarled. “What gives you the fucking right, Queen?”

“I…” the archer slunk back a step. “Sorry, man. It’s just; we’re a team but that shouldn’t stop us looking out for each other, right?”

He was on his feet without remembering standing. “Then why the hell weren’t you looking out for Clark, huh?” He stepped after him. “He’s part of your team. Why was I the one you would ‘be there’ for?”

“Hey, Bats, it wasn’t like that.”

“Then what the hell was it like?!”

“Well, you’re the only…”

“Either you were waiting you turn, alpha,” he said the man’s caste like an insult, “or you were protecting the sole omega.”

“Hey,” Hal jumped between them. “This is just a misunderstanding, guys. Ollie didn’t mean anything by it, Bruce. He was just looking out for you because—eh—it was a stressful time for you. That’s all.”

Barry was beside him in a second. “What’s happening? I heard voices. Are y’all okay?” A keen look at Hal standing between Bruce and Oliver. “You two aren’t about to fight are you?”

“No, we’re fine,” Hal said as if the words would make is so. “It’s just, well, Bruce sprung something on us and it’s surprised us.”
“I’m pregnant,” Bruce said again before the man could question him. His voice sounded hollow and dry to his own ears. “I won’t be on call for the next seven and a half months. I will be available for consultation and investigation. Contact through the regular channels.”

“Or Superman,” Billy pipped in helpfully.

Oliver flinched, Clark blushed, and Barry’s eyes widened.

“You… and him?” He said in disbelief. “You two are mates? You’re bearing a Kryptonian? What if it heat visions you?”

“Half human,” Bruce muttered.

“I figured you had a mate but I…”

“Seriously?” Hal looked at Barry. “At least you figured that much. I laughed when he told me he was pregnant, dude. Laughed.”

“Men,” Diana shook her head. “No matter your caste you are blind. Their relationship has been clear for several years now.” A pointed look around the room of disbelieving faces. She rolled her eyes. “If superman’s bimonthly unavailability didn’t give it away, they usually arrive together, leave together, train together, fight together, intrude the medical wing whether one or the other is injured, sit together when they eat, visit each other on monitor duty, and always look up when the other’s name is called.”

The League took a moment to consider this.

“It wouldn’t,” Billy interrupted, looking terrified. “It wouldn’t really heat vision you, would it?”

“I’ll be fine.”
“But you said Superboy was half human and he can heat vision. And what about being super strong?”

“Superboy was enhanced,” Bruce snarled. “Designed. I’ll be fine.”

“But…” Billy protested.

“Foetuses are connected to their bearers in ways we do not understand,” Diana told them sagely. “I have super strength and my mother does not yet, I am told, I kicked far gentler than most.”

The boy turned hero didn’t look convinced and, worrying, neither did Clark. The alpha looked pale as his gaze struck Bruce, trailed down to his abdomen, and shot back up to his face.

Bruce had requested Captain Marvel to be on the panel because – unknown to the rest of the League – he was closer in age to the teenagers than anyone else they had on their team; would be turning fifteen at the end of the year. Still hadn’t presented. When Bruce had found out he had reconsidered the man’s position on the team but decided, over the years, he had proved himself more than worthy to wear the cape and kept his secret. Still, occasionally his boyish innocence left him open to ask questions – and push a point – the others would ignore or overlook.

“But, will you really be okay?” He asked, stepping closer. “Really? How do you know?”

“Back off,” he snarled, startling the other hero back a couple of steps. “This is my business.”

“But…”

“Stay out of it, boy.”

Billy opened his mouth to protest further, realised what he had said, and stared at him with wide eyes and ashen cheeks. It was the first time he ever hinted to the other hero he knew his origins; delivered now as a simple threat.

“O-okay.”
The rest of the League looked on; Clark with newfound worry, Hal like he was still working through his shock, Barry like he wanted to step towards him but wasn’t sure how, Diana with simple acceptance, and Oliver reserved and unquestioningly unhappy. John had left after the meeting, Billy’s eyes were on his boots, and Tornado stood in the corner with all the interest in proceedings as could be expected from a machine.

Bruce hated it. Hated being looked at like that. Hated being judged, re-evaluated, and summed up not by the cowl and what that meant but by the being between his hips. It was a necessary trial, he reminded himself, and one that wouldn’t – couldn’t – remove Batman’s power. Because, unlike his pack, he had never had any kind of physical authority over the League. Most of them, by value of their powers, were far stronger than him. Beyond that, as a team, they functioned differently than a pack and there was no single leader. The kind of command he had here was different and, even if they did cast him aside, even if they did decide he was just an omega – a breeder – that didn’t belong; he could live with that. It would hurt but he could survive. The League was important but they weren’t part of him the way his pack was. A betrayal from them wouldn’t hurt the way theirs had hurt.

“Inform the rest of the League,” he tried to wrangle control of the conversation back. “I will also be able to perform monitor duty but only while I’m still not showing; another month or so; I don’t wish to reveal Batman’s caste to newer League members. Refrain from contacting me unless it’s League business.” Another look at Clark and Billy. “I’m fine.”

“Hey,” Oliver looked over Hal’s shoulder. “You know I didn’t mean anything by…”

He silenced him with a look, turned on his heel, and left; cape hugged tight around his shoulders. He guessed they must have turned their voices onto Clark because the other man didn’t catch up to him until he was powering up the zeta tubes.

“Seven and a half months?” He began. “You’re planning on spending, what, a week with your child before volunteering for deep space missions?”

He sent him a withering look through the cowl. “Two,” he corrected him.

“ Heck, Bruce I thought… I’ve requested months off from League activities.”

“Good. Then I don’t have to.”
“You will have just given birth.”

“I have devised a plan.”

Wearily. “Of course you have.”

“Two weeks should be more than I need to return to passable fighting condition,” he snarled. “Don’t try to fucking guilt me into giving you more.”

“Giving me?” Clark stared at him. “I thought this was something you wanted.”

“I do.”

A long look. “You know,” Clark began again, voice losing all it’s power. “If it’s not… If you want…”

“Don’t,” he spun towards him. “Don’t you dare suggest a fucking abortion.” If you want. “Not in those words. Not the words I used to fucking proposition this. Not in the words you agreed to it. Those words are meant to be good. They’re meant to be special. Don’t you fucking dare make them ugly. Don’t you fucking dare.”

“You’re not…” the alpha searched for a word. “Happy. You’ve not been okay since…”

“I’m fine!” He yelled. “You’re only doing this now because Barry made you think it’s going to kill me the second it grows legs to kick.” A dark look. “I’m not letting you kill my baby, not in the words you used to bring her to life, not here, not because of this. I’m not having a fucking abortion!”

Clark stared at him. “Her?”

“I…” he balled his hands into fists, “I mean it.” He’d called it a baby too. Not a fetus. It wasn’t a baby yet. It didn’t have a sex yet. It was a fetus. He was being emotional. Weak. He was being omega.
“Bruce,” Clark tried to touch him. He slapped the hand away.

“Fuck off.”

“Look, I… I don’t want you to have an abortion.” The man said; voice shaking. “I’m just worried about you. You’ve not been okay these last few weeks; I don’t care what you say. I can tell. And if what Barry said is…”

“Goddamn it, Clark, you were an adult before you flew and a teenager before you could use heat vision.” He began checking points off on his fingers. “You told me you couldn’t outrun a train until you were seven and only picked up cars at five. Super hearing and sight didn’t start to kick in until you were four. Your spaceship was designed to absorb all impact of the crash yet from the pictures I have see you had bruises anyway and Martha told me you struggled to breathe as a newborn. Since I’ve known you you’ve grown stronger.” He let the other man absorb that information. “It won’t get enough solar radiation through my skin or placenta to hurt me; even if it could it’s only half kryptonian and it’s only nine months.”

“Conner…”

“Was designed to be a weapon and force fed solar radiation! I know what I’m doing!” Through gritted teeth. “I’m not your stupid hormonal bitch that begs brainlessly to be bred. I think.”

“Okay, I should have known you would have figured it out. Sorry. But, are you okay?”

A deep, broken, breath. “I’m fine.”

A flat look. “Are you?” Clark asked earnestly.

“I…” his voice failed him. “Fuck Clark I…”

The alpha didn’t say anything. Didn’t step forward. Just opened his arms in silent invitation.
“I don’t need…” he tried. “I don’t…”

“Okay.” Clark’s arms settled back by his side. “I just want to say I’m here to help you if you need it.”

“Because I’m an omega?” He hissed. “I need your protection?”

Clark’s brow pleated. “No.”

A weighted silence.

“Why do you always do that?” Clark muttered miserably. “You always make something about caste when it isn’t.”

Bruce hugged his cape around himself. Didn’t say anything.

“I know I’m probably way off base here, and you don’t have to answer, but did an alpha hurt you? Really hurt you?” His tone of voice left no room for misinterpreting exactly what he meant by those words.

“You’d like that wouldn’t you?” Bruce snapped; not believing what he was saying but grasping at the words he knew could hurt the other man. “That’s why you insisted what happened between me and Talia must have been rape. If I’m nice and damaged you can write off everything I say as the poor, hurt, omega. If someone hurt me that means you swooped in and saved me. Oh, that’ll make you feel fucking good wouldn’t it?”

“No! No, it’s not like that.”

“No one has raped me,” he answered. “People have tried but, I’m sorry, you don’t get to—”

“Bruce!” Clark stared at him. “Don’t…”

The transporter was online. It had been active and waiting for a while now. He stared at the waiting
machine and felt a toxic trickle of guilt run down his spine. Clark was just trying to help. He was his mate, his child’s sire, and his instincts meant that he wouldn’t look at him like the others would. Strong, safe, alpha. He’d proved that. Again and again and again.

“It’s not,” he told the other man, voice horse. “It’s not about rape. It’s not that. It’s about…” he closed his eyes, “being weak, Clark. Omegas are weak. I fought so hard to be different but I’m still... I’m not strong enough to be who I need to be to stop the alphas leaving, not strong enough for my pack, not strong enough for some mugger to shoot in some stupid alleyway.”

A cavernous silence.

Clark stared at him; face stricken and eyes shining with shocked understanding.

“I don’t hate alphas, not really.” A shaky breath. “I hate omegas.” He stepped onto the teleporter pad. “Alphas just remind me that I’m still just another omega.” *Still weak.*

He hadn’t meant to say all that. Hadn’t even known he had all that to say.

“Bru—” Clark began.

He activated the teleporter and watched the Watchtower hanger dissolve to be replaced by the square concrete walls of the safe house on the edge of Gotham. The batmobile waited for him; a winged black beautiful beast of a car. Massive all terrain tyres, sleek aerodynamic body, and a perfectly weighted engine. A vehicle that could only belong to Batman.

Batman was strong. People feared, shot at, Batman. Batman would never be left alone and alive in an alleyway. But once he removed Batman he would be back to where he was before; the omega trying to be an alpha and lead a pack, trying to be a beta and pull the League together, and finally being an omega and breeding. It didn’t escape his notice that his pregnancy was the only thing he was doing that was going well; the only thing he was succeeding at. Despite his age, Clark’s biology, and the years abusing suppressants he got pregnant first try, bore without complication, and even his morning sickness had subsided for the time being.

He hated himself for it but – just then – it seemed like a cruel sadistic joke.

The teleporter activated again and Clark appeared beside him; ignoring the previous plan they had
for him to fly down and patrol Metropolis. The city was starting to miss his presence.

“What are you doing?” He muttered wearily.

The man blushed. “I… I thought you…” a breath. “You said you weren’t, um, who you need to be to stop alphas leaving. I just wanted you to know you’re more than enough for me; so much more.”

He didn’t bother trying to tell the man he had been talking about his parents and Jason. Let the alien take his hand and drew some small about of recurrence from it. Clark thought he was strong. What Clark didn’t know was how much strength Bruce drew from him; how much of what he saw was just his own character reflected back at himself; his own inherit goodness. But – with Clark – it didn’t matter because with him he was better. Clark picked him up and held him up in ways he didn’t think the man could possibly understand and sometimes – just sometimes – it felt like he did the same for Clark.

And sometimes - just sometimes - being strong for this man was enough.

Chapter End Notes

Did you guys notice my use of "y'all" in Barry's dialogue? It took hours of careful planning, research, and typing but I did it. I can American! :D
I love you.

Those three words swam through his head again and again like a toy train travelling around a circular track; dragging behind it the memory of how Jason had looked as he uttered them – angry, alone, hurt – and his own pathetic response. What? What? He, Dick Grayson, had said ‘what’ and not any of the things he should have said. Not any of the things that have been sitting unspoken and heavy in the bottom of his lungs of years. I love you too. I’ve always loved you. You’re the most amazing arsehole I ever met. I’m sorry I didn’t see. I’m sorry I hurt you. I’m so sorry…

How could he be so stupid? How could he have forgotten, in that moment, what to say? How could he have just sat there and let him go? In his mind’s eye Jason stood back on that rundown road; hurting, and looking right at him as he spoke. I love you I love you I love you love you love you love… The words were like bleach on his brain; clearing it off all the muddied feelings and leaving everything stark and painfully clear. Jason hadn’t wanted to sleep with an omega, he refused to even kiss one, and was aggressive when the man approached him. God, how had he misread him so badly? He knew Jason. He’d known Jason most of his life. Jason said what he couldn’t say with words in body language, tone, and a million other ways. Reflecting back he couldn’t think of a single time Jason had showed his approval of the idea. He’d said he wanted this, asked for it, but never told him it was okay in the language that really mattered with him. He had only been there because he thought that was what Dick wanted and when the man gave him a chance to fix everything, to reel back the disaster their relationship had become, he had let him walk away thinking he hated him. All because he hadn’t said what he needed to say when he had the chance.

I love you.

"Why?"

"I need to know where he is," Dick pleaded. "Come on."

Suspiciously. “Why don’t you know?”

“I… it’s a long story, Timmy, can you please just tell me where he is?”

The young omega eyed him carefully. “Have you two had a fight?”
After Jason had left that night Dick had passed on the suppressants in a haze of twisted emotion and desperately searched the streets for hours looking for the other man. When he finally returned defeated to the manor he found the alpha in question asleep on top of Bruce beside Damian who had also somehow wiggled onto the omega’s crowded lap. Despite Bruce’s pleading look and obviously barely swallowed discomfort he couldn’t bring himself to wake the alpha or the boy beside him. In sleep the angry set of Jason’s face softened to become boyish, beautiful, and oddly sad. His cheeks were pale and there was blood on his knuckles.

After that the man had disappeared – no doubt cycling through more safe houses – but this time Dick wasn’t made privy to the elusive addresses. He had waited for him; sure he would have to come back to the manor soon. He hadn’t. At least, not that Dick had seen. It had been eleven days and it was killing him; every hour he went without fixing what he had broken between him and the man he loved. The man who loved him.

Wearily. “Are you going to give me the address or not?”

“Depends…” Tim said slowly.

Dick lifted his eyebrows.

“Well,” nervously, “he’s like my big brother. If he doesn’t want to see you I don’t know if I should tell you where he is. He’s still kind of angry about Young Justice and Kon being allowed to visit.”

Dick digested this information. “It wasn’t much of a visit though, was it,” he said knowingly. When the young alpha had arrived Bruce had made sure either one of the other was bunkered down with homework or training during almost the entire stay. “Why don’t you go to Smallville this weekend?” He suggested lightly, watching Tim’s eyes light on him. “I bet Clark will let you if I tell him. I could pull some strings and see if Bart and Cassie could come as well.”

Hopefully. “You could?”

It was a dirty move. “Yeah, Timmy, no problem. But, about this address, are you sure you can’t…?”

“As long as you don’t tell him it was from me,” the boy cautioned.

“I won’t.”
“And could you message Wally now? Just so you don’t forget?”

He frowned. “Sure.”

For a fleeting moment Tim looked savagely proud of himself; like he was the one manipulating and not the one being manipulated. As quickly as that look appeared it was gone and the boy was left blinking up Dick with wide innocent eyes. The beta dismissed the idea. Despite everything that had happened recently Tim remained the good kid; open, honest, and smart enough to solve any case but not particularly wise when it came to people.

Wally texted back with inhuman speed.

_I think the little guy’s in lockdown for a while yet, bro. Barry would kill me if I let him run off right now. Tell Tim I’m sorry._

It didn’t matter. The sixteen year old had already eagerly rattled off the suburb, street, building, and apartment where Jason was staying.

It wasn't hard to find.

He entered through a back window, sat on the tattered sofa he found in the middle of the otherwise empty living space, and propped a bottle of scotch he had picked up on the way between his knees as he waited. He had come over after a token patrol Damian wouldn’t let him skip and still wore Batman’s armour; the belt heavy on his hips and cowl empty behind his neck.

He had been wearing it for almost two months now but it still felt keenly wrong resting on his shoulders. That feeling intensified when he saw the symbol splashed across his chest and the stern shape of the cowl. He felt like a fraud, a cheap copy cat, or a boy playing at grown up; wearing an icon he never fully understood or wanted. Masquerading a man he could never be. Grimly - guilty - he hoped Bruce would take the costume back soon after the baby was born. This - darkness, vengeance, fear - was never who he was.

The balcony door opened and Jason walked in, red helmet under his arm, and hair stuck to his brow with sweat. He was fumbling with a gun, a packet of bullets between his teeth, and frown bleating his brow. He froze when he saw Dick.
“Hey…” The beta began. His stomach was a riddle of knots and butterflies. “I, um, bought something to drink.”

The man spat the bullets onto the ground and dropped his helmet with a loud clunk onto the floorboards. Bitterly. “What are you doing here?”

“I,” he shifted on the cushion, not sure if he should stand, “well, I wanted to see you and realised we’ve been together for almost three years now and we’ve never really drunk together before.”

Jason slowly put the gun back in its holster and stepped forward; eyes sinking suspiciously to the alcohol held upright between Dick’s knees.

“There is, um,” Dick continued awkwardly, “actually heaps we haven’t really done. Heaps we haven’t talked about. I figured it would be good to start with this, get drunk together, and then we can talk about what else we should do.” A deep breath. “And, um, what else we should talk about.”

Jason made no move to approach further. “Like what?” He growled. His eyes were like oceans; dark, deep, and dangerous. But they were also looking right at him. Fixed onto him with an intensity he used to love, then had come to expect, and finally overlook. The intoxicating attention of this man. Locked onto him for years now.

“I… I just think we should talk. Like, about what happened the other week.”

Jason’s features hardened and set. “You come in here, dressed like that, to try and make me go back to your bitch’s house,” he assessed; voice bleak and barren.

“No! Jay, no I’m not going to ask you to go back there.”

“No, Jay.”

“Then what the hell is this about?” The alpha snarled. “You said you wouldn’t fuck me around any more if I fucked some of my alpha off. I could be like a low level; like Roy fucking Harper. You always did like that prick better than me. Bet he would have been able to do it; fuck your stupid bitch.”
Through tight lips. "You told me you hated me. I get it. I’m leaving you the fuck alone."

Quickly. “I don’t want you to leave me alone.”

“Yeah? Well I can’t give you anything else you want so I suppose this ain’t that surprising either.”

“Please,” he tried. “I know I fucked up. I know I pushed you into a place you didn’t want to be. I’m sorry. I…” he swallowed. “I just wanted there to be a magic way out, you know? A way I could just make you happy and then… that would be it. No more… whatever the shit is we always get stuck doing. No more hurting each other.”

Jason didn’t say anything.

“Because I… I…” he stopped, licked his lips, and tried again. “I lo—”

“No you don’t,” Jason interrupted him.

He stared hopelessly up at him. “I-I do, Jay.”

“Bullshit.” He grabbed the bottle from him, snapped the cap open, and took a swig. Grimaced and took another. “You’re only saying that because I said it.” Wretchedly. “You hate me. You said so.”

“I… I know I did.”

“You always say that.”

“I know.”

A flicker of bleak black emotion flashed across the alpha’s features. “Fuck off, Dick,” he rasped, turned, and started walking away.
“Hey!” He scrambled to his feet and grabbed Jason’s arm, stopping him. “Please, just talk to me, okay?”

“I couldn’t do it, okay?” the alpha snarled. “I couldn’t fuck your little omega. I’m never going to be anything but a stupid fucking high level dog. I tried.” He shrugged off his hand. “Just fuck off already.”

“No. No I’m not leaving.”

A horse laugh. “You always leave.”

“Fucking hell, Jason, I love you.”

Jason shoved him. Hard. “Don’t lie to me!”

He stumbled back until his knee knocked against the side of the sofa. “Ah—I’m not lying you arsehole! What the hell do you want me to tell you? I’ve loved you since you tied me up and put me in the back of the batmobile!” He inhaled, heaved as a strong sickeningly familiar smell hit him, and looked down at the batsuit where Jason had touched him. There was blood on it. The scent of it metallic, ugly, and strong enough that he couldn’t believe he hadn’t smelt it until now. “Jay?” He rasped, looked up, and saw the red stain across the other man’s left forearm and over his hand.

“It’s not mine,” the alpha told him; voice low.

A different kind of nausea assaulted him. “What did you do?”

“Nothing,” he growled.

“God Jay, how could you? I thought you knew this. We f-fucking talked about this! You can’t just kil—”

“I didn’t do anything!” The man pulled his knife from his belt, showed him the clean blade, and
threw it into the floorboards with enough force to drive it into the wood. “You want check my bullets too?” He drew a gun from under his arm, tore open the base, and spilt a stream of ammo onto the floor. “My fucking fingers?” He dropped the gutted weapon and held up his hands. The blood on his left was on his palm but didn’t extend to any of the digits. His right was clean and still clutching the neck of the bottle. It looked like he’d brushed up against someone, or someone had brushed up against him.

Guiltily, Dick realised he had got more blood on him giving people first aid in the past than Jason had on him now.

“I didn’t fucking kill anyone,” the alpha continued; voice so bitter it was toxic. “You know why? Because of you. You’ve fucked me up.”

Dick stared at him. Silent.

“When I first came out of the pit everything was so clear,” he told him. “There were good people and there were bad; bad people hurt and good people didn’t. I killed the bad. Talia lined them up for me, they taught me to kill better, and then I killed them. It was so fucking simple. So easy. I figured I’d just keep killing bad guys until some other bad guy killing bad guys got me.”

“Talia did what?” Dick croaked.

“But now I fucking hesitate!” Jason yelled. “Because of you!”

“Because I told you not to kill,” he concluded slowly.

A hollow laugh. “Because you hurt, you idiot. Bad people hurt, you hurt, but I can’t kill you because you’re good. That doesn’t make sense but it’s true. Killing you would make the world worse; so much worse.” He tipped another portion of scotch down his throat, shuddered, and looked away. “It’s not simple anymore,” he croaked. “Not easy. I can’t see who is good and who is bad. I don’t know. You fucked me up.”

“That’s just the pit wearing off,” Dick heard himself. “You know what it does. It’s madness, man. It removes empathy, it…”

“It wasn’t madness it was order,” Jason said simply. “The world made sense. It was easy.” He
looked at the blood on his arm. “Now bad guys hurt good guys, right beside me, and I just punched him and waited for the cops like… like… like a fucking Robin!”

Dick hesitated and stepped forward. “Did someone…?”

“No one died,” he told him, voice losing all its energy. “Even that fucker that should have died.” Another mouthful. “You’ve fucked me up.”

“Yeah,” Dick said. “I know. I know I did.” He stopped his tentative approach just at arms length away from him. Looked at him for a long time before finally finding his voice. “God, thank you, Jay. I get that I’ve hurt you, and we just hurt each other, but…” his hands were shaking. He knew Jason killed. He knew Jason had killed for him. He had killed in front of him. But it was something he had started to carry like a scar on his relationship; something he believed they would never cure only live around no matter how hypocritical that was, or how much it hurt him. Perhaps that was still the case. Perhaps he was being naive. But he looked down at the fat golden bullets and the polished clean blade protruding from the floor. Unfired. Unused.

His gaze returned to the other man. “There you are,” he whispered.

Jason scowled. “What the fuck does that mean?”

“I thought I’d lost you, Little Wing.”

He opened his mouth to say something, stopped, and stared at him; eyes black. “You haven’t called me that since I was Robin.”

“No, I haven’t,” he agreed; voice wretched and ruined. He thought that part of Jason had been destroyed; either by the Joker, by his death, by the pit, or by any of the hordes of other things he only ever hinted at; never spoke about. All the things Dick never wanted to know; was terrified would destroy him if he did. Maybe, just maybe, the boy he had once known was still there; buried under everything else Jason had become.

God, he wanted to believe that. To reel back who they were, their relationship, to a time where it was simple, strangely explorative, and safe. Back when Jason was his not quite brother who would always frown so much it was visible through his Robin mask. They fought back then, hit each other sometimes, but they never hurt each other. Not really. Not the way they did now.
“I only did that because you stole my grapple gun.”

Dick blinked. “What?”

“Tied you up and put you in the batmobile,” the younger man specified; voice strained. “I only did it because you took my grapple.”

Dick’s lips twiched upward in a hopeless smile “My grapple gun, you mean.”

“It was in my belt,” Jason told him stiffly.

“No it wasn’t; it was in mine. You stole my whole belt.”

“I was Robin,” Jason snapped. “That R means it’s my belt.”

“Well, it was clearly too big for you, I was also Robin, and that grapple gun was defiantly mine. It had the sticker on it I got from the zoo.”

A dark look. “You gave me a black eye when you kicked me,” he said.

He swallowed the old guilt and struck a self righteous pose. “Damn right I did. You tied me up and left me in the batmobile.”

Jason crossed his arms. “It only took you thirty seconds to get out,” he said defensively.

“Twenty,” Dick insisted.

“Nah. I was at the computers by the time you got out. Thirty.”

“Fuck you.”
A long pause. “Is that why you let me tie you up?” The alpha asked; not quite looking at him in the eye. "If you loved me?"

Dick didn’t say anything.

“I was eleven.” Jason pushed. “You were fifteen. You were so much stronger than me, always way better at escaping, and I sucked at tying knots.”

Dick shifted slightly and straightened. “You know,” he muttered. “I felt so bad about giving you that black eye. I didn’t mean to hit you that hard.”

A pause. “I knew it was your belt,” Jason admitted; eyes down.

Dick felt his lips twitch toward a smile; what felt like the first genuine smile he’d worn in months. “Everyone knew it was my belt. It really didn’t fit you, Jay. I wouldn’t have minded except I needed it for the Titans.”

“That’s why I took it.” A reserved look. “You were going to leave again. You always leave.”

Dick’s smile faded. “Says the one that died. You have no idea how much that fucked me up, dude. I…” he hadn’t told Jason this before. Hadn’t even really spoken about it to anyone before. “I was at the Titans Tower at the time,” he forced himself to continue. He didn’t want there to be any secrets between him and Jason. Not anymore. Not if what they were saying meant something more than words. “Bruce tried to contact me ten times but we’d fought about something – something stupid I don’t even remember – so I wasn’t answering. Then I heard this rumour that something had happened to Bruce Wayne’s kid during his travels, the Justice League database said your status was unknown so I hacked it for higher clearance and… man, you have no idea what it was like. When I saw those three fucking words. Robin. Status. Deceased. I didn’t believe it. Not really. Not until I finally picked up Bruce’s fucking call. Even then I had to see your body before I really believed.” He stopped, swallowed, continued. “Then you got back and you were,” he waved a hand towards him. “Not the little kid that left. You were this big, mean, alpha and you only had eyes for our pack omega.”

“I fucked up,” Jason told him.

“And I left.” A pause. “But I came back, Jay.” His voice trembled slightly as he called the other
man’s name. “S-so did you. Now I’m the one that’s fucked up and I totally get if you want to walk out just like I did.” He stared at him. “But I’m not going anywhere. I promise. I want you, Jason. I want us. I... I do love you. So fucking much. And if you want...?” he didn’t know how to finish that sentence. Hoped Jason would know what he meant regardless. "If you want...?"

The alpha looked at him for a long time, studied him, silent. It could have been hours, or seconds, but it felt like an age. A millennia waiting for Jason to say something, to make some move, to either accept or dismiss the ridiculous proposition for more; of a real relationship like the kind they had been flirting with for years. The same disastrous world they had been living with but armed with a simple unshakable knowledge; \textit{he loves me and I love him... and he loves me...}

Slowly, almost shyly, Jason offered him the bottle and the world crashed back into real time; perfect, imperfect, and all he wanted. Dick took the drink, swallowed a mouthful of the burning liquid, and coughed. “Man,” his voice was utterly wrecked, "that’s disgusting. I can’t believe I used to drink this shit when I was a teenager.”

“You need to by the cheap stuff.”

“And that’s better?”

“No. Cheaper.”

A low laugh.

“What...” Jason started, stopped, and started again. "What are we going to do now?”

“I don’t know.” Dick answered honestly. "That’s why I brought this.” He hugged the bottle to his chest. “Because, you know, I’ve never drunk with you before and getting drunk together seemed like a good a place to start as any.”

“Start what?”

He looked at him; met that intense, beautiful, gaze that shine on him like a dark spotlight. “The rest of our lives, I suppose.”
The alpha considered this, took the bottle back, and tipped another mouthful down his throat.

They spend the rest of the night sprawled on the sofa, talking, fighting, and forgiving in a haphazard loop. Learning more about each other in one night than they had in the years since they had first had sex. It wasn’t better, there was no promise to be better, but that didn’t matter. Rather than fixing anything they seemed to have built a bridge over it all and from there nothing seemed quite so hard. Jason was still Jason, and he was still himself, flawed and stupid; but if they loved each other, if they trusted each other, then it would be worth it. It would also, in a strange kind of way, be beautiful. The most beautiful thing he had ever done. Flawed – a childhood image of romance twisted and tortured out of shape – but unquestioningly perfect in its imperfection.

He couldn’t live without Jason. He couldn’t do that again; wouldn’t survive that. He had been willing to give Jason whatever he needed to keep him in his life. He thought that meant giving him an omega. It turned out the equation was far simpler than that.

Jason, in what could only be some cosmic mistake, just wanted him.

The man was on top of him, lips crushing against his, and mouth tasting entirely necessary for survival. God, when had he become so addicted to this man? His alpha hormones flowing like liquid fire between their open mouthed kiss. Hot, earthy, beautiful, deadly, powerful, addictive, intoxicating, perfect, Jason…

“…you,” he gasped as their lips parted. “Love you. I love you.”


A broken laugh. “You’re such a goddamned prince charming, you know that? Really know how to make a guy feel special.”

Fingers groping at the front of the batsuit; hard, greedy, and robbed of their usual targeted dexterity. “Shut up.”

Dick moved to help him, hoisting himself drunkenly upward, and accidentally knocked their heads together. The man pulled back with a hiss of pain, sent him a scathing look, and took one more mouthful of scotch. Threw it across the room to smash against the protruding edge of the kitchen counter.
“H-hey,” Dick was giggling, one hand pressed against his sure to be bruising skull. “I wasn’t finished with that.”

Jason finally managed to get the belt off him and threw it away before it could administer a shock; the belt needed to be removed by someone wearing Batman’s gloves or it locked down and pumped electricity into anyone with a heat signature that held it for five seconds or longer. It took Jason only a moment after that to yank open the front of the hybrid fabric and work it down around Dick’s thighs. Then, as Dick lay there still holding his head trying to swallow his boyish laughter, the alpha did something Jason almost never did. He shuffled back on the sofa, pushed Dick’s hips flat into the lumpy cushions, and leant forward to take him into his mouth.

Jason never performed oral unless prompted and Dick tended not to prompt. It wasn’t strange for an alpha to shy away from that activity and the experience had – in the past – left something to be desired. Dick didn’t mind. He preferred giving over receiving in that department; was addicted to the silent spotlight, loved the excuse to get down on his knees in front of the alpha, and thrilled at the show he could put on for the other man. Drank up every twitch and drip of precome like applause. But, God, Jason – or any other alpha for that matter – had never taken him into his mouth when it was so wet with alpha saliva before. The cavern of his cheek was scorching hot, spit slid slowly down his shaft, and through it all Jason sucked on him almost painfully hard. He arched off the cushions with an embarrassingly high pitched whine; thrashed as the other man shoved him back down, and almost sobbed as more of that saliva ran between his balls; tickling, tortures, and too fucking much.

He cried out as he came, embarrassingly soon, and slicing into the sofa with Batman’s blades still affixed to his forearm. “God, fuck, fucking love you, love fucking you, fucking love you…” and it was better. Better despite them both. Despite no promises for it to be so. The same place he had been for years – the same turbulent relationship – but made beautiful by those three simple words. The words he could see Jason’s lips forming now even if the blood rushing through his ears stopped him from hearing them.

I love you.
Chapter 20

The sofa at Smallville was coloured with faded orange and green stripes, rested between two tiny tables piled high with family pictures, and smelt of the mingled scents of all the people that had sat on it; years of family history ingrained into every coffee stain, stitch, and mismatched patch of fabric. As alienated from the cool dark leather seats scattered throughout the manor as a pedigree hound is from a stray mutt.

Tim lay along it, knees slightly bent to fit his feet between the solid armrests, and fingers plucking nervously at a strained seam of the cushion beneath him. It had been only too easy to get Dick to pull the strings so he could stay here the weekend; Clark had even seemed honestly excited to have company as he flew back to Kansas. The farm hadn’t been what he imagined. Clark and Kon had brought in the harvest and turned over a new field within the hour; literally throwing away the tractor at one point as they bounded, flew, and created craters that were quickly closed with an annoyed moan and a blur of motion. Tim watched sleepily form the shade as Clark kept pulling Kon into the sky where the boy would fly, fall, and fly again; face flushed with concentration, until Martha came out and gave him a list of chores that made Bruce’s training look like a stack of pancakes. He milked cows, fed pigs, groomed horses, mucked out stalls, sorted a fencing shipment, drove a car without a bat brand on it for the first time into town for groceries, and attempted to help Martha make a pie only to be thanked fondly despite the disaster he pulled out of the oven. He cleaned her computer of malware while she set about making a replacement and – in the spur of the moment – moved through the house fixing and moving things until the whole place felt better. By the time the second pie came out of the oven looking cartoonishly perfect Kon was hovering unsteadily by the barn only grabbing Clark’s offered hand once when an unexpected gust of wind hit him.

“Tim! Look! I can fly!”

“You’re floating.”

The young alpha had sent him a hurt pout that changed into a grin as Clark rolled his eyes and said something about bats before midday.

“It’s true!” Tim cried out. “The definition of flight is the movement through air.”

It didn’t matter. The Kryptonians deliberately turned away; apparently fascinated by something impossibly far away in the opposite direction.

Once distracted, Kon’s hovering lost its erratic unstable edge and he seemed to sit in the air with something closer to Clark’s lazy comfort. Still the older alien bore with him a distinctive
weightlessness and effortlessness that Kon seemed to naturally lack. Clark was placing himself in the air; powerful enough to casually move the universe around him at his pleasure. Kon was exerting effort; a muscle held taunt.

Bruce was right; they weren’t the same; Conner had human DNA.

Tim frowned; gaze fixed on the small stitches he was worrying in the couch. It had been a good day. In the afternoon they had swum in the dam, Clark had taught them both some kryptonian, and Martha had made some food he happily ate despite his rolling stomach. Bart and Cassie couldn’t come; Bart was still in trouble and Cassie was studying for an exam, but at least he had been able to spend some time with Kon. The boy had told him how beautiful he smelt before he had even showered, playfully chased and hunted him through the cornfields, and had kissed behind the barn until his head was spinning from the taste of it.

But then Kon had reached down and gently but firmly slipped his palm between Tim’s thighs. The action had been at odds with the boy’s red cheeks and nervous smile; but not the suddenly stronger scent of his alpha pheromones and the sharp sweet smell of Tim’s body’s greedy response. The kiss after that had been open, noisy, and only broke apart when Martha called him from the house to take the dog for a run.

Now he was lying on the sofa, a movie playing on the screen before him, and phone dark beside him. Martha was in bed, Clark had flown back to Gotham for the night *I don’t know if I should be away from Bruce too long right now*, and Kon had been doing something in the kitchen for the last half hour. Bart still hadn’t texted him back.

He needed a second opinion; he needed an omega to tell him… because Bart had done all this before, right? He seemed like he had done it before. He would know. Tim didn’t even know what question he wanted to ask was but Bart, he was sure, would know the answer. Bart probably knew the question too. Bart would be able to tell him.

The phone stayed silent beside him.

Bart had to know. The only other option was Bruce and Bruce would tell him all the biological things he already informed him of when Tim first presented, probably colour it with a cryptic remark, and would also send Clark shooting back across the states fast than a speeding bullet to take him back to Gotham. The man had never been able to hide his distaste for Dick and Jason’s relationship despite giving them the freedom to explore it without harassment. Tim wouldn’t get the same liberty; he was sixteen, Kon was effectively his step brother, and he was the stray kid omega that had never been able to live up to the Olympian standard Bruce set for their shared sexual caste.
His phone lit up and he snatched it before it could vibrate and swiped the screen. A text. From Cassie.

*Why is Conner messaging me in the middle of the night asking about omegas?*

He could practically hear her voice resounding with dry accusation.

The phone buzzed and another message popped up beneath the first.

*Bart and now Conner. Why do none of you guys seem to know what ‘gay’ means?*

Another buzz. Another message. This one finally from Bart.

*What up, bro?*

Tim typed as quickly as he could, deleted everything, and tried again. Sent it before he could read what he had written and change his mind.

As usual the other omega’s response popped up with uncanny speed. *I know this one! When I fell down from Heaven, right?! Because I’m an angel?! Hah! 21sters actually say that? I thought that was made up.* The words were followed by a confusing array of emotes.

*No.* Tim responded. *I mean: did it hurt? The first time?* He hesitated a long time before he added. *Sex?*

Bart sent him a hundred and twelve messages instantly. The number jumped up to five hundred and twenty nine in the following second and was still climbing the next second as Kon walked back into the room. Tim quickly killed his phone as it flashed like a pinball machine and stuffed it between the cushions. Tried to pretend he was just stretching to hide the motion.

“I’m sorry. I was, um, thirsty,” Conner informed him.

“Okay,”
“Is it good?”

Tim stared at him. “What?”

Kon nodded towards the TV.

“Oh… yeah.” He didn’t even know if it was a drama or a comedy.

The boy looked at the sofa. “Can I…?”

Tim swallowed and shifted to the side; giving him room to crowd onto the couch beside him. Conner didn’t fit properly onto the sofa; his shoulders spanned the length of the seat, legs sagged over the edge of the armrest, and his weight in the pillow soft cushions tipped Tim against him. When they were arranged more or less comfortably the alpha reached down and threw a blanket over them. Tim couldn’t hide his shudder as the course fabric fell onto his suddenly strangely sensitive skin and Kon’s arms wrapped around him. The alpha had neglected to wear a shirt and his bare skin was scorching as he spooned in behind him.

They lay there for almost half an hour staring sightlessly at the screen as the film ploughed steadily onwards. The distant sounds of dogs barking and the occasional restless moo from the nearby cows created an unfamiliar sound scape; one alienated from the barely audible waves and rumble of Gotham he could hear from his room in Wayne Manor.

“Tim?”

He looked over his shoulder and the alpha opened his mouth to say something, hesitated, and leant forward and pressed a kiss onto his lips. Capturing his breath, closing the distance, and adding an extra horde of butterflies to those already flying in his stomach. This… this was happening. This was okay. This was… Kon’s arm tightened around Tim’s waist, tongue danced between his lips, and—oh fuck. Tim twitched violently as Kon’s hips brushed against his arse and he felt him. **Really felt him** for the first time. The other boy was at least semi erect, **huge**, and as their kiss broke looked at him with a shy, red cheeked, smile.

“I, um, thought you looked really hot when we went swimming today.”
"T-thank you?" It came out like a question.

"And I liked chasing you in the cornfield," Conner told him, blinked, and made a face. "I mean… you know."

"Yeah." He swallowed. "That was fun."

"And behind the barn…"

"Kon," he stopped him. "I… I know."

"Was it," the alpha licked his lips uncertainly, "okay? I mean, behind the barn? That was okay?"

"I…” Tim wriggled on the cushion, "yeah?" Again like a question; higher pitched than usual.

"Good?" Kon pushed hopefully. "Really? You didn’t mind me…?"

"Y-yeah."

Kon’s face sank.

Tim realised what he said. "I mean no! No, I didn’t mind. Yeah, it was good. I’m sorry, I’m fucking this up. I just want you to…” he could feel his blush creeping slowly but surely up his ears. "I thought it was hot. You being like that, I mean."

The young alpha looked at him. When he spoke his voice was gaining confidence and momentum with every syllable. "Do you want to do stuff?" Kon was moving. His hands exploring the contours of Tim’s body with slow tenderness, bare chest inching closer, and breath hot and spicy against Tim’s skin.

"I… I’ve never done anything before,” Tim told him.
“Me neither. Do you want to?” A pause. “We don’t have to. Or we could just do some stuff.”

“Kon I…” a deep breath. “I kinda do… if you want?”

“Yeah.” Kon’s voice had dropped half an octave. “I want. I wanted to since I saw you.”

Tim looked at him in disbelief. “Since you saw me?”


He swallowed the surge of alien session that shot through him seeing as he turned his head the alpha over him; smelling his arid, addictive, scent engulf him; feeling the hot weight of his body. “You knew I was an omega?” He rasped.

“I guessed.”


Kon shrugged, moved forward, and brought their mouths together; guiding Tim to arch and twist his spine as they kissed over his shoulder. Tim had kissed Kon a lot over the past couple of weeks. In the trees behind Wayne Manor, in the back of the batcave, and behind the barn; all experiences captured in their fleeting moments alone just like their first kiss on the edge of the track at school. Stolen sessions of fiercely erotic, and awkward, exploration. This kiss was different. This kiss Conner took his time, dictated, and Tim found himself falling into it in a tide of instinct, want, and visceral understanding. This was an alpha. An alpha he trusted. An alpha who respected him. An alpha that was as new to this as him, as uncertain, and yet an alpha that was willing – wanting – to take on the role of aggressor, willing to do all the thinking so for a rare moment Tim could let go and let himself get caught up in the feeling of their bodies, the taste of Kon’s lips, and the hypnotic way their scents were starting to curl, interweave, and tangle together. Like dance partners; the stern acrid alpha accenting and highlighting – and being highlighted in turn – by the strong sweet sting of omega.

He had never noticed before but he smelt good. Not Bruce’s enthralling allure; so strong it pressed on those around him with an unspoken demand for explicit attention, or Bart’s hot fiery zesty smell; as fast, confusing, and as cheeky as the boy himself, or even alike any of the more varied collection of scents found in his PE class. His scent was him. Just him. Low level omega, Tim Drake, and nice
enough that he caught himself feeling deeply, animalisticly, satisfied when he picked it up among the heavy press of Kon’s earthy spiced-with-alien alpha aroma.

His scent was also stronger than usual – sharper – and wafting from his skin in an embarrassingly obvious tide of pheromones; signalling his arousal like a red flag over his head.

Kon groaned, broke their lips apart, and began kissing him down his neck; the opposite side to his omega gland. The deliberate space and safety Conner left suggested a level of cognitive function Tim wasn’t able to reach at that moment; not with the other boy figuring out all the things he could do to Tim’s neck with his mouth besides leaving a bond mark, fumbling with his shirt under the blanket, and exploring his newly exposed skin with broad open palms. He was also rock hard against Tim’s thigh; the presence of his erection obvious even through both of their pants.

“Kon,” he moaned; the husky tone surprising himself and issuing a low growl of approval from the alpha. “Kon, ah, let me roll over.” He wriggled under him. “I can’t do anything this way.”

“What do you want to do?”

“I… hold you? I don’t know.”

“You don’t have to do anything,” he told him. “I’ll take care of you.”

"But I want to do something."

The alpha paused, the weight of him still pinning Tim face down into the sofa. "But... this is how boy omegas go."

“Please, Kon.”

The boy leant back and Tim rolled awkwardly over. Conner knelt on his knees, blanket hanging loosely off his shoulders, and washboard of naked muscle visible in the light spilling from the TV. Broad shoulders, defined lines, and hips poking out of his low hanging pyjama bottoms. His hair was somehow already a mess, lips gleaming wet, and hands hovering uncertainly; waiting to reconnect with Tim’s skin.
“This is better,” Tim promised him as he read the alpha’s uncertain look.

“But, if we’re this way how do I…?”

“I think if I…” Tim spread his legs and lifted them higher.

The alpha’s eyes flashed as he caught onto the idea. “Will you get, like, uncomfortable like that?”

“I don’t think so.” He forced a fleeting smile. “I, um, actually think this is better. The armrest was digging into my leg and this way I can, you know, do stuff and see you better.”

“But what if it lasts a while?”

“I…” Tim hesitated. “How long?”

“I don’t know. How long does sex take?”

Tim stared at him hopelessly. “I don’t think it’s too long. H-how long does a knot last?”

Kon blinked and looked down, embarrassed. “Like… half an hour. Bit longer.”

“Okay, I… I’ll be fine.” He shifted in the warm embrace of the cushions. “It’s okay.”

Breathlessly. “Okay…”

The boy leant forward again, took advantage of their changed position, and kissed his bare chest. Tim shuddered violently as Kon’s tongue brushed against a nipple and threw back his head as it continued upward, was accompanied by a nip at the hollow of his collarbone, and moved with a series of kisses up his jugular to finally reconnect their lips.

It had been a good day. Watching Kon learn to fly, helping Martha, and even just seeing the sky
stretch clean and blue from one horizon to the other like a big open embrace had been worth the trip. But, the real reason why he had come was this. It was for a chance to explore the strange dark looks Kon had started throwing towards him, to follow up on the frantic assurance buried within their kisses, and to acknowledge the wet clench of muscles deep inside him whenever he thought about Kon casually pulling off his shirt in Mount Justice.

He had known this was why he came here, hadn’t thought about it; didn’t think he would really get a chance to follow up on it, but deep down he had known. This wasn’t an accident. This was something he wanted, planned when he tricked Dick into letting him leave for the weekend, and craved so much he refused to think about it – refused to think about anything alpha or omega – because once he started thinking about it he would start to analyse it and this was something he didn’t want to pick apart, comprehend, or control; he just wanted to experience.

He just wanted to do – to be – with Kon and not have a damn thought go through his mind other than the feeling of the alpha now kissing him, pushing his hips up, and grabbing at the baggy boxers he wore to bed.

He felt a fleeting moment of terror as the fabric was pulled from his own erection and up his thighs. Nudity wasn’t an issue in his pack. They had all, barring Alfred, seen each other naked at one point or another. Still, he had never been as free with his body as Bart and being naked like this was different. He was hard, he was wet, and the moment his boxers were off those two things became explicitly obvious as the scent of his slick flowed into the air. He was also, Tim realised with a flash of panic, hairy. Not very, not compared to the other members of his pack, but he did have some hair between his legs. Omegas in porn never had hair down there and the only other omega Kon might have seen naked was Bart and Bart was naturally almost bare.

But the alpha didn’t pause, flinch, or withdraw as he wrestled Tim’s shorts off his legs, dropped them to the ground, and lunged back into the embrace with all the ferocity of an attacking animal. And— oh fuck—he was naked. He was naked and under Kon.

Tim clung to the boy’s broad shoulders and dived deeper into their own mouthed exchange; absorbing the mind bending taste of Conner’s hormone charged saliva and nervous sweat. Tried not to shudder, writhe, or make a sound as the boy began to explore the newly available territory; palms snaking over his hips, fingers ghosting over Tim’s cock, and hands wrapping around him to feel his arse. When a knuckle brushed between his legs, behind his balls, the skin on his inner thighs woke with a sudden wave of near painful sensitivity. He broke their kiss with a small, shocked, squeak and blinked up into the surprised stare of the boy above him.

“Does that hurt?”

“No.”
“But…” Kon stiffened, tilted his head as he listened to something, and with a curse he leapt to his feet, picked Tim up effortlessly in one arm, and bolted from the house. Tim had been carried by Bart for what the speedster insisted were ‘short’ stints and had, when Kon picked him up, almost expected to the world to morph into a sickening blur. Kon either didn’t have or hadn’t yet mastered super speed. Despite it he managed to get them out of the house fast enough that the night air was shocking on his skin — the exterior space invoking an irrational pang of unease — and into the barn before Tim managed to protest.

“Kon?”

“Sorry, grandma was coming downstairs.”

Tim blinked and yelped in shock as he was thrown into a pile of hay.

“Be right back.” He ran back outside and Tim stared after him. Became keenly aware that he was naked, alone, and without clothes in a barn at night. Only a slash of moonlight falling in the open door left him anything to even see with.

He stood slowly, brushed as much hay off him as he could, and padded into the barn; groping at tack and equipment until he found the saddle blankets smelling of grass seeds and horse. It was still better than nothing. By the time he had thrown them across the hay and curled up on them he was starting to worry Conner wasn’t coming back.

He wouldn’t just leave him would he?

Another five minutes. Tim forced himself to uncurl, lie back, and think only what was about to happen. Conner would come back, they would kiss some more, and then they would have sex. The thought sent a surge of mixed desire, excitement, and fear through him. Sex. Sex with Kon. Would he be okay? Would Kon like it? Would it hurt? He had asked that question to Bruce when he was thirteen and the man was grudgingly talking to him about his new caste. The internet said it did. The older omega, to his surprise, was more forgiving; he told him it hadn’t hurt the first time for him but every omega, and every partner, was different. So, the question became would he and Kon together hurt? The young alpha had been big. It was obvious even in the dark through the alpha’s pants; he was much bigger than the dildo in Tim’s draw.

Tim reached down and tentatively touched himself; almost groaned aloud at his throbbing omegahood sent sparks of heat through his body in response. His skin was hypersensitive, mouth still
tasted of Kon, and insides clenched unhappily around the absence inside him. He reached down with
his other hand to offer some relief to his aching cock and probed himself more confidently in time;
knowing what he liked and taking advantage of the heightened state Kon had left him in.

Soon he had three fingers inside himself and was leaking enough precome to make the movement of
his fist slick and smooth. It didn’t take long.

His brain surrendered under a blitz of pleasure surging up his spine moments before he sprayed all
over his fist whiting out the world for a second time in quick succession. Shit. He should have waited
for Kon. He should of… Tim jumped in shock. Conner was beside him, naked, and watching him;
eyes smouldering and hand fisting his cock.

“K-Kon! I’m sorry. I just…”

“You did yourself.”

“I… yeah but I’m an omega so I can do it more than once.”

“You’re so hot when you do yourself.”

“…Thank you?”

The alpha moved forward and manipulated Tim’s body back into the position he was in on the
couch. “But I told you I would take care of you.” There wasn’t a hint of anything negative in his
voice. In fact, he sounded excited. But, in his words, he was asking for something. Submission, Tim
realised. While the other boy seemed perfectly happy to follow him – even went so far as to promise
to defend his leadership – in this setting he wanted to take the reins. More: he wanted Tim to give
them to him.

He propped himself up on his elbows, looked the alpha straight in the eye, and showed him his neck.
Not for long, not enough to make a scene, but just enough to show him that he wanted this; wanted
Kon like this.

It was enough.
They kissed, groped, and Conner fumbled with six different boxes of condoms he must have brought back from the house.

“I didn’t know which one was best and I, well, I just ran into the shop yesterday.”

“I don’t want one that smells like strawberries,” Tim prompted. “Just a normal one. No, that looks too small. That one looks okay I guess.”

“This one’s good.”

“Yeah.”

Rolling the sheathe on proved harder than expected with two pairs of sweaty, trembling, hands and afterwards neither of them seemed really sure exactly what they should do next but it didn’t take them too long to figure out.

Sex wasn’t what he imagined. They kept stopping and starting, changing places, and exchanging breathless, desperate, and sometimes simply confused dialogue.

“I think if…”

“I like that…”

“That tickles!”

“Wait.”

“You look… fuck.”

“You’re hot as hell.”
“That’s good.”

“You feel...”

“Ah! Wait!”

“Am I doing okay? Does it hurt?”

It did hurt. Enough that he couldn’t hide it from the alpha. But it also felt good in the most visceral way possible. The twin sensations feeding into each other until he couldn’t tell the difference; every nerve in his body firing with the intoxicating pleasure pain that left his head spinning and vision blurred. He came with a shock of agonised pleasure; body quaking as he was impaled by the other boy’s shaft. He was still reeling from it when Kon finished, made a deliciously deep noise, and thrust so far into him Tim whimpered and writhed in his arms.

Being knotted didn’t feel like he expected. It was pleasurable, it was painful, but it was also soothing. Like a hand on his shoulder. Despite it a more cognitive part of him flailed desperately as he tried to adjust to having something that big inside him for the first time. But he did adjust; his body wet, yielding, and welcoming towards the invasive presence. Insides clenching greedily around the indomitable alien alpha.

He slumped limp into Conner’s embrace and sunk wordlessly towards sleep under a tide of hormonally induced exhaustion as the alpha happily made them comfortable, peppered kisses onto his face, and pulled a blanket over them.

When his knot went down Tim felt like he had been gutted; like an intrinsic part of him was being removed leaving behind it a raw open wound that was begging to be filled. He moaned in pain and hugged his middle, a fresh trickle of wet leaked out of him, and his sides shivered.

“Are you okay?” Kon said uncertainly.

“I just… give me a sec.” He regulated his breathing, stretched, and groaned as a cramp hit him like a blow. Neither the internet nor Bruce mentioned pain after being knotted. It was likely just his body shifting back to normal. Probably just a… God Kon smelt good. He just wanted to roll onto his stomach, prop himself up on his knees, and get the alpha back inside him as quickly as possible. It would feel good. So good.
“You smell really good,” Conner groaned and crawled towards him. “Really good. Do you wanna?”

Before he could agree he felt a flush wash through his body. God, he felt like he was in heat. But he couldn’t be. His heat wasn’t due for at least another couple of days. Bruce always went into heat first and Bruce… Tim’s eyes snapped open as he realised the glaring fault in that line of logic. Oh… oh fuck.

He’d moved things around the house earlier, his appetite had dwindled, and he had felt exposed in the open space when Kon ran him to the barn. Stupid! He had been nesting and hadn’t even realised. The part of his brain that was meant to recognise those signs on low alert because he was still subconsciously waiting for Bruce to herald the start of the danger zone. Then Kon had fucked him while wearing a condom; bringing up his omega hormones but not giving him the alpha hormones to neutralise it; speeding up the imminent arrival of the biological trigger to reproduce. Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!

Kon kissed him; the contact stronger in both action and alpha hormone than any of their previous kisses and Tim barely managed to rein in his animalistic response.

“N-no, Kon!”

He drew back with a ragged growl. “You smell so good, Tim. Come on. Let's do it again.”

“I… I can’t I… get Martha. I need… call Clark. Please.”

“Why?”

Tim balled his hands into fists. “Just do it!”

Conner scrambled back, all hint of dominance falling away in an instant. “Sorry! Okay I will I… what’s wrong? Do you want clothes first? I…”

The moment Bruce’s feet touched the ground he pushed Clark away and stormed towards the weathered farmhouse. Clark moved after him feeling small, wretched, and useless; he wished that feeling wasn’t substantiated by his gross failure; the reason why he had flown his mate halfway across the country that night.

“Hey,” he called softly, “go easy on them.”

“Don’t you tell me what to do,” Bruce snarled. “Don’t you fucking dare.”

Pleading. “They’re kids.”

“Which is exactly why you shouldn’t have left them alone!” His mate yelled over his shoulder. “I can’t believe you actually went ahead with this idiotic plan to get this clone to like you. I can’t fucking believe it!”

“You said he wasn’t a clo—”

“I don’t care!” He stopped and spun to face him. “I don’t! Jesus Christ, Clark; that’s my boy in there. Do you have any idea what this means? An omega can’t give consent in heat. Think about that for a damn second will you? We can’t give consent. Do you know why? We’re legally insane during our heats.” A harsh, mirthless, laugh. “Legally fucking insane. That’s how pathetic we are; we can’t even hold onto our own damn sanity dealing with our own damn bodies.”

He turned and continued before Clark could reply.

“Your little puppy dog wouldn’t have cared about that though; Tim’s begging for it and smells nice so that makes it okay.” Bruce shoved aside a stack of sunflowers as he made his way towards the aging homestead. “Just because he forgot a heat doesn’t mean he should have his first time like that. No one deserves a first time like that. No one ever deserves that. If you had just told me you were taking him this weekend I would have been able to stop this. I could have told you his heat was due. We could have saved him.”

“I-I thought when Dick suggested it you knew,” Clark tried. “I thought it had all been sorted out.”
“But you didn’t bother to fucking check!”

Hopelessly. “You’ve been so stressed out lately.”

“Oh, I suppose this isn’t stressful then, huh?!” Bruce scaled the steps up the porch two at a time and pushed through the front door without knocking. “I haven’t been doing anything. How is that meant to be stressful? How is finding out you don’t even respect me enough to let me know what’s going on in my own pack supposed to make it better?”

Clark hunched his shoulders as he moved slowly through the doorway after him. “I’m sorry.” The living room was exactly like it always was; wooden walls painted white, a fresh pot of flowers sitting on the kitchen bench, and Rusty. The dog hid under the dining table nervously wagging his tail but not approaching; nose easily powerful enough to smell the agitating pheromones pouring off Bruce.

“I know my pack doesn’t respect me,” the omega rasped, “I know I’ve fucked up and failed them a thousand times over, but I didn’t think you…” his hands balled into fists at his side. “How the hell could you do this? How could you just leave them?”

“I was worried about you, Bruce. God, I love…”

“I know you love me! That doesn’t matter right now. I thought you respected me and loved my pack too.”

“I do.”

“Then how could you do this?!”

Clark hugged his sides and Ma walked down the stairs; movements stiff but brisk. “Bruce,” she breathed in relief when she saw him and leant against the banister. “Thank God you’re finally here. He’s okay – hasn’t been able to fall asleep – but okay. I didn’t have any medication in my draws to give him and nothing is open in Smallville right now.” She wore an old neat nightgown, held an almost empty jug of water, and had her sleek grey hair pulled back and knotted at the nape of her neck. Her wedding ring hung from a chain around her neck and cheeks were oddly pale.
“Ma,” Clark moved forward and pulled her into a tight hug. “I’m sorry. Are you okay?”

“I’m fine dear,” she patted his cheek. “Believe it or not this isn’t my first rodeo. But let me talk to Bruce now.”

He released her uncertainly and watched as she approached the omega glaring at them with icy unforgiving eyes.

“Where is he?”

“Tim’s upstairs.” The woman said soothingly. “He’s safe.”

“Where’s Conner?”

“He’s also—”

Bruce barged by her and scaled the stairs without another word. “Get away from the door;” the omega’s voice carried; a low growl drenched with fatal promise.

“I—I was just guarding it,” he heard Conner stutter.

“Move!”

“I’m sorry, Ma,” Clark began as he heard the upstairs bedroom door open and slam closed.

“There is nothing more dangerous in this world than an omega defending their child,” the woman echoed the old proverb with a weary reverence. Put down the jug and rubbed her cheeks. “God above, I don’t know how he’ll ever respect me as a mother-in-law now. You trust me with your family for one nig—” she stopped, sniffed, and wiped a tear from her cheek with the heel of her palm. “I know Jonathan and I had our reservations about Bruce when you first brought him home but, God as my witness, I can imagine no better bearer you could have chosen. After I phoned you I… I was just waiting for him. I kept thinking Bruce will know what to do; Bruce will take care of it. He’ll never trust me again but he’ll make sure Tim’s okay. Such a strong boy. Both of them. They’re such wonderful omegas.”
“I didn’t choose him to be a bearer.”

“No; you chose him because you loved him and all the reasons why you loved him, his strength, passion, and independence; that’s what is going to make him good for you and your baby.”

Clark looked through the ceiling and watched Bruce slowly turn Tim’s head to see the other side of his neck. A surge of relief washed through him as he saw the boy was still unmarked.

“Y-you.” Tim seemed to recognise the other omega; his instincts not objecting to the invading pack mate enough to invoke a violent or terrified reaction but clearly setting off a sting on unease. “W-what are you… where…”

Bruce sat down on the bed and dragged the heat high Tim into a sitting position, propped him against his chest when the boy almost slumped back into the bed with a pained moan, and emptied a pill canister into his hand.

“Suppressant,” he said and put his palm against the younger omega’s mouth. Tim mindlessly swallowed the offered pills; responding more to the unuttered command and alpha like growl in the other man’s voice than any cognitive reasoning. Bruce produced another couple of pills and offered them to him. “Painkiller,” he named it. Once the boy had reluctantly swallowed the second helping the older omega produced a third. “Sedative.” Tim took those as well and made a face.

“Where’s… my alpha? Kon?”

“Contraceptive,” Bruce growled and fed the boy the last pill.

Tim swallowed, coughed, and wiped his mouth on the back of his sleeve. “W-what?”

“Plan B,” the man specified simply.

“I don’t think… I don’t need… Where’s Kon? I-I need Kon.”
“No you don’t, Tim. You don’t need anyone.”


The alpha in question stood in the hallway outside, face red, hair a wreck, and shoulders shaking on every exhale. Every time the other boy said his name he twitched and visibly stopped himself from running into the room. There was dried blood on his bottom lip where he had bitten himself.

“I, um, better go look after Conner,” Clark told his mother and bolted upstairs to confront the boy. “Hey, you okay?”

Conner’s eyes were fixed on the room Tim was in with an intensity and precision that screamed x-ray vision. “I didn’t hurt him,” he said; voice pained. “I-I didn’t know he was going into heat. He just smelt good and I thought that meant he was into it, you know. I never smelt an omega in heat. I didn’t know. I didn’t mean to… we didn’t mate or nothing.”

“You didn’t?”

“I…” the boy shifted from foot to foot. “I don’t think so. It seemed like it – his heat I mean – came after we were pretty much finished.” The boy didn’t look away from Tim as he spoke. “Like, um, he wasn’t like this before. He spoke fine and didn’t smell so strong and I… I don’t think…” his gaze finally turned to Clark. “I’m sorry. Please don’t make me never see him again. It was just sex, he said yes, and I was so careful. J-just like you said about not hitting humans too hard expect I was holding him. I didn’t hold him hard even when I wanted to.”

The door opened and Bruce walked out carrying an unconscious Tim wrapped in a number of multicoloured blankets. Grimly, Clark realised Bruce hadn’t stated what exactly he was giving Tim as a sedative; or how strong it was.

“Get us back to Gotham,” the omega instructed.

“Wait!” Conner sprung forward. “Why? He’s fine!”

Bruce’s glare was blisteringly cold. “Back off.” Spoken with all the authority and aggression of an
The boy shuddered violently and slunk back a step. “But… please, he’s fine.”

“I’m not leaving him here.”

“Why?”

Growled. “You.”

“I didn’t hurt him!”

Bruce sent him a withering look; didn’t respond.

“We don’t know that, Kon,” Clark said quickly, deliberately using the name Tim often addressed him with. “Until Tim finishes his heat he can’t really talk to us about it. Once he’s over this we’ll set things straight but, for now, we don’t know. As long as you didn’t hurt him this’ll all be fine.” Desperately hoped that was true. “We’re just being safe. For him. We’re going to put him in his usual nest where his pack can guard him.”

“I…” he looked from Clark to Bruce and back. “Can I come? I just have to make sure he’s okay. I promised to take care of him. I need to take care of…”

Bruce. “No.”

Conner shrunk back another step, looked down at Tim, and balled his hands into fists. When he spoke his voice was low, mumbled, as if to convince himself and not the man standing opposite him. “You’re not my leader.”

“Damn right I’m not! And he’s not your omega!”

“Let me come,” Conner insisted. “I need to.”
“You’re peaking you dumb dog,” Bruce snarled. “You’re not going to be able to control yourself if you stay where you can smell him.”

“I can control it! I can do it. Please; I’ll go mad if I can’t just see to make sure he’s alright. I… I didn’t know heats were so bad. I brought it on. It’s my fault.” Face red. “I got to take care of him.”

“Conner,” Ma lurched up the last step into the hallway and moved between the confrontation; carelessly crossing the no man’s land to wrap her arms around the trembling teenager and press a kiss onto his forehead. “You got to listen to Bruce, dear. Tim’s with pack now. You know pack comes first. You know that.”

An old agony crossed Conner’s features and he looked down. “I just want…” he wiped his eyes on his sleeve. “If they take him I’ll never see him again.”

“You will, love. You will.”

“No I won’t. He hates me now,” a look at Bruce. “He’ll never let me see him again.”

“Clark,” the omega barked. “Get us out of here.”

“But…” he looked at the young alpha wrapped firmly in his mother’s embrace, desperately trying to stop himself from crying. “Can we…?”

“Now!”

Like a bandaid, Clark decided. Get Tim out of it fast so it would hurt Kon less.

He bolted forward, bundled the two omegas up in his arms, and flew out of the house fast enough to knock pictures from the wall. Once they were airborne and away Bruce’s aggressive composure broke down and he clutched the boy to his chest like at any moment someone was going to try and take him from him. He didn’t say a word but, for once, his face held no secrets; oceans of relief mixed with wretched worry and a small dark spark of self hatred.
Clark didn’t know what to do about that. He hated himself for not knowing what to do but since Bruce broke the dam and spoke to him in the Watchtower the man had been frighteningly liberal letting him see what was going on in his head. It scared him. Bruce was hurting, hating himself, and he didn’t know what he could do to stop it; to save him. He knew Bruce had issues with his caste, he had known that for a long time, but he never thought they were so injurious, so influential, or so ingrained. What made it worse was that these weren’t open wounds anymore; these weren’t something he could treat. They were scars; ones put onto his mate that night decades ago when his parents were killed. Yet more mental conditioning that horrific moment had instilled on him. Hurting him as much as it had defined him. The moment Bruce Wayne first saw the injustice of the world in the most visceral way possible. The moment he had also first known his caste and been spared by it. The moment he had first both been an omega and hated himself for it. The moment that sowed the seeds into wanting to be something else; something powerful; something casteless.

A boy’s unshakable will to be something that could bring justice to a world without any.

He had given all that will, all that strength, to Batman – had expected to die doing it – but he had survived and now Batman was beyond him, bigger than him, and he had to be Bruce Wayne again. To exist in a world where, once again, there wasn’t any fairness. He was an omega, something he had been told his entire life was weak, and he had to be strong enough to take care of his pack; to keep them together and build them up now more than ever. Because now he wasn’t just a mentor, or a leader, but – due to his pregnancy – he had to finally face the fact long put aside that he was also a father.

He could do it. He could lead his pack, care for his family, and be a father. Clark knew he could. He was more than strong enough. But he didn’t know how he could make Bruce believe it. How he could make Bruce look at his caste, at his position, and not undermine himself now that he didn’t have the Batman persona to hold himself up with? How could he show Bruce just how unspeakably, perfectly, powerful he was?

This time Bruce didn’t step away from him as they touched down outside the imposing shape of Wayne Manor; elegant arches of brown stone demonized in the poor light, steeple sharp turrets crowning the stern towers, and fountain sitting silent and empty under the moonlight. The family occupied less than half of the massive building and the army dark windows glared down at them; bleak and black.

During the hours of flight Tim had sunk deeper into the blankets; escaping the cold sting of the air. He tentatively poked his face out now, blinked blindly into the night, and leant back against Bruce with an exhaustion that pulled his eyes closed again.

“Don’t like being outside…” he mumbled.
Bruce’s only response was to tighten his hold and pull the large, awkward shape of the slumbering teenager against him. “Be behind me, Clark.”

“Always.”

As usual they avoided the front door, worked their way around the side of the stone façade, and entered though the kitchen; the one homely room in the whole house. Sleek expensive cooking appliances lovely cared for, a stack of school textbooks left on the bench, and the table pushed against the wall. Clark had only ever seen the proper dining room used once when the Wayne Enterprises Board of Directors paid an official visit eleven months ago to formally offer the role of CEO back to Bruce Wayne due to changing public opinion on omegas in positions of power. He had denied; leaving the day to day managing of his company with the dutiful Lucius Fox. That room, filled with a long mahogany table occupied by elite businessmen, one wall swallowed by a massive fireplace, and ancient family portraits lined between gaping windows; hadn’t looked half as intimidating as the kitchen with the pack assembled within it.

Dick sat on the dishwasher gnawing at his nails, Jason was pacing a groove into the floor, Alfred stood to attention by the door, and Damian sat with his legs curled under him in one of the chairs. Clark had long since given up trying to find out how they learnt what was going on without Bruce uttering a word to them.

The moment they entered Jason surged forward, took a breath to say something, and staggered back with a heaving cough. “Fuck he’s in… Fuck!”

“Is he…?” Damian muttered.

“He’s fine,” Clark said quickly.

“You don’t know that,” Bruce snapped.

“I’m going to kill that fucker,” Jason rasped. “I’m going to fucking kill him.”

“He’s… Oh God, I’m so sorry,” Dick said, face in hands, “I didn’t even think… I never keep track and Bruce always goes into heat first. So fucking stupid.”

Jason shot him a layered look and started breathing through the crook of his elbow; cheeks spiked
with colour. With a sickening feeling Clark watched the other alpha struggle to regain his composure and realised Tim’s scent wasn’t affecting him; he could smell the pheromones pouring off the boy, could understand it, but had been able to fly him home without a trickle of an alpha’s typical involuntary response. He had a bond mate so he was never going to be as affected by another omega the way he was by Bruce but he still should have felt something. It must be another Kryptonian thing; his bond with Bruce affecting him in ways a human bond didn’t. Jason though, wasn’t Kryptonian, didn’t have a bond, and wasn’t so lucky. Yet he was working through it, straightening, and looking at Tim with one thought in his eye. Brother.

“You,” he jabbed a finger at Clark; voice little more than a croak. “You left him in heat with your half alien bastard.”

A series of condemning looks flew his way; Jason, Bruce, and even Alfred; lips pinched and hands clasped stiffly behind his back.

“I didn’t know his heat was due.” It was a pathetic excuse.

“I did!” Bruce roared. “If you two idiots had taken the time to tell me what the hell was going on!”

Dick was shaking his head. “So sorry. I told Clark it would be okay. I told him to take him.”

Low. “That doesn’t change anything.”

Pleadingly. “I know. But…”

“This ain’t about Dick!” Jason interrupted. “It fucking ain’t! It’s him,” a finger jabbed at Clark, “this fucker and his fucked up not-clone. You alien freaks are always tricking our omegas and…”

“Don’t you dare start that shit now,” Bruce snarled; eyes on the young alpha.

“Why not? It’s the mother fucking truth!”

“Stop yelling,” Tim mumbled; eyes still closed. “Mm… tired. Stop yelling.”
Bruce moved; the boy’s words snapping his blistering gaze off Jason and shocking him back into action. He hoisted him in his arms and walked through the kitchen; moving towards the boy’s bedroom and usual nest. Alfred followed him out the door and after a hesitation Damian scampered afterwards as well. When Clark stepped forward to bring up the rear of the parade Jason’s arm snapped out and stopped him with enough force to send anyone else reeling backward.

“I ain’t done with you, freak.”

“Jason…”

“It’s not his fault!” Dick shouted, hands slamming down on the counter he sat on. “For fuck’s sake, Jason, why can’t you accept that? I fucked up. I’m not going to fall out of love with you if you yell at me!”

Eyes down. “It’s not your fault.”

“Yes it is!”

“You weren’t even—”

“So? I’m the one that set him up. I’m the one that arranged it. Clark just went along with it.”

“You didn’t know.”

“Neither did he!”

“What? Are you some kind of masochist now? I’m not going to mess you up for something that ain’t your fault.”

“If it ain’t my fault it ain’t his,” Dick insisted. “He was just trying to look after Bruce. He flew back to look after him.”
“He shouldn’t have left them alone!” Directed towards Clark. “You don’t leave an omega alone with an alpha!”

“Why?” The beta kept pushing. “Tim isn’t going to be a virgin forever, you know. If they were just going to have consensual sex then…”

“Tim isn’t ready.”

Dick’s lips thinned. “Don’t you think that should be up to Tim to decide? Omegas marry at sixteen. You know that right? Did you see the stack of gifts that came in the mail on his last birthday? All those rich old alphas after his money. Don’t you figure, if it was just sex, that would be better?” He swallowed, visibly struggling to keep his voice steady but speaking with an earnestly that shone in his eyes. “They’re both teenagers and Conner cares about Tim. If he wasn’t in heat…”

“Conner wants to get his dick wet!”

“You don’t know that.”

“Conner said they didn’t mate,” Clark interjected. “Just sex before the heat.”

A horse bark of laughter. “And you believe him? Not even you are that fucking dumb.”

Dick didn’t look convinced either as he launched back into the argument with Jason.

Clark fidgeted, wishing he could escape but the insistent aggressive placement of Jason’s body told him that would be a bad idea. Instead he peeked through the walls of the house and watched as Bruce lay Tim down in his bed, Damian slinking curiously into the room to sniff with puppy like interest at the strange pheromones in the air, and Alfred prepping everything the boy would need to survive the remainder of his heat in comfort.

The young omega, Clark noticed as he wriggled out of his blankets, was wearing Conner’s House of El shirt.

The party left the boy at his request and began making their way back down to the kitchen; Damian
“Conner is his son,” Jason jabbed a finger at Clark, snapping him back to the argument unfolded around him. “He should be like a brother, not trying to steal him away to form his stupid pack.”

A breathless laugh from the acrobat looking fraught and frayed as he stayed perched on the dishwasher. “You can not use the abstract possible-maybe-kinda-if-you-don’t-really-think-about-it incest card against them when you’re fucking me.”

“You’re not my brother.”

“Only because you died before the big guy started legally adopting,” Dick reminded him. “Hell, I’m his son enough to inherit and you’re the one developing proper family bonds with this pack. You look out for Tim like a brother and I saw you practically puppy cuddling with Bruce the other night.”

Damian streaked back into the kitchen and blinked at the arguing couple before turning suspiciously narrowed eyes onto Clark and mimicking Jason’s aggressive alpha posture.

“This doesn’t have anything to do with it,” Jason growled. “You didn’t do anything to Tim.”

“That’s bullshit. You know what I did?” The beta pushed; voice shaking and fists clutching the corner of the appliance beneath him. “I didn’t just say it was okay, I didn’t just tell Clark it was all cool, I suggested it. You hear me? I stopped him and suggested he go to the farm this weekend.”

“Why the fuck would you do that?” Jason hissed; eyes bleak and black as he finally bought the bait Dick was swinging in front of his face. “What the hell is it to you? You think just because you got yourself fucked at fifteen, because I fucked up at sixteen, that makes it okay?!!”

“That’s not what I’m saying.”

“What if the dog fucking raped him, huh? Tim told him he didn’t want to run away and make a pack with him so he figured he’d get what he could.”

“No! I… we don’t know that yet. It could be fine. Maybe Clark was right. Maybe they just had sex
and didn’t mate. Or maybe Tim did give his consent before he started nesting.”

“I don’t give a shit if they just kissed; Tim ain’t ready! Why the fuck wouldn’t you go to the fucking leader?! Why the hell wouldn’t you tell Bruce?!”

A flash of unreserved surprise passed across Bruce’s face as he stepped into the room; gaze turning to blink at the alpha in shock and awe.

“Why didn’t you let him take care of the damn pack? That’s what he does. It’s his job. Why the hell wouldn’t you let him do it?!”

“I…” Dick raked his hand through his hair. “You wanna know why, Jay? It’s because I needed to talk to you.” An ugly, elongated pause. “I needed to tell you I l-loved you; make everything right. You were avoiding me and Tim knew where you were. I thought if I let him go to the farm, told Clark it was okay, I could…”

Jason had gone very still, eyes dark and distant. “Fuck…”

“You think I feel good about this?” The beta cried; face ashen. “I p-practically put him up on a silver platter just because I wanted you, just because I was too stupid to think, just because I didn’t tell the boss… Just because I fucked this up from the start and didn’t tell you I loved you the day I knew.”

“Go to bed, Dick,” Bruce muttered. Then, as if in afterthought. “It’s okay. He’s home. We’ll look after him.”

Dick stared at him for a moment, eyes sparkling with tears, and hurled himself off the counter and into Bruce’s side. Clark started forward, his protective instincts flaring hot, until he saw the younger man was hugging Bruce.

“I’m sorry, boss. I’m sorry. I know this had been fucked up for you. God, I’m sorry. These last few months were meant to be about you and the baby but we messed that up. And now with Tim…”

Damian took note of the embrace and quickly wormed his way into the middle of it with a dark look at the oblivious beta.
“It’s okay,” the omega said again “Go to bed.”

The man obeyed and was followed by the ten year old after Bruce had given him his own personal hug. Jason left without a word; shoulders still and aura dark and angry. Alfred kissed Bruce on the forehead before retreating after the others with a soft. “We’ll get through this, Master Bruce.”

When they were gone Bruce turned to him. “You didn’t stay behind me.”

“I…” his stomach lurched. “No. Jason stopped me.”

“It’s okay. I thought I needed… it’s okay,” he looked at the door his family had left through. “They’re still following me,” he whispered as if this were some strange anomaly. “All of them.” With private wonder. “Even Jason.”
He’d left his phone at the Kent Farm.

Tim stared at the charger hanging limp on his bedside table and wished there was some way he could contact Kon and explain; some way to wipe away the image of the alpha – scared, guilty, and alone – that kept dancing behind his eyelids. Conner had been so good to him, so caring, and now his pack would probably not let him near again.

He let out a dry heaving sob.

God, how could he be so selfish? So selfish as to forget his own cycle and put Kon through that. To put Martha through that. To put his pack through that. How could he be so stupid as to put himself through this? He’d changed what should have been a private and perfect thing into something ugly that had ruined his reputation in the pack. How was he ever going to convince Jason he wasn’t a kid when he had proven he couldn’t even handle his own heats? How was he ever going to convince Damian he wasn’t worthless when the boy knew he had sex with the first alpha that showed any interest in him? How was Bruce ever going to respect him again when he had proved himself to be the very definition of the omega stereotype; thoughtless, desperate for alpha attention, and weak… weak enough he needed to be rescued. Bruce would never let him join the Titans now. He wouldn’t be allowed back in costume for months. But, somehow, that wasn’t even the worst thing.

How was he ever going to convince them to let him see Kon again? Because Kon was – he hooked the t-shirt over his nose and desperately tried to find a trace of the alpha’s scent – special.

A knock.

Tim groaned and sunk deeper into the blankets. When Alfred had come in that morning Tim had pretended he was still in heat. The beta didn’t have a powerful enough nose to pick up the staleness of the pheromones in the air and while it was unusual Tim’s heats did occasionally run overtime. Now that air was almost clean and the lateness in the day meant it was well past time he was out of his nest.

The knock came again.
It wasn’t Alfred’s usual knock. Not the polite doable tap on the flat would of the old oak door. Instead it was light, tentative, and against the window.

*The window.*

Tim jerked upright like a steam valve flipping back and stared at the boy hovering outside the planes of iron and glass.

“K-Kon!” He kicked off the sheets and scrambled off the mattress. Stopped when he realised what the boy’s presence here could mean. Voice a hollow rasp. “W-what are you doing here? How did you get here? Did Martha just let you come? What if my pack see you? Smell you? God, you’ll make it all even worse.” Not that he believed it could get any worse.

The boy shifted in the air as if the tirade of question threw him off balance. His lips moved.

Tim frowned. “I can’t hear you.” The manor was located in the southern reaches of Gotham, on top of some jagged slopes, among a scattering of other mansions all nestled within their own massive parklands. The city’s smog still stained the sky and the towers were visible from the other side of the house. Tim’s bedroom faced East and looked over the rocky cliffs on the edge of the lot to the ocean beyond. To keep the room liveable in winter the ancient windows had long been refitted and weatherproofed to survive the sea winds. “It’s the windows,” he told him. “I really can’t hear you, man. What are you doing here?”

The young alpha motioned towards his eyes. *See.* Then turned his hand to direct a finger at Tim. *You.*

His stomach twisted. “I don’t know if they want to see you right now.”


“God, Kon, I’m sorry,” he staggered toward the stern gothic window. A key rested in the lock unturned. “I’m sorry but they… I can’t open the window. Bruce will smell you were here if he comes in.” Voice stronger than he felt. “I… I think they hate you right now.”

Kon hesitated for a while before nodding and making a motion – one finger held in front a line of others – that Tim, after a moment, realised meant *leader.*
“Leader? Bruce? Bruce hates you?”

Another nod.

“He yelled at you?”

Again. The alpha pointed to the middle of his chest. *I* hugged his sides and shivered; face a mask of fear. *Scared.* The motion he used before. *Leader.* He shook his head and made an absolving gesture with his hands. *No? Never?* Chest, eyes, Tim. *I see you.*

“You thought Bruce would never let you see me again,” Tim translated.

A relieved nod.

A long pause. “Me too,” Tim whispered. “I… this is all my fault. Bruce is never going to respect me again. I can’t even take care of my own heats, I throw myself at the first alpha that shows interest in me… not that I don’t care about you Kon it’s just that’s how it’s going to look. He’ll probably never let me near a batarang again, let alone join the Titans, and never leave me alone with you. An omega can take care of himself. That’s what he used to tell me. An omega doesn’t need anyone. Only a bitch needs to bend over and beg and it looks like… it looks like that’s what I…”

Kon sent him a pained and strangely frantic look.

“Kon?”


“He thinks you hurt me? Why?”

*You. No.* A mimed action that could only mean… *Sex. Me.*
“He doesn’t think we had sex?” Tim said hopefully, desperately. “But… how? Fuck, man, I thought there was no way they wouldn’t figure it out. I was naked and reeking of you. This is good. T-they might forget this. Jason might not lock me in a tower.”


“Bruce…” Tim stared at him. “Thinks what?”

The alpha stared at him for a moment before leaning forward and blowing a layer of fog across the window. Wrote on it backwards for his benefit with a speed and neatness that his powers had to be responsible for. He thinks I raped you.

Tim’s stomach dropped out of his chest. “Raped? W-why would he think that? We’re friends. He knows that.”

You were in heat.

“But… no I wasn’t. Not at first. We didn’t do in heat. Why didn’t you tell him?”

Kon was out of space on the glass and breathed again, eradicating his previous messages and etching in another; compacting the script this time around. I told him. He doesn’t believe me. He hates me.

“I’ll tell him. I’ll fix it. I… it’ll be okay.” He took a breath. He needed to fix this. He couldn’t let them think that of Conner. He couldn’t. Kon was a good alpha. How could he make them understand? Kon was good.

If he doesn’t let you join the Titans how will I ever see you again?

“You’ll see me,” he promised; resolved himself to make those words true. No matter what.

He underlined the word ‘how’.

“I… I’ll take care of it. I will, Kon. I don’t know how but I will. Trust me.”
He visibly relaxed; a subconscious surrendering to Tim’s assertion that, in this at least, he could take charge. It was the same kind of grateful taking of direction he showed when they were working as a team in Young Justice. Sexually Kon was an alpha in every sense of the word. Socially, Tim realised, he was something closer to Clark; an alpha that was more than happy, sometimes even grateful, to be allowed to follow. It didn’t stem from a lack of leadership ability, or physical inferiority, but a kind of natural devotion that was obvious in Clark eye’s whenever he looked at Bruce. That was reflected in Kon’s eyes now as he gazed at him and balanced in the air outside Tim’s bedroom.

The alpha motioned with his hands; three simple gestures that when put together were as common as they were widely understood.

Tim felt like his heart skipped a beat. “What?” He rasped; palms suddenly sweaty and pulse pounding in his ears.

Again. He laid a hand in the middle of his chest, folded his palms around the shape of an invisible heart – fingers curved and touching at the first knuckle and thumbs pressed together – and finally pointed at Tim. The alpha mouthed the words this time as well. Or perhaps he spoke them. There was no way Tim was going to be able to hear through the glass and the deafening noise of his own heartbeat.

*I love you.*

“I… Kon I… I don’t think you should say that.”

The boy’s hopeful smile slowly started to fade; running like water off his face.

“We’ve only known each other… not even two months. You only kissed me a couple of weeks ago. We only had sex the other night.”

He frowned, nodded, and quickly signed the motion again; seemingly oblivious as to why any of this would alter the declaration he was making. *I love you.*

“I…” his heart was fluttering, stomach full of knots, and a wave of pins and needles washed over him. “P-people don’t fall in love that fast, Kon. That’s not how it works. We have to, I don’t know, be together before you can say that.”
Another breath on the glass. _Be with me?_

“I…” he wanted it. He wanted to be with Kon. Just _be_ with Kon. He wanted to be with him and for it to be happy, simple, and good just like it had been at Mount Justice, the side of the school track, and the Kent Farm. “I need to convince my pack you’re not a rapist first,” he tried to joke. His voice sounded stiff and offensively flat. “I mean…”

*What if they don’t let us see each other again?* 

“We’ll see each other. I told you. I promise.”

Conner leant up against the glass; hair billowing softly as it was crushed between the window and his skull, feet finally finding a perch on the narrow window ledge with obvious relief, and fist gently pressing the glass as if all he wanted to do was break through it. Tim stepped closer and gently ran his fingers down the opposite side of the window.

“Look I… I also… They can’t keep us apart forever, Kon.”

*Wish I could touch you…”* he said; only Tim’s lip reading able to configure a meaning out of the muffled noise.

He opened his mouth to respond and gasped in shock as he felt the air twitch and shudder around him; ghosting along his skin for a fleeting moment like a wave; engulfing him and washing away into the room. “W-what was that?” He gasped.

Conner blinked dizzily at him and steadied himself against the glass but didn’t react; eyes locked onto Tim.

“I, um, we’ll be adults when we turn eighteen. We could do whatever we want.”

He held up his first couple of fingers and mouthed the question. ‘*Two years?*’ In his breath he added three words. *You’ll forget me.*
“I won’t forget you, Kon. The Titans are in three months and if Bruce will let me join—”

A horrified look. ‘If??’ His lips silently cried.

“Please don’t look at me like that,” he choked desperately. “Trust me. I’ll take care of it. I won’t let them keep you away from me. I just…” he tugged at his hair. “I’ve never been able to be like him, you know? I’ve never been able to be as strong an omega. He’ll be disappointed. He’ll look down on me for all this. I’m scared. That’s all. I don’t know what they’re going to do. I don’t know how big Bruce is going to make this. I… I just don’t know. But I will see you. I have to. I…” He stopped, hating how awkward he sounded. He was ruining this. This was… he couldn’t mess this up.

“Because, you know, when you say you love me that’s… I think… I love you too.”

His voice was ragged, fumbled over the word, and shot up in pitch on the last syllable. It didn’t seem to matter. Kon was looking at him like he’s just made a speech worthy of a standing ovation at the UN. Awed, blissfully overjoyed, and a painfully longing.

“But,” he continued quickly as he felt his cheeks heat with colour. “It’s way too soon to say that, and you can’t tell anyone because Bruce would kill me for acting like a teenage bitch if he knew and Jason would think I’m just some dumb kid, and it might be months before we can even talk in private again, and seriously don’t tell anyone. Not even Bart. Especially not Bart.”

He nodded furiously and began writing again on the window inches away from his chest. Be my ome— Kon crossed out the start of the word and tried another. Boyfriend?

“I, um,” his knees were shaking. “I don’t really know what that entails that we haven’t already been doing. Or that we’ll be allowed to do now.”

He put a series of extra question marks on the end of the sentence and shot him a hopeful, honest, loving look.

That look undid him. “Okay but… keep it a secret, okay?”

Kon nodded again, made a begging motion, and mimed the opening of the windows.

“I… what if Bruce smells you? He’s an omega so can pick up way more than anyone else and, I swear, his smelling has got scary good since he got pregnant. Like, I know that’s how omegas tell
what’s wrong with babies when they cry but he’s not even showing and he can smell food on you if you’ve eaten hours before.”

“Please.” Another begging motion.

“Kon. They’ll hate us even more if they find out…” his voice sounded uncertain to his own ears.

Conner held up the splayed fingers on his left hand. “Five seconds.”

Damn it. Damn it! But he was obeying. Fingers fumbling, heart hammering, and throat dry. The second the window opened Kon swept in and pressed a feverous kiss onto his lips. It was like watching a small, square, and silent black and white film suddenly transform into vivid IMAX embellished with a near deafening orchestral score. Tim groaned and fell into the warm scent of the other boy wrapping around him in thick hot layers like an electric blanket. Strong, beautiful, perfect alpha. All encompassing, powerful, and yet willing to follow him as a team leader and gave him enough give in his assertion of sexual dominance outside that situation Tim didn’t feel smothered; just cherished, adored, loved.

“I love you,” Kon said between kisses; the sound of his voice somehow filling all the space between those words; sounding louder even as he whispered than Tim had ever heard him before. “Cause you’re so smart, and hot, and nice, and good, and perfect…”

“Too,” was all Tim could fit between breaths and kisses. “Too. Too. Too.”

The alpha groaned, crushed their lips together once more, and wrapped his arms around him; warm bands of neigh on indestructible flesh constricting around him so hard it was almost painful. But he knew Kon knew that; trusted Kon to know his strength; trusted him…

“That’s five seconds,” he whispered as their lips finally broke apart, making no move to disentangle himself from the alpha.

Kon buried his face in his hair and didn’t move.

He could feel the other boy's distinctive scent start to settle on him. Alpha’s didn’t scent as strong as omegas but their pheromones were designed to mark – claim – and Kon’s high level made sure his body was working overtime to complete that objective. “You got to go,” Tim pushed. Still didn’t
move. Prayed the other boy had more strength than he. “You got to.”

Kon pulled himself away from him with a broken unhappy sound and staggered back into the open air.

“Get back to the farm before someone notices you’re gone.”

Voice tight and strange. “Okay.” He turned his face down and rubbed at his eyes with the back of his wrist. “I’ll see you, right?”

“Yeah. You will.”

A nod. “Okay. I... okay.”

Then he was gone. Tim stood by the window for what could have been hours trying to suppress the sick feeling bubbling to life in his stomach. He supposed this was what people called love sick. He always thought that was just a saying. In the wake of his heat his muscles were sore and tired, he had a rash on his thigh, and his mouth tasted painfully dry but the light, frothy, sickening swirl in his stomach eclipsed it all; not painful, nor intense, but bringing with it a terrifying, exhilarating, amazing new knowledge. Kon was his boyfriend. His boyfriend...

A knock at the door startled him out of his thoughts and he frantically closed the window, dashed across the room, and dove into the bed sheets; rubbing himself against the stale sweet scent of his own heat.

“Master Timothy?”

He didn’t answer.

“Master Tim? Are you awake? Could I please come in?”

Silence.
He tensed as the door opened, the lock sounding an ominous double click as a key worked it from the outside. The butler entered; grey eyes gazing towards him with unmasked concern and features void of their usual cool composure.

“Master Timothy, forgive the intrusion,” he closed the door behind him. “Are you alright?”

He put aside the pretence of sleep – he was shaking too much for Alfred to buy it – and pulled the blankets higher over himself. “No,” he muttered. “I’m still in heat.”

The man paused. “You don’t smell like you’re in heat anymore, sir, and it has been over ten hours since you usually finish up.”

A pause. “Can you tell Bruce Kon didn’t rape me?”

The butler eyed him carefully and stepped forward; approaching the bed. “I can. Are you sure you’re alright? You look very pale.”

“I’m okay. It’s just my heat I guess.” God, Alfred was getting closer. What if he smelled Kon? What if…?

“You go red in heat.” Alfred sat down on the edge of the mattress and looked down at him with open concern. “If that boy did hurt you don’t ever feel ashamed to say it, Master Tim. We won’t look at you any differently.”

“Bruce will,” Tim informed him and kept the blanket tight around himself; a foul smelling shield between him and the other man.

“I promise you that is not the case.”

“You don’t know that. It’s… it’s an omega thing. You wouldn’t understand.”

The butler lifted a sceptical eyebrow. “Is that so?”
“I, well, it’s like…” Tim struggled. “He’s this omega that can probably still take down criminals on heat without breaking a sweat, he got this perfect mate not even trying, and leads a pack while pregnant. And I’m an omega that…” he trailed off. He didn’t want to say it out loud. Didn’t want to make himself look like that in front of this man. Didn’t want to admit how selfish and stupid he seemed forcing Kon to go through everything in what must look like some half brained teenage omega’s attempt to get the alpha. How would Bruce ever respect him after that? How could he make Jason leave him alone ever again? How could he keep his promise to Kon?

His stomach fluttered at the thought of the other boy anxiously waiting for him to sort this situation out. Relying on him to set everything straight. His boyfriend he might not be able to see for months if he screwed this up.

“He didn’t rape me,” he continued; voice dry. “He would never do that. We had sex, we did, but we did it before the heat hit me and we both agreed to it. When my heat came he stopped and got Martha.”

Alfred’s look was calculating; careful. “He didn’t notice you pre-heating?”

“I didn’t notice I was pre-heating,” Tim insisted. “He’s never smelt a heating omega before. I messed up. Not him. Don’t blame him.” He stared pleadingly at the older man. “It was just sex. That’s it. I know Jason didn’t want me to have sex but… it felt good. It felt right. God, my heat was such a fuck up. It was never meant to happen then. I didn’t think.”

The butler leant, wrapped his arms around Tim, and pulled him into a tight embrace. “It’s such a relief to hear you say that, sir… such a relief.”

Fuck! No! He would smell him. Smell Kon. How wouldn’t he smell him? The scent was still fresh on him. Why wasn’t Alfred smelling it? He was a beta. Could betas really not smell that?

A terrifying thought. “Do I have to tell everyone else? I do, don’t I. They’ll all think…”

“I’ll tell them. It’s okay.”

“Do you have to tell Jason we had sex?”

A dry smile. “I’m afraid that piece of information was divulged to us early. When Mrs Kent called
she told us the state she found you in.”

Naked in a haystack reeking of alpha beside boxes of condoms. Jason and Bruce would have him in lockdown for a year. “None of them are ever going to respect me again, are they? I can’t even take care of my own heats. I’m just an omega and Bruce…”

“Bruce’s father,” the butler interrupted, “was always far stricter than I. His mother far more protective. He was a… he searched for a word, “a very sheltered boy, Master Tim. Very sheltered. Inquisitive to no end, fiercely intelligent, but easily frightened.”

Uncertainly. “Okay…?”

“What word?”

“You used it yourself not a few minutes ago.”

“I didn’t say anything…”
“You did. Just an omega, Master Timothy? Just?”

He didn’t move.

“Don’t do that to yourself, sir. Don’t start to rank and keep score. Don’t buy into that dogma. Master Bruce does not see you as any less than him and don’t, in God’s name, start to think of yourself that way. I don’t want to send another boy down that path.” A jarringly honestly look. “I don’t want you to believe that. You’re an omega, yes, but that is not just anything.” A pause. “Understand?”

Tim nodded numbly. His mind struggled to compartmentalise the new information; dissecting, digesting, and drunkenly returning again and again to the butler’s belief that Bruce wouldn’t look down on him for this. For practically presenting himself to an alpha, for needing to be rescued like a damsel in distress, and for not being strong enough to be like Bruce. He couldn’t quite believe it. He wanted to. He wanted Bruce not to feel disappointed at him for being an omega, for enjoying being an omega, for wanting an alpha to be an omega for. For surrendering, in however specific a way, to the stereotype of their sexual caste.

“I will tell Bruce about the young Mr Kent and yourself,” the butler promised. “Please try and come out soon.”

“I will.”

“Thank you, sir.” He stood. “And,” he added pointedly, “before you come down, I think it would be prudent to change.”

“Change?” With a lurch he remembered Conner’s shirt. “I forgot about that.”

“Indeed. Perhaps it best to face the pack in an item of clothing not smelling of young Mr. Kent for a while yet,” the beta suggested.

“Okay.”

“Very well, sir.”
He didn’t believe what Alfred said. He didn’t believe it as he showered, changed, and finally plucked up enough courage to slink shame faced out of his nest. He didn’t believe it as he choked through dinner around a silent table - practically crushed between Jason and the wall - and decided now was not the time to ask for another trip to Smallville. He still didn’t believe it when Bruce trained in him detective work the next day, invited him to his first public event with the Wayne Foundation the week after, or finally allowed Kon to practise powers with Clark in the far side of the cave while Bruce drilled Tim in escape techniques. He still couldn’t quite believe it when the man let him visit Cassie, Bart, and finally spend small pockets of supervised time with Kon. It was only when Bruce helped him create a better, more functional, Red Robin suit that he believed.

Despite everything he did – letting an alpha near him, forgetting a heat, needing to be rescued – and despite everything they’d been through – Bruce firing him, him sneaking out, and all that happened with Kon – Bruce didn’t hate him or write him off. Even though they were two omegas sharing the same territory, even though he wasn’t the perfect powerful omega like Bruce, and even after everything. Bruce respected him.

Discovering that made it harder to hack into South Gotham and Smallville High’s attendance records, afforded him with an ugly nudge of guilt when he left his PE clothes hanging untouched in his locker, and left him anxious and uncertain as he boom tubed the familiar route back to the dark and deactivated Mount Justice.

“You,” Kon said as he walked in, “are a genius.”

But it didn’t quite stop him.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, I know, I'm getting soft in my old age. I just wanted these two to have a bit of a happy ending. I hope you liked it!

Also, if anyone has any baby-gender preferences now is most certainly the time to shout them out. Unless there is a strong following/compelling arguments for either 'girl' or 'boy' I'm probably going to roll a dice on it.
Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

When Alfred came out of Tim’s room Bruce expected the worst. The boy hadn’t emerged hours after his usual heat duration and considering the situation at the Kent Farm he wasn’t surprised. He didn’t know what Tim had experienced or how much he remembered but he knew the feeling of being betrayed by his own body; of waking and trying to put together bits and pieces of scattered memory, attempt to retell a story from what he found around him, and feel his own neck to make sure he hadn’t been bitten; wondering all the while if things had gone a step further would he have begged, fought, or greedily invited it.

There were so many incidences in his life where if things had gone that step further, if he had lost control of his heat or hormones, his life and experience would have been radically different. If he hadn’t broken his heat with suppressants Bane would have realised he was an omega and never broken his back; would have likely raped him and thrown him to his venom charged pack instead, if Talia’s drug had been a little stronger and he hadn’t been able to push her away when she tried to bite him he might have been the one to leave that encounter pregnant; not her, and if he hadn’t panicked when his parents were killed to the point he had brought about a pre-presenting sting of omega pheromones maybe, just maybe, Joe Chill would have deemed him dangerous – strong – and shot him too.

Only once in his life had he ever been in a situation where things did go that step further with an alpha; where his body betrayed him to the point where he would have willing and wantonly accepted anything the other man wanted to do to him despite the rational part of his brain screaming no. But Clark, in that moment, had proven himself something he had forgotten alphas could be; strong yet safe. Good. An alpha that respected his will over that of his body and caste.

It wasn’t Kryptonian instinct. He refused to believe that. Venomously denied the impossible suggestion that all the earth shattering goodness in the man had come out of some biological trigger to obey. No. It was Clark. The same man who had decided he would be the kind of hero that didn’t exist in this world, who would hold back asteroids; pull kittens from trees; and visit children in their hospital beds; and who did nothing but make the world a better place; unreservedly and unquestioningly. Clark wouldn’t do anything to him until he asked for it first, had never – even in heat – pressured him to go beyond his limits, and had always been by his side even when his caste threatened to undermine who he was.

He could only hope Conner had inherited even a portion of that goodness. If he had any of it inside him there was no way he would hurt Tim. But Bruce had been studying Conner, following the Cadmus case, and had tracked down the boy’s most likely human DNA donor. Lex Luthor. Still unconfirmed but the possibility terrifyingly plausible. If the boy had even a shred of Luthor’s power hunger, his self worship, or aggressive alpha sexuality then he might have raped Tim; taken advantage of him when the boy’s heat did go that dreaded step further; humiliate, hack down, and
hurt Tim in a way Bruce had never been. Had no idea how to help or come back from.

An omega that was taken advantage of in heat wasn’t just stripped of any kind of authority over their own body but all dignity as well; put into a position where they would invite, plead, and welcome the offending alpha; their ego and will imprisoned and crushed down to near non-existence by their own bodily chemicals.

The relief he felt when Alfred came down to the sitting room and told him what happened in a low voice in his ear had left him feeling dizzy and light headed. Tim was okay. He’s made mistakes, he’d forgotten his heat, but he was okay.

“I’m still gonna fucking kill that alien prick,” Jason snarled as he paced the room half an hour later. “He can’t just trick Tim like that!”

“Why do you always think alphas have to trick omegas for omegas to want to have sex with them?” Dick said; his own face coloured with exhausted relief as he leant against the back of a stiff leather armchair.

Alfred stood by the door, Clark by the window, and Damian leant against the bookshelf opposite Dick. The whole pack assembled to hear the verdict.

Jason rounded on the beta. “Because no damned alpha who thinks they’re good enough to fuck one of our omegas is ever fucking good enough to fuck one of our omegas!”

The acrobat blinked as he tried to ingest and configure the messy sentence. “So... the alphas that think they’re pieces of shit and are never worth an omega... they’re good enough? But the ones that do... they’re not?”

Jason paused a little too long before replying. “Yes!”

Dick crossed his arms. “So, the only alpha you would be happy going near Tim is an alpha so fucked up it could never fuck anyone.”

The man’s eyes lit at the idea. “Yes.”
“Come on, Jay. He does deserve a sex life. They made mistakes but Conner didn’t actually hurt him.”

“Don’t you dare take that fuckers side. Alphas are fucking shit.”

Clark frowned at Jason from where he stood by the window; face tight with worry. “You don’t really believe that, do you?”

“I say what I think, freak.”

Dick looked hurt. “I like alphas.”

“You…” Jason raked his fingers through his hair, “for fucks sake. Tim’s too fucking good for him, okay? Can I say that or will another one of you jump up onto your high mother fucking horse?”

Bruce rubbed at his brow. “Sit down, Jason.”

The alpha turned towards him. “You’re not letting this dog get away with this.” Spoken with a righteous assurance. “You’re not. Tell me and I’ll fucking gut him and cut off his cock. Just give me the order. Give it or I’ll do it myself.”

“Sit. Down.”

He stared at him for a moment, fingers twitching around an invisible weapon, before slumping back into the chair Dick leant against. The beta reached down and began running his hands through the agitated alpha’s hair. Jason flinched away then relaxed into the contact; eyes boring into Bruce.

“So what the fuck are you gonna do then? You are figuring something out, right?”

“I’m going to look after Tim.”

“Damn fucking right.” Furiously. “When Tim comes out I gonna tell h—”
“Won’t say a damn word to him about this,” Bruce rumbled warningly. “You heard.” A nod towards Alfred. “He’s scared. Too damned scared of us to leave his nest. I won’t let you give him something to be afraid of.”

“But he let that al—”

“We’re his pack, Jason!” The room plunged into an uncanny silence after the statement. All ears pricked up and turned towards him. “We protect and provide for each other.” A hard look around the room. “What’s done is done. Tim has been more than hurt and humiliated enough over this and yelling at him didn’t work. He knows his mistakes. Protect and provide for him. That’s what we’re going to do now.”

“Bu—”

His gaze snapped back to the young alpha. “Understand?”

Jason bit his lip and looked down. “Yeah. I get it. Still don’t fucking like it but fucking get it. Ain’t saying I won’t kill that half alien fucker if I see him though.”

“Yeah, boss,” Dick smiled. “Thanks.” To Jason. “Tim needs a break, man. You guys have been brutal these last couple of months.”

Low. “I said I get it.”

Damian huffed and crossed his arms. “I don’t know why any of you ever put so much concern into a mere low lev—ah!” He ducked as Jason picked up a book and hurled it at the ten year old.

“I like low levels you little shit!”

“Tt!” The boy straightened, sent the man a withering look, and turned his head up and away. “Filthy degenerate.”
Alfred. “Settle down. Yes, that’s it. We’re not going to be like this when Master Timothy comes down, are we?”

“When Tim comes down it’s situation normal,” Bruce informed them. “Provide and protect. That’s the way it’s going to stay.”

And that was it. Everyone was looking at him the way they always had. Listening to him. Working with him. Following him.

He thought his pregnancy would create ripples in the pack. It had created waves. But, after the storm had past they were back in still water and everyone was looking at him like nothing had happened. Jason and Dick looking at him like, weeks ago, he hadn’t almost abandoned them to find a new leader. Alfred and Damian looking at him like he hadn’t been inches away – mere millimetres – away from undermining himself and betraying his entire pack. And Clark looking at him like he loved him. Like he hadn’t been the one to pull him back.

It was the strongest he had felt, the most complete, the most real since he had put aside Batman.

He harnessed that feeling, held it, and when he and Clark were finally alone he unleashed it on the other man. They hadn’t had sex in weeks. He hadn’t wanted to have sex in weeks. God how could he have slept beside this body – this man – and not wanted to have sex with it in weeks?

Clark groaned, loud, messy, and hard enough to shake the bed when he rolled to stifle it in the mattress. “God, Bruce, you have, ah, no idea how much I… fuck, oh fuck, hold on, ah, hold on a sec.” He tried to pull off his shirt.

Bruce grabbed the other man’s wrists and pinned Clark into the bed with a needy growl; not willing to halt their action even to expose his mate’s golden pink flesh. They were still both fully clothed, rock hard, and were grinding furiously into each other; hip to crouch to hip. The friction of their clothes, heat of their bodies, and the trickle of slick tickling the back of his balls contributing to an agonising primal need surging to painful life inside him. He moaned and somehow Clark was on top of him, their hands were in each others pants, and the alpha was licking desperately – beseechingly – at his neck.

“P-please…”

“Yes,” he hissed through his teeth; feeling his thigh twitch and hips spasm forward into the other
man’s fist. “Come on.”

Feeling Clark bite his neck shouldn’t be erotic. There were no nerves, no erogenous zones, and no reason why being bitten by an alpha should be a pleasurable experience for an omega. The sensation he felt as Clark’s teeth sunk greedily into his omega gland wasn’t then due to any kind of physical stimulation or gratification but a carnal knowledge that this man was addicted to him. Mate. Bound. His.

A savage sound of satisfaction left his throat as he fisted a hand in Clark’s hair, wrapped his legs around his hips, and arched into the heat radiating off his body. Rubbing himself against him and feeling the pleasure he took in his neck in every twitch and shiver of muscle and pulse of the organ in his hand.

“F—ah…” Clark whined as he released Bruce’s neck. “G-god.”

He squeezed his cock tighter and ground up against the alien’s hips.

“Br—ah—Bruce! Wait, I-I’m going to…”


As always, Clark obeyed.

Bruce watched in fascination as the being above him fell apart; hot breath against his skin, hips spasming into his fist, and scorching hot semen spraying across Bruce’s bare abdomen where Clark had pushed up his shirt. A few flecks splashed up into his neck and chin where he wiped them away with the heel of his palm and looked down at the inhuman amount of come cooling on his body.

Lifted an eyebrow up at the mortified man blinking himself back from the abyss above him. “Been waiting for that for a while, have you?”

“Oh God, I’m sorry.”

“Why?”
Clark gave him in incredulous look. “Because I’m pretty sure a teenager in the woods with some magazines could last longer than that.”

Bruce felt the other man’s still erect shaft down to his fully inflated knot and swallowed the tortured pang his insides gave at the thought of it stuck outside his body. “It’s okay,” he lied. “I just wanted to watch you come,” that much at least was the truth.

“No it’s not,” the alpha told him; gaze raking up and down his chest. “I should be able to do better than that. Christ, you’re a mess.”

“I’m not complaining.”

“No,” Clark’s smile fluttered to life. “You’re not.”

He started fistng Bruce and rocking against him; shifting their position so he could grind a thigh between his legs.

“Ah… that’s… good.”

Clark smiled and groped him rougher the way he knew Bruce liked it.

“Some… ah… magazines in the woods?” He heard himself say. “I thought you were meant to be a writer. That’s all you could come up with?”

A playfully hurt look. “What’s wrong with magazines in the woods?”

Clark’s thumb glided over the head of Bruce’s cock and he groaned. “You’re dating yourself,” he said. “Teenagers have internet now days.”

“Is that so?”
“Yeah.”

“Shame. There was something magical about those old porn stacks in the forest.”

“Magical is not the word I would use,” Bruce panted as he felt the sensation of Clark stoking his cock, and grinding against his entrance, mount to a tingling mass of promise in belly.

A low, sensual, pur. “What word would you use?”

“Sti—hah—icky.”

Clark laughed and then leant forward to kiss his throat, chin, and cheeks.

“Clark…”

“There you go,” the alpha crooned. “You’re so beautiful. You have no idea. So beautiful.”

When he came he tensed forward, coated the other man’s hand, and groaned as the alpha showered his face in sodden wet kisses; finally pressing his hormone charged lips against Bruce’s for a brief blistering taste. When he was finished Clark didn’t waste anytime and started pulling at his pants; trying to capitalise on Bruce’s relaxed state knowing his omega’s anal orgasms were always easier and often better directly after penile ones.

“Wait, no,” Bruce said anyway, stopping him. “Just lie down with me for a bit.”

He paused, seemingly unwilling to give up his mission. “You sure…?”

“Yeah.” Bruce pulled the man’s hands off his pants. “When your knot goes down you can fuck me properly.”

Clark blushed and rolled down onto the mattress beside him. “Seriously, sorry about that. I messed that up.”
Bruce ran a hand through the semen drying on his stomach. “I told you to.”

“Yeah but only because I was already going to come.”

He sighed and settled on the bed; close enough to touch the other man but not cuddling. Just a hand on each other. “I don’t have sex with you in weeks and the thing you complain about is no doing well when we do.”

“I know you’ve had a hard time adjusting to everything,” Clark muttered. “We don’t always have to have sex. Plus, I don’t know, I thought maybe the pregnancy might have… you know, made you less interested in that sort of thing.”

“No sex usually happens after the baby is born. Not before.”

“Yeah, but… I don’t know. I guess you’ve also not been, well, happy.” The man shot him a look. “Honesty, I don’t much care about sex when you literally cry yourself to sleep.”

He looked aside. “That was… just hormones, Clark.”

A long pause. “Maybe.”

“Maybe?” He scowled and turned his gaze back towards the man lying at his side. “You don’t trust me?”

“You’ve never used that excuse before,” Clark rationalised.

Quickly. “I’ve never been pregnant before.”

“But, I mean, even when you were clearly hormonal before…”

Incredulously. “When I was clearly hormonal before?”
“When you would get angry for no reason one week after your heat. When you were on your period. You would always make up a reason. Never just say it was just hormones. So the fact you’re telling me its hormones now makes me think maybe it was something else.”

When he spoke his voice was deathly low. “Choose your next words with *extreme* care.”

The man blinked and seemed to realise he was in trouble. “I… sorry?” He shifted uncomfortably. “I just meant I think it’s obvious the way the pack has been recently has been bothering you and after what you told me in the Watchtower I thought maybe being pregnant or giving up Batman for a while had brought out some stuff that might have been buried a bit.”

Growled. “Don’t presume so fucking much, Kent.”

“No, I’m not I’m just…” he pushed his hair from his eyes, “saying this all wrong and messing it up.” A deep breath. “The truth is I’m worried about you, Bruce. You’ve not been yourself and I know you’re pregnant, and not working as Batman, and that’s a lot of changes and I can’t imagine what it’s like but - fuck it - when you said you hated omegas I could have cried. I mean that. I’m meant to be your mate, I’m meant to be there for you, and I had no idea that’s what’s been going through your head.”

“I don’t need you to take ca—”

“I know Bruce, that’s not what I said.”

“You said…”

“*Be there*. I said I’m meant to be there for you just like you were there for me when my dad died and I don’t know if I have been if after all these years you could tell me something like that and for me to be so oblivious. I had no idea.”

He scowled and looked up at the ceiling. “Don’t worry about it.”

“Do you really hate omegas?”
He bit his lip. “For fucks sake, Clark.”

“Because omegas aren’t weak, Bruce. Look at Tim, look at Selina, and I know you don’t believe it but look in the mirror.”

His hands balled into fists. “I didn’t know I had to be lectured at just to get a fuck out of you.”

“I... I’m not trying to do that.”

“You don’t understand,” he snapped. “It’s not about what you do it’s about having to do it. A beta doesn’t have to be successful to prove to people they have that potential.”


Bitterly. “Where do you think the stereotype comes from, Clark? People don’t think omegas can do things because omegas don’t. You know why we don’t? Because we’re too damn weak to ignore that little voice in our head called instinct that says bend over and let the alpha sort it out. We’re weak because biology makes us weak. Did you know the average omega experiences an involuntary submissive response at the sound of an alpha’s growl? All you have to do is growl and that omega is ranking itself below you.” Earnestly. “Thank Christ Tim doesn’t seem to have it a fraction as strong as I did. He can shrug it off. I couldn’t. Not at his age.”

“But you grew out of it?”

He snorted. “I meditated to tapes of alphas growling. I used to sleep with it playing.” He looked at him. “How can you tell me to love my caste when I had to do that, undermine the programming it put into my brain, just so I could have an equal conversation with a temperamental alpha?”

Reservedly. “I know it’s not fair, Bruce.”

“Not fair, Clark? What the fuck do you have to deal with, huh?”
Without a moment’s hesitation. “I can’t pack bond.”

Bruce felt the guilt hit him like an icy hand through the chest; intense, sharp, and stripping him of his self righteousness in an instant. “I… that’s…” He couldn’t imagine what it must be like to be with but not part of a pack; to be as obviously oblivious as Clark was to the invisible spider web of connections holding them all together. He observed but was never a part of pack bonding, would never feel the happy whole *throb* pack bonds gave when the pack was together, nor be able to fall into the unspoken formation when they moved together. He was part of the family, acknowledged, respected, and even loved, but he wasn’t *one of them*. A dragon – impossible, perfect, and powerful – trying to run with a scraggly band of wolves down a mountainside.

“None of this is fair,” Clark said softly. “None of it has ever been fair and please believe me when I tell you I know what it’s like having to learn to conquer yourself like that. When I was five my mother thought I was deaf because sometimes I couldn’t hear her yelling beside me over the sound of some party on the west coast or dogs fighting in Cuba.” A tortured look. “People are always singing happy birthday, Bruce. If I listen I can always hear someone somewhere singing happy birthday. But that’s the trick. I had to learn to listen and to not listen at the same time; to filter information, and I hate myself for it because there are people crying out for help; there are people who die screaming my name but I can’t hear them. Not unless I listen. And even then… everyone talks all at once and scream for other reasons that don’t need Superman.”

Bruce rolled, propped himself up on his elbows, and studied the alpha. He knew from that agonised earnest look in his eye Clark was listening to that song now, listening to people screaming now; even as he spoke again; spoke to him despite the world constantly crying for his attention.

“I know it’s not fair, Bruce, but you’re a billionaire, I can fly, and we’re having a baby. A baby we want. How is that fair? You know how many couples would kill for a baby? Betas? Homosexual alphas? Couples like Jason and Dick? And then there are omegas that are pressured into having a dozen children without ever wanting one because *don’t be selfish, it’s up to you to keep this country afloat, and look at all the people that can’t*. People used to actually say that to Pete when he said he didn’t want kids. Adults to a teenage boy. How is that fair?”

“I want it to be fair,” Bruce heard himself rasp. “I want it to be. Everything.”

The alpha looked at him; a small pleat between his brows.

“Life *should* be fair, Clark. It should be.” A pause. “And other omegas… they just accept it.”

“Who are these omegas?” He interjected.
“Just omegas,” Bruce muttered.

“Name one.”

“Clark…” a weary moan.

“No, I’m serious. Name a single omega that is truly happy to be the stereotype and nothing else.”

Silence.

“What about alphas?” The alien pushed. “You think we are really nothing more than our stereotype? Because I’ve met good alphas, bad alpha, and ordinary alphas but I’ve never met an alpha that was nothing more than the alpha stereotype. Jason’s aggressive, sure, but he’s also one of the most caring and passionate people I have ever met. And I have never met all these ordinary betas everyone keeps talking about. Betas are the most extraordinary people I know. Even the ones that do conform to instinct and tradition.” A hand on the side of his face. “There is always something Bruce. Always something. We are none of us mere sums of our caste.”

Miserably. “I know that.”

“Then…” he frowned, reading his tone. “Why?”

“I want it to be fair. I want…” he looked aside and thought, with a sudden sickening clarity, how much easier the world would be if omegas were exactly what the stereotype said they were; if they deserved it; if he could blame them; hate them; if it was fair.

“Bruce?”

“It’s not fair,” he told him. “I know that. I just… I need my pack and when I thought I was losing them… I thought I deserved it because if they wouldn’t follow me if I could no longer fight them… if they were going to fall apart…” he shook his head. “So fucking stupid.”
“Yeah.”

He shot Clark a sharp look.

“That was stupid,” he agreed. “I don’t think I have ever seen a more tight knit pack.” A long look. “They’re not going anywhere, Bruce. I may not have pack bonds but I know enough to see you’re together and that isn’t changing any time soon.” A surprised blink as if he had just realised something followed by a secretive smile. “They’re, um, actually getting a lot more commit—”

A hard thud at the door followed by a muffled curse.

“Bruce? I need to talk to you. Why is this door locked?”

“I’m busy, Dick,” he called.

“P-please I…”

Something about the other man’s tone had him stuffing himself back into his pants, mopping up his stomach, and pouring a cloud of stiff smelling deodorant onto his body. Clark watched him the entire time with a strange expression on his face.

“Be supportive.”

He stopped. “What?”


He frowned and slipped out of the door without opening it wide enough to show the indecent alpha slumped and sated across his bed.

“What…?”
Dick looked pale and on the verge of tears. “Jason,” he answered the unfinished question. “He… I…”


“He… uh…” Dick wiped his cheek and took note of the fresh bite on his neck and clearly covered up smell. “Oh God, is Clark in there? I’m so sorry. I… I’ll come back…”

“Dick,” he reached out and stopped him. “What did Jason do?”

“He…”

“Tell me.”

“He…” The beta licked his lips and turned directly towards him; eyes open and earnest. “He asked me to marry him.”

Chapter End Notes

I fully intended to include the baby's gender in this chapter but it (obviously) didn't quite happen. Because of that I'm overspilling even more and giving you guys one more chapter. I hope you liked it. :)

Clark had been privy to the proposal. He had witnessed it - the words sounding at the back of his mind but not quite registering - as he was practically attacked by his mate; teeth, tongue, and gorgeous sweet smelling body moving against him in ways that made his head spin. It was only after he had emerged from the hot, fast, and humiliatingly poor performance did he realise the relevance of those words spoken in the drawing room downstairs.

Jason launched the question at the other man with no preliminary speech, no ring, and no romance. As far as Clark could tell he just walked into the room and asked.

“Wanna marry me?”


“Cause what you were saying the other night about forever and shit.” Jason continued regardless. “Figured we could do it for real. Proper.”

“I…”

“Like I can’t mate bond with you or nothing, or put a baby in you, or be your first alpha; but I reckon if we just say it all again in front of someone that could be us kinda sorted.”

“A… are you?”

“Yeah. I am.” A pause. “If you want.”

Dick’s broken breathless response had been muffled as if by a hand help over his mouth but that too Clark had heard.
It hadn’t been until afterwards as he listened to the beta make his way up stairs towards their room did the meaning of that conversation settle on him.

It was too easy for him to segment and compartmentalise what he heard into important and peripheral information; the coping mechanism designed to stop him going insane under the torrent of information pouring in through his super senses. While he had heard the conversation some part of his brain had, at the time, not quite written it off but yet not quite brought it to his immediate attention either. Still he had processed it enough to, with a surge of surprise, hint at the growing commitment of the pack and throw out a warning to his mate as the man moved out to meet his sobbing son.

The acrobat told him Jason had asked him to marry him and, as he tugged unconsciously at his empty ring finger, told him he’d said yes. The man listened; as still as a statue.

Weeks later Bruce still wasn’t happy about it. Clark doubted he would ever fully accept the wayward couple. Even if they had never seen themselves as brothers that had always in some small way been the intention of them living together as boys. Bruce had never back then been in a place where he could bring himself to form parent bonds but the presence of the boys suggested some small part of him had wanted to. If, Clark wondered, he had overcome his prejudices sooner and hadn’t pushed Jason away as a boy, would they have come to see each other as siblings? Would Dick have seen Jason and Bruce bonding and wanted it too? Would the whole pack have come together as a family unit in every sense of the word? Parent? Grandparent? Brothers? Would Dick and Jason’s relationship have been made impossible with a bit of affection Bruce at the time couldn’t bring himself to give? Were these the questions tormenting the other man whenever he looked at the young pair?

“I don’t understand the attraction,” Bruce muttered bitterly; privately venting the same secret sentiment he had since he had found out about the engagement. “Marriage is a dated and derogatory institution that has long been obsolete. A couple doesn’t require marriage to be committed nor will it commit a non-committed couple to each other. My parents were never married and do you think yours would have been any less dedicated as partners or parents if they hadn’t been? This whole idea is an ill conceived attempt to fix an unhealthy relationship. A childish jab at romance.”

“Yet you gave them your blessing,” Clark reminded him wearily.

“I said they could if they wanted to,” he snapped. “That’s not a blessing.”

“Don’t tell Dick that. He was so happy when you didn't, you know, say anything bad about it.”

A conflicted frown. “I know.”
They came to the top of the stairs, pushed through the door out of the concrete stairwell, and moved into the familiar hallway. Clark produced the key and opened the door set into the simple brick wall.

“‘This is different,’” Bruce muttered as he wandered into the vacant space; flicking lights on as he went.

“What did you expect?”

A small shrug. “‘I thought you would leave the furniture.”

“The furniture was mine.”

“You sold it?”

“Gave it away, mostly.”

It had taken him longer than expected to pack up the apartment, will himself to tell his landlady of the space’s impending vacancy, and find someone else to take over the lease. It officially changed hands the day after tomorrow but Clark had emptied it out several days ago, cleaned it, and now all he had to do was leave the key on the kitchen bench and lock the door on his way out.

Then he would no longer be living in Metropolis.

He hadn’t been living in the city for a long time, not really, but the official move had a strange kind of bittersweet finality to it. He had already stepped forward into the life he wanted – with Bruce and the family at the manor – but now it was time to close the door behind him and as much as he wanted to move forward, that was a hard thing to do.

To his surprise Bruce was the one who had suggested they give the apartment an official farewell.

The omega walked into the middle of the empty living room, footsteps echoing loudly, and sat on the wooden floorboards staring out the balcony window at the iconic skyline skewered from the atypical
perspective. Clark approached, sat cross legged beside him, and began opening the different local take out meals and arranging them before them.

“Do you think they’ll be happy, Clark?”

He cracked open a container of Mongolian lamb. “Yes.”

Bruce looked at him. “Really?”

He blushed as he thought of all the accidental snippets of sound he had caught coming from Jason and Dick over the last couple of weeks. The tender, the playful, and the downright filthy. “I, ahem, think they really do love each other.”

“They’ve loved each other from the start,” Bruce informed him. “That’s not what I asked. Do you think they’ll be happy?”

“I think…” he let his voice trail off as he considered the other man’s words.

“Because,” Bruce pushed. "I don’t know if I’ve ever seen them truly happy before. Not together.”

“What about now?” He asked and passed the man his bottle of water.

Bruce took it and frowned. “I don’t know.” A pause. “I suppose. But what if now doesn’t last? What if they go back to the way they were before?”

“What if they don’t?”

“I…” Bruce scowled and looked aside. “I don’t like it.”

“I know.”
“And now Tim and Conner are doing the same thing. I thought maybe they could start to see each other as brother if… damn it.”

“Tim and Kon aren’t doing anything,” Clark said calmly.

A harsh bark of laughter. “I don’t know how or when they’re doing it yet but they’re doing it. Tim’s not as good a liar as he thinks he is.”

Clark looked at him in shock. “You think they’re having sex?”

“Maybe… just this last week something’s been different with both of them. They’re keeping a secret and they’re doing it together.”

“What are you going to do?”

Bruce shot him a layered look.

“You put a tracking device on my son didn’t you.” Not a question.

“Don’t be so dramatic, Clark.” Question unanswered.

“Is it so bad that they’re together?” He asked with a sigh and picked up some honeyed chicken with the supplied plastic fork. “I mean, it’s obvious they’re not going to give up on each other at this point.”

No response. The omega chewed irritably on a piece of salmon.

He used one of Bruce’s favourite words. “Wouldn’t it be practical just to make sure they’re being —?”

Bruce twitched. “I’m not giving him up yet, Clark. Not yet.”
Clark opened his mouth to reply, paused to consider, and let it lie. Despite not being a fully hormonally bound parent to any of the boys in his pack Bruce couldn’t quite hide how much he truly did care about them. Damian seemed to be the first one that might soon develop a proper parental bond but that didn’t mean the others didn’t mean the world to him in their own abstract way. While Clark had come to care about them too he hadn’t really began to understand that feeling until recently as he watched the miniature being rolling over and over inside Bruce as the man slept. Terrifyingly tiny and still undefined but inexplicably fascinating and slowly but surely becoming intrinsically important as it developed.

He felt guilty being able to so intimately watch and listen to the squirming bundle of cells inside his mate when the man himself was so oblivious. He hadn’t even started to show. But it had quickly become a guilty pleasure. He peeked at it now; looking through the wall of Bruce’s skin, pelvic bone, into the slowly swelling shape of his uterus.

“What do they look like?”

He started and looked up into Bruce’s gaze; earnest and knowing.

“Little,” he answered. “I, um, can’t believe how small its hands are. And its fingers are tiny.”

“Count them.”

“What?”

“Fingers and toes,” Bruce muttered, closed his eyes, and put his hand on his stomach. “Count them.”

“They’re all there, Bruce. Everything’s fine.” He reached out, interwove his fingers with his mate’s, and repositioned his hand so it was directly over the foetus. “Didn’t Leslie already tell you that?”

“Yeah,” he opened his eyes and turned them towards him; strangely soft but still bewitchingly beautiful; icy pale blue flecked with darkness. “You know we conceived here.”

He smiled. “I know.”
“Right here.” The man specified pointedly. “The bed was here so I could see the door, the kitchen, the window… it seems so important when you’re nesting, Clark. You need to see things.”

“A lot of things seemed to seem important while nesting,” Clark observed dryly.

“This,” Bruce rubbed the designated spot on his stomach, ignoring his comment. “It started here.”

“Most likely.”

“Most likely?”

“Well, not all of our mating was on the bed.”

Bruce frowned for a moment. “Kitchen?”

“Yes.”

“Sofa,” he said, eyes alighting on the spot where it used to be.

“Yes.”

Less certainly. “Wall?”

“Yes.”

“And…”

“Ceiling,” Clark supplied.
Bruce cocked an eyebrow at the one. “Where in this place haven’t we had sex?”

His lips twitched towards a smile. “There,” he nodded to a patch of floor.

“Just there?” Bruce replied sceptically.

“Just there.”

The omega abandoned his half eaten food, stood, and walked across to settle on the designated area. “Just here?”

Clark watched him; keenly aware of the subtle change in his voice and what it meant. His usual baritone spoken to fill the room like a long mellow note on a bass guitar.

“Just there,” he confirmed again.

A deliberately - tortuously - long pause. “Come here, Clark.”

Perhaps it had always been Bruce’s intention to say goodbye to the apartment with one more sex session. Clark hadn’t dared hope but it seemed fitting considering their history with these now sparse rooms. Not only had they conceived here, but Bruce had invited him to meet the pack here, he had first bitten Bruce here, and – more importantly – bitten Bruce here again after they decided to turn that bite into a bond. There was also something different about sex here. Here Bruce wouldn’t let him lead but he wouldn’t control him as strictly either; like he was aware he was in Clark’s territory – on his turf – and that meant Clark was given just a little bit more grey area. A space he always injected with the kind of sex Bruce rarely orchestrated; slow and loving. He cock always throbbed at the idea of the raw dark sexual thrill the man gave him when he was being explicitly dominant; using him, pleasuring him, and stealing away for a moment the weight of the world. But sometimes he just wanted to hold him and be held in return. Slow, sweet, skin on skin on skin.

Bruce groaned and arched off the floor as, fifteen minutes later, Clark lightly traced the wet rim of his arse.

He really was stunning. Muscles flowing from scarred but perfect broad shoulders down beneath the pale skin of his chest, and over the smooth subtle yet still somehow strong swell of hips. His features were angular, colouring artistically stark, and limbs long and powerful. Those legs closed around him
now; ankles locking behind his back.

“Fuck me.”

It used to take him a lot more to get Bruce ready to take him. Not half as much time as an alpha or a beta but it still hadn’t been an instantaneous process. Since bonding the smell of each others unique arousal spiced scent sped up certain biological functions and as a general rule Bruce was wet easier, more often, and when he was he was wet he was wetter. An omega’s involuntary bodily response to having a mate living in close proximity. Clark entered him easily with no prep. Even so he was tighter than usual but the sound the omega made wasn’t one of discomfort or pain.

He still didn’t know how he had lived most of his life without knowing what it felt like to be inside Bruce Wayne. The hot wet cling of muscle greedily guiding him down the correct channels, entrance clamping down with aggressive need to hold a knot in, and the softer flesh just inside him designed to take that knot now teasing him as he sheathed himself in the groaning omega.

He moved as Bruce’s command; the omega’s hands pulling him forward and pushing him back. When Clark tried to slow the pace the other man’s eyes opened – flashing a blistering blue – and a low warning growl filled the air. The mere sound enough for him to shudder under a sudden surge of desire and thrust into him faster; relishing the hot, wet, slide of his cock.

But he was making more noise than Bruce. That wasn’t what he wanted. He was usually the louder of the two but, that night, he wanted Bruce to feel more than him. Wanted to hear that beautiful voice work and know how much pleasure he was giving him.

He kissed him until he felt Bruce shake from the taste of it, teased his cock, and used his spare hand to stroke his side, chest, and ghost over a nipple.

Bruce broke the kiss with a sharp – almost pained – gasp.

They both stopped.

“You’re more sensitive there then usual,” Clark observed; voice ragged.

The omega shot with him a sharp look. “So?” He croaked.
God, his voice was almost gone.

Clark honestly had no desire to dominate Bruce. The idea just wasn’t very appealing. He would much rather worship that perfect body and let the omega wash away all the stresses and stature of being Superman with a look and a growled order. *Kneel. Kiss. Suck. Bite. Fuck.* A simple, no accessories kind of sexual authority that made him weak at the knees. But, despite that, he couldn’t deny there was a kind of raw animalistic excitement in seeing, through it all, the control freak lose just a little bit of control. A control he took back with an effortless ease.

Teeth through lips wet and swollen from kissing. “Fuck me, Kent.” He pushed him back until Clark was sitting on his haunches, knees on the floor, and Bruce was arching into his lap; shoulders pressed to into the wooden floor for leverage. “Make me feel it.”

He pulled Bruce’s hips obediently into his lap and pounded into him until he finally felt the man cry out and clamp around him with an insistent *throb throb throb* as if his body were trying to milk the come out of his cock. He kept that punishing pace, slightly faster than a human would be able to do, and held Bruce’s hips at the best – most brutal angle.

By the time he did come his thighs were wet with Bruce’s slick, the body before him was boneless, and eyes blinking foggily up at him. Bruce flinched and then moaned as he took his knot and curved his spine as he tried to find the most comfortable position on the floor, face to face, with the knot trapping his arse against Clark’s groin.

Clark started fisting the other man’s shaft and Bruce slapped him away.

“Are you sure?”

The omega blinked sleepily up at him.

“It won’t take long and it’ll make you feel better,” he tried to persuade him. “You can close your eyes.”

Bruce made an appreciative noise and slumped into his lap. Omegas often dozed if didn’t fully sleep when knotted; their body’s energy dedicated to absorbing the sperm and unique alpha hormones inside them. The only obvious exception to this rule was when they were in heat when they were too full of their own bodily chemicals to respond so passively. Even then a knot – and more importantly
the fresh alpha hormones it trapped in the omega’s body – would help quell the violent edge of a heat and rein an omega back from high heat.

He tugged Bruce, the man’s hips twitching and eyes fluttering open and closed again, until he came with a breathless exhale.

“Ah,” he said sleepily. “That always feels different with a knot inside…”

“Does it?”

A half nod. “I’ll do it to you sometime,” he mumbled, eyes closed.

Clark chuckled and looked down at the other man. While omegas usually slumbered in some fashion during this time alpha's often didn’t. Clark had long since decided an alpha’s instinctual duty during this time was to care for, protect, and most importantly fall madly in love with the person wrapped around their knot. He gazed at Bruce now; admiring the shape of his lips, the strong definition of his jaw, and slow sated rise and fall of his chest. There, among it all, was his bite mark; soft, pink, and framed around his omega gland; Clark’s messy claim seeming out of place on the masterpiece that was this man.

And between his hips the small, strange, somersaulting little thing that was theirs.

Both of them beautiful.

After his knot went down and Bruce stirred back to life they finished eating their now cool dinner and Clark started experimenting with the new sensitivity levels of Bruce’s chest; finally having the chance to keep it slow, loving, and tender; Bruce, for once, seemingly to prefer a gentle touch. He would have called it odd but there were a few little things Bruce was starting to allow himself to act slightly softer for; like he was finally relaxing a muscle held taunt for years; finally surrendering however slightly a totalitarian need to always be perceived as the indomitable warrior.

He had been training Tim how to work as a detective and where an omega’s superior sense of smell was a boon and when it was not, had allowed Dick to hug when the man told him about the engagement, and was starting to properly bond with Damian; neither experienced in being physically
affectionate but seeming to find the same kind of comfort from just being in the same room as each other. The boy especially didn't seem to know how to instigate an embrace but was quick to thrust himself into the middle of any one Bruce was apart of and glare at the other person seeking attention from his father.

Clark hoped the conversation they had had the day Tim finished his heat had helped Bruce as much as it had helped him understand Bruce. The man had finally opened up and allowed Clark to see however briefly through his eyes. The experience had been a stilling one. He didn’t hate omegas, Clark reasoned, not really. If he did he wouldn’t love Tim the way he did, have the connection with Selina, or have stomached the omegas he used to kiss when pretending to be the beta billionaire playboy.

No, he didn’t hate omegas; but he wanted to.

Bruce – with an earnest childlike will – just wanted the world to be fair. He wanted to hate omegas, wanted to blame them, because if omegas somehow deserved all the discrimination and pain he received because of his sexual caste then that would be easier than believing there was no justice in the world. No fairness. That was why Bruce had looked so utterly miserable when Clark told him people weren’t just sums of their caste. Like a child who had his fantasy snatched away from him, or a man who knew it was a silly dream but had been clinging to it anyway.

First self righteously. Life should be fair, Clark. And then in morbid defeat. I want it to be fair.

It seemed his internalised omegaphobia was born out of the same passion - the same desire of justice and vengeance - that had given birth to the bat. But even if it had been a hard thing for Bruce to acknowledge and attempt to put aside he seemed happier now; open, less aggressive, and a more there part of his pack. As hard as it was to let go of his hate for omegas – his shield against the injustice of the world – it meant he no longer had to aggressively prove himself as something other than omega. He was still as different from his more conventional caste mates as black on white but it was like the tension between that difference had been eased.

The issues weren’t gone. It would be naive to believe a speech could wash away years of negative perceptions and hate. Clark knew some things weren’t so easily left on the road side and forgotten; some things Bruce would carry with him to the grave. But that was okay because at least now Clark knew what those dark looks meant, knew what was going on in his head, and could carry them with him.

His eyes flicked down to the being inside him.
It seemed only fair that he carry some things since Bruce was carrying the most important thing of all.

He watched that child grow over the next month. Watched it develop with impossible speed until the wall of the womb overspilt the cradle of Bruce’s hips and started leaning against his abdominal wall. Removing all the definition of his abs in an instant. It wasn’t long after that Clark came back to the manor after a few days in space, stared at the changes to the tiny person discreetly bulging Bruce’s belly, and leapt onto the bed to wake up his sleeping mate.

“Hey… hey… Bruce…”

“Welcome home,” Bruce muttered dryly; not looking up from his pillow. “Sex later. I’m sleeping.”

“It’s a girl.”

No response.

“Hey… are you awake?”

Bruce slowly rolled and looked up at him. “You sure?”

He smiled. “Pretty sure.”

Another extended silence.

Clark felt his smile slip. “Why? Didn’t you want a girl?”

“I wanted a baby, Clark. I didn’t think in specifics.” At last the smile; open and happy. “Besides, I don’t think it’s about what we want anymore.”

He blinked. “How so?”
“Because we already have her.”

Chapter End Notes

And there we have it folks!

I really hope you enjoyed this double sized addition to the series and thank you so much for your support, advice, readership, kudos, and all those wonderful wonderful comments! You guys really are the fuel to this fire and directly responsible for this story transforming from a porn one shot I wrote a year ago into the beautiful imperfect monster you see before you today. I could never have imagined coming so far without such incredible support so thank you all. This is for you.

If you are interested in returning to this world with me, fear not; this is not the end. I am planning now on taking a brief break to write some other fan fiction, work on some personal projects, and even create a spin off or two set in this universe - most likely during Bruce's pregnancy - which I will link up to the end of this story (keep a sharp eye out if you're keen). After which I'm going to conclude this series with one more super sized segment which will include the baby's birth, the wedding, and a lot more besides. I hope to see you there!

Otherwise, let me know what you thought of this story. I would love to hear from you. Thanks!

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Here's a little something special to celebrate the one year anniversary of this universe. ;)

Teen Titan spin off anyone? Check out Secret Future if you're in the mood for a bit more TimKon, a bit more young love, and a whole lot more Bart in this universe.

Works inspired by this one: Mortified By You by SticksandBones, Secret Future by Evilpixie

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!