I See What's Mine (And Take It)

by rhyaenv

Summary

After Jensen lays eyes on the new omega his father brought in to mate with—a young man from the San Antonio Pack named Jared Padalecki—he knows he’ll do whatever it takes to have Jared as his own mate instead. Even if that means he’ll have to go up against his own father, the Head Alpha of their pack.

Notes

A fic for sammy-get-me-pie for being the second winner of my omega!Jared/Sam sideblog’s fanfic giveaway!

Slight edits to chapters 1 - 3 as of October 5, 2016.

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

Throughout Texas, it’s commonly thought that the Ackles Pack in Dallas is very likely the most formidable wolfpack in the entire state, despite it not being the largest.

Their Head Alpha, Alan Ackles, is also believed to be one of the most daunting pack leaders in northern Texas. An alpha that none, not even other Head Alphas, ever wish to go up against.

Which might help to explain why, despite the change that’s slowly begun to settle in Texas over the last couple of years—a shift from the older, conservative beliefs to modern, progressive ideas—the areas in and surrounding Dallas are still clinging to traditionalist views and ways of life.

Yet unknown to many, and much to Alan Ackles’ own chagrin, his only son and possible heir, Jensen, seemed unwilling to take over their pack, to become the next Head Alpha. It irked Alan immensely as he was already over fifty, and still it seemed he had no true heir, no son of his to take over and lead when he’d finally have to step down from being the Head Alpha of their pack.

Alan knew he had to do something soon to rectify this. He wasn’t getting any younger and knew he couldn’t risk anyone else suddenly coming in and claiming his pack should he fall ill and grow weak or die. No, Alan knew he had to take action soon to make sure control would still be in his hands.

So, weeks later, when a new omega was suddenly brought in one Monday afternoon—a young man named Jared Tristan Padalecki, who happened to be the second son of George Padalecki, the Head Alpha of the San Antonio Pack—and Alan declared that the twenty-one year old boy was going to be his new mate, everyone was shocked by the news.

Including Jensen.

Jensen had been hanging out with his closest friends—Chris, Steve, Tom, and Mike—at Chris’ place above the auto repair shop he owned and worked at, when they’d all received a text from Jensen’s aunt, telling them that Jensen’s father was going to make an important announcement to the pack at Jefferson Park in about half an hour and that they should all be there.

The guys had turned to stare at Jensen, all of them looking completely nonplussed and seemingly hoping and expecting Jensen to know, and therefore also explain, what the important announcement might be. Yet Jensen had merely given them a nonchalant shrug in response.

It was Chris who spoke then, suggesting they all carpool over to the park in his truck. They all agreed, and nearly twenty minutes later, they were finally at the park, awkwardly standing behind a small group of people that stood before the sole gazebo in the entire park that was often used to make public announcements.

A few more minutes later, a semi-large crowd had gathered around the large gazebo. Everyone was
chattering about, some with friends, some with family, over typical things associated with one’s work and life, but even so, there seemed to be a guarded aura hovering above everyone.

Yet as soon as Alan Ackles walked up the steps and into the gazebo, everyone immediately fell silent.

“Hello everyone! First, I’d just like to thank you all for coming here today,” Alan began, his voice loud and carrying across the crowd, as he looked at all of the people standing before him, “especially since today is Labor Day. I know all of us here work very hard, and to have a Monday off, well, it feels like Christmas has come early, right?”

A few, random murmurs of stilted laughter sounded from the audience.

“Now, the main reason I called everyone here today is to inform you all that I will finally be taking in a new mate.” A surprised silence fell upon the crowd immediately after he finished his words, and Alan paused momentarily in hopes of building suspense. “I am delighted to inform you all that my future omega will be the second son of George Padalecki, who, as many of you already know, is the Head Alpha of the San Antonio Pack.”

He paused yet again to tilt his head slightly to the right, and then a tall, lean young man suddenly walked up into the gazebo until he was about a foot away from Alan’s side.

“Everyone, I’d like to introduce you to Jared Padalecki, my soon-to-be mate and the future Head Omega of the Ackles-Dallas Pack.”

As Jensen regarded the young omega carefully, Jared dared to take a hesitant look out to the crowd, and somehow, perhaps by mere change, their eyes happened to meet—and when they did, in that second everything around them seemed to fade away.

The affect was nearly instantaneous. It was like a calling—an unfamiliar voice whispering in the back of his mind, one that stirred his inner wolf awake, urging him to somehow get closer to the omega, to take him, and the more he denied doing what it wanted, the more it felt like something inside of him was trying to tear him apart.

Jensen felt his chest tighten painfully, as if the air around him had grown too thin and he was somehow struggling to breathe. His heart began to pound furiously, and Jensen distantly wondered if he was about to pass out when Jared immediately averted his gaze to look down, and whatever had transpired between them abruptly vanished.

But as the crowd began to clap in congratulation, Jensen merely stood there motionlessly, his body coming down from whatever had taken over him only seconds before. Yet he remained oblivious to the sounds around him, his eyes still locked onto the young omega’s form and trying to take in every possible detail about him.

Jared had lengthy dark brown hair that flared out slightly around his ears and his neck, and long bangs that seemed to try and hide his eyes along with his eyebrows. And while his skin appeared to be somewhat tanned, from where he stood, Jensen could easily see his now brightly flushed cheeks.

But what really struck Jensen, was that this omega looked incredibly young—especially when standing next to his fifty-two year old father—and Jensen couldn’t help but wonder just how old this omega really was, because from the looks of it, he seemed like he could be anywhere in his late teens to his mid-twenties.

“The mating ceremony will take place this Friday night at ten in our Great Trinity Park,” Alan
continued with a proud grin on his face, his words breaking Jensen out of his trance. “It is my hope that you all will attend and be witnesses to our union.”

Then as Jensen took notice of his father possessively wrapping his left arm around the omega’s tiny waist, a suddenly heavy, hot uncomfortable feeling began to stir in his gut. The simple action made his skin crawl, and though Jensen had no idea why, every inch of his body was all at once trembling, his wolf snarling in fury, ordering him to walk over to them and yank his father’s arm away and push him as far away from the omega as he possibly could.

Without notice, the voice in the back of his mind spoke again, the one Jensen knew belonged to his wolf, automatically correcting him—from his omega.

But then Alan and Jared began to make their way off the stage.

At the sight of the two walking side by side, so close that their sides were touching with every step they took, Jensen felt an unpleasant swell of blinding rage wash over him. Both of Jensen’s hands clenched into fists by his side, his nails digging slightly into the skin of his palms.

He shut his eyes and tried to take a deep breath to help calm himself down.

But then it hit Jensen—a reason as to why he was reacting so strangely at the mere sight of his father with the young omega—and his teeth clenched in exasperation and agony.

Because the omega his father wanted to claim as his own? Jensen was now quite certain that the reason he’d reacted so vehemently to the sight of his father with his new omega was because his wolf knew that Jared was his true mate.

Fuck.

“You alright there, Jensen?” the voice immediately pulled Jensen out of his thoughts.

“Huh?” Jensen opened his eyes to see that it’d been Chris who’d spoken to him, his friend now giving him a concerned look. He felt his body relax slightly and he tried to give Chris an easy smile as he replied, “Yeah, I’m alright, just surprised to hear my father’s taking in an omega now, of all times.”

“Yeah,” the concern on Chris’ face remained, but his eyes narrowed in suspicion, as if he knew Jensen was lying, “I’m quite surprised by it too.”

Suddenly Steve popped up right next to Chris, Tom and Mike right behind him.

“Jensen, did you know about this?” It was Steve that first spoke up, his brows pulled together in confusion. “About your father wanting to mate with a new omega?”

“Honestly? I had no idea,” Jensen replied with a sigh. “But you all know me and the old man don’t exactly get along. So him doing something like this without even telling me’s no real surprise.”

“We should head on back to my place,” Chris began, his voice quiet as he casually glanced around them, “because I’m pretty sure we all have our own thoughts on this…new revelation, and right now, right here, is not the place for us to talk about everything.”

“Yeah,” it was Tom that spoke up, his face grave, “you’re right, we should head on back.”

Mike and Steve nodded their heads and Jensen only gave a sigh before they all began to make their way back to the parking lot.
“Man…” Mike let out a huge breath of air when they finally reached the car they’d all carpooled in, “Chris, I seriously hope you have some cold beers stashed away in your fridge because I’m thinking we’re probably gonna be needing them soon.”

Once they were finally back at Chris’ place, all of them now sitting down in the living room, Mike was the first to speak up. “So…Chris, about that beer I mentioned before…” But Tom, who was sitting down right next to Mike, gently slapped the back of his head to quiet him while Steve just rolled his eyes and Chris shook his head.

“I ain’t got any beer secretly hidden away in my fridge, Mike,” Chris replied with a disappointed sigh. “Even though you might’ve had a point before. Because if we are indeed going to discuss what he learned earlier, well…it’s gonna be one hell of a conversation.”

“I don’t know about you all,” Tom suddenly began, a troubled expression on his face, “but I’m actually really worried about Jared. I actually met him a few years ago in Austin. I was visiting Mark at UT at the time, and my brother was apparently pretty good friends with Jared, so we sort of got to know each other a bit while I stayed there for a few days. From what I saw, Jared was unbelievably kind and thoughtful to everyone, and he was always smiling. So to see him today like that…honestly? I’m pissed off. Jared doesn’t deserve this.”

“Yeah. I admit I don’t know the kid, but I still gotta agree,” it was Steve who spoke next with a grimace on his face, “I mean, we already established that Jensen’s father planning to take in a new omega now is already a big deal, but for the old man to mate with such a young omega? I just…it doesn’t really feel right, you know?”

Everyone else nodded their heads in agreement while Jensen merely remained silent with an obviously displeased frown on his face.

“When I met Jared, he mentioned he was in his second year at UT, so I’m guessing he’s probably either twenty-one or twenty-two right now,” Tom added quietly, his eyes downcast.

“Are you serious?” was Mike’s disbelieving response before he began to shake his head. “Fuck, that’s gonna be a thirty year age difference between them! That’s fuckin’ crazy!”

A heavy silence suddenly fell upon the living room as everyone took the information in, but Chris was looking at Jensen, who seemed to look both deep in thought and slightly distressed.

“Hey Jen,” Jensen turned to look at Chris, who was now eyeing him with a stern face, “what’s up, man? You’ve been acting off since before we left the park after your father’s announcement. Don’t lie and say you’re okay, because you’re not fooling me—it’s obvious you’re not.”

Hearing Chris’ words, Steve, Mike, and Tom all turned their heads to stare at Jensen, their brows furrowed in clear concern.

“Is it because your old man’s taking in a new omega now?” was Steve’s tentative question.

“Or is the age difference bothering you?” Mike asked with a scowl on his face. “Because I think that was even more shocking to find out. I don’t know Jared like Tom, but I’m still pissed off on the kid’s behalf. Alan should’ve picked an omega closer to his own age.”
“No, it…” Jensen let out a shaky breath of air. “It’s neither of those things.”

And when he saw that both Steve and Mike seemed like they were about to say something else, he gave a defeated sighed and clarified, “Okay, fine. I admit I was really taken aback by my father’s announcement, especially since he was mateless for nearly ten years after Mom passed away. And yes, I’m honestly appalled to know that the omega he wants to mate with is so young. But…” his shoulders sagged, “that’s not what’s really bothering me right now.”

“Then what is?” Tom eyed Jensen carefully, looking extremely worried. “Jen, you know you can tell us. We’ve all been best friends since high school.”

“It’s…. Jensen stopped himself to let out another shuddering breath as he dragged both of his hands down his face. “Fuck.”

“Jen…” Chris began, seemingly about to get up from his seat and walk over to where Jensen was sitting, “you—”

But then Jensen cut him off, the words tumbling from his lips in a nervous rush, “I’m pretty sure that Padalecki kid is my true mate.”
The silence that fell upon the living room after Jensen’s words was stifling, and while Jensen shut his eyes and hung his head in embarrassment, everyone else seemed to look at each other, shock written across their faces, feeling unsure on how to proceed.

Chris was the first to speak up moments later, his face grave. “Jen, are you sure he’s your true mate?”

“Yeah, I’m pretty sure.” Jensen let out a tremulous, resigned sigh as he raised his head to look at Chris, his face weary. “I mean—fuck—Chris, I felt it when I made eye contact with the kid. It only lasted for a split second, but I swear I felt this pull towards him, like something deep inside of me was just pleading for me to get closer to him. We’ve been told to suppress our inner wolf, to ignore its calls until the wolf’s voice falls completely silent, but this time…I just couldn’t. I don’t even know the kid, but when I saw my father touch him…” Jensen shut his eyes for a few seconds and took a deep breath, “I found myself feeling so…enraged. All I wanted to do was walk over to them and get Alan as far away from him as I could.”

“Well…” Tom’s quiet voice caused everyone to look at him, “if Jared really is your true mate, you know you have a right to challenge your father for him, right?”

Jensen merely nodded his head.

“It sucks that our pack still follows traditional pack laws,” Steve shook his head, “because if we’d adopted the more progressive pack laws like most other wolfpacks across Texas have already done, you could just claim that Jared’s your true mate and he’d be yours. But since we’re still following the old ways, you still have to challenge your father to a fight if you want to be with him.”

“Fuck these old pack laws,” Mike growled, “they aren’t right! Jared and Jensen are true mates, they should be together no matter what! But no, according to these fuckin’ laws, if Jensen were to challenge Alan and somehow lose the fight, even if Jared’s Jensen’s true mate, Alan’ll still have the right to claim Jared as his omega. Just how fucked up is that?”

Everyone went quiet after Mike’s outburst. Both Jensen and Tom looking even more anguished at the reminder of how exactly their pack laws still worked.
“Are we even gonna talk about the implications behind Alan’s announcement?” Chris finally had to ask as he paused to look at everyone. “Because I’m thinking Alan only wants to mate with Jared to secure another heir to the pack before it’s too late.”

“You’re right,” Tom let out a deep breath of air, “we need to talk about this now because, despite all our talks and planning, Alan’s decision to take another mate after about a decade of being mateless is something we clearly weren’t expecting. Now, we’ll have to come up with a new plan of action.”

“We were supposed to have more time for this!” Steve couldn’t help but groan.

Tom looked at Chris. “What do you think we should do?”

“Well, even though we’ll definitely have to move quickly on this,” Chris began, a pensive expression on his face, “Alan’s announcement’s also happened to presented us with the perfect opportunity to throw him out of power.”

“How?” Mike questioned Chris, clearly confused.

Chris gave a hesitant glance at Jensen, who was looking back at him with an unreadable expression on his face, before answering in a steady voice, “If Jensen claims that Jared is his true mate, as Tom mentioned before, he can legally challenge Alan to a fight for the right to claim Jared as his own mate. And, should Jensen win the fight, he’ll also gain status as the new Pack Alpha.”

“And that’ll work even though Jensen won’t directly be challenging Alan for leadership of the pack?” Steve asked.

“Yeah,” Chris let out a tired breath of air, “if Jared had been brought in by any other alpha, the challenge would be just like every other fight for the right to claim a mate that another wants. But since Jensen will specifically be going up against Alan, our current Pack Alpha, according to pack law the fight will automatically be considered a challenge of leadership as well.” He paused. “If any other alpha dared challenged Alan for Jared, the same would apply to them—it’d not only be a fight to claim a mate, but also a fight for pack leadership.”

“Okay, so…just so we’re clear,” Mike began, “no matter what, if Jensen wants to claim Jared as his own mate, he basically has to become the next Pack Alpha?”

Chris sighed. “Yeah, that’s about it.”

Everyone fell silent as they took in Chris’ words. But when Jensen gave a loud sigh, Mike turned to look at him and dared to ask the question that was on everyone’s mind.

“Jen, man, I’m sorry to ask, but we need to know…what’re you thinkin’ of doing?”

“Well…it seems like I don’t really have a choice now, now do I?” Though a strained smile tugged at the corners of Jensen’s lips, the sorrow in his eyes remained evident. “I need to challenge my father to a fight before the mating ceremony this Friday, and I need to win.”

For a few seconds, no one spoke—the reality of the situation and how consequential what they were discussing weighing heavily in their thoughts.

“Alright.” Yet another sigh escaped from Chris as he ran a hand through his long hair. “Then we need to discuss when exactly everything’s gonna go down.” He averted his gaze to stare at Jensen yet again. “Jen, have you thought about when you’re gonna challenge Alan yet?”

Tom, Mike, and Steve locked their gazes on Jensen, nervously waiting to hear his response.
Jensen let out another breath of air before replying, “Well…whenever I do, the challenge’ll have to be a public declaration, right?”

A sympathetic frown appeared on Chris’ face. “Yeah, since Alan’s still Pack Alpha, according to pack law, you’ll need to challenge him for the right to claim Jared before a large crowd of people for the challenge to be admissible. The same applies to the actual fight.”

“Wow,” Mike finally spoke up, a disgruntled frown on his face, “that sucks.”

While Steve grumbled something indiscernible under his breath, Tom couldn’t help but look at Jensen worriedly.

“I, uh…” Jensen hesitated, clearly appearing uncertain, “I think I might have an idea, but I’m not sure if you guys are gonna like it.”

“Oh boy…” Mike mumbled as he looked at Tom, who in turned turned to look at Mike anxiously.

Chris merely leveled a hard look at Jensen as if already suspecting what his friend was about to say and was clearly displeased with what he believed Jensen was about to suggest.

Since Chris had gone quiet, Steve decided to speak up. “Alright, let’s hear it.”

“Well…” Jensen paused for a few seconds to look at each of his friends for a few seconds before continuing, “I know I’ll be cutting it close, but I’m thinking…what if I challenge and fight Alan right before the mating ceremony’s scheduled to take place?”

When no one said anything right away, Jensen tentatively added, “Nearly everyone in the pack’ll be gathered there. If I win, Alan won’t be able to do anything to deny my victory. He wouldn’t dare to, not before everyone.”

“You’re right,” Chris glowered at Jensen, his voice critical, “you’ll be cutting it real close then.” But then his face and voice softened as he continued to say, “But…even though I personally think your suggestion is absolutely terrible, I still have to admit it’s a pretty good idea.”

“I just…” Jensen paused for a moment, his eyes downcast, “I really wish it didn’t have to go this way, you know? From what I remember, and from what everyone else tells me, Mom was actually rather liberal, and maybe, if she hadn’t passed away so soon, our pack would’ve eventually adopted the progressive pack laws. But she did, and after, my father just…he changed, he become more distant, unapproachable.”

A pained grimace showed on Jensen’s face as he continued. “Honestly, I think it’s rather sad to say that I’m somewhat glad my father doesn’t know me that well now, because that’s likely what got him thinking I’m not interested in succeeding his place as Pack Alpha. Because, let’s be real, if he really knew me, he’d’ve seen through that lie and found out the truth, and if that had happened, he probably would’ve legally disowned me immediately after to prevent me from ever taking his place as the Dallas Pack Alpha.”

“Yeah, oh man…your father’s gonna be pissed when you challenge him…” Mike groused quietly with a miserable expression on his face.

“Especially since you’re planning on challenging him before everyone on the day he plans to mate with Jared,” Steve added with a slight grimace.

“Guys…” suddenly Tom’s features twisted in concern, “what about Jared? How do you all think he’s gonna take this?”
The question was unexpected and everyone but Chris fell silent.

“You think you can find a way to speak with Jared before Friday night?” Chris asked as he turned to look at Tom. “I’m pretty sure Alan’s gonna keep Jared hidden away somewhere until the mating ceremony takes place, but if you can find out where he’s keeping Jared, and mention that you actually know Jared, you might be able to talk to Jared and give him some kind of a warning or something.”

With a determined expression on his face, Tom nodded his head and replied, “I’ll try my best.”

“Good.” Chris gave a slight nod as well. “Then I’m thinking everything’s pretty much settled, right?”

“But…” everyone turned to look at Jensen, who was suddenly looking incredibly apprehensive, “what if I challenge Alan to a fight for Jared and I…lose? I mean, you know the rules for alpha challenges, we have to shift and fight it out as wolves until one of us gives up. Our pack law doesn’t even legally allow us to shift after we turn twelve unless we formally ask permission from my father. It’s fucked up. I haven’t shifted in years. How the hell am I supposed to suddenly shift in a few days and fight my father and win?”

“Yes, we all know and understand just how fucked up all this is, how biased our laws really are,” Chris ground out, his face stern as he narrowed his eyes at Jensen, “you’re not gonna lose, Jen. You have to believe you’re gonna win.”

“Yeah, man,” Mike offered Jensen a huge smile, “I mean, Alan’s fifty-two and you’re twenty-six. Statistically speaking, since you’re considerably younger than him, and in better health, it’s much more likely than not that you’ll win the fight, even if you’re not used to being in your wolf form anymore.”

“Gotta agree with Mike here,” Steve nodded his head, there was hints of a smile on his face, “Alan’s definitely too old now. You fight him, I’m betting you’re gonna win.”

“Even I’d be willing to bet on you winning,” Tom gave Jensen a kind smile, “and you know how much I dislike making bets.”

Hearing his friends’ encouraging words, knowing they had such strong faith in him, Jensen couldn’t help but smile. “Thanks guys.”

Chris gave a small smile in return before his featured became serious once more. “Anyways, we’re all gonna be there too, so if you do end up needing help, or whatever, at any point, just know that we’ll have your back.”

It was Tom that ventured to ask, “You think Alan might try something?”

“Once Alan finds out Jensen’s not gonna follow traditional pack laws after becoming Pack Alpha, I’m pretty sure he’s not gonna be pleased.” Chris frowned, his brow furrowed. “So, just to be safe, come Friday, we should all go in expecting some kind of counteraction from him. Better yet, we should all be prepared to put up a fight if necessary. Should things take a turn for the worse, be ready to fight in either form.”

Tom nodded his head in agreement.

Steve gave a firm, “Right.”

And Mike grinned and said, “Got it.”
“Thanks again, guys.” A fond, sincere smile appeared on Jensen’s face. “No matter what happens Friday night, I just want you all to know that I really appreciate your friendship, your unwavering support, and everything you’ve done for me. You guys are the best.”

“Fuck, Jen…” Mike’s hands moved up to wipe away imaginary tears from his eyes, “don’t get all sappy on us now… I don’t have any tissues with me.”

Everyone let out a laugh at that.

“Don’t worry, Jen. Everything’s gonna be okay.” Tom looked at Jensen with an assuring smile on his face. “I know it.”

“Alright then!” Mike abruptly shot up from his seat. ”I say we go out and get those beers now because I’m hungry and thirsty as fuck, and after all this talk, I'm pretty sure we fuckin’ deserve them.”

“I swear, Rosenbaum,” Steve closed his eyes and shook his head disapprovingly, “I don’t get how Tom here can stand sharing an apartment with you.”

Mike gave Steve an incredulous stare, his next words spoken in a peeved, yet proud tone. “I’ll have you know, Tom loves having me as a roommate! We get along splendidly.”

“To this day, I still wonder how,” Steve muttered under his breath, “but then again, Tom’s got the patience of a saint.”

“Excuse me, did you say something, Steven?” Mike questioned as he narrowed his eyes at Steve.

Steve gave Mike a large, cheeky grin. “Nope, you’re probably just hearing things, Michael. You might wanna go and get your ears checked.”

As Mike looked indignant and began sputtering out a response, everyone else began laughing again. Jensen couldn’t help but smile and join in the laughter.

In that moment, Jensen felt like perhaps everything would be okay after all.

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That night, as Jensen lay in bed attempting to fall asleep, he found himself thinking of the lanky omega, who, despite being twenty-something years old, still managed to look even younger. Of the omega who Jensen knew was his true mate. Of the omega his wolf still called for.

Jensen wondered if Jared was also aware that they were true mates. If Jared had also felt something in that fleeting moment their eyes had met back at the park. If he had, what did Jared think of him? Would Jared even want to mate and bond with an alpha like him? Would he be happy with someone like Jensen as his alpha—as his mate?

The questions in Jensen’s mind were endless, but even so, eventually, he drifted into a state of peaceful sleep.

Come morning, Jensen would think back to the dreams he’d had that night—of gentle, twinkling
hazel eyes, of a blinding smile that seemed to beam brighter than the blazing sun.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

I deeply apologize for taking so long to update this story. Things were rather rough for me for a few months and I wasn’t feeling too good, and then I also lacked the motivation to continue writing. But I’ve been starting to feel a bit better as of late, so, after eons of struggling, I was finally able to finish up this chapter. Again, I’m very sorry I took so long to update this fic.

I’d also like to make a quick note now, about something mentioned in this chapter. When referring to the specific omega that will mate with the Pack Alpha in the mating ceremony (which will be Jared in this case), I decided to capitalize their title (i.e., Omega) when referring to them. Hopefully that’ll clear things up at a certain point in this chapter.

Anyways, here’s a chapter from Jared's POV—I hope you all like it, if you do, please leave kudos and/or a comment! And if you have any questions about anything, please feel free to ask!

Given the day he’d had so far, Jared was glad that, despite being in an unfamiliar place, he was now alone and had a comfortable bed to lie in so he could think back to everything that’d lead up to him suddenly leaving to Dallas.

While a part of Jared was anxious and terrified about being in a new territory, of being away from the safety of his home back in San Antonio and his family and pack, another part of Jared was still absolutely furious.

None of this would’ve happened if his father hadn’t suggested to literally give away Jared's little sister, Megan, to the Dallas Pack Alpha a week ago. His little sister that had just turned nineteen not even three months ago.

For his father to even consider giving away Megan to Pack Alpha Alan Ackles, a man over fifty years old—the mere idea of it had driven Jared into a heated argument with Gerald Padalecki as soon as his father had finished speaking the words. Thankfully his mother and older brother had intervened before their argument had taken a possible turn for the worst.

But when Gerald eventually informed Jared that the arrangement had already been made, that there was no getting out of the deal, had Megan not suddenly appeared in the living room, her face ashen, Jared feared he might’ve actually confronted and tried to hurt his own father. Instead, seeing Megan look so frightened had instantly driven Jared to his sister’s side, to comfort her and tell her that all would be alright, that he’d do whatever he possibly could to stop the situation from becoming a reality.

So moments later, when an idea suddenly popped into his mind, Jared immediately turned to address his father, ordering Gerald to send him in Megan’s place instead.

Initially, Gerald had seemed displeased with his son’s suggestion, but before he could say anything about the matter, Jared had cut him off, informing his father that sending him in Megan’s place
would be a better option. Especially since Megan was still so young—she was just a freshman in college now—and he’d already graduated with his degree.

Yes, they were both omegas, but sending him instead would make for a better arrangement with the Dallas Pack Alpha, Jared had argued, seeing as he was older, more mature, and would thus make a better mate for a Pack Alpha.

Unsurprisingly, as soon as he’d voiced his suggestion, Megan had suddenly shot up and tried to convince their father that he shouldn’t send Jared. She was angry. Angry that their father had offered to send one of his own children away without even speaking to them and giving them a choice in the matter. Her fury was palpable—especially when her voice rose as she asked their father why he thought he had to be the one to offer Pack Alpha Ackles one of his children as a potential mate, why he didn’t let another Pack Alpha in Texas do so instead. Gerald had merely remained silent through the ordeal, and it only increased Megan’s anger. Eventually, their mother had to pull Megan away and take her to another room before she said something to really upset their father.

Not a full hour had passed before Gerald then informed Jared that he’d already called Pack Alpha Ackles, that the change to their agreement was official now. In a few days, rather than Megan, Jared would be leaving to Dallas to become the Pack Alpha’s Omega.

The night his father had told him the news, Jared had struggled to close his eyes and let himself fall asleep, his mind too awake and overwhelmed by all the information it was trying to process. But when he finally did manage to fall asleep, he did so with a heavy feeling of dread burrowed deep in his gut leaving him agitated. Knowing that within a few days, his life was going to forever change—and likely, for the worst. That it was inevitable. There was nothing he could possibly do to stop it, and Jared was absolutely terrified.

Now more than 200 miles away from his home, alone in a silent room, and dwelling on his current situation, Jared couldn’t help but feel that one of the things he most feared might indeed come true, that it was very likely he’d never see his family again.

It’d been around ten years ago that the newer, progressive pack laws had officially made their way into Texas, the Houston Pack being the first to implement them, and not a month later, the Austin Pack as well. During this time, his father had already been the San Antonio Pack Alpha for nearly eighteen years, ruling their pack under strict, traditionalist laws. Yet not two years had passed before there’d been some apparent uproar within the pack. Many had begun to protest, saying they wanted change, that they wanted the San Antonio Pack to renounce its dated, traditionalist views and laws.

Of course, Gerald had been furious as soon as he’d found out. He’d gone out and ranted to some of their relatives, saying that he didn’t want the pack to abandon its righteous ways, but as days had passed by, the pressure from the pack had become increasingly overwhelming as more and more people demanded the change.

It was likely due to the fear of being challenged for his title that Gerald eventually gave in and declared that the San Antonio Pack would officially be adopting the alternative, more progressive pack laws. Everyone had been ecstatic about the change being made official.
Gerald hadn’t—but he’d done a very good job of hiding this fact from their city’s pack. Because even now, while his father publicly appeared to be a rather progressive Pack Alpha in Texas, the truth was that Gerald still believed in the older ways of pack life. Jared knew this was likely why his father had been so willing to send Megan away to become the mate of a fifty-something year old Pack Alpha.

It was because of this knowledge that, quite often, Jared found himself wishing that his older brother, Jeff, would step up and challenge their father for the title of Pack Alpha of their city. Though Jeff was a rather quiet individual, Jared believed that he’d make a great Pack Alpha—even more so than their father, because unlike Gerald, Jared knew Jeff truly did believe in the progressive pack laws. But, sadly, Jared knew Jeff would likely never challenge their father as he was the oldest and believed it was up to him to be the ever-obedient son to set the example for Jared and Megan to follow. Though, the fact that they were all rather secretly afraid—Jeff included—of truly defying their father, their city's Pack Alpha, also didn't help.

Old pack laws dictated that once an omega was mated, they belonged entirely to their alpha, and as such, should an alpha choose for an omega to cease all contact with their own family after their mating, the omega would have no choice but to heed their alpha’s command. Unfortunately, many alphas that continued believing and following the old ways still practiced this. So of course, it wouldn’t surprise Jared if the Dallas Pack Alpha forbade him from ever seeing, or even freely contacting, his family ever again. Jared was sure that if the Dallas Pack Alpha chose to do this after their mating, his own father might even assist and prevent his mother and siblings from finding some form of way to contact Jared.

The mere thought of it made Jared feel uneasy and sick with disgust that the idea of his father doing this—of keeping him away from his own family—wasn’t something entirely surprising.

And after actually seeing the Dallas Pack Alpha earlier today for the first time in person, for a split second, Jared had wondered if it was too late for him to back out. Despite being over fifty, Alan Ackles was a tall, beefy man with a daunting aura about him. Everything about how he held himself made Jared feel uncomfortably apprehensive.

But immediately after the thought had entered Jared’s mind, overpowering guilt followed and he’d mentally chastised himself because backing out meant that Megan would have to be here in his place instead. And no matter what, Jared wasn’t going to risk that.

With a long, resigned sigh, Jared closed his eyes and wondered how he was going to make it through everything when a sudden thought that’d been in the back of his worried mind finally popped up.

Back when he’d been standing next to the Dallas Pack Alpha inside of the gazebo, Jared had dared to take a glance out into the crowd, and before he was aware of it, he’d found his eyes meeting the gaze of a man near the front of the crowd. The man had been standing a distance away, his light brown hair glimmeringly under the blazing Texas sun and looking nearly golden—and Jared had found himself utterly entranced by the man.

The man had been been wearing dark denim jeans, a white t-shirt, and an unbuttoned red and black
long-sleeved plaid flannel top. Despite the casual attire, Jared couldn't help but think the man looked absolutely stunning. Yet there had been something else—something more than just some aesthetic, or possible physical, attraction—that had prevented Jared from looking away, something that had called for him to approach the unfamiliar man, if only to be closer to him.

In that instant after their eyes had met, Jared had felt a strange prickling rush down his skin from the back of his neck to the ends of all his limbs while his body had begun to tremble. His heart had begun to race, and suddenly his chest had begun to feel heavy, tight, as if Jared had been holding his breath for too long. For a split second, Jared had wondered if this was the effect of his standing before a large crowd next to the Dallas Pack Alpha, that it was merely a result of him being nervous, but he knew this was something more. It’d taken him a moment to realize that somehow, this man was making his wolf react.

And during those few prolonged seconds where both of their gazes were locked on one another, Jared had sensed the unusual attraction he felt towards the man as if it were a palpable, invisible force trying to push him towards the stranger. He’d felt the pull to his very bones, a calling from his wolf that urged him to lessen the space between them.

Yet somehow, Jared had eventually managed to ignore the calls of his wolf, to will himself to look away—and just like that, whatever had overwhelmed him vanished. And when Pack Alpha Ackles had wrapped his arm around Jared’s waist to lead him away, everything from then had gone by in a blur. The voices around him muffled and indiscernible. His thoughts hazy and disconnected, unable to make sense of all that was happening around him. An emptiness taking root deep inside of his chest.

Everything from that moment, up until about an hour after he’d finally been directed to the room he’d be staying in until the mating ceremony on Friday, had felt unreal.

But once Jared felt that emptiness slowly begin to seep out his body, his thoughts now clear and lucid, he begun to reflect on the experience he’d had earlier back when he’d been on the gazebo.

Truthfully, the strange experience made little sense to Jared. He couldn’t explain why the image of the alluring man lingered in his thoughts even now. Or why his body and wolf had reacted as such. Even so, Jared couldn’t deny that something about it felt right.

Yet that same thought only served to further worry Jared. Because how could such an intense reaction to the mere sight of an unfamiliar man feel right?

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While Jared knew all of the traditions written under old pack law, to this day, it constantly surprised him that some people in this current age in time continued to follow some of the more ancestral customs.

So hours later, when Jared got up to leave the spacious bedroom, only to discover that the door was locked, he wasn’t entirely surprised. Frankly, a part of Jared had expected that something like this might occur—despite hopelessly praying against all odds that they wouldn’t actually follow the antiquated ritual prior to the mating ceremony that traditionalist packs often preferred.

Even so, that did nothing to smother the anger Jared felt to know that he was now locked inside a
room, that he was virtually a prisoner in this strange alpha’s domain.

Knowing he couldn’t even leave—and having nothing to keep him entertained as there was no television, or even books in the room, and seeing as Jared hadn’t been allowed to bring his cell phone with him to Dallas—he spent the rest of the day feeling rather restless. At times Jared would sit on the chair before the large ebony desk in the room and look around mindlessly. Or he’d merely walk around the room and into the small bathroom in the back. And at other times he’d just lie in bed and think back to his family and the handsome man he’d seen in the crowd.

And as part of the mating ceremony tradition dictated, a petite omega had eventually come to see him in order to give Jared some—much needed—food and water. They’d been completely covered in complementary pale pink and lavender garbs, with a white mask covering their face. The mere sight of them had unsettled Jared. It was yet another harsh reminder that many packs still desperately clung to the traditionalist ways.

And once Jared was left alone yet again, a distinct feeling of emptiness filled him once more.

That night, Jared fell into an uneasy, dreamless sleep.

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Truthfully, the only genuine surprise Jared experienced came the following day.

There’d been a knock at his door, and as he expected it to be another omega to bring him food or water like yesterday, Jared had remained lying down on the bed. But when a thick silence followed, not the soft click of a lock opening, or the brief squeak of the door’s hinges as it was pushed opened, Jared immediately turned his attention towards the still closed door.

When another gentle knock sounded, Jared felt his heart begin to race in worry.

During the waiting period before the mating ceremony, when the Omega is sheltered away from the public, only a select few omegas are chosen to attend to the needs of the future Omega of the Pack Alpha. Even then, those chosen omegas are made to follow a strict protocol.

When they are to attend to the Omega, they must be completely covered and go in pairs. The omega not carrying the food and drink will knock on the door of the Omega’s room to announce their presence. Then three seconds must pass before the door is unlocked and pushed open. At which point, only the omega carrying the food and drink will enter the chamber as the second omega will remain standing right outside the door to insure no one comes in or leaves. And after the food and drink is placed inside the room for the Omega, the omega inside may exit the room. From there, the other omega will lock the room’s door before they can both take their leave.

Knowing the details of the ritual, Jared knew that whoever was outside the door was likely not one of the omegas meant to attend to him, and the thought alone made his stomach stir unpleasantly in dismay.
When there was yet another knock at the door, Jared swallowed, his throat abruptly feeling dry, before he finally got up and walked up to the door. His hand shook as he reached out and grabbed the doorknob and turned it. But when he pulled open the door, he was shocked to find a familiar face staring back at him with a nervous smile.

“Uh, hey, Jared.”

“Tom?” Jared eyed the man standing before him with completely disbelief. “Is… Is it really you?”

“Yeah,” Tom’s smile seemed to grow, “I’m happy to know you still remember me.”

“Of course, man,” Jared couldn’t help but grin as well. “How’ve you been?”

“Oh,” Tom shrugged his shoulders casually, “I’ve been alright. And you?”

“I’m glad to hear you’ve been doing alright, and as for me, well…” Jared continued to smile, but when he saw the concerned look on Tom’s face, he felt his own face fall.

Since his father had told him that he’d be going to Dallas in Megan’s stead, Jared had tried his best to assure everyone that he was perfectly alright doing so. That he was okay with the choice he’d made, and Jared truly was, because it meant Megan was safe back at home. But the staggering terror that came with the realization of his new situation was something he’d desperately tried to hide from everyone; Jared hadn’t dared to speak of his fears to anyone, not Megan or Jeff or even his own mother.

So having Tom standing there before him, asking about him and looking worried, made Jared want to tell Tom the truth—that he was terrified of what was going to happen in a few days, that since knowing of his fate, he’d been struggling to fall asleep at night, that all he wanted in that moment was to go back home and be with his family. But even so, Jared knew he couldn’t voice his thoughts.

Yet before Jared could even give him an answer, Tom spoke again.

“Jared,” Tom momentarily paused to turn his head slightly and look down both ways of the hall he was in, “uh, I’m sorry to suddenly ask, but, can I come in?”

Jared’s eyes suddenly widened in realization as a wave of embarrassment washed over him, his face abruptly feeling warm. “Oh, uh, yes, of course. I’m so sorry. Please come in.” He stepped aside and allowed Tom to walk into the room before closing the door behind him.

“Please take a seat,” Jared politely suggested as he sat down on the edge of his bed. Tom murmured a ‘thank you’ before sitting down on the only chair available in the room.

There was a question in the back of Jared’s mind, and before he could think twice about asking, he quickly voiced his thought. “Tom, I hope it’s okay for me to ask, but…how exactly are you here?”

When Tom only gave Jared a confused look, Jared clarified, “I mean, pack law states that a Pack Alpha’s Omega-to-be must remained secluded from public eye until the day of their official public mating. I know a few unrelated omegas can visit the Pack Alpha’s Omega-to-be, in order to attend to the Omega’s needs during the waiting period, but all betas and alphas are forbidden from having any form of contact with them.”

Tom averted his eyes then, his features grave as he frowned, “Jared, I’d explain, but right now, I’ve only got a limited amount of time I can actually be here.”

“Oh,” a small, puzzled frown appeared on Jared’s face.
“Jared, I… I’m so sorry,” a guilty expression tugged at Tom’s features as he looked back up at Jared, “I… I really wish I could tell you that I came here to see you again, but truthfully, I…I came here for another reason.”

A worried, perplexed expression appeared on Jared’s face. “Oh. Uh...what’s going on?”

Tom looked at him carefully as he asked, “You know about true mates, right?”

Something stirred in Jared’s chest at the mention of true mates. “Oh, uh, yes, I do. Why?”

“Well…” for a brief moment, Tom appeared hesitant, “this might sound completely crazy, but please believe me when I say that one of my closest friends is absolutely sure that you’re their true mate.”

Jared’s mind came to a complete halt at hearing that. For a few seconds, a heavy silence filled the room before Jared finally spoke, “W— What?”

“Please hear me out—there’s a whole story behind everything, and I’m going to try my best to explain everything right now before I go because you deserve to know.”

Though he was beginning to feel quite anxious, Jared nodded his head. “Alright.”

“Thank you.” Tom gave Jared a small appreciative smile before his features turned grave. “My friend, the one that says you’re their true mate, his name is Jensen Ackles.”

Jared felt his heart thud uncomfortably in his chest at hearing the familiar surname.

“Jensen is Pack Alpha Alan Ackles’ son, his only heir to the Dallas Pack,” Tom could see the apprehension on Jared’s face and rushed to continue to try and assuage his fears, “but please, don’t worry, I’ve known Jensen for several years now, so I can assure you, he’s honestly a really good guy.”

When Jared didn’t give him a reply, Tom took a deep breath and decided it was time to tell Jared everything else. “Keeping that in mind, I’d like to bring up something else. The mating ceremony is in a few days, right?”

At the mention and reminder of his impending mating ceremony on Friday, Jared couldn’t help but tense up. Rather than speak, Jared averted his gaze and merely nodded his head.

At noticing Jared’s reaction, Tom’s expression fell. “Well, the main reason I’m here right now is because I want you to know that Jensen plans on officially challenging his father right before the mating ceremony starts.”

Jared’s head whipped up at that. Wide eyes stared unbelievingly at Tom. “What? Why?”

A small smile appeared on Tom’s face as he replied, “Jared, Jensen wants to claim you as his bondmate.”

For a few seconds, Jared merely sat there, his eyes looking at Tom in surprise. Then finally, Jared looked away, his mind taking in the information Tom had just given him. “He… Is he really going to challenge his father just for the right to mate with me?”

Before Tom could give a response, there was an abrupt knock at the door.

A startled expression popped up on Tom’s face as he rushed to stand up. “Jared,” his voice fell to an urgent whisper, “there’s more I wanted to tell you, about Jensen, about us, his friend—about what
“Okay,” was Jared’s quiet reply as he nodded his head, “I… I trust you.”

“Thank you, Jared,” he gave Jared a small, thankful smile before he began to walk towards the door. Tom pulled the door open but paused to glance back at Jared once more with a gentle look in eyes, “I’ll see you Friday, Jared. Please take care until then.”

And with those parting words, Tom was gone, the door closing shut with a soft click behind him, leaving Jared alone in the room once more. A heavy silence seemed to fill the room then.

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Hours later, Jared couldn’t help but continue thinking back to everything Tom had told him. Yet, while Jared was now even more anxious about the events to come on Friday, he couldn’t help but focus on something else as well.

Somehow, now, as if finally able to put all the pieces of the puzzle together, Jared just knew. The handsome man he’d seen before in the crowd the previous day, the man that he’d made eye contact with, was his true mate. It would explain everything, the strange attraction he’d felt towards him, the way his wolf reacted and urged him to approach him despite not having the slightest clue as to who the man was.

And now, thanks to Tom, he knew who the man was, he was Pack Alpha Alan Ackles’ only son—Jensen Ackles.

Nervously, Jared ran his hands through his hair. Despite everything, though his body trembled with worry, there was also an inkling of excitement in him that reminded him of something else.

That after years of hoping he had a true mate somewhere out there in the world, Jared now knew he truly did have a true mate. That in just a few days, Jared was finally going to see him again. That come Friday, his true mate was going to challenge and fight his own father for the right to officially mate and bond with Jared.

That night, Jared dreamed of a radiant smile that left him breathless, of a deep laughter that made his heart flutter, of gentle, bright green eyes that gazed fondly at him as if he were the most amazing and important thing in the world.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

While I was writing this chapter, about three-fourths of the way through I ended up switching the POV (from Jared to Jensen), so I decided to cut the chapter in half to separate the two different POVs into two individual chapters. Which bumps up this fic’s total chapter count from five to six (so we still have two more chapters to go)!

I admit I had a very difficult time writing this chapter, but after nearly two months (of struggling to write), I (finally) managed to finish this chapter up and post it today (which, coincidentally enough, is also birthday (*´markt*’*hehe). I'm still not too pleased with the chapter, but even so, I hope you all like it! Please leave a comment if you do! ♥

Also, just a quick note: I changed my AO3 username from acesamdean to rhyaenv.

The days leading up to the mating ceremony were some of the most terrible days of Jared’s life. Staying locked away in a room with no windows, unable to see anyone except the two omegas chosen to attend to his needs during his stay, virtually incapable of doing anything freely.

Jared felt like a prisoner, and it was hell.

But, in attempt to save himself from getting too restless, Jared had eventually gotten to learn the names of the two omegas that’d been assigned to tend to him while he was locked away. They dared not disclose any other information to him, and were often still rather reluctant to make small talk with him, but Jared was happy to at least now know that the omega in pink was called Remy, and the omega in lilac was called Dylan.

Knowing their names gave Jared some reprieve from his situation. Something he was immensely thankful for seeing as each moment he was left alone he couldn’t stop the overwhelming feeling of dread and despair that would suddenly engulf him. But being able to at least have some contact with two different people, even if their visits were mandated and brief, was a godsend.

When Jared finally woke up that dreaded Friday morning, he’d felt desperately ill—his stomach was in knots and his chest felt constricted, as if the air in the room was far too thin, and no matter how much Jared tried, he was unable to find a way to make his hands stop trembling.

As Jared waited for the two omegas to come for him, he merely sat at the edge of the bed and let his mind wander. Yet as the minutes slowly trickled into hours, his mind seemed to oscillate between being filled with frantic, terrified thoughts, to suddenly drowning in a heavy silence. And it was during those latter moments that Jared found himself feeling numb, almost empty—as if his mind was rejecting the reality around him and was preventing him from processing and thinking anything. But then the fear would cycle back and Jared frantically found himself wishing that it would all just end.

So when the heavy silence in the room was finally disrupted by a soft knock at the door, Jared let out
a shaky, deep breath of air.

He closed his eyes for a moment to steel himself.

And then he waited.

The door creaked open and then there was a slight pause.

“Mr. Padalecki.”

The familiar voice was gentle, but even so, Jared couldn’t stop himself from flinching slightly before he turned around to face one of the still-entirely-clothed omegas—it was Remy.

In that moment, Jared found himself wishing he could see their face. To see the expression they might be wearing under the wraps that hid everything but their eyes.

“The mating ceremony will commence in approximately two hours. Please follow me. I will lead you to the grand bathroom where we will then begin to prepare you.”

Jared gave a resigned sigh before he finally muttered a quiet, “Okay.”

He didn’t bother saying anything else as he got up and began to follow Remy out of the room.

Some minutes later, Jared found himself being led into a large bathroom. Dylan was already there when they both walked in.

“Please disrobe, Mr. Padalecki,” Dylan spoke quietly. Jared did as he was told and handed over his clothes to the omega in lilac.

Seeing as he was now completely unclothed before two semi-unfamiliar individuals, Jared found himself feeling distinctly uncomfortable. He wished that in that moment the ground would suddenly open up and swallow him.

From there, things only got worse as he was lead to a large hot tub where the two omegas gently, yet meticulously scrubbed his body down and then dried his skin after they’d finished washing him. And once the incredibly embarrassing ordeal was over, Dylan had handed him a white garb, asking him to please put it on.

When Jared unfolded it, he realized it was just a lengthy shirt with long sleeves. The material was thin, plain with no patterns or designs on it, but it had five tiny buttons that ran down the center of the shirt below the collar.

Despite being unsurprised, Jared couldn't fight the blush that appeared on the tops of his cheeks in indignation as he realized this was all he was being allowed to wear for the mating ceremony.

He bit his lip and tried his best to squash his anger as he began to put on the long shirt.

Soon, Jared found himself feeling somewhat thankful that at least the shirt was long enough to reach a few inches below his knees. Wearing the shirt didn't feel too comfortable, as that was all he wore, but Jared knew there was nothing he could say or do to change that.

Remy then walked up to him with a small cup in their hand. They extended it out to him and said, “You must drink this, Mr. Padalecki.”

As Jared eyed the cup, he felt his stomach drop. All traces of anger from before were now abruptly gone and replaced with a dread that made him feel sick. The mere sight of the cup was like a harsh
slap to the face, another blatant reminder of what exactly was going on, of what was going to happen once he took that cup and drank the liquid inside.

Since the old customs of mating ceremonies called for consummation almost immediately after the mating ceremony, a distinct tea had long ago been created specifically to induce a faux-heat in the omega that was going to be mated. Though the faux-heat wouldn't last as long as a normal heat, as the effects of the tea only lasted for a handful of hours once it kick-started the faux-heat, it would last long enough for the alpha and omega to properly mate and bond.

Knowing this, Jared couldn't help but hesitate.

His mind was yelling, warning him not to drink the dark liquid inside the cup because if he did, at that point, there would definitely be no going back. That once he took it, by the end of the day, he'd likely be mated and bonded to Pack Alpha Alan Ackles.

And the mere thought of it terrified Jared and made his stomach churn in horror.

“Mr. Padalecki?” the voice jolted Jared out of his thoughts.

“I'm sorry,” he swallowed as he trained his eyes on the cup in Remy’s hands, “I was just thinking about something…” Yet before the omega before him could say anything else, Jared reached out, grabbed the cup from their hand, and downed the drink in one shot before handing the empty cup back to Remy.

“Now,” Remy began quietly, “we’ll begin the binding.”

Jared only nodded as he extended both of his arms forward. Dylan approached them then and handed over one of the two white ribbons they had carefully folded in their hands to Remy. Who gently began to bind Jared’s wrists together with the ribbon.

He merely stood there watching—his mind blank.

Seconds later, when Remy had finished tying the ribbon’s ends into a simple knot, Jared suddenly felt a presence behind him. His eyes quickly scanned the room and realized that Dylan was nowhere in sight. He figured Dylan was the one behind him.

“Please close your eyes, Mr. Padalecki,” Remy spoke, “we’ll finish the binding and then proceed to make our way towards Great Trinity Park.”

Jared didn’t have it in him to say anything, he merely closed his eyes and waited.

A moment later, he felt the second ribbon being wrapped around his head, covering his eyes. When it was tied and he was left in absolute darkness, Jared felt a small hand around where both his wrists had been bound together.

“Let’s go, Mr. Padalecki,” it was Remy’s gentle voice, “they’re waiting for us.”

Jared nodded solemnly and silently began praying.

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After what felt like forever, Jared felt the car they were in come to a stop. Moments later, after he
was helped out of the vehicle, Remy’s voice reached Jared’s ears, “Mr. Padalecki, we’re about to enter the park. We will escort you to the sacred statue and then you and the Pack Alpha’s mating vows will begin.”

“Okay,” Jared tried not to wince when he heard how hoarse his voice had sounded.

They began walking, Remy still gripping Jared’s bound wrists as they lead Jared to where he had to go, with Dylan only a few steps behind them.

After a while, Jared began to hear a faint murmur. As they continued on, the numerous voices whispering indiscernible words all around him only grew lounder. He assumed they’d finally reached the area where everyone was crowded together to witness the mating ceremony.

*His* mating ceremony.

Even though Jared was blindfolded, at hearing all the whispering voices around him, he couldn’t help the way his body began to react. Every inch of him was trembling, his hands were sweating, and his heart was thudding rapidly inside his constricted chest. Jared knew he was start to panic, that this was just his mind’s way of preparing his body so he could flee from any perceived danger at any given moment.

But Jared knew he couldn’t just take off and leave. His hands were bound together and he was blindfolded. And even if he wasn’t, he knew he had to do this. He couldn't back out now after everything.

He *couldn’t*.

Suddenly, he could feel the omega before him come to a complete halt. Remy patted his arm gently, and Jared knew to stop as well. A heavy silence followed, and Jared couldn’t ignore the loud rushing of blood in his ears, or the way his body was now beginning to feel unbearably warm.

With dread, Jared realized his faux-heat would likely reach its peak in less than half an hour.

“Everyone,” the abrupt, unfamiliar voice startled Jared, “the mating vows will now commence.”

At hearing those last words, Jared tried to ignore how fast his heart was beating in his uncomfortably tight chest, how he felt out of breath, like his lungs weren’t taking in enough air.

“Alan Ackles, Revered Alpha of the Dallas Pack, please remove the first binding from your chosen Omega, so that he may see and behold his future mate and alpha.”

Teeth clenched, Jared was relieved he’d managed not to flinch when he felt the Pack Alpha reach behind him to untie the ribbon that’d been wrapped around his head to cover his eyes. The ribbon was pulled away and while Jared wished he could keep his eyes closed he opened them and found himself standing less than a foot away from the Dallas Pack Alpha.

Alan backed away slightly, much to Jared’s relief, but when Jared accidentally made eye contact with him, a smirk seemed to appear on the older man’s face as he briefly scented the air. There was a knowing glint in the man’s eyes.

Immediately, Jared averted his gaze to look down at the ground and tried not to clench his hands. Knowing all eyes around them were on both of them, Jared willed his body not to recoil and move away from the Pack Alpha. They were so close now, Jared couldn’t help but pick up on the alpha’s scent. It was potent, thick—it was virtually impossible to ignore the faint, but clearly present hint of arousal in the alpha’s scent.
It made Jared’s stomach lurch in disgust.

“Now,” Jared looked up slightly and took notice of the beta priest standing between them about a meter away from him to his right, “let us begin the mating vows.” There was a slight pause before the priest began again, “We are here today to unite the Dallas Pack and the San Antonio Pack in—”

Yet before the priest could finish his sentence, a loud, new voice suddenly roared, “Stop!”

Everyone, including Jared, turned to look at the person who’d suddenly spoken.

When Jared laid eyes on who it was, he felt like the remaining air in his lungs had suddenly been forced out. It was the man in the crowd he’d made eye contact with when Pack Alpha Alan Ackles had introduced him as his Omega-to-be days ago. And if what Tom had told him was true, then this was Pack Alpha Alan Ackles’s son. His true mate—Jensen.

Jensen was standing a few meters away from them with four other men behind him. Yet even at this distance, Jared could see the anger etched in Jensen’s features. He looked absolutely furious.

Jared could feel his wolf ordering him to submit, to go up his true alpha and help calm him down. Jared shut his eyes and tried to ignore the pleading calls from his wolf.

“Jensen, what do you think you’re doing?” Alan’s voice was steady as he spoke, but Jared could sense something dangerous lurking in his tone.

A heavy silence followed as Jensen alone walked right up to his father, stopping only when he was about meter from him. His eyes took a quick glance at Jared, and Jared immediately felt his face grow warm before he forced himself to look away.

“Before everyone here today,” Jensen began, his voice loud and carrying across the spacious area they were in, “I hereby challenge you, Pack Alpha Alan Ackles, for the right to mate and bond with Jared Padalecki, your Omega-to-be.”

While Jared knew Tom had warned him this would happen, that Jensen would challenge his father for the right to mate and bond with him, to actually see and hear Jensen challenge Alan made his face feel like it was on fire. It made his wolf yip in delight that his true mate wanted him, that he was even going to challenge another alpha for the right to mate with him.

Jared averted his gaze to look down at the ground in a futile attempt to try and hide his flushed face.

Loud whispers erupted across the crowd after Jensen had spoken, and when Jared dared to take a quick glance at Alan and saw the barely concealed rage on the Pack Alpha’s face, he averted his eyes to look back down at the ground again. An uneasy feeling stirred in his stomach.

“I see,” was Alan’s calm response, thought his eyes were narrowed as he continued staring at Jensen, “very well then, I accept your challenge, Jensen.” Alan quickly turned to look at Jared and then at the priest before his gaze was fixed yet again on Jensen, “You know the rules, correct?”

Jensen stared unwaveringly at his father, his voice steady as he replied, “Yes, I do.”

“Very well then,” Alan spoke as he slowly began to approach Jensen, “then before everyone here today, I accept your challenge.”

When Alan began to walk away from him and towards Jensen, Jared let out a deep breath of air. Now that Alan wasn’t standing so close to him—and the Pack Alpha’s nauseating pheromones weren’t suffocating him—Jared finally felt like he could breathe.
But that brief moment of ease alerted Jared of something else—he was sweating. Jared grit his teeth slightly as he realized is faux-heat was progressing even further. At this point, his body was slowly beginning to release in-heat pheromones that were supposed to inform his alpha that his heat was close.

Jared watched nervously as both Jensen and Alan walked away and then began to remove their clothes. In that moment, Jared prayed that Jensen would win and end the fight soon.

When Alan and Jensen finally shifted, the gasps and cries of surprise from the crowd startled Jared. Faint, indiscernible murmurs then abruptly began to spread across the crowd, and when Jared turned to look at them, he found that some of the people wore shocked expressions on their faces, their eyes wide and their mouths agape. Some looked on in fear. Yet there were those that looked amazed, intrigued, almost eager to see what was going to happen next.

It took Jared a second to realize why those in the crowd had reacted as such—these people had likely never seen two adult men shift before their very eyes. Because the Dallas Pack still followed Traditional Pack Law, Jared knew only Alan had the option to shift at will. Everyone else was forbidden from shifting after turning twelve years old. So for them to suddenly see Alan and Jensen shift into wolves? Jared guessed they were all, for the most part, quite shocked, surprised, and perhaps rather curious.

A thick silence fell upon the area when Jensen and Alan began to circle one another, both likely assessing the other and trying to figure out how best to attack. Despite not actually knowing Jensen, only knowing they were connected by being true mates, Jared watched anxiously as finally, Jensen struck first and tried to bite Alan.

Alan dodged the move easily, and as Jensen attempted to move back to put a bit more space between them, his father rapidly moved forwards and managed to nip his left side for a second, right above his left arm. Jensen immediately turned and head-butted Alan to shove him away.

As Jared watched Alan quickly move back in to try and bite Jensen once more, a sudden tightness in his lower stomach caught his attention. He averted his gaze to look numbly at the ground around his bare feet as the feeling grew.

Then he felt it.

A harsh cramp suddenly twisted in Jared’s gut, making him wince in pain. He shut his eyes in futile attempt to try and ignore the throbbing flares of pain that were now taking root in his lower abdomen. Everything around him seemed to fade away, leaving only the pain and the loud thrumming in his ears.

When the cramps subsided moments later, Jared took in a deep breath. For now they were gone, but Jared knew the cramps would likely start again in a few minutes.

His faux-heat was already starting.

He blinked a few times and then looked up just in time to see Jensen and Alan as they tumbled in a tangled mess onto the ground. Though he was in no condition to do so, the snarls that came from them made Jared want to shift into his wolf form and rush to Jensen’s side to help his alpha.

When Alan seemed to bite one of his son’s hind legs, forcing a yelp from Jensen, Jared found himself taking a step towards them before he stopped himself. His wolf was howling, egging him to join in and attack the older alpha to protect Jensen.
Logically, Jared knew Jensen and Alan’s fight was for him, for the right to mate with him, but even so his wolf knew Jensen was his true mate—they already recognized Jensen as his true alpha—and seeing and hearing him in pain made Jared want to rush in and strike down Alan for daring to hurt Jensen. To show the Pack Alpha not to mess with him and his true mate.

Jared’s fists clenched tightly by his side as he reined in his wolf.

But moments later, things took a surprising turn, because, without notice, Jensen now had Alan pinned to the ground, his jaw locked around the scruff of his father’s neck. Immediately, Alan tried to break the hold Jensen had on his neck by attempting to twist his head back in an effort to somehow bite Jensen back, but when that didn’t work, he resorted to using his legs to try and shove Jensen off him.

But Jensen didn’t budge.

The more Alan struggled, the more Jensen held on—their growls and snarls seemed to almost echo in the large open space they were in.

The sight of Jensen overpowering his father, of his resolute strength, seemed to call out to Jared’s wolf. The wolf was proud, exceedingly pleased with his true mate’s display of strength. Even Jared found himself in great awe for Jensen was fighting his father for him—his own Pack Alpha—and right now, he was winning.

Another cramp abruptly struck Jared and he couldn’t help but close his eyes again. The excruciating pain made him hunch over slightly as he clenched his hands tightly by his side, his nails digging into the skin of his palms. Everything around him seemed to go again, but this time there was something different. Because seconds later, as the pain began to dull just a bit, Jared finally felt it—something warm and wet gradually began to run down his inner thighs.

Jared bit his lower lip until he could taste blood.

His body was already starting to produce slick.

He was running out of time.

His mind screamed, ordering him to find a way to hide now.

But with his hands still tied together, and a crowd of people nearly surrounding him, Jared knew that right now there was no way he could possibly escape.

When the cramps ceased, Jared opened his eyes and looked up just in time to see Alan lowering his head down in defeat before he out a bellowing howl, signaling to all his defeat.

Incredibly relieved, Jared let out a breath of air.

As soon as Jensen heard his father’s call of surrender, he let go of his father’s neck and proudly raised his tail before he also raised his head and let out a loud howl, one that notified everyone around them of his clear victory.

One of the four men who’d been standing behind Jensen when he’d first made his entrance made his way towards Jensen, seemingly carrying the clothes Jensen had been wearing before he’d shifted into his wolf form.

Those in the crowd remained silent as Jensen shifted back into a human and immediately put on his clothes. Moments later, Jensen looked around the space they were all gathered in.
“As you all know, my name is Jensen Ackles, I am the only son and heir of Alan Ackles,” he spoke, his features serious as he looked across the crowd, “and as I have challenged and defeated him by way of the Pack before you all, from today onwards, I, Jensen Ross Ackles, will now be your new Dallas Pack Alpha.

“And as Dallas’ new Pack Alpha, my first decree will be that from today onwards, we will adopt and follow the more Progressive Pack Laws and officially renounce Traditional Pack Law. As the third most populated city in Texas, I believe it’s time for our beloved city to finally move forward—just as so many other cities and packs across Texas are choosing to do. It’s time to bring change to Dallas.”

A heavy silence followed, but then, gradually, people began to clap, until eventually, there were shouts of joy, whistling, hooting, even some rough howling. As Jared watched, he couldn't help but recall a similar experience—when his father had declared that their pack would also be adopting Progressive Pack Laws.

“Jared?” Jared tensed when he heard a voice address him, but when he turned his head to find the source of the voice, he found himself face-to-face with Jensen. Almost immediately, his body began to relax. “Jared, are you alright?”

“I, uh...” Jared finally managed to say as he gave Jensen a small, sheepish smile, “Yes, I’m alright. I’m sorry, I... I guess I was a bit distracted.”

“It’s okay. I just—” Jensen seemed to blush then. “Would it be okay for me to remove the last binding from your wrists?”

“Oh, of course.” Jared felt his heart skip a beat when Jensen walked just a bit closer to him and gently began to untie the binding until both his wrists were once again free. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” Jensen mumbled as he stuffed the ribbon into his pant pocket. He then gently cleared his throat. “You... Your faux-heat is already starting, right?”

Jared only nodded, his facing turning a bright pink at hearing Jensen mention his faux-heat and realizing that was likely because Jensen had already picked up his in-heat pheromones.

“You know Tom, right?” When Jared gave a single nod, Jensen continued. “Well, uh, he’s gonna drive us back to my place. If that’s okay?”

The obvious uncertainty written on Jensen’s face made Jared’s chest ache. “It— Yes, of course, that’d be perfectly okay.”

“Great,” the relieved, but content smile that Jensen suddenly flashed at him made Jared’s heart flutter. “Tom’s gonna be bringing his truck to the edge of the park since he can’t drive it in here. We just gotta walk over there and meet him.” Then he seemed to hesitate, “I know your faux-heat’s already started, but, uh...will you be okay walking over there?”

“I should be,” Jared replied, his face growing even warmer as he continued, “I... I admit it won’t be such a comfortable walk for me, but, uh, I think I can make it.”

But Jensen only looked worried now, “Are you sure?”

“Yes,” Jared tried to give Jensen a small, assuring smile, “the faux-heat is just starting. It won’t get worse until a bit later.”

“Okay,” Jensen seemed to accept Jared’s words, but the worry on his face was still evident, “let’s go then.”
As they began walking, Jared couldn’t help but wonder what it’d be like to hold Jensen’s hand in his own.

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Not even half an hour later, Jared was already lying down in Jensen’s bed. Tom had dropped them off at Jensen’s apartment and Jensen had immediately helped Jared to his room, telling Jared that for tonight, Jared could stay there while his faux-heat passed. Which Jared was immensely grateful for, seeing as by the time they had arrived at Jensen’s place, his heat was already reaching its peak.

“Jared, uh…” Jensen stood nervously at the entrance of the room. “I just want you to know, even though you’re in heat right now, we don’t have to do anything. I… Tom must’ve told you that I know we’re true mates, right?”

“Yes,” Jared managed to breathe out, “he did.”

“Oh,” Jensen seemed almost startled by Jared’s reply, “uh, well, even though we’re true mates, I’d like for us to get to know each other a bit before anything. If you’d like to, that is.”

Despite the way his body was aching and feeling like it was on fire, Jared found Jensen’s kindness and thoughtfulness rather endearing. It made his wolf preen in delight to know he had such a gentle alpha.

“I…” Jared couldn’t stop himself from giving Jensen a small smile, “I’d like that too.”

“Great,” the smile Jensen returned made Jared’s stomach flutter and Jared knew it wasn’t due to the effects of his faux-heat. But then suddenly, Jensen’s smile vanished and his features morphed into an uncertain expression. “Now, uh, about your faux-heat…is there anything I can do?”

“The effects are only supposed to last for a handful more hours, I think.” He tried to give Jensen a reassuring smile, but with the pain he was experiencing, Jared felt like his smile might’ve appeared a bit too strained. “This is nothing compared to an actual heat. I should be fine once I manage to fall asleep.”

Jensen merely stood there, looking somewhat uncomfortable. “Though, uh, if it’s possible, I’d really like to take a shower tomorrow morning, after this is over?”

“Of course,” the alpha replied without missing a beat, but then immediately shut his eyes and muttered something under his breath. “Jared, I’m so sorry. I completely forgot. I don’t have any spare clothes for you right now. I mean, I do have spare clothes I can lend you, but, uh, I’m starting to think they might not fit you.”

Jared couldn’t help but laugh, though it sounded weak to his own ears. “Yeah, they might fit me a bit small. I’m sorry. I… I know I’m a bit too tall for an omega.”

“Jared, please don’t apologize for that, there’s honestly nothing wrong with your height.” The soft, pleading expression on Jensen’s face as he stared at him made Jared avert his gaze, feeling too self-conscious about his now warm, flushed face. “Since I don’t have any clothes prepared, please give me all your sizes so I can call Tom and ask him to buy you some spare clothes.” Jared was about to protest when Jensen spoke again, “Please, Jared—please let me do this for you.”
The imploring look Jensen wore pulled at Jared’s heartstrings and he found himself unable to protest the matter anymore. After he listed all his different sized, Jensen gave Jared a small smile before he politely excused himself and left the room to call Tom.

Not even an hour later, Jensen was knocking on the room’s door before he paused and then pushed it open. Almost cautiously, Jensen walked into the room with a nicely folded pile of clothes in his arms, a pair of shoes resting on top of the clothes.

It didn’t escape Jared how uncomfortable Jensen looked as he stood there, how he seemed to look at everything but him. Jared couldn’t help but wonder if it was because his in-heat pheromones had completely permeated the air in Jensen’s room by now.

“Uh, hey, Jared. Here are some clothes and a pair of shoes for you. I… I’ll just leave them here on top of the dresser, okay?”

Jared nodded his head and gave a weak reply, “Thank you, Jensen.”

“You’re welcome,” even then Jensen’s gaze was unable to meet Jared’s eyes, “now, uh, if you need anything else, I’ll be in the living room, okay?”

“Okay,” Jared gave Jensen a shy, thankful smile. “Thank you again, Jensen, I really do appreciate everything you’ve doing for me right now.”

“It’s nothing.” At seeing Jensen blush, Jared felt his own face grow warm. “I’m just happy I can help you.”

“I…” Jared felt his heart flutter painfully in his tight chest. “I’ll see you tomorrow morning, Jensen. Good night.”

For a moment it looked like Jensen wanted to approach Jared, but then he took a step backwards, “Good night, Jared.”

As Jensen turned around and left and the door clicked closed behind him, Jared let out a large breath of air.

The faux-heat wasn’t at horrible as an actual heat, but even so, a part of Jared had still wanted Jensen to stay behind with him. Not necessarily to help Jared through his heat by actually mating him, but by just staying with him and holding him. Jared wished his thinking was just a result of the faux-heat, but he knew better—he could not ignore how his wolf cried, how they yearned to be near their true mate.

They’d just met for the first time today, but already Jared could feel himself starting to feel attracted to Jensen. Now, more than anything, Jared wanted to stay close to Jensen, wanted to talk to him, to get to know him.

Jared turned and burrowed his head into Jensen’s pillow. Embarrassed with what he was about to do, Jared closed his eyes and bit his lip before he pressed his nose against the pillow and took a deep breath of air. He’d been trying his best to ignore it before, but Jensen’s scent was potent and absolutely enticing. It was impossible not to feel how Jensen’s scent pleased his wolf—how it made Jared’s stomach flutter and his heart race.

Later, when Jared finally managed to fall asleep, he dreamt of a lingering kisses, of warm embraces, of a smile that made his heart flutter, of alluring green eyes that left him breathless, of a small bundle in his arms that made his own heart swell in absolute joy, of tiny hands reaching for him, of a familiar voice calling his name.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

I apologize for taking quite a while to update, but hopefully the 7k sort of makes up for the wait. ;; I’ll also be adding yet another chapter to this fic, so the total chapter count is now at seven! Anyways, I hope you all like this chapter—please leave a comment if you do! ♥

“Jensen?”

The meek voice startled Jensen awake, but when he sat up on the sofa and turned around he saw Jared standing nervously a few feet away at the entrance to his room, the door semi-closed behind him. He was wearing a plain black hoodie, a pair of fitted, dark denim jeans, and a pair of dark brown shoes. And it appeared as if though Jared had just finished taking a shower for his hair appeared to still be wet as it hung loosely around his face.

In that moment, as Jensen continued to stare at Jared in wonder, to take in all the omega’s features, he couldn’t help but think that Jared looked absolutely beautiful.

“Oh, um,” Jared’s voice broke Jensen from his reverie and he finally took notice that Jared looked rather nervous, guiltily, Jensen averted his gaze, “I’m sorry for waking you up.”

“Oh—no, no,” Jensen quickly said as he got up and fixed his shirt and then took a short glance at the time on his wristwatch, “it’s perfectly fine. I should’ve been up by now actually. So—thank you for waking me up. Also, uh, would you be alright with us eating breakfast before we leave to San Antonio in a while? Because, I don’t know about you, but I’m feeling pretty hungry.”

“That—” Jared swallowed. “Yes, that’d be okay.”

“Great, uh,” Jensen took a quick glance around the living room, “you’re welcome to stay here and watch something on the TV while I make us something to eat. Would coffee, scrambled eggs, bacon, and some pancakes be alright?”

“That’d be great. But, uh…” Jared hesitated, he averted his gaze for a moment before he looked back towards Jensen and spoke again, his voice just a fraction lower, “would it be okay for me to help you? In the kitchen, I mean.”

“Oh.” At that, Jensen finally turned to look at Jared with a surprised expression on his face. “Of course. I just—I mean, please don’t feel like you have to help. I really don’t mind making us something to eat.”

“No, it’s not that,” Jared felt his face grow warm, “it’s just…I’d really like to help you, please.”

Just like that, Jensen was sure his own face was as flushed as Jared’s was in that moment. “Oh, uh, then yeah, of course, I’d really appreciate your help. I, uh— Just let me get everything out of the pantry and ready for us to use so we can just start making everything, okay?”

Stricken by an abrupt wave of self-consciousness, Jensen didn’t even pause to let Jared reply before he suddenly turned around and began to walk towards the kitchen. Though he could sense that Jared
was following him, all Jensen could really hear was the loud thumping of his heartbeat in his ears. Distantly, Jensen wondered if Jared could possibly hear how fast his heart was beating inside his chest.

Every few minutes, Jensen found himself wondering if he was actually still fast asleep on his sofa and all this was but a dream his mind had conjured up for him.

He had expected the silence in the kitchen as they both made breakfast to be awkward, possibly even unpleasant, but to Jensen’s surprise, the silence was nice and calming. And though they’d really just met, Jensen couldn’t help but think that the sight of Jared puttering around in his kitchen just felt absolutely right.

Truthfully, the whole scenario greatly pleased Jensen’s wolf. Even Jensen couldn’t find it in himself to be annoyed with his wolf’s response as his own heart swelled in delight at how domestic it all seemed.

So while they’d both continued cooking, whenever he could, Jensen would glance at Jared and let himself briefly imagine a future where they already were bondmates. Where, just like now, they were both in the kitchen making breakfast, but where Jensen could just walk right up to the tall omega and kiss him. Where Jared would eagerly kiss him back. Where Jensen’s body would then trap Jared against a wall, the omega calling out his name as Jensen’s lips travelled down his neck. Where Jensen’s hands would slip down towards—

Yet each time, Jensen pulled himself from such thoughts as quickly as he could, before things went even further, and forced himself to focus on finishing the pancakes he’d decided to make for them while Jared made the bacon and scrambled eggs.

And several minutes later, after they’d finished making everything, and after Jensen had prepared the table, they both had finally sat down to eat.

Although the silence that continued as they began to eat wasn’t uncomfortable, Jensen wished to speak to Jared—to talk to the omega, to get to know him.

So once he finished his meal and noticed that Jared had also finished eating, Jensen took a sip from his cup and gently cleared his throat before he spoke. “Would you like to call your family? So you can give them a heads-up that we’ll be heading over to San Antonio in a while.”

“Yes,” Jared replied with a wide, appreciative smile, “I’d really like that, thank you, Jensen.”

“You’re welcome,” Jensen mumbled, his heart fluttering at hearing Jared say his name while he wore such a dazzling smile on his face. Before he could think twice and stop himself, Jensen added, “So… Tom mentioned that you two know each other? That you’re friends with his little brother?”

“Oh, yeah, Mark and I happened to meet during our first year at UT—we were both terrified freshman taking the same biology and English courses that fall semester.” Jared gave a sheepish smile. “We happened to sit next to each other in biology, but we didn’t really start talking until a few weeks later, and by then, we started sitting next to each other in our english course too. By the end of the semester, we were pretty good friends, and even though we only shared one class in the spring semester, we kept on hanging out. I didn’t get to meet Tom until the following year when he stayed with Mark for a few days.”

“Oh, and you, uh…” Jensen hesitated, unsure if he should ask for a moment before before he
continued, “you already graduated, right? What did you study at UT?”

For a moment, Jared merely eyed Jensen carefully, leaving the alpha feeling like he was under intense scrutiny, until the omega’s features softened and another bashful smile tugged at Jared’s lips that made Jensen’s heart skip a beat. “Uh, yeah—I actually just graduated from UT this past May with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology.”

“What sort of career are you thinking of pursuing?”

“Well…” to Jensen’s surprise, Jared seemed almost embarrassed then, “during my first two years at UT, I honestly wasn’t sure what I really wanted to study, but during the following summer, when I came back home, my mom suggested I look into teaching, since she’s a high school English teacher. At first, I sorta brushed off the suggestion, thinking I could never really do that, but when she brought it up again before I left back to UT for the fall semester, I seriously started to consider it. Now, my hope it to eventually become an elementary school teacher.”

“That sounds great,” Jensen beamed at the omega, “I’m sure you’d make a great teacher, Jared.”

Even though Jared ducked his head slightly then, Jensen could still see the tops of Jared’s cheeks redden slightly. “Thank you,” Jared replied as he looked up at Jensen to give him a shy, yet clearly pleased smile.

The sight of Jared, flushed and smiling, not more than a meter away, made his wolf bellow in anger, because while every bone in his body begged Jensen to stand up and reach over to pull Jared towards him, to kiss him, to hold the omega tight and mark him as his, Jensen merely held his breath for a moment and willed his wolf and mind to calm down.

“What about you?” Jared’s tentative voice instantly pulled Jensen away from his thoughts. “Uh, if it’s alright, may I ask, what you do?”

“Oh, uh,” Jensen instantly felt his heart sink as another powerful wave of self-consciousness washed over him, “well, I went to college here in Texas too. Got my undergrad degree in Kinesiology and Exercise Science from Texas Tech a bit over four years ago. I was planning on going to graduate school right after I got my degree, so I could study to become a Physical Therapist, but a few months before I graduated I found out that my Aunt Linda was sick. Her sickness seemed to grow worse though, until she couldn’t even manage the restaurant she owned, so after I finally graduated from Texas Tech, I decided to postpone graduate school until after she got better so I could go be with her and help her out.”

“Oh,” a frown tugged at Jared’s lips, “I’m very sorry to hear about your aunt, is she okay now?”

“She, uh…” Jensen tried to swallow past the lump in his throat, “she passed away about two years ago. When she got sick and I came to see her, she was furious because she wanted me to continue my studies, but I told her she was more important. Because she was the one that took me in and cared for me when my father became too absent after my mother passed away. Then, when she started getting worse, she eventually told me that since she wasn’t bonded to anyone, and since she didn’t have any children of her own, she was going to give me her restaurant. Once she passed away, it legally became mine. I… I’ve been managing it since then.”

“Jensen, I’m so sorry for your loss,” Jared’s features twisted in sorrow, and while Jensen’s own heart felt heavy at the reminder of his loss, he also wished that the frown Jared wore would vanish and that the omega would smile once more, “your Aunt Linda sounds like she was a great person. I’m happy to know she was there to take care of you after your mother passed away.”
“She was,” Jensen agreed with a reminiscent, yet mournful smile, “even though she was an alpha, she wanted better rights for omegas too. Honestly, from what I remember my mom telling me, I’m pretty sure Aunt Linda started protesting and fighting for dynamic equality because she saw just how much my mom struggled as they grew up because of her dynamic.”

For a moment, all was silent, and before Jared could speak, Jensen immediately cleared his throat and spoke, “I’m sorry, I should—” He took a deep breath and moved to changed the subject to try and lighten the atmosphere, “Have you already applied to graduate school? Or, uh—I’m sorry, I’m not sure what else you might have to do to become a teacher.”

But to Jensen’s horror, almost immediately after Jensen had finished speaking, Jared’s face fell.

“Oh, uh—no, I’m not going to be applying to graduate school,” the crestfallen expression Jared now wore made Jensen’s heart ache, “I mean, you can if you want to go and study some more, but it’s not really a requirement. I do need to find and apply to a teacher training program though, and after that, I need to take some state exams and then apply for certification so I can really teach here in Texas.”

Not wishing to see Jared look so distressed any longer, Jensen quickly tried to apologize and move the conversation to a different subject once more, “I— I’m sorry, if it makes you uncomfortable, you don’t—”

But Jared instantly rushed in to appease Jensen’s worry, “No, no! Jensen, it’s alright, I just…” his entire posture seemed to droop then, only increasing Jensen’s worry, “it’s sort of a touchy subject?

“You see, my father…even though our pack abides by the new progressive pack laws, he still believes in the older, traditional laws. So when Jeff, my older brother, graduated from high school, my father urged him to go to college, and then encouraged him to continue on with graduate school. And when Jeff finally become a certified lawyer, my father didn’t even try to hide just how proud he was of him.

“But when it came to me…” a pained smile appeared on Jared’s face and Jensen found himself becoming angry because he could already guess what Jared was going to say, “he didn’t even want me to go to college. Instead, he tried to discourage me from applying during my senior year in high school. He’d tell me that since I was an omega, he didn’t want to waste his money to send me to college when all I should worry about was to become an obedient omega so I could be a good mate to my future alpha.

“If I hadn’t managed to score a full ride to UT, I’m pretty sure my mom’s attempts to convince my dad that there was no harm in me going to college since everything was virtually paid for would’ve been futile and I’d’ve been stuck at home. And I’m sure, without a doubt, that my father would’ve tried to set me up with an alpha, just like how he initially tried to do with Megan.”

Jensen couldn’t stop the growl that worked it’s way out of his throat when Jared mentioned the idea of Gerald possibly setting up Jared with an alpha. But when Jared let out a tiny gasp at his growl, Jensen immediately snapped out of whatever had possessed him in that moment and felt himself swell with shame.

“Jared, I… I’m so sorry about that,” Jensen felt his face grow painfully warm in embarrassment as well, “I didn’t meant to—I just—”

“No, Jensen, it’s alright,” Jared gave a weak, yet understanding smile, “it’s still a sore spot with me, my father’s thoughts on omegas and how he treated me and Megan in comparison to Jeff while we grew up.
“You see, I was actually planning on finding a teaching training program in, or around, San Antonio once I got back home after I graduated, but…” Jared grimaced, “my father told me not to even bother looking, that it was time for me to look for a mate before I got too old and no one would want or accept me. Of course, I tried to dismiss what he said, and continued looking, but before I could even think of applying…” Jared paused and looked away, his voice falling slightly, “I found out what my father had tried to do with Megan.”

Understanding suddenly dawned on Jensen then, that because of both of their fathers, Jared had chosen to forsake his dream so he could take Megan’s place as Alan’s omega-to-be. That Jared had sacrificed his dream of becoming a teacher so that his little sister would be free from being mated away to Pack Alpha decades older than her.

“Jared…” Jensen looked down at his hands as they rested on the table, his voice wavering when he finally managed to get himself to continue, “I’m so sorry you were forced to give up your dream.”

“Jensen,” Jensen didn’t dare look up, but he could hear how earnest Jared was as he spoke, “it’s okay. Please, you don’t have to apologize for anything, it wasn’t your fault—if it’s anyone’s fault, it’s my father’s because he’s the one that…offered Megan as a potential mate to your father so our packs could be closely tied—he didn’t have to do that, but he still did. Plus,” Jared paused, his voice suddenly sounding inexplicably soft as he pressed on, “I mean, in the end, it helped me find my true mate—it brought me to you. That’s something I’m very thankful for.”

When Jensen finally managed to look up, he saw Jared was gazing at him with a gentle smile on his face, his cheeks tinged with pink. The sight was mesmerizing and left Jensen’s heart thudding irregularly in his chest. “Even though I wasn’t able to start the teaching training program when I originally wanted to, I can actually start looking for another program again now. So, in the end, I didn’t really have to give that up, it was just…pushed back a bit, but that’s okay.”

“That…” Jensen forced himself to look away from Jared’s face so he could take in a deep, shuddering breath, “I’m glad.”

A silence followed, and when Jensen averted his gaze to the round analog clock that rested on one of the walls in his kitchen, he realized he’d almost completely forgotten that he had to call Tom to come pick them up so they could leave. “It’s almost gonna be ten thirty in a few minutes, do you want to call your family now?”

“Oh, uh, we don’t— Do we have to leave straight away?” When Jensen only looked at Jared quizzically, Jared added in a timid voice, “I mean, can I call them a bit later? I just… If it’s alright with you, I’d really like to stay a bit longer so we can talk a bit more.”

“Oh,” Jensen felt his heart skip a beat as he took in just how nervous and unsure Jared had looked as he’d replied and tried to ignore how his own face was now feeling much too warm yet again, “of course, that’s perfectly fine. It’s still pretty early, so we don’t have to leave until you’d like to.”

“Thank you,” Jared murmured before he gave Jensen a mousy, yet thankful smile.

As they continued talking, Jensen found himself overwhelmed with joy, and it was hard to ignore how even his wolf seemed to preen and yip in delight to know that his omega really did want to be near him as well, to also get to know who he was.

It was during this time that Jensen found out that Jared had a sweet tooth. How Jared’s birthday was on July 19. How Jared, even though he was twenty-one, didn’t know how to drive because his father had never paid for driving lessons for him. How he loved summer but hated how his body would sweat profusely in Texas’ perpetually hot, sunny climate. How Jared dreamed of one day owning a
dog or two. How he was excited about one day having his very own place.

And with every bit of information that Jared shared about himself and his life, Jensen was sure to do the same.

It was also during this time that Jensen discovered he very much liked how the tops of Jared’s cheeks would easily flush when he was embarrassed. The way his eyes would just light up and his cheeks would dimple when he smiled at Jensen. How Jensen couldn’t help but think it adorable the way Jared would avert his gaze and turn his head slightly so that his bangs would almost try and hide his eyes when he was nervous.

It was clear to Jensen, the more he got to know Jared, the more he got to be close to him and just see him, the more he found himself falling for him. Even Jensen’s wolf took notice, because it too howled and urged Jensen to claim and truly make the sweet omega his.

Eventually, after nearly two hours of talking, Jensen had gotten a call from Tom, asking if they were still going to head on over to San Antonio. After telling Tom that they were still planning on going, Tom told Jensen he’d be on his way to pick them up in a few minutes. It was after Jensen hung up that he passed his phone to Jared so that the omega could finally call his family.

Yet, minutes later, when Jared walked back into the kitchen, his eyes red-rimmed, Jensen had been overcome with worry and had been unable to stop himself from asking Jared if he was okay. But Jared had merely nodded his head and given Jensen a small smile as he replied, “I’m alright. It’s just… My family’s very happy to hear that I’ll be going back home to see them.”

And although he had been relieved to hear that Jared was actually okay, a sinking feeling had lodged itself in Jensen’s chest after hearing Jared’s words, and it had persisted even after Tom picked them up and they were finally on the way towards San Antonio.

Jensen had texted Chris, Mike, and Steve about their departure, but even their words of encouragement hadn’t made the heavy feeling in his chest go away.

Because as Jensen sat in the back seat of Tom’s truck with Jared, he realized that Jared was going back home to his family—that the omega was going to leave. That, after finally meeting one another, they were already going to be separated, and Jensen knew there was nothing he could do about it. Because, no matter how much he and his wolf craved to have Jared near, Jensen wasn’t selfish enough to make Jared stay with him. Not when the omega was obviously thrilled about returning home to see his family again.

Jensen wouldn’t take that away from Jared—he just couldn’t.

Knowing it was pointless to try and ignore it, the matter of their impending separation weighed heavily on Jensen’s mind and heart all throughout the drive. Even his wolf would often cry out, pleading Jensen to find a way to make the omega stay. Yet each time, with a heavy heart, Jensen would ignore the pained cries of his wolf and try and convince himself that after Jared was gone, he’d be okay.

But no matter how much Jensen tried to believe that, both he and his wolf knew it was a lie.

Since the drive from Dallas to Jared’s home in San Antonio was going to last approximately five hours, during that time, mainly due to Tom’s steadfast efforts, the small talk between the three of them flowed easily. It didn’t escape Jensen that as they conversed, Jared looked at ease, comfortable,
and though the sight of the omega feeling so content and relaxed made Jensen feel somewhat at peace, he couldn’t ignore how the sight also made his chest swell in anguish knowing he might not see Jared’s content smile yet again.

When they were less than half an hour away from Jared’s home, the omega has kindly asked Jensen if he could once more borrow his phone to call him family, so he could inform them that they were near. But minutes later, when Jared had handed Jensen his cellphone back, the expression on his face had made Jensen’s wolf growl in anger.

Jared’s features had been twisted in distress, and Jensen had immediately guessed that the conversation he’d had with his family had likely been a very unpleasant one. Jensen had been hesitant to ask, but not wanting to see the crestfallen, agonized expression on the omega’s face any longer, he’d been unable to hold back and finally asked Jared what’d happened.

The answer had shocked both him and Tom.

Jared’s father had already heard of what had happened with the Dallas Pack, and now, despite the efforts of his mother and siblings to convince him otherwise, Gerald had stated that he did not want to see Jared. That he’d even gone so far as to declare that he did not want his own son to set foot inside of his family’s home. But as his mother, sister, and brother still wanted to see Jared, they’d all agreed to meet in a small café that sat on the edge of the Riverwalk.

Jared admitted that he was still glad he was going to see his family again, but the knowledge that his father didn’t even want him to return to their house had hurt more than he thought it would.

After this, Jensen did everything possible to make Jared smile again. Telling him tales of when he was much younger and got into lots of trouble at school and even at home, and when he’d finally managed to pull a laugh from Jared, he’d tried not to show just how pleased he and his wolf had been at the accomplishment.

He’s also tried to ignore how Tom had briefly looked at him with that knowing smirk from before through the rearview mirror, as he if knew why Jensen was doing what he was. Had Jared not been sitting next to him, Jensen would’ve given Tom the finger and told him to keep his eyes on the road.

Yet several minutes later, as Tom pulled into the parking lot of the café and parked the truck, Jensen felt like he was going to be sick when Tom turned to look at them in the back seat and calmly announced, “We’re here.”

Words of goodbye were lodged in the back of Jensen’s throat.

“Jensen,” it was Jared, “could I please speak very briefly with Tom outside?”

A wave of panic suddenly swelled in his chest, but Jensen managed to force himself to turn and give Jared a slight, albeit strained, smile, “Of course.”

“Thank you.”

The doors opened and were shut again and the silence in the truck that followed felt both suffocating and freeing. With a quick glance to make sure Tom and Jared weren’t looking at him as they both stood in front of the truck, Jensen proceeded to rake his hands through his hair and down his face. He gave a deep, shuddering exhale, feeling his heart thudding uneasily in his chest.

While he wondered what Jared could possibly wanted to tell Tom that he felt had to ask Jensen if he could talk to the beta privately, Jensen found that he was more unsettled with the eventual goodbyes they’d likely have to say to one another in a few minutes.
Would Jared merely leave with his family and never wish to see him again?

Would he leave and eventually forget about Jensen?

Would he leave and eventually mate with another alpha?

Though they were true mates, Jensen knew that not all true mates ended up mating and bonding. There had been cases before where true mates would recognize that they were true mates, but would choose to forgo bonding, to go their separate ways. Sometimes the separation was mutual, other times it wasn’t. In these cases, it wasn’t surprising to see one, or both, individuals mating and bonding with someone else afterwards—with someone that wasn’t their true mate.

He knew he’d respect and abide by whatever Jared decided to do, but Jensen couldn’t ignore how the thought of Jared deciding to leave, of the omega possibly mating with some other alpha in the future, made his heart twinge, leaving him breathless as if his chest had been struck.

Suddenly feeling slightly faint, Jensen forced his frantic thoughts to stop so he could take some slow, deep breathes of air. But moments later, when he finally began to feel better, the sight that met his eyes when he finally dared to take a look through the windshield instinctively made both his hands and teeth clench painfully tight in response.

Jared was leaning forwards, whispering something to Tom, and even though he knew Tom was a beta, and that he and Jared were merely friends, Jensen could feel his wolf growling in displeasure at seeing them standing so close together. But Jensen tried to brush the feeling away—Tom was his friend, and no matter how much the truth of it still amazed Jensen to this day, Tom was already in a very happy and committed relationship with Mike.

But then Jensen blinked and noticed that Tom was waving his hand, beckoning him to get out of the truck as well with a gleeful smile on his face that unsettled Jensen. That Jared seemed to be looking down, seemingly unwilling to look back up also didn’t alleviate any of Jensen’s unease.

Taking in a deep breath of air, Jensen steeled himself before he finally got out of the truck and closed the door behind him. Despite feeling immensely unsure, Jensen walked up to Tom and Jared and tried to seem unconcerned as he spoke, “Hey guys, what’s up?”

Tom seemed to look back at Jared for a moment then, and Jensen noticed how the omega’s gaze was still fixed down at the ground, before he replied carefully, “Jared’s feeling a bit nervous. Can you stay with him here for a bit? Mike’s been calling me nonstop, so I’m gonna call him back right now before we leave, okay?”

“Oh, uh,” Jensen’s eyes widened slightly in surprise, “okay—yeah, I’ll stay here with Jared.”

“Great, then I’ll be back in a bit,” Tom eyed them both with a sly smile before he turned and walked away. Leaving Jensen feeling like he’d just missed something very important.

What the hell had Tom and Jared discussed?

Yet before Jensen could think any further, Jared suddenly cleared his throat, making Jensen turn his attention back to the now fidgeting omega.

“Jensen…” that Jared seemed unable to meet his gaze even then left Jensen feeling incredibly nervous. What was Jared going to say? Was he planning on saying goodbye to Jensen already? A knot settled deep in Jensen’s stomach at the thought of Jared actually saying it was time for them to go their separate ways. “Can I ask you something?”
“Yeah, of course, what’s up?” Jensen tried to ask the question as casually as he could while he stuffed his hands into his jacket’s pockets in an attempt to hide how badly they were trembling.

“I’m sorry I asked you to let me talk to Tom privately a while ago, I know that was very rude, but I just… I wanted to ask Tom if he could go in with me to meet my family,” Jensen’s heart clenched at hearing that, “but I also want to ask you, right now, if you’d be okay joining us as well? I… I’d really like for you to accompany me, because, if it’s okay with you, I’d really like to tell my family about you—about…us. I want them to know who my true mate is.”

It took Jensen a few seconds to realize he’d stopped breathing at some point.

“You…” Jensen let out a shuddering breath of air. “You really want me to go in there with you?”

At last, Jared moved his head so he could look Jensen in the eye. His expression was so earnest as he spoke that Jensen couldn’t help but feel his stomach flutter, “Yes, I do, but only if you’d be alright with it. I’m sure meeting my parents is sorta of…moving pretty fast, given that we just met yesterday.”

“Well, you’ve already met my father,” he didn’t say. Instead, Jensen replied with a smile, “Of course, I’d be happy to go in with you and meet your family.”

The words seemed to pull a smile from Jared, and Jensen wanted nothing more than to close the distance between them and place a gentle kiss on Jared’s lips, but he merely stood there and continued to gaze at Jared’s face.

“Oh, and, uh… Before we go in there, I’d like to ask you something else, because I’d really like to bring it up with my family.” Jensen only nodded, his throat abruptly closing up in worry. “I was wondering, after we meet up with my family, would you, uh… Could I stay with you? In Dallas, I mean.”

The surprise on Jensen’s face must’ve been obvious because Jared quickly continued, “I’m very grateful that you and Tom brought me back to San Antonio to see my family again, given the way I suddenly left them, thinking I’d never get to see my family again, and them probably thinking the same. But…” he seemed to pause here, his voice falling to a whisper, “now that I’ve met you, knowing we’re…true mates, Jensen, I… Honestly, I don’t want to stay here anymore. I know it’s so sudden, but if you’d have me, I’d very much like to go back with you to Dallas.”

For the next few seconds, Jensen merely stood there, looking at Jared in complete disbelief.

And when a few more seconds passed by in silence, Jared’s features seemed to twist in dejection and worry, his voice rushing in, “But if you’d prefer me not to, I can just stay here, of course, that’d be perfectly fine, I just—”

“I’d love to have you,” Jensen blurted out before Jared could say more.

Jared immediately stopped speaking, his eyes going wide at hearing Jensen’s reply.

Oh, shit, Jensen immediately thought when his mind caught up with what exactly he’d said.

“Sorry, I mean—” Jensen immediately began as he averted his gaze, trying his best to ignore how quickly his heart was beating inside his chest and how his face suddenly felt like it was on fire, “what I meant to say was, yes, I’d— If you’d really like to stay with me in Dallas, that’d be— That’d be perfectly fine.”

A heavy silence followed, and Jensen, still unable to look back at Jared, continued to eye the floor,
desperately hoping the ground would just open up and swallow him whole.

When a loud exhale reached his ears, Jensen dared to look up at Jared.

The omega’s face was flushed, but there was a soft smile on his face as he looked at Jensen.

“I… Thank you.” Jared let out a light laugh then. “Oh man, I’m sorry, I just…honestly, I still can’t believe this is really happening, that you’re my true mate, and that, right now, we’re standing not even two feet apart.”

Jensen couldn’t help but smile fondly at Jared. “You’re right, I still can’t believe this either. I never really thought I’d be lucky enough to meet my true mate. But, well, here we both are.”

“I know I should’ve asked you sooner, if it would’ve been alright for me to stay with you in Dallas,” Jared admitted, looking rather embarrassed, “I actually thought about asking you while we were talking after breakfast, but I was too nervous, so I ended up waiting until the last minute—or, right now. But I had to ask you before we met up with my family, because if you said it was okay, I wanted to tell my family that I was going to go back with you.”

But something that Jared had said caught Jensen’s attention and he couldn’t help but ask, “You thought about asking me that early on? Jared, if I may ask, when exactly did you decide you wanted to stay with me?”

To Jensen’s amazement, Jared’s face seemed to grow even more flushed. “Honestly, I was thinking about it yesterday night, while my faux-heat was still in effect and I was having trouble falling asleep. But I wasn’t completely sure until we sat down and started talking after breakfast today.”

“Oh,” was Jensen’s only reply.

“I know it’s very, very sudden,” Jared immediately added, his voice rushed, “but really, if you think we shouldn’t live together, especially since, while we are true mates, we really only just met yesterday, maybe you could help me find my own place somewhere in Dallas? Maybe—”

But at the mere idea of Jared having to live away from him, Jensen immediately cut Jared off, his voice slightly frantic, “No, Jared, no. It’s perfectly okay. You can stay with me, I…I’d honestly prefer it. Please.”

“Oh.” It didn’t seem possible, yet Jared’s cheeks seemed to turn an ever brighter shade of pink just then, the flush even reaching the tops of his ears. “That’s— Uh— Okay. Thank you.”

“We’ll talk about this some more once we get back to my place,” Jensen assured with a smile. “For now, let’s go find Tom, because I have no idea where the hell he vanished off to.”

Yet before they could even move, Tom was suddenly there before them, as if Jensen had somehow summoned him, with a huge grin on his face. “Hey guys, I’m back. I’m sorry I took so long.”

Jensen narrowed his eyes suspiciously at the beta. “It’s fine, so what’d Mike want?”

“Oh, you know, he and the rest of the gang were just wondering how we were doing and how things were going so far—nothing big,” Tom’s response was nonchalant, but his eyes were trained on Jensen, a knowing smirk on his face. Before Jensen could say something in response, the smirk on the beta’s face was suddenly gone as he averted his gaze towards Jared and added quietly, “Hey Jared, you wanna head on inside now?”

“Oh, uh—yeah,” Jared gave Tom a nervous smile, “I don’t want to keep them waiting any longer.”
“Alright then,” Tom nodded, “let’s go.”

As they made their way towards the café’s entrance, Jared walking between Tom and Jensen, Jensen wished he could just reach out with his left hand and hold the omega’s right hand in his own. Knowing he couldn’t do such a thing for so many different reasons, Jensen merely gave a silent sigh as Tom opened the door for him and Jared.

The moment they were all in the small café, the door closing shut behind Tom, immediately after Jensen noticed that the inside of the café was oddly just as empty as it was outside, a tall, slender girl rushed straight towards Jared. Her long, light brown hair hung loosely around her head, and it didn’t escape Jensen’s notice that she looked like she might’ve been crying a while ago because her nose and cheeks were still deeply tinged with pink.

Now recalling Jared’s mentions of his family from a few hours ago, Jensen wondered if this was perhaps Megan, Jared’s younger sister.

Before anyone could say anything, the girl cried out Jared’s name in relief a second before she wrapped her thin arms around Jared.

“Megan,” Jared immediately returned the hug, “I missed you so much. Are you alright?”

“Me?” She seemed to pull back then, shock and indignation written on her face. “Jared! You’re the one who left! I should be asking you if you’re okay!”

“Megan, I’m perfectly fine,” Jared replied with a smile, but then he quickly added, “can we go see Mom and Jeff? I…” suddenly, an uncertain look appeared on Jared’s face, “I brought Tom with me, he’s Mark’s older brother, and…Jensen.”

As soon as Jared had mentioned Tom’s name, Megan’s gaze had drifted from Jared to Tom with a confused expression, but as soon as Jensen’s name had been mentioned, the corners of her lips had twisted into a blatantly displeased frown before her eyes had even moved to glare at him.

“Jensen…Ackles?” Jensen found himself rather shocked by the obvious contempt in her voice as she said his name. And as Megan continued staring at him with narrowed eyes, Jensen began to feel increasingly anxious.

If Megan already seemed to dislike him, what hope was there that the rest of Jared’s family might not also dislike him? What if they wouldn’t accept that he and Jared were true mates? What if they disliked Jensen so much that they’d try and convince Jared to leave him?

“Megan, please,” Jared urged quietly, “Jensen needs to be here. I promise, I’ll explain everything once we sit down with Mom and Jeff, okay?”

Megan said nothing for a few seconds, her gaze still locked on Jensen as if she was looking right into his very soul and determining if he was worth the benefit of the doubt or not.

“Please, Megan, trust me,” Jared’s pleading voice fell to just above a whisper, “I... I need him here with me. Please.”

When she finally looked away, Jensen let out a tiny breath of air and tried not to think about how his heart had skipped a beat when Jared had emphasized that he needed Jensen here with him.

“Fine,” Megan huffed out with slight pout, clearly still displeased but willing to let it slide, as she crossed her arms across her chest, “let’s go then. Mom and Jeff are eager to see you again.”
As they followed Megan further inside the café, Jensen felt a knot in the pit of his stomach. Given Megan’s adverse reaction to his presence, he couldn’t help but worry that Jared’s mother and brother were also going to have a similar response once they walked up to them and he was introduced. He wouldn’t blame them if they did, given they likely knew he was Alan’s son, and if they were pissed with his father for accepting Jared as a potential mate, well, it wasn’t a stretch to guess they’d also be displeased with his presence if only because he was related to Alan.

No matter how silly the thought might have been, Jensen wanted Jared’s family to accept him, to like him. Because if all went well, hopefully one day, after he and Jared bonded, he wanted to be able to call them his family as well. And it dawned on Jensen that if they didn’t accept him, and Jared still wished to be with him, the possible rift between them would most definitely hurt Jared—and Jensen most definitely did not want that.

Abruptly, something bumped into Jensen’s left arm, startling him out of his thoughts.

He turned his head only to see Jared looking at him, his brows pulled together in what Jensen thought was worry. But a moment later, his features smoothed out and he gave Jensen a small, reassuring smile, as if he somehow knew that Jensen was worried about meeting his family and was trying to assure Jensen what all would be alright.

Amazingly, in that moment, Jensen instantly felt all his worries fade away until they were merely indiscernible whispers in the back of his mind.

When he offered Jared a smile of his own in return, Jared’s smile seemed to widen before the omega shyly turned his head back around.

Jensen turned his head as well and took a deep breath.

He could do this.

If it was for Jared, he could do this.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Originally, I wasn’t going to post this chapter until after I finished chapter seven as well, but lately I’ve been rather busy (I’ve taken up gardening as a very serious hobby lately, hehe) and feeling rather down (which is rather usual for me around summer-time), so I just decided to post the remaining two chapters individually, after each was finished, as usual. Anyways, I hope you all like this chapter, please leave a comment if you do! ♥

As Tom, Jensen, and Jared slowly made their way towards the table where Sharon and Jeff were sitting in the otherwise empty café, Megan seemed to rushed off to their mother’s side. Jared could easily spot the relieved, buoyant grins on both of their faces as they watched him approach. Yet as soon as their gazes drifted past him to Tom and Jensen, their smiles seemed to falter. Oddly enough, Jared couldn’t help wonder why, while his mother’s eyes narrowed in suspicion and anger at Tom and Jensen, Jeff seemed almost thoughtful.

When he realized he was going to have to explain everything to everyone, Jared felt his own smile turn into a grimace. He shook the worrying thought away and tried his best to give his mother and brother a warm smile as he acknowledged them. “Mom. Jeff.”

“Oh, Jared!” Sharon quickly stood up from her seat around the rectangular table and walked over to Jared so she could envelop him in a tight hug. “I missed you so much, honey! I’m so happy to see you again.”

“I’m happy to see you too, mom,” Jared wrapped his arms around his mom and returned her embrace. When they broke apart seconds later, Jeff walked up to him and placed a hand on his shoulder.

“It’s good to see you again, Jared,” Jeff spoke with a small smile.

Jared returned his older brother’s smile. “It’s good to see you too, Jeff.”

“And…who might these two fellas be?” Sharon suddenly asked Jared, though her eyes were still looking daggers at both Jensen and Tom.

“Well…” Jared let out a weary sigh. “I’ll introduce everyone, but, if it’s alright, can we all take a seat before, please?”

Sharon only nodded before everyone began sitting down on the rectangular table. On one side, Sharon sat in the middle, with Megan to her right and Jeff to her left. Unwilling to let Tom or Jensen sit right in front of his mother, Jared decided to take the center seat so that Jensen sat to his right and Tom to his left. Hesitating for a moment, Jared took in a deep breath of air as he steeled himself and turned slightly so he could face Tom.

“This is Tom Welling,” Jared introduced as he gestured to Tom, “he’s Mark’s older brother.”

“Howdy, ma’am,” Tom greeted with a polite, easy smile, “it’s a pleasure to finally meet you.”
“And this…” Jared continued carefully as he then turned and gestured to Jensen, his wolf already sensing that something dreadful might happen once he mentioned the alpha’s name, “this is Jensen...Ackles.”

A heavy silence followed and Jared could feel his heart beating nervously in his chest as he waited. He glanced up at his mother’s face only to see that she didn’t look surprised at all.

“You’re Alan’s son, then?” Sharon threw the question offhandedly, her face almost expressionless, but Jared could easily hear the underlying current of animosity in her words that made his inner wolf cower away and whine in apprehension.

There was a pause before Jensen gave a quiet, but steady reply, “Yes, ma’am, I am.”

Sharon’s eyes narrowed as she continued to stare at Jensen, “Your father tried to steal my son from me, Mr. Ackles. There’s absolutely no reason for you to be here—your presence isn’t needed, much less wanted.”

Rage abruptly swelled in Jared’s chest as he heard the way his mother spoke to Jensen, his wolf tensed and snarled in anger, and before he could hold himself back, he snapped, “Don’t speak to him like that!”

Everyone seemed taken aback by Jared’s outburst, especially Sharon.

“Jared,” Jensen addressed the omega quietly, “it’s okay.”

“No, it’s not,” Jared answered as he narrowed his eyes at his family, “I’m going to explain this to everyone, right now, because Jensen sure as hell doesn’t deserve to be treated like this.”

“Jared, honey, we’re just—” Sharon tried to speak, but Jared cut her off.

“Jensen saved me,” he interjected sharply, “he challenged his Pack Alpha, his own father, for the right to mate and bond with me, and he won. He even brought me back home to see you guys. Jensen didn’t have to do any of that, but he did. So please,” his voice grew soft then, almost pleading, “please don’t try to pair him off with his father. They’re absolutely nothing alike.”

A heavy silence followed, and Jared noticed how his family was now eyeing Jensen. Megan and Sharon both looked shell-shocked, as if Jared’s words had fundamentally altered their understanding of the world; yet, in comparison, Jeff only looked somewhat surprised.

“I…” Sharon cleared her throat and Jared was surprised to see that both her and Megan looked embarrassed. “Then, I— I apologize for my rudeness, Mr Ackles.”

“It’s alright,” Jensen gave a small, yet friendly smile.

“And…” Sharon took a deep breath before continuing, “I would very much like to thank you for bringing my son back to me, Mr. Ackles. I… I truly do appreciate what you have done.”

“There’s no need to thank me for that, ma’am. And please, call me Jensen.”

Sharon merely nodded her head.

As an unpleasant, almost suffocating silence filled the empty café, Jared moved his gaze towards Megan. She appeared just as uncomfortable as their mom, but while Sharon appeared to be fine making eye contact with anyone, Megan appeared more shy; her gaze appeared to be glued to the space of their table right in front of her. Jared let his gaze slide over to Jeff. Strangely, his older
brother didn’t appear all that uncomfortable. Just like before, Jeff appeared somewhat thoughtful, almost pensive, as if he was thinking critically about something.

“Jeff?” Jared couldn’t help but speak up, his eyes still fixed on his brother. “You haven’t said anything yet.”

Jeff turned to look at Jared and gave him a serene smile. “I’m sorry, Jare. I just… I sorta figured Jensen was a good guy the moment you called us.” Everyone went quiet and Jeff explained, “I mean, if Jensen had been anything at all like his father, then we wouldn’t’ve even heard back from you in the first place. Then for you to say that you were gonna come back here, that Jensen was actually gonna bring you over, well…by that point I was sure that he was different.”

Jeff turned his attention to Megan and Sharon and merely shrugged his shoulders, “I did try to tell you guys before we got here that Jensen wasn’t the bad guy you were making him out to be, but neither of you wanted to hear me out.”

Jeff glanced at Jensen, “Thanks for bringing my lil’ brother back, Jensen, and for also getting him out of his arranged mating with Alan. I know it couldn’t’ve been easy to challenge your father like that.”

The kindness in Jeff’s words seemed to take Jensen aback, “I, uh— You’re welcome. It really wasn’t easy for me to challenge him in front of everyone like that, but, truthfully, I’m glad I did.”

“And given that you won, I’m guessing you’re gonna take over as the new Dallas Pack Alpha now, right?”

“Yeah,” Jensen gave a hesitant nod, “as soon as Tom and I get back to Dallas we’ll have to start making arrangements and changing everything.”

“Everything?” Jeff regarded Jensen carefully then. “May I ask what exactly you mean by that?”

Jared watched and Tom and Jensen turned to look at one another then, a few silent seconds passed before Tom merely nodded his head and they turned away. With his gaze fixed on Jeff, Jensen finally replied, “As soon as I became the new Pack Alpha, I publicly announced that the Dallas Pack was finally going to forsake Traditional Pack Laws and adopt Progressive Pack Laws.” Jensen paused then. “It’s something we’ve been planning doing for a while now, but thanks to Jared, well, our plans were sort of, uh, well, rushed.”

“Is this true?” The question from Sharon was directed at Jared, but Jared couldn’t help but wonder why his mother was asking him this instead of asking Jensen.

Was it because she still didn’t trust Jensen, even after all Jared had said?

“Yes, it’s true,” Jared answered quietly.

Another heavy silence followed.

Realizing their conversation had come to an uncomfortable lull, Jared figured it was now or never—he needed to tell his family that he was planning on leaving back to Dallas with Jensen and Tom. Steeling himself, Jared inhaled before he gently nudged Tom with his elbow. Just as they’d discussed before they entered the café, Tom immediately understood the cue.

“It was great meeting you all,” Tom said with a grin, “but I think we best be on our way back to Dallas. As Jensen mentioned before, now that he’s become our new Pack Alpha, there’s quite a lot we have to do. The sooner we get back to Dallas to start sorting everything with everyone, the better.”
“Oh,” Sharon was the first to speak, “well, it was very nice meeting you, Tom. You’re just as handsome as Mark. Please send your little brother my regards, I haven’t seen that boy in so many months now.”

“I will, Mrs. Padalecki,” Tom gave a polite nod in acknowledgement before he turned to Megan. “It was nice meeting you too, Megan.” Megan only nodded her head shyly. Lastly, Tom turned to look at Jeff with a friendly grin. “And Jeff, it was a pleasure meeting you as well.”

“It was good to meet you as well, Tom,” Jeff offered Tom an amiable smile as well, “I hope you two will have a safe journey back to Dallas.”

“Thank you.” With that, Tom gave a polite, yet cordial bow before he turned around and left. As soon as the beta was out of the café, Jared noticed how everyone’s attention jumped right back to him and Jensen. A heavy knot of unease lodged itself in Jared’s stomach as he realized then that there was no going back, that he had to do this now.

“There’s something else I want to say,” Jared could feel his heart beating nervously in his chest. Everyone turned to look at him then. “What is it, honey?”

Jared looked at his family and observed how both Megan and Sharon wore the same worried expressions, while Jeff looked almost expectant, as if he already knew what Jared was about to say.

Unease creeped down Jared’s neck and back until it settled heavily in his gut, he looked away, fearing what he might see on their faces once he informed them of what he wanted—no, what he planned to do. But then something bumped gently against his shoulder, directing Jared’s gaze up to his right only to see that Jensen had moved close enough to him so that their shoulders were now touching. When he took a glance at Jensen’s face, the alpha looked back at him, giving him a small, assuring smile.

It took Jared a moment to realize that Jensen was trying to comfort him. That the alpha had likely seen his distress and was now attempting to assuage his anxiety as best he could, given their current situation. The thought made his wolf keen and huff in delight, and Jared thanked the heavens that he hadn’t blushed in response.

Determination and strength surged in Jared, and with that, he took a deep breath before he finally spoke, “I won’t be staying in San Antonio, I’ll be going back to Dallas with Jensen and Tom.”

A beat passed and then Jared saw the expected looks of horror on his mother and Megan’s faces. “Jared!” Sharon cried out, clearly upset. “What’re you saying? You just got back home! You belong here with us—your family!”

“You only just met him!” Megan exclaimed, her features twisted in indignation.

It was thanks to Jensen standing right by his side that Jared was able to stop himself from wincing at the way his own family was speaking to him, even though his wolf had flinched and whimpered in alarm. For a moment, Jared felt lost—he knew his family wouldn’t accept his choice so easily, but to actually hear their words, to hear the way they spoke to him in response, it broke his heart.

He swallowed and turned to look at Jeff. Yet, in stark contrast to his mother and sister, Jeff only regarded Jared calmly, his voice gentle as as he questioned, “Jared, is this what you really want?”

Megan and Sharon quickly fixed their shocked gazes on Jeff.
Megan looked almost betrayed. "Jeff!"

"Don’t you dare encourage him!" was Sharon’s angry reply.

"Mom, Megan," Jeff let out a sigh, "we all know Jared’s old enough to make his own decisions. If he wants to go with Jensen and Tom back to Dallas, then he has every right to. I think Jensen and Tom have more than proved themselves to be good men. So if Jared wants to go with them,” Jeff turned his attention to Jared, “then he has my support.”

“Jeff…” Jared felt his throat close up, “thank you.”

“You are not going anywhere with this alpha!” Sharon quickly snapped her attention back to Jared, and he couldn’t stop himself from flinching this time at the ire in her voice. “I won’t allow you to go!”

An arm suddenly wrapped itself around Jared’s waist and he went absolutely still as his heart skipped a beat.

“What Jeff said is right, Jared is more than capable of making his own decisions,” Jensen growled out. “You can say whatever you want about me, but I won’t just stand here and let you speak to Jared like this anymore.”

Jared felt his wolf howl in adoration and glee at Jensen’s protectiveness.

“We’re his family!” Sharon countered. “You have no right to say that!”

Thinking this was the perfect moment, Jared cleared his throat and spoke, his voice loud and clear, “Yes, he does.” When everyone stopped to stare at him, Jared continued, “Jensen might not be my family, but he is my true mate.”

The silence that followed was deafening. Even Jeff appeared to be taken back by the declaration. As no one dared speak then, Jared reluctantly decided it was finally time to try and explain.

“What Megan said before, about me just meeting Jensen, is completely right. But…we’re true mates, and I…I really want to get to know Jensen more. I already feel that strong pull to him, and I just… I know can’t stay here, I can’t be away from him now that I know and feel this. I just… I don’t want to be away from him.”

“But, Jared—”

“Mom, please,” Jared pleaded quietly, “I know how sudden this is, how strange it might seem given everything that happened, but please understand, I want to stay by Jensen’s side, I want to get to know him better. Because now, given everything that happened, if I stay here, I… I know I won’t be happy.” The last words that fell from Jared’s lips were laden with guilt.

There was silence for a second before Sharon spoke, appearing as if she was near tears. “Oh, Jared, honey… I won’t lie to you, I’m not happy with this—you were taken from us and we thought we’d never see you again, but yet here you are. You’re back home! And I… I want you to stay with us, with your family. But…” Sharon watched Jared, her gaze sad yet understanding, “I now see just how much this means to you. So, I… I understand.” When Jared’s eyes widened in surprised, she added with a watery smile, “I’m going to miss you so much, honey. I swear, this is like you leaving to college all over again. So you better call me every day, alright? And please, come visit us again whenever you can, especially on holidays, okay?”

After hearing his mother’s words, Jared felt as if an immense weight had been lifted from his
shoulders. “I— Of course, I’ll text and call you all every day.”

“Good.” She turned her attention to Jensen then. “Please take good care of my son, Mr. Ack—” Sharon quickly corrected herself, “Jensen.”

“Of course,” Jensen replied easily with a warm smile, “you have my word, Mrs. Padalecki, I swear I’ll do my best to make sure that Jared is both safe and happy with me in Dallas.”

Jared tried to ignore how the words make his stomach flutter in what he couldn’t deny was excitement. Much to his own embarrassment, even his wolf let out a pleased yip.

“And, Jared…” Sharon looked back at him, and Jared’s heart gave a lurch as he noticed how his mother was on the verge of tears then.

Megan walked up to them, her eyes watery and red-rimmed as well, and continued, “We’re all going to miss you so much.”

The three of them embraced then, in a huge hug, and Jared felt his own eyes start to burn. “Come on guys,” he said, his voice breaking slightly, “it’s not like I’ll be leaving forever. I’ll just be a handful of hours away, and we’ll be able to talk and everything once I get my own phone back and everything else.”

When they broke apart, Jeff walked up to them, “You gonna want us to pack up your stuff and send it over to Jensen’s place?”

“Yeah, I’d go and do all that if I could but…” everyone understood his unsaid words—_but father doesn’t want me to even step foot in our house again._

“Don’t worry ‘bout a thing, honey,” Sharon offered Jared a reassuring smile, “we’ll pack up your things and take them over to Jensen’s place ourselves as soon as we can.”

“In that case,” Jensen finally spoke up, “let me give you all my address before we leave.”

Several minutes later, after Jared and Jensen had gotten everything sorted out, and Jared had said his goodbyes to his family yet again, they exited the café and walked right up to Tom’s truck.

“Ah, I see,” were Tom’s first words after both Jensen and Jared were finally in the vehicle. “It seems I missed something monumental while I was here waiting. Would you guys mind filling me in?”

Jared merely blushed in response as Jensen replied, “Tom, just start the damned truck already.”

Tom let out a laugh as he started finally turned the key and started the truck, “Alright, alright. I was only curious, there’s no need for you to get upset.”

“I, uh…” Jared paused to glance at Jensen, the alpha seemed to understand what Jared was about to say and merely gave him a smile and brief nod. “Well, I… As you can already tell, I told my parents that I was coming back with you guys to Dallas because I want to stay with Jensen. I also informed them that we’re true mates.”

“Ah,” Tom mindlessly nodded his head as he keep his eyes on the road, “I see—so _that’s_ what you wanted to discuss with them. Well, I, for one, am very happy you decided to come back with us,
Jared. I’m pretty sure our friends back home are going to freak out when they find out.”

“You haven’t told them?” Jensen asked in mild disbelief.

“Nah,” Jared looked up into the rearview mirror and noticed that Tom was grinning, “I figure we can surprise them, yeah?”

“Wait, just—Tom, please give me a moment here to talk to Jared about something.” Tom remained quiet as Jensen’s turned to look at Jared.

“Jared?” Jared turned to meet Jensen’s gaze, feeling slightly nervous. “What I told your brother back at the café is true, since I’m now the new Dallas Pack Alpha, I’m probably going to be rather busy for the next few days making sure everything proceeds smoothly, given the new changes I’m going to be bring to the Dallas Pack.” He paused, and Jared’s heart ached at how tired and crestfallen the alpha looked then. “Things are going to be very hectic for a while, and I’d just like to apologize for that right now. I know our friends really want to meet you, but I also realize that you’ve been through so much these past few days, so if you’d prefer to meet them at a later time, then that’d be perfectly alright. I’m sure everyone will understand.”

“Jensen’s right,” Tom added quietly, “if you’d prefer to meet everyone later, they’ll understand. We don’t want to overwhelm you, Jared, and trust me, some of our friends can be pretty… overwhelming.”

Jensen let out a breath of air that sounded like a short laugh, “He’d know.”

Jared looked up at the mirror and saw Tom roll his eyes while his lips pulled into a grin, “Yeah, yeah, whatever.”

“Well…” Jared began after a few seconds of thought, “I think I’d be okay with surprising everyone, like Tom mentioned before. So I wouldn’t mind meeting everyone today, if that’s alright.”

“Well…” Jared began after a few seconds of thought, “I think I’d be okay with surprising everyone, like Tom mentioned before. So I wouldn’t mind meeting everyone today, if that’s alright.”

“Of course,” Tom spoke, “so Jen, you want to text everyone to meet up at your place later?”

“Yeah, I’ll do it once we’re about half an hour away.”

“Alright, then, for now, my friends, please enjoy the ride.” Tom quickly glanced at them through the rearview mirror, a wide grin on his face, before his gaze returned to stare at the road before them. “I’ll be putting on some of my music, but if you guys prefer something else, or for me to turn it off, just tell me, yeah?”

“If Jared doesn’t mind it, then I’m fine with anything,” Jensen replied easily.

“Oh, uh—some music would be fine,” was Jared’s quiet answer.

As the melodic music filled the truck, through the corner of his eyes, Jared saw Jensen turn to his left to look out the window at his side. Jared tilted his head slightly enough to notice that Jensen’s right hand was resting on the empty space between them. Doubt filled Jared’s mind as he contemplated doing what both and his wolf yearned to do. Before his worries could overwhelm and stop him, Jared casually moved his hand from his lap to the space between them on the seat and slowly began sliding his hand to the left until eventually his fingers brushed up against Jensen’s hand.

Though the alpha didn’t move his hand away, Jared saw him start slightly before he quickly turned his head to glance down at their hands and then to look up at Jared in surprise.

With his heart already beating furiously in his chest, Jared only gave Jensen a shy smile before he
carefully moved his hand a few centimeters so that his hand was resting slightly on top of Jensen’s. He held his breath and waited, desperately wishing that Jensen would understand what he was trying to say. Not a beat later, Jensen’s eyes widened in, what Jared hoped was, realization, and a pink tinge appeared on the tops of his cheeks. Then, amazingly, the alpha’s features softened and a smile was directed at Jared.

Yet, the moment Jared felt Jensen’s hand move against his own, moving his hand so that not two seconds later, their hands were clasped together, Jared swore his own heart had tried to jump right out of his chest in surprise and exultation. As his wolf let out a pleased howl, he let out a shuddering breath of air as he glanced down to stare at their entwined hands.

When Jared lifted his gaze to look back up at Jensen, the fond, almost loving smile the alpha wore as he looked at him made Jared’s heart and stomach flutter in delight, leaving him slightly breathless. Yet when Jensen gently squeezed his hand, Jared could feel a burning flush crawl it’s way up from his shoulders to his ears. Feeling overwhelmingly embarrassed at that moment, Jared timidly squeezed Jensen’s hand in return before he quickly twisted his neck and averted his gaze to look outside the window to his right to try and calm his still racing heart and to try and quiet his frantic thoughts, and to try and ignore just how pleased his wolf was right now.

Hours later, after they’d arrived back at Jensen’s place, and Jared had finally met all of Jensen’s friends—Chris, Mike, and Steve—Jared was completely exhausted. The omega supposed it was noticeable, despite his efforts to hide just how weary he truly felt, because only two hours after they’d arrived, Jensen had asked his friends to come over another day because he wanted to get some rest. Though Jared guessed Jensen had said it on his behalf. Which, given how tired he was, Jared truly appreciated it because he would’ve never actually said it on his own.

After everyone had left, leaving Jensen and Jared alone in Jensen’s place, Jensen had cooked something for them to eat. Jared had insisted beforehand that he wanted to help Jensen, as he had done during breakfast, but Jensen had been adamant, “Jared, please, let me do this for you.” The alpha’s voice had been soft, almost pleading, and Jared had immediately given in.

Everything had been going smoothly during their meal, and it was afterwards, that Jensen and Jared had sat down next to each other on the large sofa to watch some television. Even with the sounds from the TV, things between them had been quiet at first, but eventually, during the commercials, they began to talk to one another. Gradually, their talks grew until they were avidly talking and the TV was mostly forgotten, reduced to mere background noise as they conversed.

They kept talking about as many things as they possibly could, until eventually, night came and Jared began to yawn, his body demanding sleep.

“Jared,” Jensen said, taking notice of Jared’s yawn, “if you’re tired, please feel free to sleep in my room again.”

Knowing that meant Jensen would be sleeping on the sofa again, even his wolf seemed displeased with the there mere thought of it, “No, Jensen, I can’t let you sleep on the—”

“Jared,” Jensen gently cut him off, “please, I insist. I have a second room available, but the only things in there are my desktop and some bookshelves. But, since you’re planning on staying with me now…” the sudden nervousness Jared could sense from Jensen surprised him, “once your family sends over your stuff, you can stay there, if you’d like to that is?”
“Jensen, I…” Jared paused and took a deep breath, hoping to try and ease his racing heart, “Yes, if you’re sure, than I’d be more than fine staying there. Hopefully my family’ll box everything up and bring all my things here in a few days. I don’t want to keep you from your room too long.” Then, Jared recalled something. “Jensen, are you sure it’ll be okay for my family to come here? Knowing them, it won’t be just Jeff dropping everything by; I’m pretty sure my mom and Megan are going to tag along as well.”

“Of course it’s okay,” was Jensen’s immediate reply. He gave Jared a gentle smile, “If they want to come, they’re more than welcome. I’ll just have to make sure my place looks a bit more presentable before then.”

“Thank you.” With his gaze now fixed on his hands, Jared felt his face grow warm as he quietly added, “Jensen, you’ve been…absolutely amazing. You just— Everything you’ve done for me before we even met, what you continue doing now, I just…please know that I really appreciate it all so very much. So, uh, I just want to say…thank you, for everything.”

“Jared,” the omega forced himself to meet the alpha’s eyes then and felt his heart thud repeatedly against his ribcage when he saw how the alpha was gazing at him, “you really don’t have to thank me for all that. You’re my true mate, my…” Jensen seemed to grow bashful then, “well, hopefully, one day, you’ll also be my bondmate—my omega. There’s… Jared, there’s nothing I wouldn’t do for you.”

Taken completely by surprise, Jared merely sat there, at a complete loss for words, staring at the alpha.

“Alright then,” Jensen immediately stood up then, “now, uh, well…since this is now going to be your place too, um, please feel free to do anything you’d like. Mi casa es su casa. Uh, I think I’m gonna take a quick shower, though, I, uh— I shouldn’t take too long.”

Before Jensen could walk away, Jared stood up and reached out to gently grab the back of Jensen’s shirt. The action seemed rather silly to Jared, like something a child would do, and he felt his face heat in embarrassment at the thought. “Jared, please—wait.”

“Jared,” the omega forced himself to meet the alpha’s eyes then and felt his heart thud repeatedly against his ribcage when he saw how the alpha was gazing at him, “you really don’t have to thank me for all that. You’re my true mate, my…” Jensen seemed to grow bashful then, “well, hopefully, one day, you’ll also be my bondmate—my omega. There’s… Jared, there’s nothing I wouldn’t do for you.”

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After Jensen turned around to face him, looking very surprise, Jared let go of the alpha’s shirt.

“I…” the frantic beating of his heart made Jared feel out of breath, almost faint, “I want us to be bondmates, too. I—I want to be your omega too, just as much as I want you to be my alpha.”

His words were little more than a shy murmur, but Jensen clearly heard them because he then quietly asked, “Jared, you… May I hug you?”

At that, Jared briskly looked up to meet the alpha’s gaze, his eyes wide. “Of course! You, uh— Jensen, you don’t have to ask me to do that.”

The alpha gave Jared a soft smile, “We may be true mates, Jared, but we only just met yesterday. I… I didn’t want to presume anything.”

“Oh,” Jared let out a breath of air, “well, from now on, you don’t have to ask.”

“What if—” Jensen immediately cut himself off, looking incredibly nervous and hesitant, yet before Jared could dare ask what Jensen wanted to say, the alpha seemed to take a breath of air and spoke again. “What if I wanted to…kiss you?”

It was as if all the air in Jared’s lungs had been forced out, leaving him dizzy and feeling like perhaps this was all just an extremely long dream he had yet to wake up from. Even his wolf had gone quiet.
then, as if taken completely by surprise and was merely awaiting what would happen next.

“Then…” Jared swallowed even though his throat felt uncomfortably dry, “I’d say the same thing—
you don’t have to ask, because I… I’d let you.”

Everything seemed to come to a standstill, with only the rushing of blood roaring in Jared’s ears. But then he noticed it, Jensen was walking towards him, was taking those last steps so that their bodies were only inches apart.

“So if I wanted to kiss you right now, would you still let me?”

The words were soft, but there was something in the way Jensen said them that send a jolt of something down Jared’s back, that made the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end, that made his wolf keen in anticipation.

“Yes,” Jared breathed the word out.

Before Jared could blink, Jensen’s face was only centimeters away. He could feel the alpha’s breath against his own skin, and it sent chills down his spine. But with each passing second, Jensen didn’t move. They merely remained locked there, standing unbelievably close to one another, and yet Jensen wasn’t taking those last steps to kiss him.

He realized it then, even though the alpha had already indirectly asked him, right then, right there, the alpha was waiting for Jared to decided—he was giving Jared the chance to back out, to pull away if he so wanted to. But Jared didn’t want to—couldn’t.

So he did the only thing he could think of doing in that moment, knowing the alpha’s gaze was fixed on him, awaiting his response, he listened to his wolf and tilted his head just a fraction to the side. It was a sign of submission, yes, but it was also a way of letting Jensen know that he understood what the alpha wanted to do and that he was okay with it.

The move seemed to appease the alpha, because a second later two hands were gently cupping his jaw and neck and pulling him down until Jared felt his lips gently collide with Jensen’s.

The kiss started off chaste, but that only lasted for a few seconds before the kiss deepened. Given how Jensen was holding him, how their bodies were so painfully close, nearly chest-to-chest, Jared found himself drowning in Jensen’s heady alpha scent. It made Jared’s body tremble in response, and, distantly, Jared could feel his wolf howling loudly in delight to finally be this close to the alpha, to finally be able to scent his mate.

It was all so overwhelming, but in the best possible way.

When Jared felt his knees grow weak, his wolf craving something more, he couldn’t stop the faint whimper that slipped past his lips.

He felt Jensen pull back slightly, the alpha’s widened eyes looking at Jared in surprise. Jared felt his face grow uncomfortably warm in response, which pulled a smirk from the equally flushed alpha that only made Jared’s heart skip a beat.

“I—” Jensen took a few steps back and cleared his throat, “I, uh—I guess I’ll take that shower now. I’ll just, uh—Let me just get some clothes from my room.” Still feeling completely embarrassed by his reaction only moments ago, Jared only gave a nod.

The alpha offered Jared a gentle smile before he walked away.
Jared let out a sigh and suddenly wished the ground would open up and swallow him whole.

As Jared closed the door behind him, he rushed to sit down on the edge of Jensen’s bed. He was exhausted. Both physically and mentally. Even though his wolf was pleading him to spend more time with Jensen, to just physically be near the alpha as much as possible, Jared wanted nothing more than to go to sleep in that moment. He’d had a stressful week—thinking he was going to be forced to mate with Jensen’s father, how he was then forced to experience a faux-heat, and how he’d then had to deal with the anxiety of facing his family to tell them about Jensen.

After removing his shoes, Jared moved the comforter so that he could lie down on the bed and then pulled it back over his body. The sheets were new, given that the previous ones had been dirtied when he’d gone into the faux-heat the night before, and reeked of laundry detergent. Immediately, Jared realized he missed Jensen’s scent, missed how the previous sheets had still carried the alpha’s scent, no matter how faint, and had nearly fooled him during his faux-heat into thinking the alpha was near. For in his slight faux-heat haze, the alpha’s scent on those sheets had managed to calm and comfort him. These new sheets didn’t carry Jensen’s scent at all, and it made Jared’s wolf cry in sorrow at the loss.

Though Jared knew it was likely ridiculous, as time flew by and he had yet to fall asleep, he couldn’t help but blame these new, clean sheets for his lack of sleep. It was nearly two hours later, when Jared was distantly starting to wonder if perhaps he should go to Jensen, if only to scent the alpha one last time at his wolf’s insistence, that Jared gradually found himself whisked away by sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Also, even though my internet is frustratingly slow atm and I haven’t really been online in a few days (today I got online just to post this and even that took forever—the woes of living in the middle of nowhere... OTL), if you all might be interested, I’m on tumblr as rhyaenv. Even though it’s pretty empty rn, I plan on posting more things (like photosets, ficlets, fic updates, and such) as soon as I can (i.e., as soon as my internet is faster and I have a bit more free time because gardening has seriously taken over my life now, lmao). So please feel free to talk to me there! ♥
Epilogue: One Year Later

Chapter Notes

Here it is everyone, the last chapter! It's short, and just an epilogue that takes place months after Jensen and Jared mated and became bondmates (and one year after they first met), but even so, I hope you all like it! Thank you guys so much for sticking with me to the end, especially as this has just become the first chaptered fic I've ever completed on here! (●•obuf planets

Lastly, you guys can also find the tumblr post I made for this fic on my tumblr [here](http://example.com) (which includes a small photoset I made for the story). Again, thank you guys for reading my fic, and for all the nice comments you all left! ♥

“Jared, are you sure you want to go through your heat without…” Jensen’s face was burning, and it felt like there was something lodged in his throat, he tried swallowing but it only seemed to make the sensation worse, “without using your, uh…” his voice fell to a rushed, faint whisper, “pre-heat birth control shot?”

Oddly enough, his words brought a gentle smile from Jared, “Jensen—yes, I’m sure.”

Even though Jared’s words pleased his wolf, Jensen felt a wave of unease creep down his back.

“We really don’t have to—” Jensen paused again to tug nervously at his shirt’s collar. “I mean, I’d love for us to have pups, but, Jared, I— I don’t want to rush you into doing anything you don’t want to.”

“Jensen,” Jared’s features changed, and Jensen felt his heart give an uncomfortable lurch at how serious the omega now looked, “I need you to know that on my side, I’m ready. I…” somehow, Jared managed to appear both serious and incredibly shy then, “Jensen, please, I want to have your pups.”

The words drove his wolf howling to the surface in exultation. He could feel his control waning, could feel how his wolf was itching to come out, to have him shift and claim Jared right then and there, knowing his omega wanted it, wanted them to mate and conceive pups. But Jensen forced the urge back; Jared’s heat hadn’t fully hit yet. For now, Jensen knew he’d have to ignore the callings of his wolf.

“But if you don’t want us to have pups just yet,” it amazed Jensen how incredibly kind and understanding Jared appeared as he looked at him, “then I’m also fine with us waiting. I just want you to know that if you do want to have them now, I’m perfectly fine with that too. Whatever choice you decided on, Jensen, I’ll be happy.”

Jensen felt warmth and pride swell in his chest. Fate had given him such a considerate, kind mate. One who seemed to put his alpha’s needs before his own, just as Jensen placed his omega’s needs before his. Together, placing the other’s needs above their own, they made quite a pair.

“No, Jared— If you’re really sure, then…” Jensen couldn’t believe what he was about to say, what he was about to agree too, “okay.”
But seeing Jared’s features soften, seeing the omega’s cheeks flush a pretty pink, his lips pull up into a grin, and his eyes glimmer in obvious elation, Jensen felt his heart flutter in his chest; even his wolf woofed in approval of his decision.

“My heat’s still a few hours away,” Jared spoke quietly, “for now, can we just continue lying down in bed together?”

Jensen’s reply was instantaneous, “Of course.”

After Jared lay back on their bed, Jensen moved behind him and wrapped one arm around the omega’s waist.

Even though Jared was taller than him by a few inches, the omega had made it clear very early on during their courting, that when they slept together, when they cuddled, he preferred Jensen behind him, preferred to be sleeping in Jensen’s arms. Jensen, of course, had not minded this one bit, as he personally loved to be able to place his head behind Jared’s so that his nose could rest against the back of the omega’s neck, right where his scent gland was. He loved being able to see the claiming bite he’d placed on Jared’s neck, an obvious sign to all that Jared was mated and claimed and belonged entirely to Jensen. But he also loved being able to fall asleep surrounded by the omega’s gentle, alluring scent.

When Jensen felt Jared shift slightly back, moving his body closer to him, the alpha gently tightened his arm around Jared. Moments later, both Jared and Jensen fell asleep.

Jensen nearly jolted awake when the omega’s scent finally hit him—Jared was finally in heat.

“Jared?” When the omega gave no response, Jensen gently shook his mate and called his name again, “Jared?”

It seemed to do the trick, as Jared finally turned and groggily opened his eyes, his voice slightly hoarse as he spoke, “Jensen…?”

“Jared, your heat’s already starting.”

“Oh.”

“How are you feeling so far?”

“Really warm, like I have a fever, and…” Jared paused to think, but then he moved and suddenly his face immediately flushed a bright pink, “oh, uh, I guess I’m already…”

Jared didn’t even finish his sentence but Jensen immediately knew what he was talking about, and he felt his own face grow warm in response. “Oh, uh— Would you feel more comfortable taking off your clothes then?” Jared only nodded. “Would you like me to help you, or do you want to take off your clothes on your own?”

“I, uh…” Jared looked down and his bangs tried to hide his eyes, “I think I can do it on my own right now.”

Jensen felt his chest fill with warm at the sight of Jared blushing and looking so shy. They’d made love several times now, had spent many of Jared’s heats together, but even so, the sight of Jared appearing so bashful each time they were intimate made Jensen’s heart flutter and his wolf exhale in adoration.
Jensen felt his features soften before he replied, “Okay. Would it be alright for me to take off my
clothes off, too?”

After Jared gave another nod, both men swiftly removed their clothes and let them in a pile at the
bottom of their bed. It was then that Jensen was hit by the full force of Jared’s heat. The omega’s
heady pheromones were permeating the air in the room they shared, filling Jensen’s lungs with
Jared’s sweet, heady, and utterly enticing scent. The alpha could feel his body react to them, could
feel the way his wolf was howling, begging Jensen to let him surface so he could shift. But Jensen
did his best his best to ignore the wolf, they’d agreed to mate as humans for this heat, and Jensen was
going to abide by that decision no matter what.

“Jensen…”

The omega’s pained voice broke Jensen from his thoughts.

Jared was laying on his back, his leg spread open before Jensen, the insides of his thighs glimmering
with slick.

“I… I need you,” the omega’s words were laced with want, and as Jensen’s wolf let out a
thunderous growl, Jensen moved so that he could crawl over Jared’s body. Almost instinctively,
Jared craned his neck to let Jensen scent his neck. The alpha took in a deep breath, the heady in-heat
pheromones making his body react immediately, his wolf fell quiet and his thoughts seemed to come
to a halt, and just like that, the alpha let himself give in.

“Jensen!”

The loud call from his omega immediately had Jensen awake and sitting up in bed, fully alert. He
 glanced around the lowly lit room before his gaze settled on Jared, who was sitting up next to him
now with a smile on his face. “Jared? What is it? What happened?”

“My heat’s gone!” Jared exclaimed with a grin.

“But…” Jensen’s brows furrowed in confusion, “it just started yesterday.”

“I know,” Jared’s features softened, “for my heat to end now, do you know what that means?”

Then, in an instant, it hit Jensen. His eyes widened in surprise and his heart nearly jumped out of his
chest as his wolf let out a staggering howl. “Then it— You’re pregnant?”

“Yes,” Jared nodded, unable to stop smiling. “I honestly didn’t think my heat would stop so soon,
but I guess I shouldn’t’ve underestimated my body’s desire to have pups.”

“What do we do now?” Jensen asked. “Do you want to take a shower together?”

“For now, can we just go back to bed for a bit? It’s still pretty early,” as if on cue, Jared yawned, “I
think I’d like to get at least two more hours of sleep before we officially get out of bed. We can take
a shower together then, before we eat breakfast, if that’s alright with you?”

“Of course.” Jensen knew he could never deny Jared anything. No matter what Jared wanted, Jensen
knew he’d want to grant the omega’s wish. Even his wolf agreed with this. They’d do anything to
make the omega happy.

The two lay back in bed, just like before Jared’s heat had started, only this time they were both
unclothed under the covers.

“Thank you, Jensen,” Jared said, his voice soft but slightly weary.

“You don’t have to thank me for anything, Jared.”

_You’re my omega, my bondmate, Jensen didn’t say, you know I’d do anything for you—I’d give you the world if you asked._

This time, when Jensen wrapped his arm around Jared’s waist, he couldn’t stop his hand from gently caressing Jared’s stomach. It was completely flat now, but in a few weeks, they’d likely start to see it swell as their pups inside grew. Jensen had no idea if Jared had conceived only one pup, or multiples, but either way, he’d be ecstatic. They were going to be parents soon—he was going to be a father.

Given the strained relationship Jensen ended up having with his father after his mother’s passing, Jensen swore to himself right then and there that no matter what happened in the future, he wouldn’t let himself become like that. He wouldn’t let himself become like his father, a man whose heart grew cold, a man who estranged his own son. No matter what, he’d do his damned best to be one hell of an amazing dad to their child—their children.

To his surprise, Jensen felt Jared’s hand cover his own as it remained resting against Jared’s stomach. Though no words were spoken by either man, a tranquil silence filled the lightly lit room. It didn’t take long for Jensen to sense that his omega had fallen fast asleep again, and with that, his wolf calmed.

Warmth swelled in Jensen’s chest as be placed a light kiss on Jared’s neck. He closed his eyes and let himself take a deep breath. Perhaps it was because Jensen could already feel himself beginning to succumb to sleep, but just before he too fell fast asleep, he swore he could already detect just the slightest change in Jared’s scent.

End Notes

Kudos and comments would be greatly appreciated! ♥

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