### I have seen so much of Hell, can this truly be Heaven?

by Chrisx1987

#### Summary

Clark Kent mated with Lex Luthor when he was only 18. The fairy tale fell apart quickly as Clark was gradually isolated from friends and family, eventually unable to leave their Metropolis penthouse.

One night, there is a car accident, killing Lex, severing their bond. Clark now has to learn to be independent again. But can he learn to love after he comes to terms with the abuse he suffered at the hands of his mate?

#### Notes
11/06/2018 IMPORTANT NOTE BEFORE GOING FORWARD:
In some chapters, I have my characters say some things regarding Trump. These are in three separate chapters, and they are very brief. If you don't agree with my stance on Trump, nothing is making you stay. I have received comments from anonymous users defending Trump.
Again, and I cannot stress this enough, if you don't like what I have to say, LEAVE. Go click on the home button in the upper left corner of the page; it will take you back to the front page of AO3's website, and you can go find a different story to read. Leave me alone.
*****************************************************************************************
This is very much inspired by thepinupchemist's work What I Used To Be. I am borrowing elements from her such as Omega clinics and support Alphas, but this story exists in a world of its own, and there will be no referencing characters from her story. The type of abuse Clark suffered and his recovery are different.

I would like to take this opportunity to point out that there are many different types of abuse dealt out by many different abusers. Clark is one victim reacting to and recovering in his way. No one can say that what I am portraying is wrong or unrealistic, just because it's something you haven't encountered. I've actually taken elements from real-life examples of abuse and victims' testimonies to put in my story.

If you have critique on my writing, or if ever I go OOC compared to what character layout I had previously established, or if there are tags missing you think should be there, then by all means, let me know. But trying to say my story doesn't fit in a mold of what you think it should be will not work here. I will ignore and delete such comments.

Huge shout-out to ottertrashpalace for being my beta again! This work wouldn't be going up without you! :)

- Inspired by What I Used To Be by thepinupchemist
Crash and Burn

Still can’t find what keeps me here
When all this time I’ve been so hollow inside
I know you’re still there

Watching me, wanting me
I can feel you pull me down
Fearing you, loving you

—Haunted by Evanescence

“I’ll be out until late tonight, Omega. You’ll stay here and be good for me, won’t you?”

Lex breathed the words softly into the Omega’s ear. Clark was still trembling, sticky with sweat and seed, prostrate on the bed, pressed beneath his Alpha.

“Yes, Alpha.” He let out in a clipped voice.

“Good Omega.” Lex nipped at the bond-mark on Clark’s neck, making him whimper.

“If you’re really good, I might take you someplace nice this weekend.” Lex whispered thickly.

Clark bit his lip, trying to hold back, but the words dropped of their own accord.

“Could I see my mother?” it was nearly a sob.

“Maybe. If you’re good.”

Lex drew back, heading for the ensuite.

Clark didn’t want to move. He would rather just cry himself to sleep. Lex made sure he had come, but, as always, he felt empty, like he had been gutted.

It never used to be this way. When they had mated for the first time, when they had bonded, it had been wonderful.

But then slowly things had changed. Clark couldn’t leave the penthouse without him anymore. Pretty soon Lex stopped taking him out altogether. He kept saying he’d take him places, but it never worked out.

He hadn’t seen his mother in five years, even though she had moved to the city to join her father’s law practise following his father’s death.

He’d missed his father’s funeral.

He tries he tries he tries he tries…

Clark told himself, because he believed Lex when he said that he tries.

“Running a business is a lot of work, Omega. I wish I could take you somewhere, but it’s just not a
good time right now. Now, come on. Daddy's had a long day. You want to help Daddy feel better, right?"

It had once been making love.

At some point it had become ownership.

But Clark never complained, because if Lex was spending time with him it was because he loved him. Right?

*If he didn’t love me he wouldn’t prep me.* Clark reasoned. Because Lex always took the time to make sure Clark was slick; he always made sure he came.

Whatever he felt before or after, he told himself, it must mean something’s wrong with him. *Lex is doing the best he can,* he told his aching heart. *He still loves me; I know he does.*

Clark forced himself from the bed and started cleaning the room. He put the clothes they had been wearing before Lex brought them to the bedroom in the hamper, then stripped the bed and threw those in the hamper, too. He used a cloth from the linen cupboard to wash himself at the sink in the half-bathroom near the entrance to the penthouse. The whole time he worked, silent tears tracked down his cheeks.

He worked with a mechanical determination, wanting to be finished before Lex left the shower. Soon, the bed had new sheets, Clark was dressed in a dark-blue button-down and jeans, and Lex’s suit for the evening was hanging on the closet door, ready to go.

He carefully wiped away the tears, looking himself in the vanity mirror to be sure that no trace remained of his having been--

*Over-sensitive. Silly. Melancholy nonsense.* Lex’s descriptions of his earlier outbursts echoed through his head.

*Of course it’s silly. Why would Lex keep me if he didn’t love me?*

It was only another minute before Lex stepped out of the ensuite, towel wrapped around his waist, smiling; the complete opposite of the mess going on in Clark’s head.

“Come here, Omega.” Lex held his arms out. Clark crossed the distance in three strides, scenting at Lex as his Alpha closed his arms around him.

“Such a good little Omega. You did so well.”

Clark closed his eyes as Lex stroked his hair. Maybe this weekend, finally…

“I’ll be leaving very soon. You be good and make sure everything’s set before I get back, and tomorrow I’ll see about taking you to your mother.”

It was something Lex had said a hundred times.

Clark still believed him; he always did.

With Lex dismissing him from the bedroom so he could finish getting ready, Clark left to throw the hamper’s contents into the washing machine.

As soon as Lex was at the door, briefcase in hand, sport coat over arm, Clark was standing there, ready to see him off. Because he was a good Omega, needing to bid farewell to his Alpha. He kept
his eyes to the floor, waiting for Lex to make the first move.

“Give Daddy a kiss, Omega.” Lex crooned, as he put down the briefcase and sport coat.

Clark closed the distance between them and went pliant while Lex threw one arm around his waist and used the other to grab a fistful of hair from the back of Clark’s head, then pulled, hard. Hard enough to make Clark yelp even as Lex claimed his mouth.

There was nothing gentle about it. This was another show of how Lex owned him.

Lex pulled back after having thoroughly chewed at Clark’s lips until they were swollen and pink, before whispering huskily, eyes locked with Clark’s:

“Who’s your Daddy?”

“You are, Alpha.” Clark whimpered.

Lex smiled.

“Such a good boy.”

He planted one last kiss on Clark’s mouth before letting go, straightening up his clothes, and reclaiming his sport coat and briefcase. Clark had retreated to his previous position, eyes downcast.

“I’ll be back rather late, as I said. Japanese investors care nothing for the time difference. Make sure everything is ready. You should probably have a nap, but make sure to be awake when I get back.

Clark nodded.

“Yes, Alpha.”

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Before settling down for his nap, Clark had eaten a couple of sandwiches and downed a glass of milk. He hadn’t really been hungry, but he knew from experience that if he didn’t eat during regular mealtimes, he would be hungry later, no matter what his mood, and he’d really rather not have to explain to Lex that he’d skipped dinner should his stomach start growling after Lex came home. His brain supplied what he already knew Lex’s reaction would be.

“I’m disappointed, Omega. You should know to take better care of yourself. Aren’t you a good Omega?”

Clark knew that Lex might not allow him to see his mother if he disappointed him in any way.

Clark woke from his nap quite suddenly, mouth open in a silent scream. He couldn’t move, couldn’t think, couldn’t breathe. His heart was pounding, and he felt the same punishing rhythm rampaging through his head.

Lex. Something’s happened to Lex.

Clark managed to sit upright and reach for the cordless phone on the nightstand. With shaking hands, it took longer than usual to dial Lex’s cell number.

With each ring, Clark felt his heart nearly stutter to a stop.

The neutral female voice of the automatic voicemail did nothing for his nerves.
It was against the rules to call his mother without Lex standing nearby, but Clark was in such panic he couldn’t help himself.

He’ll understand. When I tell him how scared I was, he’ll understand.

His mother picked up after the second ring.

“Clark?” she sounded almost disbelieving. Clark hadn’t called her in several weeks. Lex had always been too busy to supervise the calls.

“Mom?” Clark sounded frantic, even to himself. “I think something’s happened to Lex. I felt-- something. Mom, it hurts to breathe.” he was sobbing through his words.

“Okay, honey, I’ll make some calls.” Martha Kent used the tone she employed when Clark had scraped his knee or had a nightmare: soothing, but authoritative. “Just stay put and I’ll take care of everything. When did this start?”

“I don’t-- I think-- five minutes? I tried his cell, but-- mom, what’s happening? It hurts ,”

“I’ll find out what’s going on. Are you at home?”

“Yes.” came out the quiet reply.

“Just stay there until I can figure this out. I love you, sweetie.”

“Love you, too, mom.” the words came out with a sob.

“I’m gonna hang up, now, so I can find out what’s going on. Stay by the phone.”

Clark nodded before replying with a verbal okay.

“Alright, I’ll call back, soon.”

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Instead of calling back, about two, fitful hours later, the doorbell rang. Clark ran for it, slamming the intercom button, practically yelling into it.

“Yes!”

“Clark, it’s me.” Martha’s voice sounded strained.

Clark hesitated as he forced himself to overcome the no-visitors-unless-I’m-here-to-approve-them rule that Lex had ingrained in him so that he could push the door buzzer to let his mother in.

It was only two minutes, but felt like hours, when Clark heard the chime of the elevator from the hall, announcing his mother’s arrival. When he opened the door, he found her flanked by two plainclothes officers. One was a thin, blonde woman, the other a somewhat beefy old man.

“Sweetie, come sit down.”

Clark allowed himself to be led by his mother to the plush, white sofa, where she sat down beside him, holding his left hand in both of hers. He held back the instinct to scent her in front of the officers.

“Mr. Kent-Luthor,” The woman officer began. “My name is Lieutenant Sawyer. My partner,
Detective Turpin and I regret to inform you--"

Clark barely heard anything more after that, only registering the essentials.

Crash. Joyriders ran a redlight. Direct collision. DOA.

He wasn’t sure how he ended up there, but suddenly Clark was on his side, his head in his mother’s lap. He hadn’t even realised he was crying until he felt his mother dab at his face with a tissue.

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Lex hadn’t written him into the will. Everything had been left to Lexcorp, now under new management by Derek Powers. Clark could take any personal belongings from the penthouse, but couldn’t stay in it.

Martha assured him that she’d fight to get him something. He and Lex had been mated for ten years, he should be able to have something to live on. Her father’s name still carried significant influence in legal matters, and he, too, thought it shameful that Powers was unwilling to give any sort of living to Clark.

Neither of them said anything against Lex; at least, not in Clark’s presence. Martha had all sorts of things she wanted to say, but bit her tongue. She could only suspect why and how Clark was kept from calling or visiting, but didn’t voice any of it. Because, no matter her suspicions, Clark was still grieving. A severed bond was one of the worse things anyone could go through.

She had a spare room made up for him in her apartment. Any personal belongings of Lex’s or that otherwise wouldn’t fit were placed in storage, with two exceptions:

Lex’s lounging robe and the towel he had used that night were placed in a pillowcase for Clark to have in his bed.

Clark held it close for scenting before falling asleep.

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“He’s not well, Martha.” William Clark whispered as they sat in the living room. Clark had retreated to his room. He had spent the whole day tidying, and had even tried to make dinner, but Martha had quickly shooed him from the kitchen.

“I can tell, dad.” Martha sipped at her coffee. “He was never one to shirk chores, but now he’s acting like a housekeeper. I don’t think he’s had a proper cry since it happened.” She sighed heavily. "He doesn't smell right anymore, either."

“I have to admit to you, Martha, I think you were right in pulling out of society. Your mother and I did well in it, but, I guess you saw more than what I did.”

“You mean about how the upper crust treats Omegas?”

William took a long drink of his coffee and sighed, putting down the cup in its saucer.

“When I had first heard that Lionel Luthor’s son was marrying my grandson, I couldn’t have been happier. I thought for sure you had ruined our family’s chances at making their mark by running off and marrying a farmer. But, I know Jonathan treated you decent. Whatever Alexander Luthor has done to Clark…” he sighed again, more heavily, unable to continue.
“I hadn’t seen him in five years, dad.” Martha pursed her lips tensely before continuing. “Whenever he phoned, which wasn’t often, it was like I just knew that Lex must be over his shoulder. I should have said something sooner. As soon as I received Lex’s letter saying they couldn’t come to Jonathan’s funeral, I should have seen, should have realised. It’s like you said: I left society because I saw how Omegas were treated. You were among the few good Alphas.” Martha’s voice began to shake as her speech increased in pitch and speed. “I just couldn’t see it because Lex always seemed to be the opposite of his father. He was always so pleasant when he came to visit. I just didn’t see, dad. I--”

Martha broke off with a sob. William quickly took her cup from her and placed it on the end table with his before taking his daughter in his arms.

“Dad, what’s he done to my son?” Not wanting Clark to hear, she fought to keep quiet even as she gave in to the flood of emotions that had been building over the past three weeks; ever since she had seen just what state Clark was in, it had been building. Anger at Lex for doing this to her puppy; anger at herself for not doing something sooner.

“I don’t know, Martha. But we’ll find out. We’ll get him help. I won’t leave either of you behind, again.”
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Clark attends therapy.

Chapter Notes

Warning of hints of rape in this chapter; Lex was a manipulative asshole.

When I watched Batman vs Superman, I was baffled by the fact that they made Gotham and Metropolis so close together. However, in the interests of my story, it became a necessary plot device. Please don't hate me.

Just as an FYI, I picture my Harleen Quinzel to be like in the web series from Imagination Upgraded. Even if you don't end up loving the series, you should at least enjoy the scene in Episode 1 where she switches from Harleen to Harley and kicks total ass. :P

I'm fine.

And even if I'm not,

I'm fine, Just the same.

Why? Do I look like I'm not?

Be sure, I feel no pain.

And even though I feel bad,

I have to be fine, to feel again.

I'll get over it,

And learn to live without you.

— I'm Fine Bruce Johnson

Martha Kent was nothing if not thorough. The Omega clinic in Gotham was said to be the best in the state, so, although it meant an extra hour's drive, Martha took the time to bring Clark there to meet with a counselor.

Clark looked furtively around the hall, a little on edge as his breakfast didn’t seem to have settled just
right. All manner of Omegas, some dressed in white scrubs-type outfits, some with pups at their sides, walked up and down the corridor.

Clark felt a little pang at the sight of parent Omegas with their pups.

He would have liked to give Lex a pup.

Maybe then Lex would have been less disappointed with him.

“Clark?”

He started at his mother’s voice.

“Doctor Quinzel would like to talk to you, now. She wants to help you.”

Clark nodded. He stood from the hard plastic chair, kicking his shoes off onto the mat outside the wooden door. Taking a deep breath, he then followed his mother through said door.

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The lights inside the room were softer than the harsh glare of the hallway. The floor had soft carpeting, and the furniture set was like a lounge with two recliners and a sofa, a long, low coffee table in the centre. A stack of colourful bean bags were in the corner.

“Clark, how nice to meet you.” Dr. Quinzel extended her hand to Clark. She was a lean female Omega, but somehow still looked strong, with blonde hair tied back in a neat bun. She wore a black skirt and red blouse, and her kind smile seemed warm.

Clark shook her hand, unsure.

“You alright, Clark? You’re looking a little pale.” she asked softly, privately noting that his scent seemed fairly sweet for an Omega so close to his thirties.

Clark nodded.

“Just a little off this morning. I think I might have stood up too fast.”

Harley nodded, not pressing, but tucking her observation away for later.

“You can either sit in one of the recliners, or take the couch if you prefer to lie down or spread out a bit.”

Clark sat in a squishy, blue recliner, while his mother took the sofa.

“Now,” the doctor said as she sat in a red recliner across from him. “You can feel free to call me Harley; titles are so formal, and the idea of coming to talk therapy is that you can be comfortable enough to confide in me anything you’re feeling.”

Clark nodded.

“Would you like that your mother sit in on our session? Understand that if she does, but then at some future point you have something that you’d rather discuss without her, we can ask her to leave. Anything discussed between us is between us in the interests of helping you feel better. The only time I would ever share what you tell me in confidence with anyone else is if I think you’re in danger of hurting yourself or hurting someone else.”
Clark glanced towards his mother before returning his gaze to his lap.

“She can stay.”

“Now, Clark,” Harley said in a temperate tone. “I know this is going to be difficult due to your recent loss, but I’m going to need you to talk about Lex.”

Clark shivered and drew his arms around himself, his stomach doing a few turns.

“The only way to get past your hurt is to talk things out. Why don’t we start somewhere happy? Can you tell me how you met?”

Clark nodded. He liked those memories.

“I was walking on the bridge and he nearly ran me over.” Clark gave a small smile. “He stopped his car and came out to apologise. The next day he was waiting for me after school. He wanted to take me to the coffee shop, but I was nervous. So many of my classmates were staring at the fact that Lex Luthor was outside the high school talking to Clark Kent. I told him there would be too many people.” Clark’s smile grew a little. “He said that was the point, because no Alpha should ever take an Omega somewhere secluded without the Omega’s parents’ permission. He had even walked there from the coffee shop, anyway, with the intention that we walk back together, so that everyone could see us and not think that Lex and I were being improper. It felt like out of a Jane Austen novel, his being such a proper, gentlefolk kind of Alpha.”

“How old were you?”

“Sixteen. Lex was twenty-two.”

“Was he your first love?”

Clark’s smile dropped as he shook his head.

“No, but--”

Clark swallowed. He hadn’t given thought to Lana in some time. Too long.

“It’s okay, Clark. Take your time.”

“It was with another Omega.” Clark has whispered this very quickly, but Harley managed to hear it.

“You know that there’s nothing wrong with that, right? The Supreme Court finally legalised same-presentation marriage last year. Rights for everything from hospital visitations to parental documentation has been improving steadily.”

Clark gave a little shudder.

“Lex said I shouldn’t mention it around people; that they’d think I was queer.”

Harley gave a sad smile.

“There is a lot of headway to be made, unfortunately. But we’ll talk about that another time. Let’s get back to you and Lex: when did he propose to you?”

“A year later; exactly. He brought me to the bridge where we’d first met.” Clark’s smile came back, tentative. “He promised to cherish me. To be strong for me. He stood proud and tall in front of me, like a strong Alpha should. When I knelt to show my acceptance, he was so happy.”
Clark stopped. He was choking on held-back sobs. Harley handed him a tissue box and took the soft, cashmere throw from the back of the recliner to wrap around his shoulders, before sitting back in her recliner, which she had brought closer to Clark’s so that she could place a hand on his forearm, waiting for him to calm down. Martha held still on the couch, clearly wanting to go to him, but afraid to interfere.

“We’re happy.” Clark whispered through his tears. “He loves me he doesn’t mean to--”

Clark stopped with a choked gasp, suddenly looking panicked.

“Clark, what does Lex not mean to do?” Harley said very slowly.

Clark shook his head.

“Nothing. We’re happy,” he smiled at her. “I’m just being silly; over-sensitive.”

“You know there’s nothing wrong with letting your feelings out, right, Clark?”

“It’s just melancholy nonsense. I don’t want to upset anyone with it.”

“This session is for you, Clark. To let your feelings out so that you can feel better. You don’t have to worry about upsetting anyone here. As a person, anything you feel is perfectly valid to be given attention.”

“It’s really just silly.” Clark insisted.

Harley took a deep breath and nodded.

“Alright, Clark. I think that’s you done for today, then. But I would like to speak with you next week around this same time. Is that okay?”

“Of course, Dr. Quinzel.”

“I’m just going to talk with your mother for a moment, if that’s alright? You can wait in the hall, again. It won’t be long.”

Clark gave a small nod and stood. He folded the throw and placed it back exactly as it had been, tossed his used tissue into a waste-paper basket, and placed the tissue box back in its spot on the coffee table before quietly exiting the room.

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“Abuse takes on many forms, Mrs. Kent. I can’t be certain whether or not physical abuse took place, but psychological abuse definitely.”

“Do you mean that Lex would have used the Voice on him?”

“If I’m reading things right, Mrs. Kent, he wouldn’t have had to. You told me before that you hadn’t seen Clark in five years. I want you to think back very carefully: when did things start to change?”

Martha furrowed her brow, thinking. All of sudden, there was a look of realisation on her face.

“That last Christmas, it was almost two years before Jonathan died.” she took a deep breath before continuing. “It was just us, Clark, and Lex at the farm. But, Clark was on edge the whole time, I could tell. What I mean is, he was behaving all cordially like he was at some society function.”

Martha took a shaky breath. “He was never in a room without Lex, practically glued to his side. But,
it had none of the warmth I remember there being when they were dating or even when they came back from their honeymoon. Oh, God!” her composure broke and Harley handed her the tissues before sitting beside her on the couch.

“Why didn’t I notice!!?” Martha sobbed as she fumbled with the tissues.

“Any more visits, and you probably would have.” Harley gave her arm a comforting pat. “Lex would have known this, which is why the visits stopped. Psychological abusers are cunning. They know how to make sure everything on the surface looks just right, while they have their victim completely in their control. It’s a power trip, to own someone. To have them depend on you for everything. Now, parents usually feel something like this with their children when they’re small, but it’s closer to pride. They feel their child’s every advance towards independence as a small victory. Yes, a lot of Alphas do appear to behave with a kind of animalistic ownership over their Omega partners at times, such as during heats and ruts. It’s just instinct for Omegas to be submissive during these times, though, I know, not everyone fits into the mold, no matter what presentation you are. However, in a healthy relationship, the Alpha cares for their Omega’s well-being. If their Omega isn’t well, psychologically or otherwise, they’ll feel it through their bond and do whatever they need to fix it. In the case of someone like Lex Luthor, he just wanted to own Clark. Notice how, just as Clark started getting upset, he suddenly ‘corrected’ himself? As though being sad is just a mistake he’s made. He can’t allow himself to be sad, because it would upset his Alpha. Even though Lex is gone, he’s been conditioned to feel this way.”

“But how could he have gotten like that in the first place?” Martha had gone from sobs to sniffles. “Clark was always the one who would keep the bullies away from the smaller children.”

“It starts with small things. Once someone is in love with someone else, they want it, crave it. Maybe Clark wanted to go shopping, or otherwise do something for himself. Something that would require him going outside, by himself. Lex might have dissuaded him. ‘Wait for me to go with you. It’s a big city and there are some bad people. I don’t want to see you get hurt.’ Little things like that would eventually turn into conditions of his love or approval. ‘You like making me happy, don’t you?’ He would have lost all agency.”

Martha gave Harley a strange look.

“You seem to know a lot about it, Doctor.”

Harley took a deep breath and sighed.

“I became a psychologist for abuse victims because I wanted to understand. I wanted to understand why someone who would start by showing such love and devotion, would ultimately make me his prisoner.”

She undid the first two buttons to her blouse, and shifted it to show what must have once been a massive gash, now a whitish, hypertrophic scar on her collar bone.

“Clark got lucky.” she continued as she re-buttoned her blouse. “His bond is broken, and he’ll never have to face his abuser again. It will be a long and painful process, but he will heal. There will always be some topics or situations which will be difficult no matter what, but it will be possible for him to become an independent person again. I have to see my abuser every few years whenever he comes up for parole, and our bond, though weaker, is still intact. I have to mentally prepare myself to not be near him before I go to the hearings, because instinct tells me I want my Alpha. I have to fight to make sure they’re scheduled for when I’m at the lowest point in my heat cycle.”

Martha threw her arms around Harley, then, who hugged her back.
That night, Clark dreamt he was seventeen again.

“Everyone’s looking at us.” he muttered as Lex reached out to take his hand from across the restaurant table. It was the fanciest place he’d ever been to in his life. City dining was much different from small town dining. When Lex offered to take him someplace special to celebrate their engagement, he’d had no idea Lex would pull out all the stops.

“Let them look. They’re jealous I managed to snatch up such a beautiful Omega.”

Clark felt his cheeks grow hot and lowered his gaze to the table.

“I live on farm.” he blurted out.

“I know, Clark.” Lex smiled, amused. “That’s probably why you have such a healthy build. Strong, lean, figure. Homegrown foods, lots of time outside. You’re so beautiful, Clark, don’t you know?”

Clark looked Lex in the face.

“Your father still doesn’t like me.” Clark said.

A shadow passed over Lex’s features.

“It doesn’t matter. I’ve got my own foothold in LuthorCorp, not to mention the plant in Smallville. We’ll be just fine, Clark. You won’t want for anything.”

Clark shook his head.

“I’m not worried about that. It’s just, he’s your father. I don’t want to come between you.”

“Clark, even without you, my father and I couldn’t be further apart if we tried. I only had you two meet because tradition dictates that I introduce my parents to the Omega I choose to pursue.” Lex brought Clark’s hand to his lips, kissing the emerald ring he’d placed there just a few hours ago, when Clark had kneeled in acceptance to his proposal.

“I can do without his approval of you, Clark. The moment I met you, I knew I wanted you. But I’ll be damned if I ever let him insult you again.”

Clark woke with a start, beginning to cry silently almost immediately as he drew the pillow-case containing the last of Lex’s scent to his face.

A few weeks later, not much headway had been made in the sessions. However, Harley now had a full picture of how Lex most likely got into Clark’s head. From what she could tell, and she told Martha as much, Lex hadn’t used threat of physical violence, so much as setting conditions of his being happy or unhappy with Clark. Which wasn’t to say that Clark hadn’t been physically abused; it was their seventh session when Harley uncovered the truth about Clark and Lex’s sexual relationship.

“Did Lex ever take you out just for an evening? Birthday dinners, for instance?”

“Well, this year he said he was going to take me to Bridge’s Dining Company, but, when he got
home that night, he needed to blow off some steam, so we didn’t go.”

“What do you mean by blow off some steam?”

“I mean, I would help him relax.” he said in a quieter tone.

Harley’s pen paused in its note-taking. She looked Clark over, noticing the faint flush which had overcome him.

“Would you have rather gone out?”

“Lex needed me.”

“Clark, please tell me.” Harley gently urged. “If you had to choose that night, would you have preferred to not help Lex relax?”

Clark shifted in the recliner, looking uncomfortable.

“He’s my Alpha.” Clark’s voice had gone very small.

“And did he often ask you to help him relax?”

“Yes.”

“Even if you didn’t want to?”

Clark’s mouth opened, but no sound came out. In the next moment, however, he relapsed into what Martha had taken to calling his Stepford Mate state.

“I want my Alpha to feel good. He makes me feel good, too.”

Harley let out a small sigh.

“That’s all for today, Clark. Please go wait in the hall for a few minutes.”

Clark obediently left the room.

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“Did you have a good session?”

Clark looked up at the young, dark-haired Omega.

“Yes, I think it went well.” he said with a small smile, though his stomach was acting up again.

“That’s good.” the young man smiled at him. “Harley’s got a good way with people. I first met her when she was in recovery here.”

“Have you been here a long while?”

“I was adopted through the clinic after my folks died. When I was old enough, my support Alpha—well, my new dad, really, he started taking me round to volunteer. He’s in here on the weekends, mostly. He really likes helping people. I was the first pup he adopted, but now I’ve got three little brothers.”

“He sounds like a good Alpha.” Clark smiled again.
“He really is. Anyway, I’m Dick Grayson, you?”

“Clark Kent-Luthor.” Clark took the offered hand to shake.

Dick had a brief look Clark couldn’t describe, but shifted it to a neutral sort of sympathy.

“My condolences. I heard about the accident.”

“Thank you.”

“I better go. Damien, he’s one of my little brothers, is down in the crafts room. I’ll see you around!” Dick smiled and gave a small wave before continuing down the hall.

***

Martha’s control broke as soon as the door shut, leaving Harley to scramble for the tissue box and take a seat next to her on the couch.

“He- that- oh, Clark!” she sobbed.

Harley waited while Martha eventually quieted down to sniffles.

“Mrs. Kent, for next week’s session, I would like to try something different. I would need you to not be in the room, however.”

“What are you going to do?”

“Nothing harmful, I promise. You have no doubt heard of hypnotherapy?”

Martha frowned, looking at Harley like she was insane.

“What I am going to do works on the same basis. Clark won’t be in a trance, per se. However, it should delay his entering a reclusive state until I can get some more information than what I’ve been able to thus far. The reason I need you out of the room is to ensure there will be no distractions whatsoever, and it may be difficult for you to hold your composure as I will be asking Clark more in-depth questions regarding Lex’s sexual advances.”

Martha shivered.

“What would you be doing to get him to answer you?”

“Face me. You can put your feet on the couch, it’s okay.”

The two women sat cross-legged on the sofa, facing each other.

“The basis for hypnotherapy is providing a physical distraction for the subject to focus on, and then using this state of distraction to obtain information. One of the best interrogators during World War II never caused his prisoners physical harm. Hanns Scharf was known to befriend his prisoners and take them on nature walks in the woods nearby. He never asked directly any questions related to the information he had been asked to collect, but the prisoners would end up telling just enough information that gave Scharf what he needed, because he was kind to them and it led to a feeling of safety, where they let their guard down just enough.

“Over the past few sessions, thanks to your being here as a bridge, I’ve developed a similar trust with Clark. He still locks up, but he has been telling more and more intimate details over time. For our next session, I will be providing a distraction for him while asking all around the issue of his sexual
relations. Eventually, he’ll tell me the details I need to build a concrete picture of what was happening.”

“What kind of distraction?”

Harley gave a small smile.

“I’m going to lightly tap both your knees, and I want you to count the taps in your head until we’ve hit thirty, then say ‘stop.’ But keep your eyes on me, okay?”

Martha nodded.

Harley used both hands to tap first one knee, then the other, in a gentle rhythm. Once she hit thirty, Martha said stop as instructed.

“When was Clark born?”

“February 29th, 1987.”

Harley resumed tapping.

“Stop.”

“Was it an easy birth?”

“I don’t know.”

Tapping again.

“Stop.”

“Why don’t you know about his birth?”

“We adopted him June 18th of that same year.”

The tapping began again, and stopped at thirty.

“Has Clark ever met his birth parent?”

“It was a closed adoption; we don’t know anything about his birth parent.”

Tap-tap-tap…

“Stop.”

“Does Clark know he’s adopted?”

“No.”

“Who does?”

“Myself, my father, Jonathan, the people at the agency.”

“Is it something you feel comfortable telling people?”

“No.”
“Yet you’ve told me.”

Martha blinked, then her eyes widened when she realised what happened.

“Don’t worry, I won’t tell Clark. But do you see how it works?”

Martha nodded, mouth open slightly.

“If the next session works, then I’ll be able to start using it more frequently to get enough details of the scope of his abuse to put together a proper profile for him. Following that, I can pass on my suggestions for further treatment. We can’t know yet if he’ll need any medication, but we’ll probably be looking at re-integration techniques to help him reach out to the world. I’d also like him to start attending a support group. Right now, he’s still in denial that he was being abused. By attending a group and listening to some of the stories, it might give him some perspective; help him to see his marriage for what it was.”

Martha put her hand to her mouth and shut her eyes.

“This is going to break his heart.” she whispered.

“But it’s the only way he’ll heal. No one would be doing him any favours by allowing him to continue to live in the fantasy Lex crafted around him. Once he can get past it, he’ll be able to be an independent person. Anything that follows will be gravy.”

Martha nodded and stood.

“I’ll bring him by next week, then.”

“I’ll write him in for the usual time.”
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

We get a look into life at Wayne Manor, and a little of what's going on in Bruce's boys' lives.

Chapter Notes

VERY important: in my universe, no matter what gender a person is, if they gave birth, they're mother. If they sire, they're father. I will try to use the other gender pronouns around as I can to make sure it's obvious who is who, but please forgive me if there is any confusion.

I have started a Photobucket Album to put pictures of who I imagine the characters as looking like. For Dick, there's a URL in the description of his pictures so that you can check out the Nightwing web series he's from; same for Harley.

I would appreciate any suggestions for who to use for the following characters:

Damian (no older than 10, though he's 8 in my story)

Derek Powers

Those are the only ones I'm looking for at the moment. If there's a character I bring up who doesn't have their picture yet in the album, it's because I'm working on it.

"That's my job, that's what I do

Everything I do is because of you

To keep you safe with me, that's my job, you see."

— That's My Job by Conway Twitty

“We’re home!” Dick called out as he walked through the front doors of Wayne Manor, Damian at his side.

“Master Dick, Master Damian, welcome back.” a deep, warm London accent reached them a moment before the owner of the voice entered the room.

“Is Bruce home, Alfred?” Dick asked as he and Damian shed their light coats for the butler to take to the cloak room.
“No, but he should be back at any moment. He asked me not to make dinner tonight, and hinted at something with Asian origins.”

“Pad Thai?” Damian exclaimed, excited.

“I believe so, Master Damian.” the grey-haired Beta smiled at him.

Damian’s face threatened to split with the grin that spread in response.

“Who else is home?” Dick asked.

“Master Timothy is working in his computer lab. Master Jason is outside, needing to cool his head after having returned home early due to another round of fisticuffs, I’m afraid.”

Dick sighed heavily.

“Let me guess: there was no time to get a teacher and Digger had it coming?”

“Something along those lines, yes.”

Dick sighed again.

“Come on, Damian. Let’s get you washed up for dinner and go get Tim. I’ll go talk to Jason.”

The two started towards the large staircase.

“From what Jason says, Digger is really mean to Omegas. Why is it that no one does anything about it except Jason, and then he gets in trouble for it?”

“Because, Damian,” they began to climb the stairs. “High schools are the closest things our country has to institutionalised torture. Unless Digger gets caught with something big that the police have to get called in, the excuse is ‘pups will be pups,’ and he’ll continue to get away with it. They just see him as a harmless teenager who doesn’t know better and, well, Omegas should be flattered that he’s paying attention to them, supposedly. But, a lot of Alphas who do that as teenagers get worse when they grow up, because they got away with it before.”

“Barbara doesn’t act like that. She’s nice to you.”

Dick smiled.

“Yeah, well, Digger’s not what we call a decent human being. Barbara actually cares how she makes others feel with her words and actions. Barbara’s a nice Alpha.” The best Alpha. The most gorgeous holy-shit-why-does-she-waste-her-time-on-me?Alpha.

“Father’s a good Alpha.”

Dick smiled again.

“Yeah, he really is.”

“If I’m an Alpha, I hope I’m more like father, not like Digger.”

“I don’t think you have to worry about that, Damian.” Dick ruffled his hair. “You’re already a good pup. You get along well with the pups at the clinic, and a lot of them have been through hell.”

Damian stopped; they had reached the first floor landing.
“One of the pups said something today… about Alphas not meaning it when they hurt Omegas?”

Dick knelt in front of him.

“Do you remember more of what this pup said?” he prompted gently.

“She said that,” Damian furrowed his brow as he tried to recall. “Her mom told her that… he said her dad doesn’t mean it when she hurts them, because Alphas can’t help themselves sometimes.”

Dick pulled him into a hug, then pulled back to look him in the eye.

“Everyone gets mad sometimes, Damian. Because we’re human, and we have feelings, and there are times that we might do things based on those feelings that we regret later. But what that pup was talking about, about her dad hurting her and her mom, that is never okay. Like,” Dick looked to the side, rubbing his face, trying to gather his thoughts.

“When Jason gets into fights with Digger, Digger is just as much to blame as Jason, probably more. Jason never goes up to him and hits him just like that; Digger likes to fight, especially since he knows that Jason will be in trouble after, too. So when Jason tries to stop him from being mean to Omegas, Digger will do the things he knows will start a fight. But, sometimes, two people will be together, and one will hurt the other, because they like knowing they can control the other person. They make them think all kinds of things so that the person doesn’t leave, so that they can keep hurting them. The person can just be sitting there, doing nothing, and the other one will come and hurt them. And they’ll make all kinds of excuses. But, the thing is, it doesn’t matter what your presentation is: hitting someone is never okay. Unless someone is trying to hurt you, and you need to stop them, hitting is never okay. And it’s not that Alphas can’t help themselves, because they can. Not all Alphas hit Omegas. Some Omegas hit Alphas, and Betas hit, too. But the truth is, everyone can decide they won’t go that far. Some people decide they don’t care. Bruce has been taking care of me since I was your age, and I know I sometimes made him mad. It’s not easy, looking after a pup. But he never, ever hit me. He never hit Jason, he’s never hit Tim, and he’s never hit you. And he’s never going to, because Bruce doesn’t want to hurt people. He loves us, and he would never hit unless someone else is hitting and he has to stop them.”

“Like when grandfather was here?”

Dick sighed and nodded.

“Yeah, like when your grandpa was here.”

He swallowed as he remembered the long weeks of Damian’s leg in a cast following that incident, then convinced himself not to go into sad-Omega mode, for fear of spooking the pup, instead kissing his hair before standing to continue on their way.

Dick left Damian in front of his room before continuing to his own. He felt a sadness wash over him, thinking about Damian’s mother. She had been one of two Omegas that Bruce had dated since he came to live there.

Selena couldn’t settle; as much as it hurt Bruce that she wouldn’t stay, he didn’t think the Alpha begrudged her for it.

Talia could have been the one. If only she could have gotten away, Bruce would have helped her get over her addiction, Dick was sure. She was always so nice to him and Jason (Tim hadn’t been in the picture, yet), and the love she and Bruce had for each other was obvious to anyone with eyes. No, even a functioning nose could pick up what those two had.
But then she was gone. Gone because her Alpha father wanted things his way, and she couldn’t deal with it anymore. She had to find a different way out, and succeeded, but not before giving a part of herself to Bruce. Damian being able to live with Bruce and learning his ways instead of her father’s was a victory for Talia, even though she didn’t get to live to see it.

***

Dick hadn’t managed to talk to Jason before Bruce arrived with armfuls of Thai food. Suddenly the boys were being called down for dinner, and gathered in the kitchen as the food was distributed. Alfred didn’t join them, not being a fan of Asian food in general.

Once his arms were free, Bruce eagerly hugged and scented (being scented in turn) Damian, Tim, and Dick. Jason was being withdrawn, so Bruce settled for clapping a hand on his shoulder.

Once they settled in, Bruce asked them about their respective days.

Tim had finally managed to get a computer working from scratch… for about five minutes before he had to disconnect the power source to prevent the harddrive from frying.

Bruce chuckled as he worked his chopsticks through his Pad Thai.

“It’s probably more than most of the pups in your class have. How long before the project is due?”

“Another two weeks. I’m sure I can get one going before then.”

Bruce nodded.

“I think you will. Damian?”

“We got to work with clay, today. Dr. Karlo said he’ll bake our work over the weekend and we can pick them up next week.”

Bruce nodded.

“What did you make?”

Damian grinned at him.

“It’s a surprise.”

Bruce smiled back.

“Dick, how were things for you?”

“I think Cassie’s really coming along. She can read and write fine, now. She just still won’t talk. Her signing skills are great, though.”

“That’s good. I’m sure she appreciates the time you put in with her.”

“Also, while I was on my way to get Damian, I saw Lex’s mate. He had just finished a session with Dr. Quinzel.”

Bruce nodded again, this time looking more serious.

“It was kinda weird. He was smiling and everything, but… it didn’t seem real?”
Bruce sighed.

“A severed bond is said to be one of the worst things a person can go through. To have lost his mate so suddenly… he’s probably grieving in the only way he knows how: acting like nothing is wrong when he’s around people.”

“I read something online, today.” Tim added. “There was an article talking about how Lex didn’t leave anything for Clark, and Powers won’t give him anything, either, because they never had any pups?”

Bruce put down his box of Pad Thai with his chopsticks, chewing and finishing what was in his mouth before replying.

“By law, Clark should receive something. They were legally married for a long time. But, because Lex didn’t write Clark into his will, there will be a lot of legal red tape to be crossed. If they had had a pup, then there would be almost no question. But, the laws are written kind of funny in that Powers can fight, saying that without a pup, their marriage is invalid. I’ve no doubt Clark will succeed in getting a living from the company, but you can bet that Powers will drag it out as long as he can. It’s an unfair, antiquated system, but it can be beaten. There’s a lot of precedence.”

“Maybe Mr. Dent could help?” Damian suggested.

“Harvey could help, but not as DA. Metropolis isn’t in his jurisdiction. From what I remember reading, however, Clark’s grandfather has a very successful law firm, so he’ll have plenty of legal support.”

“Why wouldn’t Powers want Clark to have anything, though?” Tim asked.

“Because he’s a piece of shit who only thinks about money.” Jason muttered.

Bruce cleared his throat pointedly.

“It’s true!” Jason exclaimed. “How many times has he tried to shut down your projects because they cut in on his business, even though they’re helping people!?”

“True or not, Jason, we’ve spoken about word selection at the dinner table.”

“Powers is a piece of poop, right, Father?” Damian said helpfully.

Dick, Jason, and Tim tried not to laugh, waiting to see how Bruce would react.

“Powers,” Bruce began, biting the corners of his cheeks. “Is a man whose words and actions often may cause one to react the same way one does around something which smells unpleasant. However, unlike unpleasant odours, he also possesses ears, and it would be best if he didn’t hear what we think of him.”

This was too much for the boys as they all burst out laughing, Bruce chuckling right along with them.

***

Bruce knocked softly on the door frame to Jason’s room. Jason was sprawled out on his bed, but, at Bruce’s knocking, looked up from his graphic novel adaptation of The Gunslinger.

“Can I come in?” Bruce asked, his tone gentle but serious.
Jason sat up, placing his book open-paged and face-down on the pillows.

“Sure.”

Bruce crossed to the book, first, taking a nearby receipt which was amid the junk on Jason’s desk, and marked the page before closing it and laying it back down on the pillows.

“If left open too long like that, the spine gets damaged.”

“Sorry.”

Bruce sat in the computer chair, facing Jason. Jason stared at his lap.

“The school called today.”

“I didn’t start it.”

“No, but we’ve talked about this, before.”

“He wasn’t letting her go. She was struggling and telling him to stop, but he just held tighter and put his hand down her skirt. That’s when I intervened.”

“And did you go get a teacher after?”

“No time. He fought back.”

“What’s her name?”

“Tatsu. Yamashiro.”

“Did she say anything to the teachers?”

“She ran off.”

“If we asked her to speak out, would she?”

“I don’t know.”

“I’m gonna level with you, Jason: the school would like very much to expel you.”

Jason looked up, mouth agape.

“I asked them if they were going to expel Digger. They said that as he’s not the instigator, they have no reason to.”

Jason started to protest, but Bruce stopped him with a raised hand.

“I told them that they’re protecting a sexual predator. They don’t seem to think so. So, here’s what’s going to happen. You’re going to be suspended for the next two weeks. During this time, I need as many of the names of the Omegas you defended as you can. Harvey’s going to be reaching out to them to open a sexual harassment case against George Harkness. Until this case gets off the ground, you need to keep your nose clean, okay? Don’t get into any more fights. But, after your suspension ends, do try to reassure the victims that help is coming, if they can step up and testify. If enough of them do, the school will have no choice but to expel him, and you should be okay. But you need to toe the line, Jason. If something happens, film it. I didn’t get you one of the better smartphones on the market just for Snapchatting with your friends. If you get right in his face with it, he’ll come after
you, and then you can claim self-defense, with the evidence to back you up. Be smart about this, okay?"

Jason nodded solemnly, then launched himself at Bruce, hugging him tightly, scenting him.

“Thanks, dad.”

“You’re welcome, Jay.” Bruce whispered as he buried his nose in Jason’s soft, dark hair.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

What we've all seen coming gets discussed. There's also another flashback to Clark's happier memories of Lex.

Chapter Notes

I have gone back to the first and second chapter and added tiny things which hint about the pregnancy which I should have before. This is in regards to Omegas smelling different when they're pregnant. I have no experience writing A/B/O fics, so little details like that sometimes slip my mind.

Warning for more discussion of coercive rape. Also vomiting.

I have started a Photobucket Album to put pictures of who I imagine the characters as looking like. For Dick, there's a URL in the description of his pictures so that you can check out the Nightwing web series he's from; same for Harley.

I would appreciate any suggestions for who to use for the following characters:

Damian (no older than 10, though he's 8 in my story)

Derek Powers

Those are the only ones I'm looking for at the moment. If there's a character I bring up who doesn't have their picture yet in the album, it's because I'm working on it.

My shadow's the only one that walks beside me

My shallow heart's the only thing that's beating

Sometimes I wish someone out there will find me

Til then I walk alone

—Boulevard of Broken Dreams by Green Day

It was their honeymoon. Lex had brought Clark to a tropical resort, where they had their own floating boat house in a chain of similar houses, all inter-connected by pathways leading to a five-star restaurant, a spa, and a fitness center.

Clark had awoken after another round of passionate love-making, to see Lex sitting up in the bed,
looking at his Blackberry, a serious look on his face.

“What’s wrong?” Clark asked him.

“My father died.” he stated blankly. “A former employee sabotaged the brakes on his car.”

Clark immediately pulled himself up to Lex’s side, encircling him in his arms, planting a kiss on his temple.

“I’m sorry, Lex.”

“It’s his own fault.” Lex said, soberly. “He would treat people like trash, a means to an end. He never cared for the lives of those in his employ. When he was going to shut down the plant, I managed to bring the workers together to buy it out from under him. He said I had a bleeding heart. The plant did so much better without him, but he never acknowledged it. Nothing I ever did was good enough for him.”

Clark nuzzled his cheek.

“You’re good enough for me. So much better than I’ll ever deserve.”

Lex put his Blackberry down on the nightstand, and turned to kiss Clark fully as his ran his fingers through his thick, dark locks.

“You’re my beautiful mate, Clark.” he whispered against his lips, before shifting his attention to nip along their bond-mark, causing Clark to shiver. “Never doubt how perfect you are.”

***

Clark woke up, tears almost immediately streaming down his cheeks. He buried his face in his pillow as he cried himself back to sleep.

***

“Clark, today’s session is going to be a little different. Come sit on the couch with me.”

Clark sat on the sofa.

“Sit facing me. It’s okay to put your feet on the couch.”

Clark brought himself into a cross-legged position.

“Now, Clark, I’m going to be asking you some questions. Some of these I already know the answer to, but that’s just to get you used to the proceeding. You’re to keep your eyes focused on mine. Before every question, I’m going to lightly tap your knees, one to the next. In your head, I need you to count them. When you’ve felt thirty taps, you say stop, and then I’ll ask the question. I need you to be completely honest, okay?”

Clark nodded.

“Then let’s begin.”

Clark felt the tapping start, keeping his gaze resolutely on Harley’s.

“Stop.”
“What’s your full name?”
“Clark Kaleb Kent-Luthor.”

The tapping started again.
“Stop.”

“What’s your favourite colour?”
“Blue.”

The tapping was soothing in its rhythm; constant, gentle.
“Stop.”

“What’s your favourite food?”
“Mom’s rhubarb pie.”

… twenty-nine, thirty.
“Stop.”

“What’s your favourite childhood story?”

“Snow White.”

And so they continued for another minute or so, Harley asking Clark very benign questions. They gradually moved from small, personal trivia, however, and more into his life with Lex.

“What was it like when Lex brought you to live in his penthouse the first day?”

Clark giggled.

“He carried me over the threshold.”

“What size bed did you have?”

“King.”

“Were the floors carpeted?”

“Everywhere except the kitchen and bathrooms.”

“What time would Lex get home from work?”

“It varied, but he’d always call to let me know.”

“He wanted you to know when he’d be home?”

“Yes.”

“To be ready for him?”

“Yes.” Quieter.
“In what way did you have to be ready?”

Clark swallowed.

“Waiting for him at the door. Nothing that had zippers or buttons.”

“What would happen when he arrived?”

Clark kept his gaze on Harley’s, but his voice began to tremble.

“I would undress him.”

“What did you feel when you did?”

“Sad.”

“Did you ever tell him?”

“No.” the word was slightly strangled.

“Why not?”

“Because I’m a good Omega.”

Harley had to fight to keep her expression and voice neutral.

“Did Lex tell you to be a good Omega?”

“Yes.”

“What did he tell you?”

“Good Omegas help their Alphas feel good.” he was struggling to stay coherent.

“Did you want to do it?”

“No.”

“How did you feel after?”

“Empty.”

Harley didn’t resume tapping.

“Clark, you know what happened to you was wrong, right?”

Clark whimpered, trying to fight tears.

“What Lex did was wrong. He made you feel like you couldn’t say no, which means that it was not consensual.”

“He doesn’t hurt me.” Clark whispered. “He makes sure I’m wet and always makes me come. Always.”

“It doesn’t lessen the fact that you felt uncomfortable with it. Sex should always be something that both partners want to do. As soon as you felt uneasy with it, it wasn’t sex anymore. Clark, you need to say it. You know what happened was wrong, but it wasn’t because of you. Lex was wrong. He--”
“No.” Clark’s voice was just above a whisper and silent tears were in freefall. “He loves me, he does. He checks in on me while he’s at work and he makes sure I come and he never does anything until I’m wet--”

“Clark, a physical reaction doesn’t mean it was okay. If you didn’t want it--”

“I want to be a good Omega. I want my Alpha to feel good. If I’m good he’ll let me see my moth--” A horrid, dry-heaving sound cut off Clark’s rambling as a trickle of drool escaped his mouth and landed in his lap.

Clark put his hand to his mouth, a retching sound coming from his throat. Harley quickly brought him to the bathroom just off of her office where he began emptying his stomach over the toilet bowl. After ten minutes, Clark was kneeling on the floor panting.

“Clark, how long have you been feeling ill?” Harley asked as she soothed her hands over his back.

“I’m not sure… a month, I think? It comes and it goes. This is the first time I’ve thrown up, though.”

Harley bit her lip, pensieve.

“Clark, I think you’d better pick up a pregnancy test on your way home, today.”

Clark turned to look at her, regretting it slightly as the sudden movement made his head swim and his stomach flip-flop a bit.

“I can’t get pregnant.”

“Why do you think that?”

“Lex and I were married for ten years. He never missed one of my heats. The last time we-- I wasn’t even in heat.”

“It’s very rare for a pregnancy to occur out of heat, but not impossible. When was your last heat?”

“It was… a couple of weeks before-- before the accident.”

Harley bit her lip again.

“Stay here for a bit. I need to ask your mother something.”

She exited the room.

_Not possible. Never once all those years did I--_

Clark placed a hand on his belly. Could it be?

***

“Mrs. Kent, I think Clark might be pregnant.”

Martha’s eyes widened to the size of saucers and her jaw nearly hit the floor just before she covered it and closed her eyes tight.

"Oh, my God!" it sounded muffled from behind her hand. She put her fingers through her hair, holding fistfuls of it.
"Oh, God, I should have known! I knew he smelled different! I can't believe I didn't even-- oh, my God, Clark!" she began wringing her hands.

Harley put a hand on her shoulder, trying to ground her.

“Now,” Harley continued before Martha could say anything more. “this is huge, because Clark says he never once got pregnant in all the time he and Lex had been married. Maybe he had fertility issues, it’s not unheard of. I know a couple of people who just couldn’t get pregnant for the longest time and then it suddenly happened. However, we need to consider another possibility. That Lex was giving Clark birth control with Clark knowing it.”

Martha’s face went from shock to anger and then to disbelief.

“But, why would Lex, an Alpha in his position, not want an heir?”

“Control. It’s easy to control one person, but what would have happened if Clark would have been pregnant before? Would Clark have simply slipped down the way he did, or would he have held on more in face of wanting the best for his pup? Now, I’m not saying he still wouldn’t have ended up as he is, currently, because Lex could have used the pup as means for further control: ‘You don’t want to set a bad example for our pup, do you? Be a good little Omega.’ But there’s still a level of risk involved from the point of view of an abuser.”

Martha nodded.

“How would I find out if he was on birth control? Nothing would show in his blood work now.”

“Where were the belongings from their home placed?”

“In storage.”

“And who has access to that storage?”

“I do. I’ve been holding it for Clark if ever he wanted to go through it.”

“You’re going to have to go through it. Look for any suspicious pills or any medication at all, really. Who knows? If they were a legit prescription, you might also be able to find out which pharmacy was filling them in.”

Martha took a deep breath.

“If he is pregnant, what’s next?”

“That depends on Clark. If he decides to keep it or not will determine the next course of action. But right now, we have to have this confirmed, because timing is crucial.”
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

A little plus sign and happy smells.

Chapter Notes

Warning for triggering flashback.

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The way she tells me I'm hers and she is mine

Open hand or closed fist would be fine

The blood is rare and sweet as cherry wine.

— Cherry Wine by Hozier

New Year’s. Lex had allowed Clark to watch the fireworks from their balcony, and then brought him inside to pin him against the wall next to their bed, one arm across his chest, holding him in place.

“You’re my good little Omega.” he breathed huskily into Clark’s ear, the smell of the alcohol on his breath burning Clark’s nostrils.

Clark whined. Lex was being merciless in his thrusts. They were hitting the right nerves, but it didn’t erase that raw, burning feeling, that just seemed to get worse the longer it went on.

Clark had just wanted to go to bed after the fireworks. The champagne that he hadn’t even wanted had made his head swim and his limbs were feeling like lead weights.

But his Alpha wanted him. He wanted to be good for his Alpha. If he was good then his Alpha might
let him go somewhere.

Be good be good be good be good…

Clark cried out, his nails digging into the wall as Lex took hold of his cock and started pumping him mercilessly.

“Come for me, Omega. Come for your Alpha.”

Clark sobbed as he came, the sensation only hammering home the sense of being used, decimated, emptied out.

He passed out before Lex knotted him.

***

Clark stared at the little stick, the plus sign making his head spin. It was the fifth one he’d tried in as many days. He had to go back to the clinic today, and he wanted to be sure.

I’m pregnant. I can get pregnant. I can have pups. I’m having Lex’s pup.

Lex isn’t here.

“I know.” Clark whispered out loud.

“Clark, are you alright?”

His mother’s voice came in slightly muffled from the other side of the door.

Clark cleared his throat.

“Yes.”

He stood up and slowly unlocked and opened the bathroom door. He held the stick out to her.

Martha took it and looked at it for a few seconds before looking back at Clark.

“How are you feeling, honey?”

Clark bit his lip for a moment before he was tumbling forward to his mother’s arms, scenting her desperately as he broke down.

“You don’t have to, sweetie.” Martha held him tight as she peppered his hair with kisses. “You won’t be alone, I promise.”

They sank to the floor, Clark in his mother’s lap as he continued to cry.

When Clark had quieted to shakes and sniffles, his mother asked him:

“Would you rather stay home, today? I can tell doctor Quinzel you’re not feeling well.”

Clark shook his head and slowly sat up.

“No. I--” he took a deep breath. “I think it’s helping. When the… the accident… first happened, I just
wanted to stay home all the time. Now, I look forward to going out. It… feels nice to be outside.”

Martha smiled at him.

“If ever you want to go anywhere else, just let me know. Anywhere you want.”

*Just be a good little Omega for me, and I’ll take you wherever you want to go.*

Clark shuddered at the memory, but smiled.

“Okay, mom.”

***

“How have things been since last time, Clark?” Harley asked gently.

Clark clenched and unclenched his jaw, staring at a spot on the wood of the coffee table.

“Well, you were right. I… I’m pregnant.”

“And how do you feel about that, Clark?”

“I-- I don’t-- happy, I think? I always wanted pups.”

“So you want to keep it?” she ventured.

“Yes!” Clark said quickly, bringing his gaze up, suddenly. “I mean, I had thought I couldn’t, because Lex and I were together so long, and I never got pregnant. I thought that maybe, even though he didn’t say it, that he was disappointed in me for not being able to give him pups. But now, I know I can. And even though he’s gone, the fact that I know now that I can, it’s a relief, you know?”

Harley nodded and smiled.

“In that case I offer my congratulations.”

“I don’t know what I’m gonna do without him, though. I mean, mom said she’d help me, but…” Clark took a shuddering breath, then looked down to his belly. It wasn’t much bigger yet, though he had been having trouble with his jeans, which should have been a sign. “I really don’t know how I’m going to take care of a pup without my Alpha.”

Harley patted his arm.

“Actually, there’s something we and your mother will have to discuss to that end, now that you’ve decided to keep it. Shall I go get her?”

Clark nodded.

Harley stood and returned with Martha only a moment later. She stood by Clark’s recliner while Harley sat in hers.

“Clark, tell your mother what you’ve told me.”

He looked up at her.

“I want to keep the pup, mom.”

“You’re sure, sweetheart? No one would judge you if you didn’t feel like you could handle it.
You’ve been through so much, already.”

“Please, mom? I thought I couldn’t have one before. It’s a relief to know that I can. Please?”

“Oh, Clark.” She bent to hug him.

“It’s your decision, sweetheart. No one will make you do anything you don’t want. I just want to know that you’re sure. I’ll help you no matter what.”

“I want to keep it, mom. I want the pup.”

“Then I’ll help you in every way I can, Clark.” she planted a kiss to his hair.

Harley let them have a moment more before clearing her throat.

“Now, timing is going to be crucial, Clark. You’ve been without your Alpha for a little over two months. Without an Alpha, you’re going to go into a pregnancy heat, and that could cause a miscarriage.”

Clark seemed to be on the point of throwing up, again.

“If we can get you a support Alpha before this happens, then it will keep the heat from happening. But this means living with this Alpha, so that you can scent them every day. No mating will take place, nothing sexual in any way. It’s just so that you have an Alpha to scent daily, to trick your body out of going into heat. No one is going to force you to get a support Alpha, you understand, but it is the healthier course of action for you and your pup.”

Clark relaxed a fraction.

“Okay.” he said, his voice tense. “If it’ll help the pup.”

“If you think you can handle it today, Clark, I can go get a scenting book. All Alphas who have signed on to be support provide a scent sample and you choose based on which scent makes you feel most at ease.”

Clark took a deep breath and sighed.

“Yeah, I’d like to do that, now.”

Harley stood.

“There’s juice in the fridge in the corner; help yourselves. I’ll be back in a few minutes.” She turned to leave, then turned back. “Oh, and there are chewable antacid tablets in the cabinet behind the bathroom mirror, if you need them.”

Clark puffed air through his nose in a quiet chuckle and nodded.

“Thank you.”

She smiled and left.

Martha knelt by the recliner, taking her son’s hand in hers.

“I’ll make sure to visit often, Clark. All the while your grandfather and I will be working on making sure you get your living. The Alphas they get to sign on for support are all screened very carefully. You’ll get someone good looking after you, I promise. And it’s only until after your pup is born.”
Clark wasn’t sure if this was to reassure him or her, but didn’t say anything.

“After that, you can come back to live with me. We can look for a bigger place, together. Or, if by that time you’re up for it, I can help you find your own place for you and the pup.”

Clark blanched at the idea of being on his own.

“I-- I’d like the pup to know your cooking, mom.”

Martha smiled even as her eyes watered.

“The very best for my grandpup.” she whispered as she kissed Clark’s palm, still trapped in hers.

Harley returned with the book just then, and handed it to Clark.

“On each page is a sort of scratch ‘n sniff space. Just give it a small scratching with the card slotted next to it, and then smell it. Make sure to wait at least a couple of minutes before moving on to the next one. This will take some time, so don’t rush it. Once you’ve found one you respond well to, we’ll contact the Alpha so that they know you’ve selected their scent. Neither of you will know who the other is. As soon as is convenient, we’ll arrange for a first-time meeting between you, here at the clinic. If you get along, then the Alpha will have a week to make their house support-safe. Most of these Alphas are extremely well-off, so they’re often ready before then.”

Clark checked each page carefully. There were no names, only serial numbers. Most of them had a pleasant smell, but none smelled just right.

Halfway through the book, Clark whimpered and his mother took it from him so that he could curl himself up, knees to chest.

“It’s okay, Clark.” Harley said gently. “You can stop for today and come back another time.”

Clark took a few centering breaths, in through his nose, out through his mouth, then shook his head.

“The pup… I have to do this for the pup.”

“Clark, sweetie--” Martha started, but Harley stopped her with a hand on her arm.

“How about you and your mother sit in the garden for a while? I have to see another client in a few minutes, and you clearly need a break. I’ll come get you, okay?”

Clark nodded.

“I just need to talk to your mother about something, and then she’ll bring you, okay?”

He nodded again, and slowly eased himself to a normal sitting position, then stood and went to wait in the hall.

“He’s gonna overdo it with what he thinks is best for his pup.” Martha sounded worried.

“Maybe yes, maybe no.” Harley said. “He’s making decisions, Mrs. Kent. He’s decided he wants to keep his pup. When he started getting upset, I told him he could come back another time. Even though he’s clearly stressed, he decided to do the opposite of what I suggested. Yes, it’s because he’s worried about his pup, nonetheless it’s a decision. The only time he’s ever acted contrary to what I suggested was good for him is when he slips into auto-pilot. If he catches on that he’s being too sad, he forces himself to be the opposite, because he knows it’s what Lex preferred, and it’s less scary than dealing with feelings he’s used to suppressing. Other than that, he’s always taken my
Martha nodded.

“I hadn’t thought of that.”

“While still being mindful of his overall well-being, we need to encourage him when he makes decisions that aren’t directly based on others’ suggestions. This is something I’ll be including in his file for his support Alpha.” Harley looked at her watch. “My next appointment is probably here. I’ll see you in the garden?”

Martha smiled and nodded.

“Yes, thank you.”

Harley smiled back.

“If he changes his mind and decides to go home, leave a message with the receptionist. I’ll be checking with her in case you leave before I’m out.”

***

The gardens had colourful, flattened stones winding paths between sculptures, bushes, flowers, trees, and even a sizeable jungle jim. Clark sat on a bench near the jungle jim, his mother beside him, and watched as dozens of pups climbed, swung, slid, and crawled all over the structure. He felt a lump in his throat and placed his hand on his stomach, trying to imagine what his pup might look like, happily laughing at play.

Pictures of Lex when he was younger revealed that he had reddish-brown curls before suffering from the early receding hairline which had prompted him to shave it all off. Since his mother’s colour was red, too, maybe his pup would have that?

He wanted to have his pup, but he wasn’t sure if he loved it, yet. He’d heard stories of Omegas who loved their pups instantly upon learning they were pregnant.

*Maybe that will come later?* He mused.

“Are you nervous, honey?” his mother asked him.

Clark swallowed.

“Why did it take so long, mom? What’s wrong with me that I couldn’t make pups before?”

Martha put careful thought into her words.

“It might not have anything to do with you, Clark.”

“But Lex was a strong Alpha. It couldn’t have been something wrong with him, so it must be me. You told me you had four miscarriages before me. Maybe I’ve got the same problem.”

Martha forced down the lump in her throat and threw her arms around Clark.

“There is nothing wrong with you, sweetheart. You’re my special miracle. My beautiful boy.”

*Such a beautiful Omega.* The memory of Lex’s words flitted through his head like a sudden chill on
a warm day.

“I’ve missed you, mom. I’m sorry I didn’t visit, more.”

Martha put some squeeze into her hug.

“It’s not your fault, Clark. None of it.”

Clark allowed himself to believe her words, if only for a moment, fully basking in his mother’s affections.

***

Clark continued to go through the many scents in the book. Every once in awhile he would think something like: *I don’t want another Alpha. I want my Alpha. This is pointless.* But, right on the heels of those thoughts would be: *Do it for the pup. Alpha’s pup. Need to be strong for Alpha’s pup.*

Clark gasped suddenly. It was like a small current ran from his nose to his chest. He smelled it again, and let out a small, contented sigh.

Harley smiled.

“I think he’s found it.” she whispered to Martha.

Clark was still on a bit of a buzz from the discovery of the smell.

*Strong. Safe. Comfort.*

Harley waited a moment before gently taking the book from him. He blinked a few times, as though waking from a daze.

“Clark, would you like this person to be your support Alpha through your pregnancy?”

Clark looked at the book, at Harley, back at the book, and thought back on how he had felt just a moment ago.

“Yes. If-- if that’s okay with them.”

Harley smiled.

“I’ll bring this to the desk and they’ll contact the Alpha. I’ll let you know when they’re ready to meet.”

Clark let out one of those small smiles.

“Thank you, Dr. Quinzel.”

“I’ll see you soon, Clark. And please, call me Harley. Everyone does.”
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Time with the Bat-fam before the actual meet-up. Did I write Dick and Barbara to be adorable? I hope so. :3

Chapter Notes

Warning for flash-back hints at a teen being pressured into sex.

Also, reminder of my Photobucket Album: I am now seeking casting for Pamela Isley and Tatsu Yamashiro. Please, bring me your suggestions.

Thanks to CatawampusWhimsy for suggesting Ted Danson for Derek Powers.

I decided to change the casting choice for Jason (picked somewhat more age-appropriate) and I finally found a Damian... by this I mean I went to see Miss Peregrine's Home For Peculiar Children and found Jason and Damian waiting for me...

If I fell in love with you
Would you promise to be true
And help me understand
Cos I've been in love before
And I found that love was more
Than just holding hands
If I give my heart to you
I must be sure
From the very start
That you would love me more than her
— If I Fell by The Beatles

Bruce and the boys were enjoying an excellent steak and roast potato dinner (“That’s too much sour cream, Damian!” Tim exclaimed. “No, it’s not!” Damian argued back.) when Alfred walked up to Bruce with a cordless phone.
“Forgive me, Master Wayne, but it’s the clinic calling.”

Alfred was under instructions never to interrupt dinner with business calls, but to simply take down the contact information of the person calling. Anything having to do with his charity work was another matter.

Bruce quickly chewed and swallowed before taking the phone and walking out into the hall with it, thanking Alfred.

“This is Bruce Wayne.”

“Bruce, it’s Dr. Thompkins.”

“Leslie, hi!”

“Bruce, we’ve got another support case for you. Not a pup, this time.”

Bruce was slightly taken aback. In all the years he’d signed on to be a support Alpha, adult Omegas had never chosen his scent before. He knew more than a few who had been through the support system; they were usually in bad shape.

“Okay.” he said, trying to pass it off as no big deal.

“This one’s a bit of a funny case. He’s pregnant, and needs an Alpha for daily scenting, not only to deal with his trauma, but to prevent going into a pregnancy heat. He’s nowhere ready to mate a new Alpha, so it’s of the utmost importance that a heat be avoided at all costs. Otherwise, he could miscarry.”

“Of course.”

“I’ll e-mail the rest of the relative information to you. As per usual, the Omega won’t be identified in any way until you agree to meet him face to face. His mother will be with him, most likely, as she’s been taking care of him through this ordeal, but she won’t be staying with you.”

“Sure thing. I’ll look it over tonight and reply first thing in the morning.”

“Thank you. And Bruce? Make sure to discuss this with your boys. They’ll be as much a part of this Omega’s life as you will be, and vice-versa.”

“Wouldn’t dream of leaving them out of it.” Bruce assured her.

“Okay. I’ll await your e-mail. Good night, Bruce.”

“Night, Leslie.”

Bruce clicked the phone off and left it in it’s stand before returning to the kitchen.

He sat down and was only a few bites through before becoming aware that the boys were looking at him. He swallowed before saying:

“An Omega reacted to my scent in the book. The same way you boys did.” He gestured at Dick, Jason, and Tim, before taking another bit of steak.

“So not a pup this time?” Jason asked.

“Well, I didn’t ask if he was a teenager or not, but, he has definitely presented. He’s pregnant.”
“So you’re going to be his mate?” Damian asked.

Bruce shook his head.

“No, Damian. If I think we can all, together, provide a good environment for him, then he’ll be living with us to help get better, and, since he doesn’t have a mate, he’ll need to be able to scent me often, because it will be easier for him to get through his pregnancy. After he’s had the pup, and he’s feeling better, he’ll leave.”

“But, Dick, Jason, and Tim all stayed.”

“They stayed because they like it here and needed a family. I became their family, because I like them, too. The Omega I’d be looking after has his mother to help him, but, because he’s pregnant, he needs an Alpha nearby.”

“Harley stays with Pam.”

Bruce sighed.

“It’s true that there are a lot of Omegas who end up staying with their support Alphas, but that’s not why Alphas sign up to be support. There are Omegas who go off on their own, better for having lived with a support Alpha, and still friends with that Alpha, but end up mating with someone else. The reason Alphas, including myself, sign on to be support, is because we want to help those that need it.”

Damian nodded and went back to his steak.

“If I’m an Alpha,” he added after a few minutes. “I want to help people, too.”

Bruce smiled at him.

“You don’t have to be an Alpha to help people. If that’s something you want to do, there are other ways. Dick helps out in the education wing at the clinic.”

“Some Omegas can’t stand to be near Alphas for a long time.” Dick pointed out. “Some of the stuff they go through makes them really scared of Alphas. They need other Omegas and Betas to be with them when they meet Alphas so that they can get used to them, even if they pick their scent out of the book.”

Damian considered this for a moment.

“I wouldn’t want someone to be afraid of me. Fear smells bad.” he concluded.

Everyone nodded their agreement.

“After dinner, I’ll be checking my e-mail. Leslie said she’d send more information about the Omega for me to go over. I’d like for you all to meet me in the lounge at eight to discuss what we’re going to do.”

The boys all gave their assertion that they would and fell silent for a few minutes before gradually returning to lighter conversation (“I told you that was too much!” Tim laughed at Damian who had gotten a smearing of sour cream on his nose as he ate his roast potato).  

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Bruce sat in his study as he perused the PDF file on his desktop computer. The reports were not
pretty. Words like “reclusive state,” “coerced rape,” and “conditioned, emotional abuse” jumped at
him from the screen.

The Omega’s mate had died recently, severing their bond, but he was apparently unaware of the
abuse he had been suffering. He was compliant, wanting to do what he thought would make others
pleased with him. The pregnancy was a surprising development. He had no other pups, as it was
discovered by his mother that his Alpha had been using birth control injectors on him, likely while he
slept. He hadn’t yet been told, as Dr. Quinzel believed he needed to be eased into the reality of what
his marriage had been.

He needed to be taught independence, to not be afraid of acting contrary to what he perceived the
preferences of someone who he believed held authority over him.

Bruce spent some time re-reading the report several times, carefully filtering what he felt would be
safe to tell the younger boys. He’d give Alfred and Dick the fuller story afterward.

At five minutes to eight, Bruce entered the lounge. Alfred was already there; Dick and Damian
joined them not long after, and Jason came in at eight on the dot. Tim ran in five minutes later, and
Bruce held up his hand to stem the apology which he was about to offer.

Once everyone was seated comfortably (not that Bruce believed for one second that the ramrod-
straight position which Alfred was keeping, poised on the edge of one of the winged armchairs, was
in any way comfortable), Bruce began.

“The Omega is twenty-eight years old, and was in a bad marriage. His Alpha was very controlling,
and wanted him to do exactly as he’d say without question. The Alpha never used physical violence,
but he managed to get into his Omega’s head and make him have a different way of thinking than he
would have had before. Harley’s been working with him, but he hasn’t been told just how bad his
Alpha was. Harley thinks it’s important that he be gradually shown that what his Alpha did was
wrong, because he probably wouldn’t believe it right away. Once he does realise how bad his Alpha
was, he’ll be very upset, but, it’s important that he eventually understand this. This will be by helping
him to learn to be independent and make his own decisions. He needs to see how other people live.
As his support Alpha, I’ll be providing scent-comfort and probably touch-comfort as needed. I’ve
always encouraged you to come to conclusions on your own and I hope I’ve succeeded in helping
you to be kind, strong-minded individuals. By living here, hopefully he’ll see that, and become his
own person, again. Now, are there any questions?”

“What does he look like?” Damian asked.

Bruce smiled.

“I don’t know, yet. In most cases, the identity of the Omega is not revealed to the support Alpha until
the time comes to meet them. This is to protect their privacy and to make sure the Alpha isn’t biased
before meeting them in case they’ve heard of them before. Likewise, the Omega won’t know my
name, yet.”

“Because some Omegas might choose you based on you being Bruce Wayne instead of your scent,
right?” Tim asked.

“That’s right. Any other questions?”

No one said anything.

“Well, in that case, does anyone have any objections to him staying with us?”
Everyone shook their head.

“He needs help, and we’ll all help him, right?” Damian asked.

“That’s right, Damian.” Bruce affirmed. “Alright, I’ll e-mail Dr. Thompkins and tell her that we’re willing to meet with him.” Bruce and Alfred stood at the same time.

“I believe it’s time to ready for bed.” Alfred told them.

Dick was feeling perfectly ready for bedtime; the younger ones, not so much.

“I have to finish processing the latest programming codes on my project!” Tim whined.

“I’m one chapter away from the end of The Gunslinger.” Jason reasoned. “If I finish tonight, then tomorrow I can start the Drawing of Three on my way to school.”

“Just a little longer, please, Alfred?” Damian implored.

Alfred crossed his arms and stared them down.

“Master Tim, your project is not due until the Monday after next; the weekend is nearly upon us, during which you will have ample time to work on it, not to mention the weekend after that. Master Jason, you already read the Dark Tower series in novel form, you know perfectly well what happens next. Master Damian, no.”

Damian bowed his head, disappointed. Tim pouted. Jason looked annoyed, but turned to leave.

“I’ll be checking for lights under doors on my way to bed, Alfred.” Bruce assured him after the three pups had left.

“You won’t find them for Jason, Master Wayne. He’s learned.”

“Blanket at the bottom of the door?”

“No, blanket hanging at the top of the door, effectively blocking the light on all sides.”

Bruce chuckled.

“Bruce,” Dick approached him. “There’s more about the Omega, isn’t there?”

Bruce sighed heavily, then bade Dick follow him to the sofa, sitting next to him, while Alfred took the chair nearest them.

“He hasn’t come to recognise it for what it was, yet, but his Alpha would rape him, probably daily from what Dr. Quinzel could understand. Instead of being physically forced, though, he would have been worn down to this state where he could never say no, because he was convinced to think that whenever an Alpha wants it, their Omega has to obey.”

Dick shuddered visibly. When he was fifteen, he had been coerced into having sex with his on-again, off-again boyfriend, Slade Wilson. He’d felt like complete and utter shit the next day, but it gave him the push to finally break things off for good. He couldn’t imagine living in that situation every day of his life.

Bruce put an arm around him and drew him into a hug, where Dick melted into scenting him without realising it until he was breathing Family. Safe. Father. Protector. That was when he realised he was trembling.
“I’m sorry.” his voice sounded shaky, even to his own ears.

“No need to apologise.” Bruce assured him as he rubbed his back. “It’s easy to be upset when hearing about these things, but the reality of it is driven home stronger when it’s someone you know, and this is someone who’s going to be living with us.”

Dick nodded.

“How long were they together?”

“They were married for ten years. I don’t know how long before that. Couldn’t have been much, if you take into account that this means he would have been married at eighteen.”

“Man, I can’t imagine being married now, and Babs and I have been dating for three years.”

Bruce nodded.

Dick just had the time to realise that Alfred had left the room when suddenly he was returning with a glass of water for him.

Dick took a few long, grateful pulls from it, before pulling back with a satisfied ah.

“Thanks, Alfred.”

“Not at all, Master Dick.”

“I think I’d better go to bed.” Dick slid from Bruce’s arms and stood to go.

“I’ll be going up in a bit. Still need to send that e-mail to Leslie. Knowing her, she’ll probably want us to go in on Saturday, providing the Omega is okay with that.”

“Sure.” Dick nodded and left the room.

***

Before turning in, Dick booted up his laptop and started up Skype. He smiled when he saw that Barbara was online and clicked the video call button. She answered almost immediately, and her face filled the screen.

“Hey, babe!” she grinned.

“Hi, yourself.” he smiled at her.

Barbara’s smile fell a bit.

“Dick, are you okay?”

Dick sighed. She knew him too well, able to pick out his emotions even across the pixelated Skype call.

“Bruce is going to be support for an Omega. He just got the call today.” He paused, but Barbara gave him the time he needed to gather his thoughts.

“Remember, in high school, the first time you first talked to me?” Dick’s voice was beginning to crack. “And I blurted out what had happened between me and Slade?” She nodded. “This Omega lived through that shit for years. From the Alpha he was married to.” Dick couldn’t help a few tears
that escaped down his cheeks.

Barbara put a hand to her mouth.

“Has the Alpha been arrested?” she asked.

Dick shook his head.

“No, he died.” Barbara let out a small sigh. “But, the thing is, they were mated and everything. And now the Omega’s having to recover from a severed bond, but, he doesn’t actually know he was being abused, you know? Like, his Alpha never hit him or anything, just really messed with his head.”

Barbara closed her eyes, her lips drawn into a thin line. She then took a deep breath through her nose, letting it out slowly through her mouth before opening her eyes again.

“Are you okay?”

Dick shook his head, his eyes watering again.

“Not really. Like, I’m fine with him coming to stay here and helping out how I can, it’s just that when Bruce told me about what happened to him, it really hit close to home, you know?”

“Of course.” she assured him. “Listen, did you want to hang out tomorrow after I’m done with class? We could go get some frappucinos and talk more?”

Barbara was indirectly offering scent-comfort, which, Dick realised, he really wanted. Her cinnamon-caramel-autumn scent that he could melt into for hours.

“Yeah, that’d be great.” Dick said as he wiped the tears from his eyes.

Barbara pressed a kiss to her fingertips and held them in front of the camera. Dick did the same in return.

“I love you, little robin.” she used the nickname he’d earned on the gymnastics team from his red outfit.

“Love you, too, Babs.”

***

“Come on, Richie. Aren’t you sick of us fighting? This will bring us closer.”

Dick felt his insides squirming as Slade lowered a hand to cup his buttocks.

“I don’t know, Slade… it just doesn’t feel right.”

“You’re just nervous. That’s normal. And hey, I’m not gonna be like one of those assholes who refuses to use a rubber. Safe sex, all the way. I’ll take care of you.” Slade stroked his face with one thumb.

Dick sighed heavily. He was sick of the fighting. Maybe this would help their relationship.

“Okay.” he nodded without looking at him.

“Great! My parents are gonna be out this weekend, just don’t tell your old man. We can pretend like
it's a normal sleepover.” Slade kissed him. “Trust me, you’re gonna love it.”

Dick nodded again.

“I trust you.”

True to his word, Slade used a condom and even refrained from knotting him when Dick asked him not to. The next morning, however, Dick felt hollow and sick.

“Hey, where you goin’, Richie?” Slade asked as Dick gathered his things.

“I’m going home. Don’t call me again, Slade. We’re done.”

“Oh, come on! You can’t tell me you didn’t like it! You were gushing all over!”

Dick turned back to look at him and pointed.

“No. I wasn’t ready, and I know I shouldn’t have backed down from that, but you also should have listened to me when I said I didn’t feel comfortable with it. We’re done.”

Dick ran out of the house, Slade yelling obscenities from the doorway about him being a teasing slut.

After a while, Dick found himself downtown. He had no choice but to call Alfred, as the buses didn’t go anywhere close to Wayne Manor.

Alfred didn’t say anything as Dick climbed into the back of the car, very much aware that he smelled like sex. Didn’t say anything when they arrived at the manor and Dick went straight to his room and went to his ensuite to shower. When he stepped out, enough time had passed that Alfred had washed and dried his clothes and even the overnight bag he had carried them in, all laid neatly on his desk.

Dick reminded himself to thank Alfred later as he crawled into bed and proceeded to cry himself to sleep.

***

Dick went to stand in line at the Starbucks in the Barnes & Noble in the mall, feeling like an automaton as the line begrudgingly moved at a snail’s pace.

“Hey, did you think I wouldn’t take care of that for you?”

Barbara was suddenly at his side, holding up a drink for him. Dick let out a sigh through which some of his tension ebbed.

“You’re the best, Babs.” he said as he took it and followed her to where she had already gotten hold of the one couch.

“Caramel Waffle Cone Crème with a shot. I remembered.” she winked at him.

They sat next to each other on the couch and Dick proceeded to sip from his frappucino, relishing the sweetness. After a while, he put it down on the small table in front of them and leaned against Barbara, who immediately opened her arms for him. Dick turned his face to her throat and scented, letting out a small whimper, at which Barbara kissed his hair.

“Do you want to talk about it?” she asked as she stroked his hair.

“I just hate that it’s still affecting me. Enough that I couldn’t even stand going to college because I
“knew he’d be there.”

“Well, maybe you’ll be able to go next year.”

Dick shook his head.

“He’ll still be in the building, even if he’s in a different year than me.”

“What if he wasn’t in the building?”

Dick looked up at her.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that he went after a TA and the school is looking at expelling him.”

Dick sat straight up.

“Is the TA okay?”

“Yeah, she managed to fight him off. But, it happened in the supply room just before lunch was over, so there were more than a few people in the hall who saw him running out and were able to conclude what had happened thanks to the smells at hand.”

Dick let out a breath he hadn’t realised he’d been holding.

“Thank God.” he whispered.

The sudden relief knowing that he could apply for college, safe in the knowledge that Slade wouldn’t be there, took a weight off his shoulders he hadn’t realised had been pressing down on him.

Barbara spent some more time holding him, carding her fingers through his hair, occasionally giving little pecks to the top of his head. They talked about their respective days, then re-arranged themselves in a position more conducive to finishing their drinks, while still leaning against one another.

“When do you meet him?” Barbara asked.

“Tomorrow morning. Bruce got the e-mail at lunch and texted me. We’ll be meeting in Dr. Quinzel’s office; both she and his mother will be there to help him.”

“I think having you, Alfred, Tim, and Damian in the house will help, too. Watching how Bruce and Jason interact with everyone will help him to see that not all Alphas expect Omegas to just do as they’re told.”

“You like a good, healthy debate.” Dick smiled at her.

“Sometimes I find you’re a little too quick to agree with me, actually.”

“Well, it’s hard to find fault in your logic.” Dick teased. “You’re just so brainy.”

Barbara stuck her tongue out at him, making Dick chuckle.

Dick sat up, then gently removed Barbara’s glasses from her face, placing them on the table. She took the hint and leaned forward, Dick meeting her halfway, for a gentle kiss. They pulled back, smiling at one another, then Barbara linked her arms behind his shoulders and pressed into him more
fully, as they lazily explored each other’s mouths.

“Will you two please go elsewhere?” a stern, male voice interrupted them. “There are pups here!”

Barbara quickly pulled away and put her glasses back on, while Dick made the motion of looking around the whole coffee shop.

“I don’t see one single pup,” he said, loud enough for the older man to hear. “Do you, Babs?”

She rolled her eyes at Dick, even as a little smile teased her lips.

“Hey, missy!” The man shouted. “Rein in your Omega! A smart mouth like that could land him in big trouble.”

Dick narrowed his eyes at the man, but Barbara, adding to the loud conversation, merely stated:

“You see, Dick, you are smart. He just said so.”

The man grumbled and turned his back on the couple.

Dick and Barbara gathered their now-empty cups and tossed them as they exited the coffee shop, Barbara’s arm around Dick’s waist, his arm around her shoulder.

“Ooh, Dick, look!” she was pointing at the movie theatre.

“What am I...? Oh, I see.”

Smack in the middle of the Coming Soon posters was one for a live-action Beauty & The Beast. Barbara had made it no secret that it was one of her favourite stories.

“I thought that was coming out next year?” he asked, looking at the date of September 23rd, less than two weeks away.

“The Disney one comes out next year. This is the French one that came out two years ago. They’re finally showing it around here.” she chuckled. “One of my friends had thought the Disney one coming out was going to be starring both Emma Watson and Daniel Radcliffe, but it was because someone had made a pretty convincing trailer edit using footage from that movie and tacking Emma and Daniel’s faces onto Belle and the Beast. Emma will be in the Disney one, but Dan Stevens will be playing the Beast, not Daniel.”

Dick smiled at her excited babbles.

“Did you want to see this one?” he smirked, knowing full well the answer.

“Yes!” she threw her arms around him.

Dick laughed.

They spent the rest of the day walking around the mall, just holding each other, eventually stopping for a bite to eat at Manchu Wok in the food court. Dick made sure to text Bruce to let him know he wouldn’t be home for dinner.

As they talked things over to plan for Halloween (couple’s costume being a must), Dick could see over Barbara’s shoulder a small family consisting of a female Alpha, a male Omega, one pup in a high-chair, and another well-secured in a sling on its mother in just the right position for nursing, the Omega having undone just the right amount of buttons to expose one swollen breast. The parents
were taking their time alternating feeding pieces of fruit to their older pup while the other would take a few bites of their meal. Dick allowed himself to imagine for a moment what it would be like to be a mother, holding a pup at his breast.

“Hey!” Barbara snapped her fingers in front of him.

“Sorry, Babs. You’re right, I think Rita and Runt would be really cute. It’d be cool to see how many people recognise it.” he hastily slurped up some of his noodles.

Barbara turned to look behind her, then turned back with a crooked smile at Dick.

“Are we getting a little puppy-crazy, Dick?”

Dick’s cheeks turned bright red.

“Well, no… I mean, it’s just…”

Barbara’s smile turned softer, fonder. She reached out and took his hand in hers.

“For the record, I think you’ll be a great mom, someday. And I’ll be the most overly-informed dad, devouring parenting books months before the pup is due.”

Dick felt a soft haze take over slightly as he looked into Barbara’s eyes, her love for him very apparent in that moment.

“You’ll be a great dad, Babs.” he said as he brought her hand up to kiss the knuckles.

She smiled warmly.
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

The meeting! :3 Also hints at other people who live in this universe.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for this chapter being so short, but I hope that it's been worth the wait. The next one should make up for this one's length, I hope.

Also, reminder of my Photobucket Album: I am now seeking casting for Pamela Isley, Garfield Logan, Jonathan Crane, and Tatsu Yamashiro. Please, bring me your suggestions.

Thanks to CatawampusWhimsy for suggesting Ted Danson for Derek Powers.

I decided to change the casting choice for Jason (picked somewhat more age-appropriate) and I finally found a Damian... by this I mean I went to see Miss Peregrine's Home For Peculiar Children earlier tonight and found Jason and Damian waiting for me...

Lost and insecure

You found me, you found me

Lyin' on the floor

Surrounded, surrounded

Why'd you have to wait?

Where were you? Where were you?

Just a little late

You found me, you found me

— You Found Me by The Fray

Clark bounced his leg up and down rapidly as he leaned forward in the recliner, trying to take steadying breaths.

“It’s okay to be nervous, Clark.” Harley held his hand while his mother rubbed his back. “This is
going to be quite the change, but it is only temporary. All support Alphas take classes to know exactly how to help a recovering Omega. And it won’t just be you and him in the house; he has a family who will also be helping where they can.”

Clark nodded, sighing heavily.

He jolted, his leg pausing in its movements, when there was a soft knock at the door. Harley patted his hand once more and stood to answer.

She was out of his line of sight for just a moment, and then she was back with a tall, dark-haired Alpha. The Alpha looked at him with a sort of recognition, but quickly molded his features into a kind, soft smile. He had a strong jaw, and wore a navy suit which looked like the sort of expensive cut he had come to know being married to Lex.

“Clark, this is Bruce Wayne. Mr. Wayne, Clark Kent-Luthor.”

Clark stood quickly, reminding himself of his manners, and Bruce held out his hand to shake.

“Clark, you can call me Bruce.”

Clark nodded, taking note of the light rough edge of Bruce’s voice. It was like a wool blanket for his ears.

“Th-thank-- thank you.” Clark stammered.

Bruce gave his hand a small, reassuring squeeze, and let go.

Martha stepped forward and extended her hand as well.

“Martha Kent, Mr. Wayne. I’d like to thank you for coming to meet with us.”

“Of course, Mrs. Kent.”

“Oh, please. You can call me Martha.”

Bruce smiled.

“I don’t think that would feel quite right. My mother’s name was Martha.”

Martha nodded.

“Whichever you prefer, of course.”

Harley stepped forward.

“If everyone could sit down, we can go over a few things together.”

Clark quickly sat back in the blue recliner, while Bruce took the sofa. Harley tried to offer Martha the remaining recliner, but she refused, preferring to stand by Clark’s side.

“So, Clark, you have an appointment first thing Monday morning for your first ultrasound to determine exactly how far along you are, though you said you’re already quite sure on the conception date, right?”

Clark nodded shakily.
“If everything goes well, maybe Mr. Wayne could pick you up after your appointment and you’d go home with him at that point.”

Clark nodded, his jaw clenching.

“That’d be fine with me.” Bruce agreed.

“Mr. Wayne, how are you on arranging things for Clark’s stay?”

“I can have Alfred make up one of the spare rooms closest to mine so that you can have your own space.” Bruce addressed Clark directly. “We’d also be putting in a smaller bed from one of the other spare rooms in the master bedroom so that you can use that if you need to be near my scent. I have a bed larger than your standard king-size, so if you need to be closer but don’t feel comfortable getting too cozy, you’ll also have that option.”

Clark nodded, a fraction of the stress easing away from him at a time.

“The manor is surrounded by very extensive grounds.” Bruce offered. “It’s very peaceful, if you ever need to take a walk, clear your head. And as I’ll be working from home for the duration of your stay, I can take you into the city if ever you need some hustle and bustle. I don’t know how much you’ve seen of Gotham, but we have some very nice culture sights, as well as local markets. If a day of sightseeing is something you’d like to try, there’s a lot to experience.”

Clark nodded again, his gaze pointed just up and to the right of Bruce’s left shoulder, unable to look him in the eye.

A minute or so passed in silence, which Harley broke.

“Perhaps now would be a good time to introduce the rest of the family?” she suggested.

Clark nodded, and Harley stood to go to the door again.

Clark forced himself to look up as five people entered the room. He was on the defensive, scenting the air to determine the presentations of each. Seemingly herding the other four was an older-looking man with slightly curled grey hair, which Clark identified as a Beta. He was surprised to see the young Omega whom he had once met in the hall was among the group; Dick, he remembered.

Standing taller than him was a teenaged Alpha, his features more squared and broad than Dick’s. Next down was another teenager, not yet presented, still with some remnants of puppy roundness to his face. Eagerly having run forth to Bruce to sit in his lap and scent him was a young pup, maybe nine at most. Each of them all had dark hair, looking very similar to Bruce, though Clark knew from his short conversation with Dick that they weren’t biologically related to him.

Clark nodded before giving a nervous hello.

“Clark, these are my boys. Dick is my eldest, he’s twenty. Jason is sixteen. Tim is thirteen. And little Damian here is eight.” Each of the boys nodded as their names were said, Jason looking serious, but Dick and Tim each offered kind smiles. Damian gave a shy little wave.

“The eldest three were all adopted through the clinic.” Bruce explained. “Damian is biologically mine. His mother passed on.”

Clark gave a shy wave of his own to Damian, causing the pup to smile.

“And Alfred here is my butler,” Bruce continued. “But he’s also the man who raised me. He also helps me with the boys.”
The grey-haired Beta gave a small inclination of the head to Clark, accompanied by a soft smile.

“At your service, sir.”

Clark willed himself to be calm; Bruce’s family were all being quite kind. But, all Clark could focus on, like a spike of guilt pulsing through his head, was that he was going to live with another Alpha so soon after his had died.

_I have to, to keep Alpha’s pup safe. We won’t be mating. We won’t we won’t no no no nonononono…_

_Safe. Warm. Protection. Strong._

Clark gradually opened his eyes and slowly realised that he was being encased in strange arms. His nose was pressed against an Alpha’s neck.

_Bruce. Bruce smells nice._

“You back with us, Clark?” Bruce asked gently.

As his awareness returned, Clark realised Bruce was holding him from where he had slid off the recliner and onto the floor. He wasn’t sure when it had happened, only that it did. He was vaguely aware that Alfred and the boys had left the room.

“I-- that-- I’m sorry.” his voice was cracked. “That’s never happened before.”

“It’s okay, Clark.” Bruce assured him.

Bruce and Martha helped him back into the recliner. His legs felt like jelly and he was aware of a tremor going throughout his body.

_Not good not good not supposed to be sad can’t be sad…_

He screwed his eyes shut to fight the threatening tears.

“Clark?” Harley’s voice sounded distant. “It’s okay if you need to cry.”

_But it’s not okay. I’m not supposed to be sad. It’s upsetting to Alpha._

“You’re allowed to feel, Clark. It’s only by letting yourself feel that you can get better.”

Clark looked up, horrified, when he realise he had spoken out loud.

Martha, Bruce, and Harley were all around him, his mother rubbing his back in soothing circles.

“Mr. Wayne, if you could step into the hall for just a moment?” Harley asked.

“Sure thing.” Bruce gave Clark another one of his kind smiles before leaving the room.

After the door closed, Harley turned to Clark. He had succeeded in swallowing the lump and wiping away the moisture which had dared show itself.

“Clark, can you tell me what you were feeling just before you fell out of the chair? Remember, you don’t have to worry about upsetting people. I can’t help you if you don’t tell me anything.”

Clark took a long, shaky breath.
“I felt bad, because it’s not right to go live with another Alpha so soon. But I kept trying to tell myself that it’s for the pup, and it was like I had to tell myself that it’s not the same thing because I won’t be mated to Bruce, but it was like part of my head didn’t want to listen.” Partway through his words, he had picked up speed and was sounding frantic, like he was having to quash down that part of his brain again.

“You’re absolutely right, Clark. Bruce is going to be there to help you to make things better for you and your pup, but the two of you won’t be sharing the same kind of relationship as you did with Lex. Think of it, as Bruce being a dear friend. He wants to help you, but he won’t cross any lines you set. Both he and Jason will be taking low-level suppressants to make sure they don’t rut while you’re living with them. Dick will also be taking heat suppressants, in case it triggers a heat for you.”

Clark let out a large breath he had held.

“Can you tell me how you felt about Bruce helping you just now?”

“Safe.” Clark said almost immediately in a hushed tone. “He made me feel safe.”

“Given how you feel, do you think you’ll be okay going to live with him for the duration of your pregnancy?”

Clark didn’t answer right away, suddenly very interested in a scuff mark on his left sneaker.

*Pup. Alpha’s pup.*

“Yes.”

“Okay. I’m going to go get him and I would like you to tell him yourself. Is that okay?”

Clark nodded.

Clark thought to himself how to say the words in the short time it took Harley to return with Bruce Wayne. He forced himself to stand, and looked briefly into Bruce’s soft hazel eyes before saying,

“I would like for you to be my support Alpha.”

Bruce gave him small smile.

“Then I’ll start arranging for your stay.”

He offered his hand again, and Clark shook it. In his mind, he was still fighting that horrid feeling of guilt.

***

The rest of the weekend was a busy blur for Clark. His mother helped him gather a good selection of clothes for the next month, though she reminded him that she would have to eventually take him shopping for maternity things; at just slightly past the three month mark, his stomach was starting to go slightly convex. She also bought him a new laptop, as his was about eight years old and the charger cord was a bit worn.

“Why didn’t Lex buy you a new one?” she’d asked. Harley had said that small examples when the opportunity presented themselves would help Clark to eventually realise just how many things were wrong in his relationship, and Martha used each one she could find.

“I never thought to ask him. I haven’t used it in a long time.” Several years, he realised.
“Haven’t you been working on your writing?” Martha asked, concerned. She used to catch him working late into the night, banging away on the keyboard. *Just one more page!* He’d insist, long after lights out.

“No.” Clark thought about that for a moment. He used to have trouble stopping the words in his head which demanded to be written. He would wake up in the middle of the night and jot things down in a journal he kept next to his bed. *When did that stop?* He couldn’t be sure.

“Well, maybe you could start again?” Martha smiled at him. “It would probably help for your therapy if you kept a journal. Just write how you feel about things, and that can help you figure out your thoughts.”

Clark nodded.

“Okay.”

Clark also packed the pillow case with Lex’s things in it.

***

“Damian, why was Bat-bear in Clark’s room?” Bruce held up the large plushie.

“To help him feel better at night. Like Bat-bear helped me after grandpa hurt me.” Damian said this with an edge of sadness to his voice.

Bruce had been looking for something to bring to Damian while he was in the hospital. It was October, and so the hospital gift shop had plenty of Halloween-related items. As soon as Bruce saw the light-brown bear with the bat-wings and domino mask, he snatched it up on impulse.

“Bats can see in the dark.” he explained to Damian, still white-faced and crumpled-looking; his leg rested above the blanket wrapped in a cast. “They make a high-pitched sound that bounces off of the stuff around them so that they can find their way around. And bears can give big, comfy hugs, so you’ll never feel alone.”

*Damian immediately threw his arms around the bear, which was nearly the same size as him.*

“That’s very sweet, Damian. But how about this: Bat-bear stays with you, but if ever you think that Clark needs a hug, you can bring Bat-bear to him to borrow?”

Damian nodded, instantly relieved, and went to take the bear back.

“I think I’ll do that. I do love Bat-bear a lot, I just felt like Clark might need him more. But I do want Bat-bear to stay with me.”

Bruce smiled and enveloped his pup, along with his bear, in a tight hug.

“Well, I think that’s about everything.” Harley said, looking over her checklist as she emerged from Bruce’s room. “My main concern was the staircase for later in Clark’s pregnancy. But, as you have an elevator which opens within easy distance of the bedrooms, I don’t think it’ll be a problem.”

“I had it refurbished not long after I adopted Dick. Found it was easier for getting big things in, like furniture.”
“It’ll definitely be needed for when Clark’s pregnancy is in the advanced stages. Climbing up and
down those stairs will be hard for him, not to mention a fall hazard. Now, there is the concern of
your distance from the city. However, Dr. Jones has already submitted contact information for a
number of midwives who have worked through the clinic before. Once Clark chooses one he’s
comfortable with, they’ll be present for each of his check-ups, and come to stay here the week of his
due-date.”

“Of course.”

“Alright, Mr. Wayne. Your house is marked as support-safe, you know how to reach me.”

“I’ll see you out.” Bruce offered.

“Thank you.”

“How’s Pam, lately?” he asked as the descended the stairs.

Harley smiled.

“She’s great. Her landscaping business has really been picking up. She’s had to hire some help with
the shop. Of course, she came to me, first, and I was able to recommend her some clients who
needed the money. You remember Arthur?”

“Curry? The pup that Carter and Kendra took in?”

“Graduated this past June. A lot of Pam’s environmental efforts are in line with his views, so they hit
it off right away. He’s studying to be a marine biologist.”

“Good for him.” Bruce approved.

“And, he seems to have found himself a little lady friend in his class.” Harley smiled at him.

Bruce chuckled.

“Arthur presented as Alpha, right?” he inquired.

“Mm-hmm.”

“And his lady friend?”

“She’s a Beta. But you should see the look on his face when she comes into the shop at the end of
his shifts.” Harley grinned. “Couldn’t find a more perfect match.”

Bruce smiled as they reached the bottom of the staircase and made their way towards the door.

“That’s good.”

“Have you heard from Diana and Steve?” Harley asked.

“Puppy number five.”

Harley laughed.

“She’s going to wear him out!”

“Oh, no. She had this one.”
“Oh!” Harley nodded approvingly. “Any complications?” Female Alphas didn’t always have much luck in the carrying department.

“They ended up having to deliver by c-section, but the puppy is otherwise healthy.” Bruce chuckled after a brief pause. “Apparently, the whole ordeal left her with a whole new sympathy towards him. He told me he’s been having to assure her multiple times that she was always plenty supportive during his pregnancies and to stop thinking that she was in any way lacking in her attentiveness as a mate.”

Harley giggled.

“Diana’s always been strong in the fight for presentation equality. Of course she would be the first to think herself as being a cruel mate once she gets to experience pregnancy for herself.”

They stepped outside and made their way to Harley’s red smart car.

“Don’t let the cat out of the bag,” Bruce continued. “But, Steve said that he has number six on the way.”

Harley burst out laughing.

“He plans on waiting as long as possible before telling Diana, as it wasn’t planned. The scent of the new pup will help cover him for a while.

Harley pushed the button on her car-starter for the locks, then turned to Bruce.

“Well, I’ll be seeing you every Friday for Clark’s therapy sessions.” she reminded him.

“One o’clock sharp.”

“Thank you for agreeing to help him. I’m sure once he sees how you are with your boys he’ll be able to start waking up.”

“I’ll certainly try my best.”

“That’s all we can ask for.”

They shook hands.

“I’ll see you tomorrow after Clark’s ultrasound.” she reminded him.

“That’s at ten, right?”

“I believe so. I’ll find out for sure when I get home to check my calendar and text you.”

“Alright. Until tomorrow morning, doctor.” he smiled.

“Until tomorrow, Mr. Wayne.”

“Um, one more thing. How are you doing?”

Harley smiled.

“Happy. I mean, things aren’t perfect, yet, but…” she sighed. “I know he can’t touch me anymore. And Pam has been the best.”
“I’m happy for you. Both of you.” he said seriously.

“Thank you.” Harley smiled at him.

And with that, she got into her car and drove off.
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Ultrasound, moving, and puppy-bonding.

Chapter Notes

I've started writing a spin-off talking about Diana Prince and Steve Trevor; how they meet, start screwing around, and fall in love.
I'm not yet sure when I'll be posting it, but it is in the works. I decided to take advantage of the opportunity to bring up sexual harassment issues in the military, which is going to need some research time. It's one of those things I know exists but don't know enough about, yet, to represent it adequately.

Photobucket Album!
Still looking for Pamela Isley, Garfield Logan, Jonathan Crane, and Tatsu Yamashiro.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Went back home again,
This sucks gotta pack up and leave again
Can’t say when I’ll be there again
It’s time now to turn around
Turn my back on everything
Everything’s changing when I turn around
All out of my control
— Mobile by Avril Lavigne

Martha’s red Honda Civic was full to bursting when she drove Clark to the clinic Monday morning for his 10:00 appointment.

Clark’s leg was bouncing again as he awaited his turn to see Dr. Jones. Butterflies twittered in his stomach as he tried not to think of his last Pap smear. He’d done some searching in preparation for his appointment, and had read more than a few stories regarding the new transvaginal/transanal ultrasounds. He was completely tensed up, sincerely hoping that Dr. Jones wouldn’t be using that

“Clark?” The dark-skinned, bald doctor stuck his out from the examination room. “All set for you.”
Martha walked with him through the door.

“Clark, I’m Dr. Jones, and I’ll be your obstetrician throughout your pregnancy.”

Clark shook the offered hand, while scenting the air cautiously. Omega, he concluded.

“Thank you.”

“Now, as you’re here for a simple ultrasound, I’ll just ask you to lie down on the table, here, lift your shirt and lower your pants to just about hip-level.”

Clark complied slowly, feeling very exposed just being in the room. He did feel a good measure of the tension fade, however, knowing that nothing was going to be shoved up his channel today.

“Now, from what I’ve been told, you conceived out of heat, correct?” Dr. Jones pulled on a pair of blue gloves.

“Yes.” he said as he laid back.

“I’m going to apply a gel to your stomach, it’s going to feel rather cold.”

The clear stuff was squirted onto Clark’s stomach, making him flinch. It was in fact quite cool, and he didn’t like it.

“Now, this here is a transducer,” he held up a white, techie-looking thing, attached to a cord. “I’m going to rub through the gel on your stomach, and we’ll be able to get an image to see how your pup is looking.”

Clark nodded and squeezed his mother’s hand. She started stroking his hair.

The movement of the wand through the gel felt messy, yet oddly soothing.

Dr. Jones was looking at a monitor just above Clark’s right side.

“There it is.” he smiled and pointed.

Clark looked up. The image he saw was of an uneven sphere within a cavity which he assumed was his uterus.

“Looks to be a decent size for the current stage of development.” Dr. Jones said, still smiling. “How has your morning sickness been?”

“Just off and on nausea.” Clark told him. “I only threw up a couple of times.”

“Well, that’s fortunate. My daughter had me over the toilet every morning.” he chuckled. “Wouldn’t trade her for anything in the world, though. That first kick, and she had me wrapped around her little finger.”

Clark smiled. He still wasn’t sure how he felt about the pup, outside of his relief that he could, in fact, get pregnant, but Dr. Jones relating his own experience made him optimistic.

“I’ll get some pictures printed out for you to take home.” Dr. Jones continued.

“Thank you.”

The doctor removed the wand and used a towel to wipe the gunk off of Clark’s stomach.
“There we are. I’ll get those print-outs.”

The doctor went behind another door, presumably his office.

“How are you feeling, Clark?” his mother asked.

Clark sat up and shrugged.

“I’m not sure. Part of it still feels surreal, but, then again, a lot of my life has been like that, lately. Since Lex died, it just feels like I’m walking through the stages of a dream.”

“Your life changed so fast, Clark.” she swallowed. “When your father died… I just sort of wandered the farm. I ate because I knew I had to, but, I wasn’t living. I don’t even remember making the decision towards getting my law license back. One day, there I was, in dad’s office, and I broke down. I think that was when I woke up.”

Clark felt tears spring to his eyes.

“I’m sorry, mom. I should’ve been there, I should’ve--” he let out a sob and Martha enveloped him in a hug.

“I didn’t get to say goodbye! I didn’t get to wrap his shroud or put earth on him! I wasn’t there!”

“It’s not your fault, Clark.” Martha was crying silently. “Lex should have brought you, or let you come by yourself.”

“He was busy. He didn’t want me to make the long flight by myself.”

“Grandpa was going to bring you, but Lex told him not to.”

Clark pulled back, his face wet and tear-stained.

“What?”

“He probably still has the e-mail. He was helping me with the arrangements, so he reached out to Lex, offering to bring you to Smallville for the funeral, but Lex told him it wasn’t a good time.”

“N-no. He wouldn’t.” Clark shook his head. “He must’ve wanted to bring me himself but couldn’t make the time.”

Martha felt, not for the first time since Lex’s death, a piece of her heart break off for Clark. He was so quick to make excuses for him in spite of everything. She knew, when Clark would finally see the truth, it was going to crush him.

Doctor Jones was kind enough to wait until Clark managed to calm down before bringing the ultrasound print-outs, still kind and polite, though more gentle than before.

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True to form, Bruce was waiting for Clark outside the clinic when he was done. Harley was there, too, ready to send him off. They worked together with Alfred to move Clark’s things from Martha’s Honda to Bruce’s black Lincoln Navigator.

Clark rode with Martha for the drive to Wayne Manor (“I’ll visit every other weekend, Clark,” she promised) as she carefully followed behind Alfred, trying to commit the route to memory.
They arrived just after lunch, and Bruce bade them to the kitchen for roast beef sandwiches which Alfred had prepared and left in the fridge before they had set out that morning.

“The younger boys are all at school.” Bruce told them. “Dick had some things he wanted to take care of, so he’s in town.”

“By himself?” Clark asked.

“I think he’s meeting with his girlfriend after her classes end, but, yes, right now, he’s probably by himself. He might’ve run into a friend, but, I wouldn’t know.”

Clark wasn’t sure what to do with this information. Gotham was at least as big as Metropolis if not bigger, and yet Dick was out there on his own.

“Clark?” Martha asked.

“It’s just, Lex always accompanied me into town. He said it was too dangerous for an Omega to be alone in a big city.”

“Well, a city can be dangerous for anyone, not just Omegas.” Bruce explained. “You just have to try your best to keep to well-lit areas and be aware of your surroundings. If I walked along and a mugger spotted me, he wouldn’t think ‘oh, an Alpha, I better not bother him.’ He’d think ‘oh, Bruce Wayne, he’s loaded.’”

Clark stared, holding his half-eaten sandwich.

“I never… I didn’t think....”

“We’re all human, Clark. I can see Lex wanting to keep you safe, but, even with him accompanying you, if someone wanted to make their move, you’d be in just as much danger. But that’s no reason not to be able to go out and live your life.”

Clark put down his sandwich.

“It’s okay, Clark.” Bruce continued. “There’s a whole lot of things society tells Omegas they shouldn’t be doing ‘for their own safety,’ which would basically prevent them from living their lives; everything from how you dress to making sure you keep your keys between your fingers. Dick sometimes goes out drinking with friends on weekends, but, if you believe society, Omegas shouldn’t go out drinking at all, because then they’re inviting trouble.”

Clark resumed eating his sandwich, chewing slowly. He had never thought of Lex’s insistence on being accompanied restricting. Coming from a small town, he simply deferred to Lex as knowing better about the city, and that he was doing these things because he wanted Clark safe.

Was he keeping you safe when he told grandpa not to come get you for dad’s funeral?

Clark felt his head start to pound. He had never actively questioned anything Lex had done before. He could immediately feel other parts of his mind shouting at this new voice to shut up.

“Clark, are you alright?” his mother put a hand on his shoulder.

“Head hurts.” he mumbled.

“I’ll make you a brew for that.” Alfred offered. “No over-the-counter solutions given your condition, I’m afraid.”
“Thank you.” Clark whispered.

Alfred busied himself preparing the tea while the others finished their sandwiches. When he placed the steaming cup in front of him a few minutes later, Clark found himself already feeling somewhat soothed just by the aroma.

“Chamomile, lemon balm, lavender, and fennel seeds.” Alfred explained. “The smell is just as important as the drinking of it.”

Clark eagerly took in deep breaths through his nose as he waited for it to cool.

“How’s your head, honey?” Martha asked him after everyone had finished.

“Better.”

“We’ll be using the old servants’ elevator to get your things upstairs.” Bruce assured him. “Piece of cake.”

***

Clark looked around his new room, feeling accomplished.

He had carefully arranged everything after it had been brought up, and Martha, Bruce, and Alfred had wisely stayed out of his way; Clark relished in this new-found freedom to do this, as Lex always wanted the penthouse exactly as it was. It was only after a couple of weeks of living with his mother that she finally turned to him and told him “Honey, I can tell you’re itching to fix your nest. This is your room, and you can fix it any way you’d like.” The resulting peace he had felt was glorious.

His bed currently had the flat sheet and comforter which Alfred had made it with, but also the pillow case with Lex’s things, the comforter he had been using at home, one of his mother’s undershirts, a tattered sport coat belonging to his grandfather, and Martha had taken a couple of Jonathan’s old flannels from storage for him; she had a few such items in a box, still holding onto the last of Jonathan’s scent.

Clark wanted nothing more than to curl up into his nest and allow himself to drift, but he knew his mother would be leaving, soon, and wanted to see her off. So, he left the room and made his way down the master staircase to the entrance hall.

He decided to try the doors to the immediate right of the stairs, stopping when he heard his mother and Bruce talking.

“... always told him if someone was hurting him, to leave, ask for help. But that was always for hitting. We never thought about this kind of abuse.”

“It’s one that seldom comes up, Mrs. Kent. Most victims don’t get discovered until it’s consumed their whole lives, because they often don’t realise themselves that they’re being victimised. They lose interest in things they used to love, and just close in on themselves, because they’ve been made to be completely dependant on their abuser. They don’t exist without their abuser, so their abuser can get them to do whatever they want. Some parents do it to pups, without realising how much they’re damaging them, and then one day, surprise! Their pup is grown and doesn’t know how to write a resume. I’ve worked with quite a lot of young adults who were in such situations to get them educated in independance, because their parents wouldn’t. Some parents brought their pups to the programs themselves, and you could see they clearly regretted how they had brought up their pups. In other cases, the pups reached out themselves after running away from their stifling parents.” Bruce paused. “We also had some who had managed to break out of a bad marriage or had been forcibly
divorced by their abuser, and who had no idea how to live on their own because they had been dependant for so long.”

Clark could hear his mother take a shaky breath.

“Thank you so much for helping him.” she said.

“I haven’t helped him, yet, Mrs. Kent. This is going to be a long, hard road for him.”

“But you will.”

Clark didn’t know how to process what he’d heard. The implications were just on the edge of his understanding, threatening to make his head spin. He pushed them aside, not wanting, not able, to deal with them just then. He finished the distance to the door and knocked on the frame. Bruce and Martha looked up.

“I, uh, finished fixing things. Sorry about going all, y’know, Omega.”

Bruce smiled at him.

“It’s okay, Clark. I’ve raised an Omega teenager. Just know that if you start rearranging things outside your room, you’ll have Alfred to deal with. Dick can tell you all about that.

Clark let out a soft chuckle.

Martha let out a heavy sigh, then stood.

“I have to go before it gets too late in the day, Clark.” she went to him and took him into her arms.

“You’re going to be okay, honey. You’ll be just fine.”

Clark bent his head to scent his mother, holding her close.

“Hi, Clark!” a small voice spoke from behind them.

They broke apart enough for Clark to turn and see that Damian had arrived, backpack, raincoat and rainboots still on, apple-cheeked from the slight chill of the overcast day outside.

“Hi, Damian.” Clark smiled at him.

“In school today we went on a nature walk and I caught a frog. I had to put him back, though, because my teacher said he was icky. He felt kinda weird, but I didn’t find him icky. He was kinda funny-looking, was all.”

Clark chuckled.

Bruce stepped forward.

“I think your teacher was probably referring to the fact that frogs can carry bacteria that’s not safe for us to eat. But, as long as you washed your hands before eating—”

“Oh, yeah.” Damian assured him. “She made me wash my hands twice.”

Bruce smiled at him.

“I better go.” Martha and Clark held each other’s arms as they began to leave the room.
“I thought Clark was staying with us?” Damian asked, suddenly crestfallen.

“Clark is,” Bruce knelt to his level. “But his mother’s job is in Metropolis, so she has to go back there. She’ll be coming to visit sometimes, though.”

“Oh, ok. I’ll be back.” he hugged his father and took off running for the master staircase.

“Master Damian, that had better not be your mucked-up boots I hear on the staircase!” Alfred’s dulcet tones wafted from the kitchen just moments before the man himself appeared. Damian ran back down, took off his boots and coat, then left them at the bottom before tearing back up the staircase, bag in tow.

“Don’t put my boots away yet, Alfred! I have to help Clark say ‘bye to his mom!’” he yelled as he went.

Bruce walked Clark and his mother to Martha’s Honda. They waited a couple of minutes, and then Damian came racing out of the front doors, boots on the wrong feet, holding a large toy bear with bat-wings and a black domino mask.

“This is Bat-bear.” he explained, holding it out for Clark. “If ever you feel sad, you can borrow him till you feel better.”

Clark smiled sadly and took the bear in hand.

“Thank you, Damian.”

Martha and Clark hugged once more before she got in the car and drove off down the long driveway. Clark watched as the gates opened automatically to let her through, squealing loudly as they closed behind her.

After Lex had died, Clark felt a sort of darkness over his whole existence, his mother the only beacon. Now, he was lost at sea.

“Clark?” Bruce’s voice joined him in the emptiness, and Clark turned to him, a broken whimper escaping his throat before he could stop it.

The light breeze wafted Bruce’s scent towards him as the Alpha approached and placed a hand on his shoulder. Clark crumbled instantly, latching his arms around Bruce’s middle. Bruce held his head at the right angle for Clark to scent him, which he did desperately.

Safe. Warm. Protection. Help. Help me. Help me help me help me help me help me help me helpmehelpmehelpme...

“Okay, Clark, hang on, I’ve got you.”

“What’s wrong with him, father?” Damian asked worriedly.

Bruce helped to guide Clark up as he bent forward so that the Omega could adjust his grip to be around his shoulders and wrapped his legs around Bruce’s waist.

“He’s feeling extra-sad right now, Damian. We’re going to take him upstairs and help him rest.”

Drowning. Lost. Need scent. Don’t let go. Falling. Falling. Falling falling falling falling falling falling falling falling...

“I’ve got you, Clark. We’re almost there.”

Almost where?
They were on the second floor. Clark had the dull remembrance of Bruce getting into the elevator with him. Suddenly Clark was in a room. It wasn’t his, he realised.

Bruce carried him past a double bed and then he was laying him down on another, much bigger bed.

Damian carefully got in next to Clark and held up the toy bear. Clark gratefully accepted it and hugged it tight.

Bruce sat up in the bed next to them and waited.

He didn’t have to wait long before Clark buried his nose in his throat again, desperately clutching onto him. Bruce rubbed his back until Clark’s breathing deepened and evened out. Damian was nestled carefully between the two, and Clark had one arm around him, as well. Bruce noticed after a while that Damian had nodded off, as well.

Carefully, Bruce untangled himself from the two of them. He took the comforter from the smaller bed and put it up around their sleeping forms, brushing a bit of hair away from Damian’s eyes, and then Clark’s before he could stop himself.

“Sweet dreams, Clark.” Bruce whispered before leaving the room.

***


No, not home. But good.

Pup?

Clark opened his eyes and looked into a chubby little face, snoozing peacefully beside him.

Damian.

Clark carefully looked around, taking in his surroundings.

He was in the largest bed he had ever seen, in a dark-paneled room. Across the room from the foot of the bed was a double bed with no blanket.

Bruce’s room. He realised.

He remembered feeling lost, adrift. After mom left. He latched on to the one thing he could find. Bruce’s scent. Bruce helped me.

Clark tried to slide down past Damian so that he could get out of bed without waking him, but stopped at a tiny voice.

“Clark?”

Clark looked back at him.

“Yeah, Damian?”

“s’it time for dinner?”

“Um, I’m not sure.” he glanced at the alarm clock on the bedside table; 5:47. “What time do you usually have dinner?”
“Six.”

“Then it’s almost time.”

Damian sat up, rubbing his eyes and yawning widely.

“Time to wash up.” he declared sleepily, clearly not quite awake yet. He took up his bear and slid off the bed before wandering out of the room. Clark followed him three doors down across the hall.

Damian deposited his bear on his bed, then headed to his ensuite and stepped up onto a small stool so that he could reach the tap.

“Mind if I join you?” Clark asked.

“’kay.”

Clark helped himself to a dollop of the Captain America soap and washed his hands alongside Damian.

“Come on, I’ll bring you to the kitchen!” Damian jumped off the stool and grabbed Clark by the hand to take him into the hall.

They ran into Dick on their way, who had apparently been asked to find them.

“I think Alfred made grilled chicken, tonight.” Dick said, enthusiastically.

Sure enough, the scent of seasoned chicken greeted them as the made their way down the staircase and towards the kitchen. Clark found his mouth watering almost instantly.

Upon entering the kitchen, Jason, Tim, and Bruce greeted them. Bruce sat at the head of the table, while Dick took the chair to his left, and Damian to his right. Jason was already seated one down from Damian’s seat, and Tim next to Dick’s. This left the other end of the table for Clark. As he went to sit though, he stopped, feeling uneasy, and the reason was obvious to all in the room.

Suppressants or not, age difference aside, Clark was a pregnant Omega with a broken bond, who had not developed any familial bonds with the Waynes, outside of having Bruce’s protection. To sit next to Jason, an unbonded Alpha, wasn’t going to work this early in the game.

Pregnant Omegas were very appealing to Alphas; unbonded ones even more so. Clark knew this, and his hindbrain was warning him to be on the alert.

No one had to say a word, they could all feel the problem; thus, Tim took the end seat while Dick moved down one, leaving the spot at Bruce’s left open for Clark.

The tension eased from the room and everyone started eating.

“Did you two enjoy your rest?” Bruce asked them.

Damian nodded, while Clark offered a stammered “Y-yes, th-thank you.”

“Damian, how was school, today?”

“I already told you and Clark about the frog, father.”

“I know. I just thought you might want to tell your brothers. You don’t have to, though, if you don’t want to.”
“A frog?” Tim asked. “Were you doing dissections?”

Bruce cleared his throat pointedly.

“No!” Damian exclaimed, the suggestion of a frog being cut up upsetting him.

“Damian, calm down.” Bruce patted his hand.

“It’s okay, baby bat.” Jason stroked his hair.

“Tim,” Bruce spoke firmly. “Under what category would you place dissection as a topic for conversation?”

“Not appropriate for meal-times.” he grumbled, suddenly busying himself with the ketchup for his fries.

“We went on a nature-walk.” Damian clarified, still clearly upset by Tim’s earlier question.

“And you saw a frog?” Dick asked, trying to help steer the conversation in a more cheerful direction.

“I caught it.” Damian declared happily. “I was the only one that could. He was wriggly and felt funny and I needed both hands to hold him. My teacher wouldn’t let me bring him home, though.”

Bruce and Dick chuckled. Clark felt himself smiling.

“Dick, how did your day go?”

“I filled out the applications for next year’s criminology course. The lady at the desk said that, with my grades, the two-year gap between graduating and starting college shouldn’t be an issue. I’ll still have to do SATs, of course, but she said it’s just standard stuff, mainly science-focused. Since criminology is a lot of lab-based stuff, y’know? I’ll be doing the ones in the spring so that it’s closer to the program start date.”

“Good. I think you’ll do just fine. Need any study aids?”

“Babs is gonna help me get ready for the SATs. Which reminds me… Clark?”

Clark was surprised at being addressed.

“Yeah?”

“My girlfriend, she’s an Alpha. Would it be okay if she’s here sometimes?”

Clark looked to Bruce, expecting him to say whether it was okay, but Bruce shook his head.

“This is about what you feel comfortable handling, Clark. Your call.”

Clark looked to his plate, considering, then looked back to Dick.

“I don’t think I could say until I meet her.”

Dick nodded.

“That’s fair.”

“We could invite her for dinner on Saturday, if that’s alright with you, Clark?” Bruce offered. “Your mother would be visiting at the same time, which might make it easier.”
Clark nodded. “Sure.”

“Ok. Dick, you’ll be sure to explain to Barbara that she needs to be on suppressants if she’s going to be visiting often, yes?”

“Yep.”

“Okay, then. Jason, how was school, today?”

Jason shrugged.

“Okay. Garfield kept me caught up with stuff, so I was able to do a test in Social Sciences. I think I did good.”

Bruce nodded. “Good. Tim, how’s your computer?”

“I played Commander Keen on it for two hours and it didn’t overheat.” Tim grinned triumphantly.

“Ha!” Bruce grinned back. “Told you you’d get it.”

“Tim built a dos computer using old components.” Dick explained.

“Built? Whoa.” Clark was genuinely impressed.

“Do NOT challenge him to any video game battle.” Jason warned. “He’ll kick your a--” Bruce cleared his throat. “Rear. Every time.”

Clark chuckled.

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

After a moment’s pause, Bruce turned to Clark.

“So, Clark. Is there anything you’d like to share? You don’t have to, it’s just a way of everyone keeping in touch.”

Clark hunched his shoulders slightly.

“Well, I had my first ultrasound, today. Dr. Jones thinks the pup is looking healthy.”

“What’s a ol-ter-sound?” Damian asked.

“An ultrasound, Damian.” Bruce made sure to enunciate each syllable for Damian to catch. “It’s when a device is used to make noises on a part of someone’s body so that the doctor can see inside. When someone is pregnant, the doctor likes to do at least two or three ultrasounds at different stages of development to make sure the pup is growing okay.”

“It uses noises to make pictures, so it’s like how a bat can see?”

Clark nodded.

“Yeah, pretty much.”

“Cool!” Damian declared.

“I can show you the pictures after dinner, if you want.” Clark offered, caught up in the pup’s enthusiasm.
“Yeah!” Damian exclaimed, excited by the prospect.

Bruce smiled at the exchange.

He’d thought maybe Dick and Clark would hit it off more quickly, considering Dick’s work at the clinic and being of the same presentation (Dick sometimes joked about being the only Omega in the house). But it turned out that Damian had managed to connect with Clark almost immediately.

It was probably for the best, Bruce thought, given the type of abuse Clark had suffered, to have a pup slowly bring him out of his shell. Damian would never intimidate Clark in the way that most adults might. He’d be learning right along with him.

***

“That’s a pup?” Damian asked, staring at the black and white printout.

“Yep. It’s just getting started, so it doesn’t look like much, yet, but, it’ll get there.”

They were sitting on the sofa in the lounge. Jason was sitting sideways in a chair with the graphic novel of The Drawing Of Three, Dick and Tim were playing chess on the hearthrug, and Bruce was sitting in front of the desktop computer at a dark wood desk.

“So, where is it? I mean, people say tummy, but, it can’t be the stomach, right?”

Clark thought for a moment; an anatomical picture from high school coming to mind.

“You’re right, it’s not the stomach.” he started gesturing to his body as he went through his explanation. “See, Omegas have something called a uterus, which is kind of like a pocket of skin inside, just under the intestines. When a pup starts, it’s inside that pocket. As the pup grows, so does the uterus.”

“Is it a boy or a girl?”

“I don’t know. The doctor is going to want to take more pictures later, when it’s bigger. He should be able to tell me, then.” he stopped, reconsidering. “Of course, if it’s a girl Alpha or a Beta, that makes it more difficult to tell; he’ll really only be able to tell me if it’s a girl Omega, since girl Alphas and most Betas have both parts, and you can’t tell before puberty if a boy is an Alpha or an Omega. We’ll know more when it’s born.”

“Can it hear us?” Damian was looking interestedly at Clark’s middle.

“They say pups can hear when their parents are talking to it.”

“Can I tell it something?” Damian looked up at Clark with wide eyes, causing Clark to smile. Jason, though still looking at his book, shook his head with amusement.

“Sure.” Clark leaned back in the sofa as Damian positioned himself lying down on the couch on his stomach. He propped himself up on his forearms, his head just inches from Clark’s stomach.

“Hi, puppy, I’m Damian. Me and my dad and my brothers are gonna take care of your mommy while you’re growing. We’re all really nice. I’m really excited to meet you. I’ve never met a little puppy before. And if your mommy still needs help after you come out, I’d like to watch over you sometimes. I could show you all my toys. I guess you’ll need softer stuff at first. Bat-bear is really soft, and he’ll be bigger than you are are when you first come out. I can’t really think of anything else to say, right now. Just good luck with your growing, and I’ll see you, soon.” Damian leaned...
down and kissed Clark’s tummy, then looked up, concerned.

“Was that okay? I forgot to ask. Father says you should always ask before you touch someone.”

Clark nodded, a lump in his throat, but he was smiling.

“Yeah, that’s okay.”

“Can I give you a hug? You look like you need one.”

Clark opened his arms and Damian eagerly scurried himself onto his lap as Clark held him tight.

Clark found himself very much liking happy pup smell. For the first time, he found himself actually looking forward to meeting his pup, rather than seeing his pregnancy as a relief that he wasn’t broken.

Damian settled himself in Clark’s lap, leaning against him, asking him more questions about his pup. What were some names he was thinking of? (he hadn’t been) What was the first toy he wanted to get for it? (probably a bear) How long will it take before the pup comes out? (Damian declared six months to be an unfair amount of waiting time)

At about eight-thirty, Alfred came into the room and announced that the younger ones all had to get ready for bed. Damian gave Clark one last squeeze before bidding him goodnight, then ran to his father to do the same. Jason and Tim grumbled slightly about going, but all the same bid Bruce and Clark goodnight and trudged out of the room.

Dick excused himself, having lost his chess partner, and said his goodnights as well.

“You can go if you want, too, Clark.” Bruce told him as he replied to some e-mails. “You don’t have to, but, you know, if you’re tired. If you wanted to talk, though, I can get to these tomorrow.” he turned to Clark as he said this.

Clark looked deep in thought.

“I’m not sure.” he admitted after a while. “I don’t think I’m tired, but, I don’t know what to do.”

“What kind of things would you do if you were at your mother’s and the evening was winding down?” Bruce turned his chair to face Clark fully.

Clark shrugged.

“I’ve been sleeping a lot. But I feel like I’ve done enough of that for a long time.”

“Would you like me to show you around? We probably won’t go through the whole house, but it would be good if you at least knew your way around the main areas.”

Clark nodded. “Sure.” Clark stood from the sofa as Bruce stood from his chair and joined him in the center of the room.

“Well, as you can tell, this is the lounge.” Bruce seemed unusually at a loss for words.

“Yes, we certainly lounged here.” Clark said with a hint of a smile teasing his lips.

Bruce grinned through a silent chuckle.

“Uh, there’s a ballroom back there.” he said, pointing to a pair of doors at the end opposite of where
they had come in. “Doesn’t see a lot of action. I usually prefer hosting events outside of my home. Keep the press away from the boys. Dick and Jason can handle themselves okay, now; they’re old enough. But, when you’re the adopted son or, heaven forbid, the illicit son of the upper crust, the press like to hound you with questions, and they don’t care how young you are.”

“I illicit?” Clark asked, confused.

Bruce gave a humourless smile. “You might as well know. It’s not exactly a secret, and you will be staying here for a while.” Bruce took a deep breath and sighed heavily.

“Damian’s mother and I weren’t married. We had an intense affair. I wanted to marry her, help her get away from her father, but it didn’t work out. He took her to Europe, tried to keep us apart. She managed to find someone she could trust to bring Damian to me. For the next few years I reached out by every means I could think of to get her back to the States. The DA is a friend of mine and was going to grant her asylum. But then one day her father shows up on my doorstep. She’d died of an overdose. I knew she was using, but I thought she’d gone clean when she realised she was pregnant. She either slipped, or she couldn’t stand it anymore.”

Bruce paused and Clark could see his jaw clench and unclench several times.

“Her father is not a good man. He had expectations for his daughter and I wasn’t one of them.”

Clark expected to be smelling the anger off of Bruce, but the biggest scent to hit him was sorrow, grief, and loss.

Bruce let out another heavy sigh.

“Maybe we’d better continue this tomorrow.”

Clark nodded.

“I’m sorry.”

Bruce shook his head.

“You didn’t do anything. Like I said, you’re going to be living here, you should know.” Another heavy sigh. “I’ll go clear my head for a bit. Did you want to stay in your room or mine, tonight? And please, don’t think that this,” he gestured at the air between them. “Should have anything to do with it. I’ll be calm enough in a half-hour or so. You go where you feel comfortable.”

Clark swallowed.

“I’ll go to mine for now, see how I feel later.”

Bruce nodded.

“I’ll see you later, then.”

***

As soon as Bruce heard the sound of Clark’s steps walking up the master staircase fade, he went out into the hall, past the master staircase, and stopped in front of the grandfather clock. Reaching inside, up behind the face, he pushed the switch to the side, and the clock began to slide out of the wall, protruding until Bruce could push it aside.

Inside the wall, he hit the switch he knew to be there, illuminating the dark space.
There were practise mats lining a large space on the floor, and two benches off to the sides. Just off of the main practise area were several punching bags, hung within a precise distance of each other.

Bruce took off his shirt, laying it on one of the benches. There was a roll of athletic tape and another of gauze already waiting (judging by the smell, Jason had been in here last). He carefully wrapped his hands and stood at the ready in front of the first bag. He figured a simple boxing session would be enough for his current mood, so he proceeded to punch.

He focused his anger, frustration, and grief into pummeling the bag. Grief for Talia. Anger at Ra’s Al Ghul. Frustration with himself that he’d been unable to hold things together more, especially this night. This first night when Clark would be feeling most alone at having been uprooted from his home, yet again, now living among strangers.

Clark…

His eyes were such a piercing blue; whenever they filled with tears, it seemed to Bruce like an ocean might pour forth.

Tears caused by Lex Luthor.

The next few hits landed with satisfying *fwops*.

Bruce could only know what Dr. Quinzel had managed to pull from the therapy sessions and included in her report. Clark didn’t say outright what had happened to him, because he was still hiding in the safe space he had made for himself. One in which he smiled to keep others from digging too close.

He didn’t smile often. But, whenever a genuine smile did show itself, it was like a sunbeam bursting through the clouds.

Bruce felt his stress start to abate.

He thought of how at ease Clark had been with Damian while showing him his ultrasound pictures.

The punches he threw next were only half-hearted attempts as the ghost of a smile curled Bruce’s lips.

He thought of the beautiful image of Clark holding Damian curled onto his lap.

A light tap against the bag.

He thought of the beautiful, sweet smell which Clark had; the smell which spoke directly to his hindbrain, saying *Protect. Protect mate. Protect pup.*

Bruce stopped punching altogether. He knew he shouldn’t think of Clark as his mate, but he would definitely protect him as such.

He was panting slightly, satisfied that his stress had been pushed from his system.

He unwrapped the tape from his hands, then grabbed his shirt and used it to wipe the perspiration from his face. As he left the room, he chucked the used tape in the trash bin by the door.

***

Feeling fully refreshed after his hot shower, now sporting a red flannel pair of pyjama pants and a plain, grey t-shirt, Bruce made his way down the hall to Clark’s room, and knocked softly on the
door before calling out to him.

No answer. Oh, well. As long as he was resting.

As Bruce made his way back down the hall, he noticed that Damian’s room, which was across from his, was open slightly.

Peering in, Bruce saw that Damian wasn’t in his bed. This wasn’t unusual, as Damian sometimes had trouble falling asleep and went in with either Dick or himself. But Bruce had heard Dick chatting away to Barbara when he’d passed by his room, the next one down from his.

Bruce took cautious sniffs, following the faint smell of pup. It turned him around, straight to… Clark’s room?

Bruce listened carefully against the door. Not hearing anything, he gently opened it.

Clark and Damian were sprawled on the bed, wrapped up with one of Damian’s arms around Clark’s neck, while one of Clark’s arms was around Damian’s back, holding him close.

Bruce smiled dreamily at the image for a few moments, then softly closed the door before returning to his room.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, transvaginal and transanal ultrasounds are a real thing. In fact, there are some states which require that a transvaginal ultrasound be performed before a woman is allowed to get an abortion. Because, old white men enjoy making the worst possible decisions regarding vaginas. ⚡️
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Shopping and pizza

Chapter Notes

Funnel cake from Dairy Queen is delicious and y'all should try it!
...
I think I may be projecting my food cravings onto Clark quite a bit... and I'm not even preggers

I'm not okay
I'm not okay
Well, I'm not okay
I'm not o-fucking-kay
I'm not okay
I'm not okay
(Okay)
— I'm not okay (I promise) by My Chemical Romance

Clark was sleeping better than he had in a long time. He wasn’t dreaming, and felt completely comfortable and settled. This delightful feeling prompted a grumpy moan when he felt shifting beside him.

“Not to worry, Master Clark. I’m not here for you.”

The strange voice prompted Clark to open his eyes in panic, but he relaxed some as he became aware of the smell of sleepy pup still beneath his nose. He slowly recognised the form of Alfred standing beside the bed, trying to prod Damian awake.

“You may remain abed if you wish.” Alfred continued. “Young Master Damian, on the other hand, has school to attend this morning.”

“No!” Damian grumbled sleepily.
“Come on, Damian.” The butler slowly pulled the sleepy pup from his spot on the bed. Then, he prodded him to a sitting position before putting his slippers on his feet, then stooped to gather him into his arms.

“Wanna stay with Clark.” Damian whined while rubbing one eye.

“Master Clark will still be here when you return from school.”

Over Alfred’s shoulder, Damian’s pout prompted Clark to sit up and stretch, working his way toward leaving the bed, as well.

Clark didn’t have slippers, though he made note to get himself a pair, so he settled for putting on a pair of socks before leaving the room. He ran into a slow-trudging Jason in the hall. Behind him was Dick steering a barely-conscious Tim towards the master staircase, while yawning loudly himself.

The smell wafting towards them from the kitchen could only be described as breakfast: bacon and coffee were quite prominent.

As they took their places around the kitchen table, Clark was quick to notice that Bruce wasn’t there. He tried to quash down the small bubble of distress this caused, being an unbonded Omega in the presence of another Alpha.

He knew Jason wouldn’t do anything, but it didn’t stop his hindbrain from fretting itself into a panic. Alfred must have noticed this, because he immediately went to Clark and spoke in a soft tone:

“I’ll go see what’s keeping him.”

Clark nodded, trying to slow his breath by keeping his breathing through his nose. Damian left his chair and came to stand beside Clark. All he had to do was lock eyes with Clark, prompting the Omega to push his chair back for Damian to climb into his lap.

Clark wrapped his arms around him and buried his nose in Damian’s puppy-soft dark hair, finding comfort in his scent.

After a few minutes, there was a hand at his shoulder and Clark looked up to see Bruce, dark hair sleep-tousled, wearing a black, open silk robe over a grey shirt and dark-blue pyjama bottoms.

“You can go sit now, Damian.” he kindly prodded. Damian slid off Clark’s lap and returned to his chair.

“Better now?” Bruce asked Clark gently. He nodded.

“Do you need to scent?” Clark was about to say no, already hating that he couldn’t keep it together for five minutes in the same room as another Alpha without his support being present, but found himself just freezing, unable to say anything. Fortunately, a small whimper escape his throat, uninvited though it was, giving Bruce the hint he needed to bend down to him, pulling him into a hug and guiding him to scent the side of his throat.

Any remaining stress melted off of Clark, as he breathed in Protection. Home. Good Alpha.

“Thank you.” he whispered softly.

“No problem. I should have been up sooner.” Bruce went to sit down.

“I should have been able to keep it together. I apologise to you, too, Jason. I know you wouldn’t do
anything. I don’t know why I freaked out.”

Jason waved it off. “’snot your fault. You’re still healing.”

“It still feels stupid.” Clark mumbled as he noticed that the boys had all just resumed their breakfast, having stopped when he’d started melting down.

“If I may, Master Clark: having issues to deal with has nothing to do with your intelligence. Sir Winston Churchill, one of the best men to have ever sat in parliament, was bipolar.” Alfred spoke as he poured some coffee for Bruce. “There are many in-depth analyses which conclude that he accomplished what he did, not in spite of his illness, but because of it.”

Clark let out a puff of air, doubting seriously that he could rise to be like Churchill.

“May I offer you some tea, sir?” Alfred asked him. “Ginger and mint is said to help prevent nausea.”

Clark nodded before speaking. “Sure. Thank you.”

“Would you like some eggs, Clark?” Dick held up a large platter of scrambled eggs.

“Uh, yes, thank you.” Clark nodded as he took the platter and scooped a portion onto his plate, before passing it along to Bruce, who first made sure that Damian had a portion. As head of his pack, he made sure that all at the table were provided for before him.

“Where’d the sausages go?” Jason asked.

“Can someone pass the ketchup?” asked Damian.

“Dick, could you help me pack my computer later?” Tim inquired.

“Bruce, can I borrow the lamborghini tonight?”

“Alfred, can I have chocolate chip granolas in my lunch?”

“Could I have apple juice for mine? I’m sick of fruit punch.”

The bombardment of questions and responses were starting to pile over Clark’s senses. Last night’s dinner had been more subdued in its conversation. The morning was quickly erupting into chaos.

Clark tried to calm himself by smelling the steam rising from his tea cup, which Alfred had recently set in front of him.

Too many people. Too many voices overlapping. He’d spent years in the silence of his own thoughts during the long hours that Lex would be away.

Too loud too loud too loud too loud…

He was barely aware as someone gently removed the cup from his hands, putting it back on the table. Somewhere in the distance he heard Bruce say something.

There was just a slight chill in the air around him as he was made to sit down, and it was enough to help him start to settle back into his body.

Bruce had brought him to a ground-level terrace, and sat him in a dark wicker chair. There were six chairs in all, surrounding a matching table with a glass top. Alfred placed his plate and tea in front of him on a silver tray and left him with Bruce. Clark noticed another tray with the Alpha’s breakfast.
“I did it again, didn’t I?” Clark asked, his voice shaking.

“From what I understand,” Bruce said slowly as he sat to Clark’s right. “You barely left your home in the past few years of living with Lex. You need to get used to being around people again.”

Clark pinched the bridge of his nose, squeezing his eyes shut against the threat of tears.

“Why am I so messed up!?”

“It’s not your fault, Clark.” Bruce continued to speak slowly, gently. “You must see that the situation of you staying at home all the time wasn’t normal or healthy.”

“He just wanted me to be safe.” Clark whispered.

“Safe from what?”

Clark didn’t have an answer.

***

Once the boys climbed into the Lincoln for Alfred to take to school (Damian hugged both Clark and Bruce goodbye), and Dick took off on his motorcycle, Clark and Bruce went to their respective bedrooms to dress for the day. Clark made note of getting some bigger pants, as he now had to fasten his jeans below his bellybutton. Afterward, Clark agreed to trying round two of touring the manor.

There was a mix of classic and modern rooms, including a beautifully-stocked library and an enviable home-theatre room. Clark jokingly remarked his disappointment over the lack of a pool.

“So,” Bruce asked him as they finished the tour in the gazebo out in the rose garden (now almost completely devoid of blossoms at this point in the season). “Is there anything you wanted to do? Did you want to get something in town or just to visit?”

“Don’t you have to work?” Clark asked.

“I advised my secretary to text me if anything urgent came up. Anything else, as long as it’s done before the end of the day, isn’t that big of a deal.”

“Lex was always very busy.” Clark said quietly, almost inaudible.

“Support Alphas have to have the option to be able to work from home. I’m here to help you, Clark. With anything you need.”

“Well, my mother left me some cash. She said she’d make sure I could get stuff if I needed. I was thinking, some puppy books would probably be a good idea? I mean, I’ve been pregnant over three months but I’ve only known for about a week, so I should probably catch up on dos and don’ts.”

“Sure thing. Just to let you know, though, Clark: anything you need includes purchases. Puppy books is definitely something you need, so I can buy those for you. We can go to the bookstore and you can pick out whatever ones you want.”

“Oh, I-- um…” Clark cleared his throat and licked his suddenly dry mouth. “I don’t like being more trouble--”

“Your choice, of course. But I’m not exactly lacking when it comes to money, Clark. I’m happy to help you with whatever.”
“I would like to go to the bookstore. Maybe I’ll think things over on the way?”

Bruce nodded.

“No problem. Did you want to go now or later?”

“Um…”

*He’s offering to take you out shopping! When’s the last time you’ve been in a store?*

Why, though? Lex always said I had to be good before he’d take me somewhere. I broke down twice this morning. That’s not being good.

*He said he’s trying to help you. He said before that you need to get used to people again. Bringing you out is helping you.*

*He also said he wants to buy things for me. Do I have to do something? Lex said I had to be good if I wanted things.*

*Dr. Quinzel said that’s not why you’re here. You’re here so that you can have help getting better and have an Alpha to scent to keep your pup safe.*

*Why would an Alpha want to help take care of another Alpha’s pup?*

“Clark?”

Bruce had one hand on Clark’s shoulder, worry clear in his expression. Clark realised the Alpha had said his name more than once.

“I’m sorry.” he said, bowing his head, his voice quiet; a show of submission.

“Maybe we should try the bookstore another day.”

“No!” Clark looked up, fearful he had just lost his privilege. “I’ll be good!”

“Clark, calm down, it’s okay. You didn’t do anything wrong.” Bruce spoke slowly to him. “Let’s sit down for a bit. We’ll see how you’re feeling after.”

Clark nodded rapidly.

Bruce led him to one side of the gazebo, easing him on the bench which went around the inside, before sitting beside him.

“Clark, I want you to listen very carefully. I can tell you’re upset. There’s nothing wrong with that. You’ve been through a lot, and it’s perfectly healthy to let out what you’re feeling. It will help if you talk about what’s going on in your head, so that I can help you figure things out. But you don’t have to talk about it if you’re not ready.”

Clark was breathing rapidly through his nose, his gaze on the wood panelling in front of him, but not focused on it.

Bruce carefully laid one hand on Clark’s back, ready to pull back if he got a negative reaction. Clark didn’t flinch or otherwise react negatively, so Bruce began rubbing in gentle circles.

Clark’s breathing began to slow and Bruce could feel by the muscles in his back the tension was slowly easing away. Clark leaned against Bruce, turning his face to scent him as the Alpha wrapped
him into a hug.


Lex was strong.

Lex stopped smelling safe.

When did that happen?

Flashes of memory flitted through, causing him to whimper and the tension to rise back up. Bruce rubbed his cheek against Clark’s hair and the continued pull of his wholesome scent calmed him back down again.

“You’re going to be okay, Clark.” Bruce murmured.

Clark wanted so much to believe him.

***

Close to ten o’clock, Clark had come down enough from his panic to reiterate his desire to go to the bookstore in a calm manner. Bruce worried he might still be in danger of a panic-attack if they did so soon after an episode, but didn’t dissuade him. This was out of mindfulness of allowing Clark the liberty of making his own choices, and that he needed to become accustomed to public settings, again. In any case, he told himself that the long drive from the manor to the city might provide further opportunity for Clark to prepare himself.

Clark was quiet during the ride, though Bruce noticed that he seemed to like looking out the window a lot. Once they had settled in the parking lot at the mall outside of Barnes & Noble, he saw Clark take several controlled breaths.

“You okay?”

Clark nodded.

“M’fine.”

Clark sat there a few moments more before opening the Mercedes door very suddenly and stepping out. Bruce followed and hit the auto-lock on his key set.

The bookstore was mercifully quiet enough, with only a handful of patrons winding through at that time in the morning, though Bruce suspected that would change closer to noon.

“I don’t know where to look.” Clark was standing on his toes, trying to see if he could read the right subject heading from where they were.

Bruce pointed out a worker. “You can ask her.”

Clark nodded. “Right.”

He walked up to the blonde girl and nervously cleared his throat. The girl looked up from the display she was fixing and smiled.

“Hi, can I help you?”

“Uh, yeah… I, uh, ’m looking for, um… puppy books?”
“Dog puppies or human puppies?”

“Human puppies. Um, I’m…” he vaguely gestured towards his abdomen.

“Sure!” She grinned. “Our parenting section is just this way.” She started leading the way, but stopped when she saw that Clark wasn’t following right away.

Clark was facing Bruce, his eyes to the floor in mute deference to his permission.

“We’re here because you wanted to come, Clark. You don’t have to ask. Go on.” Clark turned and followed after the girl, Bruce keeping a slight distance behind. He wanted to keep close if Clark needed him, but still leave him the openness of autonomy.

“So, here are the ones on puppies and pregnancy. If you have any more questions, don’t hesitate to ask!” the trim blonde girl grinned again before walking away.

Clark started scanning the titles, occasionally grabbing one until he had a small pile of titles such as What to expect when you’re expecting: male Omega edition; The greatest pregnancy ever: Key to the Mother-Puppy bond; 50 Things to know when having a puppy; and (he had snickered and leafed through a few pages before picking this one up) Go The Fuck To Sleep.

Bruce caught Clark reading the reviews and summaries on the back of the books and comparing the prices.

“Clark,” he said before he could stop himself. “If you’re worried about affording them all, I can get it, remember?”

Clark jolted a bit as though he had forgotten Bruce was there.

“Um, I-I-- I just… I probably don’t need… ten.”

After much deliberation, Clark settled on three, plus the book with the profane title. At the counter, Clark meekly asked Bruce if he was sure about paying. Bruce responded by using the tap option on his MasterCard.

“Are you hungry?” Bruce offered. “I wouldn’t recommend sitting in the food court, reason being that there’s a lot of noise. But we can grab something to go and go eat on the roof; there’s a botanical garden up there. Or we could go to a restaurant elsewhere. Whatever you’d like.”

Clark was starting to get hungry.

“I’d like sitting in the garden,” he said in a muted voice. “With food, I mean.”

“Okay.” Bruce nodded. “So we’ll go to the food court, you can pick what you’d like, and we’ll take it upstairs.”

Clark nodded, holding the bag containing his new books to his chest, his head inclined.

Bruce laid a gentle hand on his bicep as he led him towards the food court.

Even as he’d suggested it, Bruce had worried about the number of people in the food court, especially around noon. Sure enough, it was packed, the overlapping sounds almost too much for him, even.

Clark’s panic was almost tangible beside him.
“Clark.” Bruce said as he stood closer and offered his neck to the Omega. Clark leaned in immediately, a soft whimper escaping him.

“How. Let’s just go in here.”

Bruce guided him into a men’s clothing store which sat just opposite the large food court, pulling him off to the side so that they wouldn’t be visible for passers-by.

“Mr. Wayne!” an over-friendly voice cut through the air. “So good--”

Bruce silenced the salesman with a look. The man took in the look of Clark, still very tense, leaning further into Bruce as though he was hoping to disappear. He nodded his understanding and walked away.

Bruce waited until Clark relaxed enough to pull back and look him in the eye.

“You with me?” he asked gently.

“Yes.” Clark sighed, frustrated with himself.

“It’s okay. Look, we can see most of the names from the front of the store. Why don’t you choose from a safe distance what you’d like, and you can sit here out of the way while I go get it?”

Clark didn’t like the idea of Bruce too far away from him, but at the same time was kicking himself for not being able to handle a freaking mall.

He nodded, following Bruce to the door as they looked out.

Clark felt a little light-headed as the vastness of the choices available to him started to overwhelm him. He felt Bruce hold his arm, steadying him.

“I-I--” Clark shut his eyes, taking some rapid breaths through his nose. “I can’t choose.”

“Did Lex always choose for you what you ate?”

“When he took me out, he would tell me what he thought I’d like. He was always right.”

“But did he give you the choice of more than one dish?”

Clark’s shoulders slumped.

“No.”

“Okay, we’re going to do this differently.” Bruce brought Clark to the back of the store where the changing rooms were, sitting him on a bench there, before settling in beside him.

“What kind of food do you want?” Bruce asked. “Don’t think of the restaurant names, just tell me what you feel like eating.”

Clark thought very carefully.

*Hey, genius, you’re in a mall. When’s the last time you had honest-to-goodness junk food?*

*It’s probably not good for my pup.*

*Pup’ll like a party in your tummy. You know Mr. Herbal-blend-for-every-occasion Pennyworth will*
have you eating plenty of healthy foods. You. Are in. A mall.

“Pizza and garlic fingers.” Clark blurted out. “Meaty pizza with mushrooms, bacon on the garlic fingers; extra cheese on both. Also ice cream. Something with strawberry drizzled on top.”

Bruce gave him a grin.

“Coming right up.”

Instead of leaving, he looked up the website on his smartphone and placed the order that way.

“It says it’ll be ready in a half-hour. At that point, I’ll just walk down and get it. So the question now is: do you want your ice cream now, or for me to get it at about the same time as the pizza?”

Clark let out a shy smile.

“Dessert before dinner?”

Bruce chuckled.

“If that’s what you want.”

Clark’s smile widened.

“Yes, please.”

Bruce chuckled again and tapped the end of Clark’s nose, causing him to blush.

There was only a moment’s pause before Bruce stood suddenly, clearing his throat, his smile changed somewhat.

“I’ll be back with that ice-cream.”

He had a brief word with the salesman about making sure Clark remained undisturbed.

Clark’s head was a tornado of thought.

The last time he’d reacted to teasing like that was on his honeymoon.

Bruce isn’t trying to court you. He’s your support Alpha helping you through your pregnancy.

Would it be a bad thing if he was courting you, though? You already know how he is as a father.

Lex died less than four months ago. You’re still supposed to be mourning him.

For what? Locking me up for most of our marriage?

The rebuttal didn’t happen. The words reverberated through his head as he felt his heart hammering in his chest.

His father let his mother drive herself into town when she needed to.

Bruce let Dick go into the city on his own.

No no no no no nononono...

Clark hugged his books to his chest, rocking slightly back and forth on the bench, small whimpers
escaping his throat.

_Can’t do this now. Can’t think. Can’t._

Later?

“Later.” He whispered out loud; a promise to himself. Later, he would consider the implications of what this meant.

He was still breathing way too rapidly when Bruce came back with the ice cream.

Bruce put the dish down next to the bench and sat beside Clark, who immediately leaned to him for scenting. Only then was he able to fully relax.

“Better?”

“Mm-hmm.”

Bruce handed him the ice cream dish.

“You said something with strawberry, I thought this looked good. It’s funnel cake.”

In the dish was a mess of what appeared to be fried dough with strawberry drizzle and icing sugar on it. Next to that was, judging by the curl, Dairy Queen ice cream, also drizzled with strawberry.

Clark tentatively tried the dough. Smiling, he proceeded to mix the dough, ice cream, and drizzle all together, and then began eating in earnest.

“It’s like strawberry shortcake.” Clark declared happily.

Bruce gave him another closed-mouth grin.

***

Clark had tried to offer to carry the food up the elevator, but, as Bruce pointed out, if he carried the food, Bruce would have to carry the books, so either way, he’d be carrying something, and wasn’t it easier to just leave things as is rather than trade one parcel for another? Clark couldn’t argue with that.

Clark’s situation reminded Bruce somewhat of Talia’s; both under someone’s thumb, unable to live their lives. Talia hadn’t made it out, nonetheless she had freed herself in her way. Clark was fortunate through Lex’s death, though he didn’t see it like that yet.

Bruce smiled as Clark watched the floors go by the glass doors of the elevator, clearly enjoying the view.

Clark was like a pup in a lot of ways, so happy for new experiences.

But as much as it would have been easier for Bruce to view him as such, to care for him as he had his boys, there was no denying that Clark was very much a full-grown man. An attractive one at that.

Bruce had been on the occasional date with both male and female Omegas, though his only two serious relationships had been with females. It was nothing physical; an Omega was an Omega. He’d just always felt more of a romantic attachment to females. Something about them just hit his instinct of family more than any male Omega had ever done (perhaps because his own mother had been female?).
And then came along Clark.

Clark who got along well with his youngest.

Clark who smelled absolutely incredible (fresh-baked sweets and the sun after the rain).

Clark who had the most adorable reactions in some situations.

He thought he had managed to choose the better course of action in the clothing shop by not giving into his impulse to peck Clark on the cheek.

But when he saw Clark flush at the action of tapping his nose, he knew he was in trouble; Clark looked so beautiful when he blushed.

_He’s only with you until his pup is born. Then he goes back to his mother’s care._

Bruce felt his pulse pick up slightly when the elevator stopped and Clark’s eyes widened at the sight of the garden. The whole rooftop of the mall was made to look like an enchanted forest, and Clark was clearly entranced. The look of wonder on his face beautiful and pure, Bruce felt at once like kissing him and shame for thinking he could be allowed to touch such a beautiful creature.

This was going to be a long few months.

Clark picked a table under a large tree. The table and seats were made of carved wood meant to mimic fallen logs.

Bruce laid out the two boxes as they sat. They ate with their hands, no plates, and Clark felt relaxed. It was easy to do in this place surrounded by plants, eating informally with someone who had so quickly opened up his home to him and been generally wonderful.

“Well, well. Mr. Wayne.” A playful tone with a bit of a lilt to it reached their ears, and Clark looked up to see a female redhead come up to their table, blueprints under one arm.

Clark went on the defensive again.

_Unbonded Alpha. Danger._

“Pam, how are you?” Bruce said pleasantly.

“Peachy keen. Working on a cover to keep the garden safe in the winter.” she indicated the blueprints. “For this year, it’ll probably be just temporary cover. But, I’m hoping that for next year we’ll be able to fix things so that patrons can come eat up here even in the dead of winter, but still have that close-to-nature feel, you know?”

“That’d be great.” Bruce agreed. “It would be a good place for people to forget about the cold for a while.”

“So who’s this pretty puppy?” she looked at Clark with a smile.

Clark swallowed. The lilt in the woman’s voice made him uncomfortable, like she was zeroing in on prey.

“This is Clark. Clark, this is Pamela Isley. She designed the garden. Not only here, but at the clinic, too. I’m serving as Clark’s support for his pregnancy.” Bruce explained to Pam.

“Oh, I see!” Pam spoke with understanding. “That also explains Mr. Pennyworth’s orders lately.
Have you been enjoying the tea, honey?” The lilt seemed to have gone out of her voice; she spoke more warmly and less flirty. Clark felt somewhat more at ease, but he was confused by the question.

“How do you know about the tea?”

“It’s one of my businesses,” Pam explained. “I have a landscaping company heavily-focused on bringing more green into the city. But I also have a natural-foods store, and I grow the ingredients for the herbal tea blends myself. So tell me, does your therapist happen to be little miss Harley?” she smiled at him.

“Oh, yes.” Clark felt his walls go back up.

“No need to be on the defensive, sugar-plum. I was Harley’s support Alpha when she went through the clinic. I was lucky enough she ended up staying with me after, too.” Pam’s expression went a little dreamy at the thought.

“You’re her Alpha?” Clark asked.

“We belong to each other in every way that counts, except one.” Pam looked a little sad. “Her first Alpha, the reason she had to go to the clinic in the first place, is still bonded with her. It’s gotten weaker, since they’ve been apart, but it’s still there. I can’t bond with her until her first one breaks, and we don’t know for sure how long that might take.”

Clark shivered, thinking of the night Lex died and he felt his bond sever.

“A broken bond hurts.” Clark muttered.

“It may hurt, but she’ll be better off when she’s not bonded to him anymore.” Pam said, her tone gentle but firm. “I won’t get into it here, Bruce can fill you in, later. But I will say: Harley’s first Alpha is in jail for what he did to her. Trust me when I say that the pain that comes with a severed bond is one that she’s prepared to take, because she wants out.”

Clark’s eyes widened.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know.”

“Hey, you didn’t do anything wrong, rosebud.” Pam smiled at him sweetly. “I don’t know the details of what you went through; Harley won’t tell me because of doctor-patient confidentiality, you see. But I know you must have your own battles to fight. Between Harley and Bruce, you’re in good hands.”

Clark nodded.

“Well, I have to finish surveying the area and then meet with the architect. Have a good day, you two!”

“Bye, Pam.” Bruce told her, while Clark offered a shy hand gesture.

“Harley’s Alpha hurt her.” Clark said after she was gone. It wasn’t a question.

“Yes.” Bruce said solemnly. “In more ways than one. There was physical abuse, but, more dangerous, was the psychological.” He tried to carefully choose how he worded things. Clark was bound to see the parallels in his own situation, but Bruce sincerely hoped it would be sooner rather than later.
“Abusers will condition their victims, make it seem like they can’t leave. In Harley’s case, she thought she was worthless, like no one would ever want her, so why bother leaving? In a lot of abuse cases, the abuser will make their victim feel like they have to do everything to please their abuser, to make them happy. Usually because they’re scared of their abuser hurting them, but this isn’t always the case. Sometimes it becomes all the victim knows, because the abuser has gradually isolated them from everything else.”

Clark shivered. Lex never made him afraid, never hurt him. He was a good Alpha.

*Are you so sure about that?* A part of his mind asked him.

“Can we go?” Clark asked, wanting to stop himself from thinking too much, again.

Bruce nodded.

“Sure.”

They combined the leftovers into one box. Bruce folded up the other one and stuck it in a trash can on their way out.
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

End of shopping trip and a second breakfast...

Hearing voices from miles away
Saying things never said
Seeing shadows in the light of the day
Waging a war inside my head

— *Six Degrees of Inner Turbulence* by Dream Theater

“Did you want to go somewhere else, or just head back home?” Bruce asked as they got into the elevator.

Clark thought it over. He was starting to feel a bit tired from the emotional roller-coaster, not to mention that he hadn’t been out in a very long time and it was starting to exhaust him. On the other hand, he wanted to be able to take advantage of being out for as long as Bruce would let him.

“Mom said she wanted to take me shopping for maternity clothes,” Clark said carefully. “But my jeans are already getting tight. Maybe I could just get a couple of jeans that are bigger without being maternity; something that’ll get me through the next two or three months?”

“Sure. That’s a good idea.”

There was silence for a bit.

“Um, I think Target sells plus-sizes?” Clark offered.

Bruce nodded. “Probably. I’ve never been in there, but I’m pretty sure they do.”

Clark nodded.

“I haven’t been to one in… a long time. They don’t have one in Smallville, and the times that Lex took me shopping, he would bring me to the other stores, instead. He’d let me look at Target at the end of the trip, after we already had everything we needed.”

Bruce nodded, unsure of what to say.

***

Target had a good selection of plus-sized jeans, which Clark selected five of. He also picked a pair of slippers and a plush bathrobe. On the way to the checkouts, they passed by the grocery aisles, where Clark picked up some chocolate doughnut holes because they were staring at him.
The line at the cash registers was practically non-existent. As they were on their way, however, Clark stopped suddenly.

“Are those checkouts you can work yourself?” he asked.

“Self-serve, yes, I think they are.” Bruce answered, peering at them.

Clark immediately went to the first empty one and followed the instructions on the screen.

Once he had everything scanned and bagged, he fumbled in his pocket for his wallet, and paid. It spent most of what he had, but Bruce didn’t say anything, wanting Clark to have his experience.

He did seem a bit happier when they got in the car than he had before entering the store.

“Did you want to stop anywhere else?” Bruce asked him as he started up the Mercedes.

Clark shook his head.

“I think I’m tired. But, it’s like…” he struggled for a minute. “It’s a good tired. I don’t know if that makes sense?”

Bruce smiled as he started pulling out from the parking space.

“It makes perfect sense, Clark.”

***

The doughnut holes didn’t survive the trip home. They were halfway there when the package was already emptied. When Bruce pulled into the garage, Clark had passed out in the passenger seat.

Bruce carefully eased Clark from his seat, taking him into his arms bridal-style. Bruce’s Alpha strength came in handy as Clark was fairly broad-shouldered for an Omega, and nearly as tall as himself. Clark’s head rested on his shoulder as he brought him into the house.

Alfred didn’t seem to be home; he must’ve gone shopping, as well.

Rather than bring him upstairs, Bruce laid Clark on a sofa in the lounge, laying a cashmere throw on top of him, placing a throw pillow under his head.

Bruce brought the purchases inside and put them on Clark’s bed, then put the leftovers in the fridge before returning to the lounge, where he booted up his computer. While it started, Bruce stood over Clark.

He looked much more carefree asleep; really, so much like a pup.

Bruce lightly ran a finger through his dark hair. Clark really was beautiful. Bruce turned away and went to the computer, now ready for action.

***

Shortly before the boys were due home, Bruce heard some shuffling behind him. He turned and saw that Clark had started moving fitfully.

In one movement Bruce was on his feet and crossed the distance to the sofa in four long strides. He knelt by the couch and tried just softly calling to him at first. Clark showed no indication of slowing his movements; Bruce could just hear him saying No over and over. Fearing he might fall, Bruce
took him from under the armpits and gently eased him to the floor, holding him to his chest.

“Clark, it’s okay. You’re safe.”

Even in this unsettled state, Clark seemed to go right for Bruce’s scent gland. He stopped fidgeting, settling for shaking, and his protests became mere whimpers.

Bruce held him around the shoulders with his left arm while rubbing his back in large circles with his right.

Bruce heard the door open and Damian’s eager feet run towards the lounge door. Bruce turned his head and stopped rubbing Clark’s back just long enough to signal Damian to stop. Damian nodded and left the room.

Clark settled down to the point where Bruce was fairly confident he had gone back to sleep. He wondered if Clark had woken at all.

He carefully brought him back up onto the couch just as Damian came back in, slippers on his feet, holding Bat-bear.

“What happened, father?” he whispered.

“I think just a bad dream.” Bruce replied quietly.

Damian placed Bat-bear lying on Clark’s chest, then pulled one of the ottomans closer so that he could sit by Clark, elbows on his knees while he held his face in his hands.

Bruce stooped to kiss Damian on top of his head, and then ruffled his hair before returning to the computer. He just had a few more emails to deal with, and he wanted to try getting them done before dinner.

As the others arrived home, they each looked into the lounge, only to be met with Damian’s stern look, holding a finger to his lips telling them all to be quiet.

When Alfred gently announced dinner was ready, Damian didn’t want to leave Clark’s side.

Bruce gently tried waking Clark, who protested at first, but eventually came to.

“Dinner’s ready.” Bruce told him simply.

Clark rubbed at his eyes as he sat up.

“How long was I asleep?”

“You passed out in the car, so maybe five hours, give or take?”

Clark looked frustrated.

“Hey, you had a long day.” Bruce sat next to him, moving Bat-bear to the end of the couch. “It’ll take you some time before you’re used to going out. You also had a bit of an emotional rollercoaster, today.”

“Hmph.”

“You’re also pregnant. Your body is going through a lot of changes.”
Clark looked down towards his belly and sighed. 

“I guess this is just the tip of the iceberg, huh?”

“You’ve been through alot, lately. And, yes, pregnancy is going to be a lot to go through. But I’m here to help you, and your mother wants to help you. Anything you need, Clark.”

Damian stood and placed himself right in front of Clark.

“I wanna help you, too.”

Clark smiled and ruffled Damian’s hair.

“Thanks, buddy.”

That night, Clark took out his laptop and started writing for the first time in years.

_Damian is a sweet pup. He seems really interested in my puppy, in how it’s going to grow. I wonder if it’s because he didn’t get to know his mother. It makes me wonder how my pup is going to be when it gets older._

_Jason is nice, although quiet. He keeps his distance, probably so he doesn’t spook me, because he knows that I’m not comfortable around him, yet. I know he wouldn’t do anything, but, I guess my hindbrain is slow to catch up on those things. He likes to call Damian baby bat; because of his bear?_

_Tim seems okay, but it’s hard to get anything on him when he’s in his room most of the time._

_Dick almost seems sad when he’s near me. It’s like he wants to help, but there’s something making him sad when he’s around me. Is it because he’s worried about bonding with his girlfriend? Knowing how messed up I’ve become from a broken bond must worry him._

_Alfred always seems to know exactly what to say and has a tea for all occasions. With him feeding me, my pup will probably be the healthiest ever when it’s born._

_I’m not sure what to make of Bruce. He hasn’t done anything wrong, but it feels wrong to be getting close to another Alpha so soon after Lex’s death. Harley’s assured me it’s not like that, but I still feel bad sometimes. Whenever he has to help me, I just want to stay in his scent. As soon as we’re apart, I feel like I’ve failed, like I’m weak._

_Lex would be disappointed in me for how easily I’ve been falling apart._

Clark hit save, just leaving it on his desktop under Document1. He then closed his laptop and curled in around the pillowcase with Lex’s things before pulling the thick cover of blankets over himself.

He heard the door creak open and tiny bare feet approach the bed. There was a pause and Clark couldn’t stop the corners of his mouth quirk up before lifting his arm, leaving an opening in the blankets.

“C’mon, pup.”

Damian crawled in under his arm and Clark held him close as he nuzzled his hair, the smell of the pup serving to calm him better than Lex’s things. Clark chalked it up to being pregnant.
The next morning when Alfred came to wake Damian, Clark got up right away and offered to carry him down to the kitchen himself, sporting his new slippers.

Bruce was up and ready to go as Clark made his way to the kitchen, smiling as he greeted him.

“Morning.” Bruce greeted.

“Good morning.” Clark smiled back.

“I think he fell asleep, again.” Bruce noted, peeking behind Clark at Damian’s face.

Clark chuckled softly as he rubbed Damian’s back.

Breakfast that morning was blueberry pancakes with servings of cut fruit and yogurt on the side.

“Would you like more tea this morning, sir, or perhaps something cool?”

“Uh, milk, please?”

“Very good, sir.”

“Thanks.” Clark said when Alfred returned with a tall glass of milk.

“No trouble, sir. Also, I forgot about these, yesterday. Prenatal vitamins.” He placed a bottle in front of Clark, who noticed that Alfred used the short ‘i’ sound when saying ‘vitamins.’

“The natural sort. They’re from the same place as the tea.”

“From Pam’s store?” Clark asked as he opened the bottle.

“You’ve met, then.”

“Yesterday, at the mall.”

“I told her I knew a pregnant Omega who’d be needing some help, and she had many suggestions of what you might need. There’s an herbal blend for every occasion, so no matter what may happen, we’ll have you well looked-after.”

Clark smiled.

“Thank you.” he said, before knocking back a vitamin.

Alfred smiled back as he gave a small bow, then hurried to pack lunches for the boys.

When the conversation started to pick up this time, Clark anticipated it and began practiced breathing; in through the nose, out through the mouth. He was still on edge, but it wasn’t overwhelming like the day before. This time, when Bruce asked him if he was okay, he was able to answer.

“I think so. I just need a minute.”

“Okay, let’s just go in the hall for a bit.”

Clark nodded and stood to follow Bruce out of the kitchen.
He leaned back against the wall, continuing to keep his breathing at a controlled pace as he closed his eyes.

“Clark?”

“Mhm.”

“Do you need to scent?”

Clark opened his eyes.

Bruce was standing just two feet away, in a decidedly non-threatening position.

Everything was crying Yes! Scent Alpha! But, nagging at the back of his brain, something was holding back.

_Aren’t you a good Omega? Why are you scenting another Alpha?_ It was Lex’s voice.

Clark’s breathing seized up suddenly as shadows swam in, obscuring his vision.

I’m sorry, Alpha. I’ll be good, I’ll be good.

Looks like you’ll have to stay home. Think about what you’ve done.

No, please! Please let me see my mother!

“Clark.”

“I’ll be good, I promise!”

“Clark, you didn’t do anything wrong.”

“I’ll be good, please just let me see my mother!”

“Clark, it’s okay, she’s coming this weekend, remember?”

“I’m sorry!”

Clark continued babbling about being good and offering panicked, broken apologies while he sobbed himself into a puddle on the floor.

“Alfred, get me a phone and dial Mrs. Kent, please.”

“Right away, sir.”

“Father, what’s wrong with Clark?” Damian had followed them into the hall; he looked to be on the verge of tears himself.

“He’s not doing good right now, but we’re going to help him.”

“Mrs. Kent, sir.” Alfred handed him the cordless.

“Mrs. Kent—”

“What’s happening?” She was hearing the sobs through the phone.

“He’s dissociating. From what I’m understanding, I think Lex would use the threat of not seeing you
as a condition for his behavior. I think if he heard your voice it would help.”

There was a pause during which Bruce heard her swallow and take a few deep breaths.

“Okay, I’ll try.”

Bruce handed the phone to Alfred to hold while he pulled Clark up into his lap, then took the phone back to place the earpiece to Clark’s ear.

“Clark, sweetie? Do you hear me?”

“Momma?” Clark sobbed, hardly believing it, grabbing the phone; Bruce moved his hand to let him hold it.

“Clark, listen to me, are you okay?”

“I was bad, momma. Lex won’t let me see you ’cause I was bad.”

“Clark, you’re not with Lex. You’re at Bruce’s house, remember? You didn’t do anything wrong. I’ll be seeing you this weekend, remember, honey?”

Lex is gone.

He took in his surroundings as the shadows gradually melted away. His upper body was in Bruce’s lap on the floor. Damian was standing in front of him, looking scared. Clark was silent for a moment, save for a few lingering sobs.

“Clark?”

He took a shuddering breath. “I’m here.”

“Are you better, sweetie?”

“I-- I think so.”

“Remember that I’ll be there this weekend. But if you need me there sooner, I’ll be there.”

Clark took another deep breath.

“Um, could I maybe call you later?”

“Of course, Clark. Anytime.”

“Love you, mom.”

“I love you, too, sweetie. Don’t hesitate to call.”

“Thank you.”

He handed the phone to Bruce, who clicked it off.

Clark tried to sit up, but was still very shaky. He leaned against Bruce, who opened his arms to him, and scented.


But was Lex a bad Alpha?
He kept you safe.

He kept me from my mother.

The part of his brain so quick to defend Lex fell silent.

“Clark?” Damian stood in front of them, lip trembling.

Clark looked up at the pup, then held an arm out for him.

Damian sat in his father’s lap, positioned just right to be embraced by the both of them.


***

After Alfred had the boys off for school (Dick went to sleep some more), Bruce went to dress for the day while Clark took a shower, first. He had taken one Monday morning before his appointment, but he had been so overwhelmed his first two nights staying at the manor that he hadn’t given hygiene much thought. Fortunately, he wasn’t one to sweat, much, so it hadn’t stuck out.

While in the shower, Clark lightly traced the small bump in his belly with his right hand, leaning against the wall.

“I was really scared when I first found out about you, pup.” he said softly. “I didn’t know what to do without Lex to help me. Mom said she wouldn’t think less of me if I would’ve stopped you, but…” he sighed heavily. “I was just so relieved that you were possible. I had thought I would never have any pups, and then there you were.” His voice cracked as some tears broke.

“You’re never gonna meet your dad, but I’m gonna do everything I can to take care of you. And your grandma promised she’d help. And, well, I don’t know how long I’ll get to stay here after you’re born, but I think Bruce will help, too, at least for a while. He’s a good Alpha. He’s got four boys that he takes care of and I can tell they’re happy. And Bruce has been helping me when I don’t feel right, and he—” Clark choked on a sob.

He never says I’m being bad. When I’m sad he helps me instead of telling me to stop. When I was sad this morning he called my mother for me instead of saying I couldn’t see her.

He’s a good Alpha.

Lex was a good Alpha.

Was he?

He took in a farm boy even though his father didn’t approve. We had the most amazing honeymoon.

What happened after the honeymoon?

Clark didn’t remember curling into a ball on the floor of the shower stall, and yet he must have because there was no way he could have fallen into that position without hitting something on the way down.

“Clark?”

Bruce’s voice was muffled and distant, no doubt calling from the hall.
Clark scrambled to his feet, light-headed and dizzy; he had to hold himself against the tile.

“Just a minute!” he called out.

He quickly scrubbed himself up and down, grateful that he had already shampooed and conditioned his hair.

Once he felt rinsed to his satisfaction, he shut the water off and stepped out onto the small towel he had place beforehand, grabbing a larger one to wrap himself in. He had never seen a towel so large before, but he could get used to it.

He dried himself off hurriedly and scurried to his room, grabbing a blue flannel shirt, boxer briefs, socks, and one of his new pairs of jeans from yesterday’s shopping trip.

He put on his slippers last of all, then went to open the door, finding Bruce waiting for him.

“Sorry I took so long.” he said, unable to meet Bruce’s eyes.

“Hey, don’t sweat it, I was just worried.” Bruce put a hand on his shoulder. “I could smell sad Omega coming through the walls and was wondering if you needed help.”

Clark looked up, seeing the concern in Bruce’s eyes.

“I… I just-- I don’t know.” He felt a lump form in his throat. “I’ve been getting confused, lately, and it’s like-- sometimes, I feel like I’m realising something, like I’m on the point of understanding something, and then it’s too much and I blank out so that I stop thinking.”

Bruce rubbed Clark’s bicep and shoulder.

“You’ve got some things that need sorting out. They’ll come in time. Don’t be too hard on yourself. You’re smart, you’ll figure it out.”

Clark nodded, swallowing the lump, and rubbed the wetness which had formed in his eyes.

“Did you want to go anywhere today?” Bruce asked him.

“Um, I can’t really think of anything I need to get right now.”

“It’s not just about what you need.” Bruce smiled at him. “It’s about going out and having fun. I know crowds are rough for you, but there’s a lot we could do while still avoiding the crowds. If you’d like to go see a theatre show, I have a private box in every major theatre house in the city. The Gotham Fine Arts Gallery is pretty quiet during the week. You don’t have to go, of course.” Bruce assured him. “I just want to make sure you know these options are open to you. If you want to stay home, that’s fine, too. But know that it’s not all you have to do, and you don’t need an excuse to go out.”

Clark just stared for a moment.

“Um… did you want to go somewhere?” he asked Bruce.

“Well, I don’t have plans, per se. I can work on my office things whenever, as long as I don’t let things pile up.”

Clark chewed his lip.

“Um, maybe I’ll, uh… Maybe I’ll just…” Clark sighed heavily, frustrated. “I’ll look at stuff on my
laptop. Y’know, get reacquainted with stuff on there. And, um, maybe I’ll look at the stuff you
mentioned, see about planning stuff for another day?”

Bruce nodded.

“That sounds good. Did you want to bring it down to the lounge? I’ll be nearby to help you with
stuff, if you need it, and I can give you the Wi-Fi password.”

“Yeah, sure.” Clark agreed, feeling the frustration edging away. “I’ll, uh, go grab it. Meet you
downstairs.”

“Okay, see you downstairs.” Bruce smiled at him.

Clark let out a huge sigh, feeling for all intents and purposes like the biggest loser on the face of the
planet.

Bruce was feeling the same about himself.

Way to put a guy on the spot, Bruce. Did you have to unload that much on him at once?

***

When Clark had his laptop connected to the Wi-Fi (settled in an armchair with an ottoman beneath
his feet), he hesitated over what to do first.

All my social media must be overloaded. Heck, I don’t remember my passwords! Should I check out
the stuff Bruce suggested? What’s Google Chrome? What happened to Internet Explorer? Okay,
let’s just start a new e-mail. Yahoo! got a facelift. Now that I have an e-mail, let’s move on to
Facebook. Facebook’s layout is totally different, too, what happened? Should I go looking for my
friends? Or should I let them find me? Do I even have any friends left?

It had been so long since he’d spoken with anybody besides Lex.

Dick arrived at that point, yawning loudly, his laptop under his arm.

“Oh, hey, you got Facebook.” he said, peeking over Clark’s shoulder. “You should add us on. Well,
Damian doesn’t have one, yet, obviously, but the rest of the family does. Heck, even Alfred uses it
for recipes.” He snorted. “And cat pictures, but you didn’t hear that from me.”

“Oh, could you help me find you? I haven’t used it in a while, and everything got changed around.”

“Easy-peasy.” He knelt next to Clark’s chair. “Just click in the bar, here.” Clark went to where he
pointed. “And type in Dick Grayson. I’ll show you which is the right one. There I am.” Clark
clicked on the name. “So you send me a friend request by clicking there.” Click. “And now you can
scroll through my friends’ list and add everyone else.”

After being shown around some, Clark was able to start intuiting how to use it, and Dick went to sit
in a different chair.

After a while, Clark received an alert; it was Dick, accepting his friend request. Bruce was next, with
Tim and Jason not far behind.

Facebook was prompting Clark to put up a picture, but he didn’t have an up-to-date one. He noticed
that Tim and Jason had images for their display picture which weren’t their faces.

“Um, Dick?”
“Yeah?”

“What are the pictures that Tim and Jason have for their display pictures?”

“Tim’s is Commander Keen, and Jason’s is a drawing he made himself of Roland Deschain; the main character of The Gunslinger.”

“So, like… I could pick a character I like and use it as my display picture?”

“Yeah, a lot of people do. Did you see the thing for the cover photo, too?”

Clark frowned.

“No?”

“It’s a new feature. Well, it’s been around maybe five years? Just go look at my wall, and you’ll see a picture of me and Barbara from our prom right at the top of the page, and my profile pic is in the left-hand corner just off to the side of it.”

Clark clicked and saw what Dick what talking about.

In the picture, Dick was wearing a black tux with a red button-down, while Barbara was wearing a deep red dress with a high waist and short sleeves. To show themselves as a couple for the evening, Dick was sporting a red-leather collar with a gold padlock, while Barbara had two fingers hooked under it, the key on a gold chain around her wrist. The two were grinning with their tongues out to the side in a playful manner.

It was a traditional sort of Alpha/Omega display. Betas usually got each other corsages and boutonnieres. Same-presentation couples had started doing the same, and even in cases of Alpha/Omega couples, there were sometimes those that considered the collars too demeaning, and so used flowers, instead. Others considered the tradition to be sort of old-fashioned romantic, and had no problem with it.

Clark swallowed a painful lump in his throat. He thought back to his prom. Lex had gotten them matching white suits, and he’d had a white collar with a silver padlock. Everyone had stared as they’d pulled up in a white stretch limo, the two sitting side-by-side on the top, their legs through the sun-roof.

They’d married a month later, not long after his eighteenth birthday.

Clark clenched his jaw and clicked back to his own wall.

He opened a new tab, and went to Google, then simply thought for a while. He hadn’t watched TV or read any books in a long time. What had been his favourites?

Buffy had been okay, though he gradually outgrew it. Saved By The Bell had been funny. The Secret World of Alex Mack had him daydreaming of having superpowers.

Roswell! He’d loved the alien-themed show. It often made him the subject of nerd-jokes at school, but Clark could’ve cared less.

Clark smiled as he looked up a picture of Jason Behr as Max Evans (he’d had a crush on him as a teen). He decided on one where Max was reading the book Among Us as being a funny pick for his profile picture, and saved it to his images folder to use for Facebook.
Now for the cover photo.

There was only a heartbeat’s pause and Clark had made his decision.

“Bruce?” he asked, nervous.

“Yeah, Clark?”

“Um, do you have a scanner?”

Less than ten minutes later, Clark’s Facebook page was sporting his ultrasound picture, with Jason Behr in the left-hand corner.
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Family game night!

Chapter Notes

I had to Google the rules and such, because while I have played Dixit, I do not own a copy. Hopefully, it's all alright.

We live and we learn to take
One step at a time
There's no need to rush
It's like learning to fly
Or falling in love
It's gonna happen when it's
Supposed to happen and we
Find the reasons why
One step at a time

— One Step At A Time by Jordin Sparks

As he went through the puppy books during the week, Clark began to get more excited about every little milestone he knew he had to look forward to.

Now well into the second trimester, the nausea had abated. He knew that, this being his first pregnancy, he probably wouldn’t feel his pup kick until well into the fifth month, but he still held out hope that it might happen early.

Damian’s face had lit up when they’d discussed it. He hoped for his sake that it would happen with him around so that he could feel it.

***

After a small lunch, Bruce and Clark were in the car on their way to the Omega clinic for Clark’s appointment with Harley.
“Damian and Dick will be there.” Bruce told him as they got on the highway. “Friday is when Damian attends the pups’ arts and crafts class and Dick helps out in the education room.”

“How come you have Damian go to the clinic, if you don’t mind me asking?”

Bruce took a deep breath.

“The night his grandfather, his mother’s father, came to the manor to tell us about Talia’s death,” he paused. “He became violent, and took his frustration out on Damian.”

Clark felt his heart squeeze in his chest.

“That’s where the broken leg I mentioned earlier happened.” Bruce clarified. “Which I repaid with a broken vase to the bastard’s head.”

Clark wanted to hold Damian at that moment; wanted to hold him close and safe.

“The classes seemed to help him,” Bruce continued. “When he saw that he wasn’t the only one who had been hurt by someone who should have loved him. After that, well, he just enjoyed going so much, I kept it up. He’s good at helping newcomers to integrate, approaching gently and helping them out.”

“He’s a good pup.” Clark said quietly.

Bruce smiled softly.

“He really is.”

***

“So, Clark, how was your first week?”

Clark sat on the sofa this time, wanting to be able to sprawl a bit. He’d asked for Bruce not to be present at the session.

“I got to go shopping.” Clark smiled. “I hadn’t been shopping in a very long time. Bruce was very patient with me, even when I freaked out.”

Harley smiled at him.

“That’s good. I’m glad.”

“I met Pam. She scared me a bit at first, but she was really nice.”

Harley smiled wider.

“She can come on pretty strong, but she knows when to tone down. She mentioned she’d met one of my patients, but didn’t say who. It’s part of the confidentiality; I don’t tell her anything specific about my patients, and though she’ll tell me when she meets them, she doesn’t say who, because we don’t want it to seem as though you’re being discussed behind your back.”

Clark nodded.

“I find it uncomfortable to be alone in the same room as Jason. He hasn’t done anything; he’s been really nice and holds his distance, but without Bruce there, I feel on edge.”
“That’s a perfectly normal instinctual reaction. As advanced as we are, there’s no beating down old-fashioned instinct. This can be life-saving in some situations. But where you know that Jason would never hurt you, and you’re able to tell yourself so, it shows agency.”

“Damian has been really sweet. He’s been coming to sleep with me, and it’s been helping. I haven’t had any nightmares, except for once when I napped on the couch while he was at school.” Clark furrowed his brow. “I think it’s something to do with smelling pup while I’m pregnant, maybe?”

“It’s very likely. Nothing is certain with these things, of course. Where have you been sleeping?”

“In my room.”

“May I ask why that is?” Harley inquired. “Your preference, of course, you can sleep where you want. I’m just curious as to why you’ve chosen to sleep there?”

Clark shifted uncomfortably.

“Well, I don’t want to bother Bruce. He already does so much.”

“Clark.” Harley leaned in and spoke gently. “As I said, you can sleep wherever you’re most comfortable. But as part of being a support Alpha, Bruce will expect you to need to be close to him some, if not all of the time. If you want to sleep in your own room, by all means, do so. You said having Damian with you keeps the nightmares away, so that’s good. But if you’re missing on anything to make you feel more comfortable, you shouldn’t stop yourself from asking for it. The worst that will happen is he says no.”

Clark nodded.

“How have things been otherwise?” Harley sat back in her seat.

Clark bit his lip, staring at the floor, looking very uncomfortable.

“Is… is it…” he sighed heavily. “I think something’s wrong with me.”

“In what way?”

“When Lex died, I felt like something had been ripped out of me. Since I’ve been staying with Bruce, I… I can’t seem to miss him. He’s been gone about four months, but it’s like it’s not hurting like it should anymore.”

Harley pursed her lips thoughtfully.

“I do have some thought on that which I would like to go over with you, but I’d rather leave it for another time, since you’re still settling in. I will say, however, that we all deal with grief in our own way. Lex was your whole world for a long time, and then he was gone. But you haven’t been alone. You’ve had your mother helping you, and now you have Bruce and his family. You’ve been able to have help adjusting, which not everyone has. You’ve been given the support you need so that you can step back and breathe. This has without a doubt been very helpful for your recovery.”

Clark nodded, feeling relieved.

“How has your pregnancy been?”

“Doctor Jones says it looks okay so far, but wants to see me twice a month instead of once since I conceived out of heat and went through a broken bond. I’ll be seeing him next week, in fact. I
haven’t been sick in a while, which is nice.” He smiled.

“And how have you been feeling about it?”

“When Bruce took me shopping, he bought me some puppy books. They’ve been helping me understand more, and I’ve been feeling more excited about it. I’ve been reading through them with Damian in the evenings. I’m hoping he’ll be with me when my pup kicks for the first time. He seems really excited about the development.” Clark smiled more brilliantly.

Harley smiled again, caught up in Clark’s enthusiasm.

“You seem to have gotten really close to Damian.”

Clark nodded.

“He’s such a sweet little pup.” Clark declared, before resting his hand on his belly. “And, I think it gives me hope for mine.”

“I’m glad to hear you’re adjusting so well, and that you’ve found attachments. There has never been a case that I’ve heard of where an Omega goes to live with a support Alpha and then doesn’t maintain a close association after they leave. You’ve found friends for life.”

Clark smiled at that. He liked the idea that he could continue to see Bruce and his boys later. It made his future less uncertain, like a promise for brighter days ahead.

“Was there anything you wanted to discuss specifically, Clark? Today’s session is pretty much just checking in to see how you’re doing. Not that I won’t continue to do that, but I wanted to give you time to settle in before we continued analysing other things.”

“I got upset at breakfast two days ago, and Bruce called my mother to talk to me.” Clark blurted out. “He didn’t say she couldn’t come visit or that I couldn’t see her, even though I was upsetting people. He called her for me, instead. To make me feel better.”

Harley nodded.

“And how did you feel, knowing that Bruce is willing to do that for you?”

Clark furrowed his brow.

“Confused.”

“Can you be more specific?”

Clark tried to organise his thoughts.

“If I would have been upset before,” he spoke slowly. “Lex would have told to stop being childish, and I wouldn’t be able to see my mother. But Bruce helped me by calling her.”

“Why do you think the two behave so differently?”

It was right there, almost within his grasp; something big, he could tell. But at the last minute he was back in the safe, if lonely, dark. Snapped back as though letting go of a taut elastic, and the whiplash set his head hurting again. Clark shut his eyes tightly as a few tears silently made their way down his cheeks.

“Head hurts.”
Clark nodded carefully even as Harley was already off her chair and headed to the door.

Clark felt the cushions next to him sink as Bruce sat down, then immediately turned to bury his nose in the hollow of Bruce’s throat. Bruce held him without saying a word, but rubbed his back in large, soothing circles.

***

Clark’s headache had abated somewhat when they went to the crafts room to pick up Damian, who was wearing a large white bib covered in paint. The paint was also all over his hands, arms, and a few smudges had even made their way onto his face.

He greeted them with a large grin, but stopped short of hugging them, suddenly aware of how messy he was. Clark chuckled and helped him at the sink with Bruce to wash the paint off.

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The four of them had just entered the house when Bruce cracked a smile and turned to Clark.

“Look who it is.” he cocked his head ahead of them.

Standing beside the staircase, having just come out of the kitchen, was Martha Kent.

Clark felt a magnet pulling him as he ran towards his mother.

She held him close as he bent his head down to scent her, tears filling his eyes but not quite falling.

“My beautiful boy.” she crooned.

Clark couldn’t speak. There had been lingering doubt, brought on by years of having his hopes dashed. But here she was, real, holding him, and smelling like Christmas dinner and after-school cookies and every good thing that made him feel like a pup again.

After Clark managed to calm, the group made their way to the lounge. Martha sat beside Clark on the sofa, with Damian between them, curled in Clark’s lap. They spoke first on how Clark’s week had gone, before moving on to how the legal battle was going.

“We’re currently studying precedents for childless Omegas inheriting from their mates, especially in cases where they were mated but not married. Since you and Lex had a legal ceremony, it further solidifies your right to a living from the company.”

Clark nodded.

“My pup must change things, though. Wouldn’t it be automatic that I need something to raise his pup on?”

“Yes, but if we bring up your pregnancy now, Powers will probably bring into question the likelihood that it’s even Lex’s pup. After it’s born, a paternity test would fix that. But, honestly Clark, do you want to have to show up in front of a judge and prosecutor, and probably the press, insisting you’re carrying Lex’s pup? The stress really wouldn’t be good for you or it.”

Clark shook his head; he definitely didn’t want to do that. He could barely make it through a day at the mall, as it was.
If we can get them to sign off on giving you a living based on legal precedence, we should be able to settle it quietly without you needing to set foot in a courtroom. Some people have already brought it up among the press, but they haven’t been as loud as they would like because of the company’s influence. Even if Powers can’t be swayed personally, we might be able to convince enough board members that it’s the best thing for the image of LexCorp to give you, as Lex’s widow, your living, with a minimum of fuss. If we manage that, Powers will have no choice but to sign off on it.”

Clark sighed. “Kinda wish I’d gone to college, now. Having a job would probably be less hassle.”

“Oh, Clark, you know I’ll help you, and so will your grandfather. If you want to go to college in a few years when your pup is old enough, we’ll make sure you get there.”

Clark tensed for a moment when the doorbell rang.

“That’s probably Barbara.” Dick practically shot out of his seat, walking in quick strides to the front door. “I’ve got it, Alfred!” he shouted as he entered the hall.

There were sounds of excited greeting, and then Dick returned to the lounge, a bespectacled redhead at his side.

The scent of unbonded Alpha hit him square away and he felt his muscles seize.

“Clark, this is my girlfriend, Barbara.”

“Hi, Clark.” she greeted kindly, holding her hand out.

“Hi.” Clark shook her hand, relaxing a bit.

They let go and Barbara was led by Dick onto a loveseat.

“So, Clark,” Barbara spoke. “Dick tells me you’re expecting?”

“Yes.” Clark replied, trying not to feel threatened by the question. “Almost four months.” His hindbrain was working overtime on panic, and he tried to reason with it.

*She’s Dick’s girlfriend. She’s not in the market. Asking someone about one’s pregnancy is perfectly normal.*

“My brother Jimmy is due pretty soon. Dad was a bit mad at him at first, since he’s fresh out of high school, but everything’s been working out okay.”

“Is his Alpha helping him?”

Barbara gave him a sad smile.

“Sadly, no. It was just a fling. She moved away before Jimmy even knew he was pregnant. He hasn’t told her. He’s had some good friends, though. They threw him a puppy party and everything.”

“What’s a puppy party?” asked Damian, looking up at Clark.

“Um, well,” he cleared his throat. “When someone is pregnant, their friends throw them a party, and give them all sorts of presents they think the mother will need to take care of their pup, like diapers and clothes. Also some presents for fun, like toys.”

“Father, can we throw Clark a puppy party, please!”
“Hold on, Damian.” Bruce held a hand up. “Be sure to ask Clark if he wants one, first.”

Damian looked up at Clark again.

“Is it okay if we throw you a puppy party?”

Clark looked around at everyone gathered in the room. So long as the number of guests didn’t far exceed those currently gathered, he supposed should be able to handle things.

“If you really want to.”

Bruce smiled.

“Of course, Clark. It would be my pleasure.”

Clark smiled and blushed, hyper-aware of the attention this would mean, but found himself excited at the prospect of presents, especially in the wake of Damian’s enthusiasm. Martha placed a hand on his forearm and stroked it, smiling at him.

“Father, will you help me pick something for Clark tomorrow?”

“Let’s wait until Monday after school. We have guests, Damian.” Bruce said gently.

“Oops, sorry.”

“It’s okay.”

Damian tried to burrow further into Clark, when the Omega let out a small yelp.

“Clark?” his mother asked, concerned. “Are you okay?”

Damian had pulled back and was looking at Clark worriedly.

“Yeah, I’m fine, I just…” he blushed, embarrassed. “Um, my, uh…” he indicated his chest.

“Ah, starting to get a little sensitive, are they?” his mother said with understanding.

Clark nodded as he felt his cheeks burning.

“Nothing to be embarrassed about.” Bruce assured him. “Perfectly normal.”

“What’s going on?” Damian asked, still worried.

“Um, let’s just go sit over here for a minute, Damian.” Clark slid off the sofa and brought Damian to an armchair in the corner nearer the ballroom door, a distance away from the others. Normal happenings or not, he wasn’t used to discussing his changing body with strange Alphas in the room.

“You see, Damian,” Clark spoke quietly. “When a pup is born, it needs milk, because it can’t really eat anything, yet. The best milk for a pup, well, any young one, really, is from it’s own mother. So, my chest is going to change a bit. It won’t get big like on a woman, but it will swell some, as my body starts making milk for my pup. While this is happening, I’m gonna be kind of sensitive there.”

“Oh.” Damian nodded. “I didn’t mean to hurt you.” He looked truly sorrowful.

“It’s okay, you didn’t know.” Clark kissed his hair.

“So, the pup is gonna drink milk from your chest?”
“Well, my nipples, to be precise. There’s probably feeding pictures in the puppy books; I’ll show you later.”

“How come you brought me over here to talk about it? Father said it was normal.”

Clark sighed.

“Thing is Damian, my brain’s not always working right these days. Since my Alpha died, I get sad very easy, and sometimes I get scared for no reason. Even though I’m sure Barbara would never do anything and is a very nice Alpha, there’s a part of my brain that warns me that she’s an unbonded Alpha. Kind of like why I can’t sit in a room with Jason unless your father is there. Because your father’s scent calms me, I’m more comfortable with him than with other Alphas. Even if they’re very nice and introduced to me by people I already know, there’s something in my brain that tells me I have to be careful. Because I know that, for a lot of Alphas, the fact that I’m pregnant and unbonded makes them want to claim me. Good Alphas like your father, Jason, and Barbara would never do that. But it doesn’t stop me from being scared around Alphas I don’t know. I’m slowly getting used to Jason, but I’ve only just met Barbara. Since I’m not used to her, talking about stuff like how my body is changing during my pregnancy isn’t something I’m comfortable with doing around her. Like your father said, it is normal. I just can’t help being shy about it.”

Damian carefully nestled himself so that his head rested in the crook of Clark’s arm, just below his chest.

“I hope you’ll start feeling better.”

Clark gave him a small smile as he stroked Damian’s hair.

“Me, too, buddy.”

***

Damian led as Clark showed his mother around the manor (she had only been shown the bedrooms, lounge, and kitchen during her first visit).

“The clock is actually an old panic room.” Clark demonstrated the switch and it slid aside for him to push. “Bruce and the boys use it as a gym.” He indicated the equipment.

“It’s the Batcave.” Damian clarified. “We call it that because there’s a hole in the ceiling that leads to some caves. Bats come in through the hole sometimes, especially during the winter when they’re trying to find warm places.”

Clark looked up, trying to spot a bat.

“Your dad didn’t tell me that.”

“Well, me and my brothers call it that. I don’t think father or Alfred do. The bats that live here eat bugs. They’re called big brown bats, but they’re really not that big. When they have pups, the moms hang from their thumbs in corners,” Damian demonstrated by lifting his arms and sticking them out to either side, fingers pointed downward. “Then, when the pup comes out, the mom catches it in a flap of skin between her feet.”

Clark and Martha smiled at Damian’s explanation.

“You’re really into bats, huh?” Clark asked.
Damian giggled.

“That’s why Jason calls me baby bat, sometimes. I told him that young bats are called pups, too, but he says this way I can say I’m BB.”

Clark chuckled.

***

That night, Martha sat up with Clark before bed, his head in her lap, as she scrapes her nails over his scalp, humming softly, just like when he was a pup.

“Damian is a sweet pup, huh, mom?”

Martha interrupted her humming, but continued scratching his scalp.

“Mhm.”

“I want to raise my pup to be kind like that. I’ll bring it to the clinic every day before it starts school so that it can see the Omegas and pups who need help, so that it’ll learn compassion. After it starts school, I’ll keep bringing it on weekends. Maybe by then I’ll be volunteering, too.”

Martha smiled. Her eyes shone with unshed tears, though Clark couldn’t see from where he had his head in Martha’s lap. He was facing the far side of the room, though his eyes were nearly closed, anyway, fully lulled and relaxed by his mother’s ministrations.

Martha felt her heart swell with hope, hearing Clark talk about his plans for the future.

“You’d do good work there, Clark. You’ve got a big heart.”

A pause.

“Do you think Lex would be proud? That I want to do good for our pup?”

Martha’s eyes squeezed shut as she took a slow, deep breath through her nose before replying.

“I think that anyone who doesn’t see how amazing you are isn’t worth your time.”

This seemed to placate Clark as he burrowed his head a bit into his mother’s thigh.

***

The next day, after breakfast, Tim suggested they play a game. The boys, Bruce, and Barbara started naming games Clark had never heard of.

“What about Dixit?” Damian eventually suggested.

There was an immediate outburst of agreement.

“What’s Dixit?” Clark asked.

“I’ll get it.” Tim declared, and ran off.

Damian launched into an explanation of cards with pretty pictures on them that you don’t show to anyone, “and when it’s your turn, you have to say something that you think represents your card, and then everyone else plays a card they think matches what you said. You mix them up, and then flip
them, and everyone votes which one they it is. You don’t want too many people to get it right, but you also don’t want nobody to get it right. You move your rabbit up for the points you get. There’s a chart that shows how the points work.”

Tim returned with an orange box. Beneath the title on the front, it read ‘A picture is worth a thousand words.’

The game was only meant for six players, so Damian partnered with Clark, and Martha decided to sit back and watch.

They rolled a twenty-sided die (which Tim had brought along) to see who got to play first. Jason won with a twelve.

“Okay, everybody.” he declared as he placed a card facedown. “Your clue is: ‘hey, Charlie!’” he said it in a high voice.

Clark snorted. Lana had e-mailed him the link to the Newgrounds video at Christmas the year he’d gotten married. Lex had taken him to the Caribbean. It had been a nice trip, but Clark had been looking forward to having a white Christmas in Metropolis; something he didn’t often see in Smallville (they were lucky if they got twenty inches the whole winter).

He played a card of a king, hoping people might think of prince Charles.

Bruce ended up taking his bait, as did Tim and Dick. Barbara, however, like him, voted on a card of someone riding a unicorn about to cross a rainbow bridge.

“Okay,” Jason said. “I get Tim not getting it, because he’s only just discovering memes, and I get dad, because he’s not savvy on Internet pop-culture. But come on, Dick!” he turned to his older brother as Barbara ruffled her boyfriend’s hair. “Charlie the unicorn! That thing got a bunch of views on YouTube forever ago!”

Damian shrugged while Clark chuckled.

“You’re making me feel ancient.” Clark said. “I saw it when it was on Newgrounds.”

“Can you show me the video later?” Damian asked him.

“No!” Clark, Jason, and Barbara chorused.

Damian gave an adorable scowl which told Bruce he was going to have to make sure the parental controls on Damian’s tablet were still in effect.

“Anyway, who had the king?” Jason held Clark’s card up.

“I did.” Clark raised his hand.

“Okay, so you get three points because you picked my card, plus another three for the three people who picked your card, I get three points because I had people guess my card, and of course Babs gets three points for guessing my card, too.”

The artwork on the cards were quite beautiful, Clark noted as they continued to play. They made his mind think of the endless possibilities of stories each card could tell. He felt the beginnings of a sort of itch, and grinned suddenly when he realised what it was.

He wanted to write.
Barbara ended up winning, though Clark and Damian had come in a very close second.

Clark excused himself as he got up, promising to return, Damian right behind him.

“Watchya lookin’ for?” Damian asked.

“Something to write with that I can have with me at the table while we play.”

“Alfred keeps a pen and book by the phone in the hall. You can borrow those.”

Clark followed him to the small table in the hall, where the pup took the spiral-bound notebook and handed them to Clark.

“You sure Alfred won’t mind?” Clark asked.

“As long as you put them back when you’re done.” Damian said like it was obvious.

Clark let Damian lead him back to the table. He locked eyes with his mother and smiled at her silent enquiry.

“Alright?” Bruce asked him as he sat down.

“Yep.” Clark assured him. “Who’s turn is it?”

“Roll the die.” Tim handed it to him. “Babs is leading with sixteen.”

Clark let it fall onto the table, and grinned.

“Seventeen!” Damian declared happily.

“Ugh!” Barbara cried, though she was smiling. “It’s never fun to lose at rolling dice, but it’s like, ugh, it’s like a papercut to miss it by one.”

There was a collective chuckle around the table as Clark picked up his cards and started going through them.

“Hmm…” Clark sucked his lips in-between his teeth.

Damian pointed to a card of a girl with people for earrings, one person on each ear.

He urged Clark to lean his head down so that he could whisper in his ear.

“That’ll work.”

“That’s what you want me to say?” Clark checked. Damian nodded.

Clark was at first confused about how the phrase and the image were related, but then he figured it out.

“Okay.” He placed the card upside-down. “That’ll work.”

Everyone else gradually added their own cards to the pile.

Clark shuffled, then overturned the cards, revealing (in addition to his own card) a person doing either chemistry or alchemy (the fantasy nature of the illustrations made him lean towards alchemy), a compass on a map, a person standing on a stack of books while looking down on an open book, a cat painting fish, and a happy-looking, brown… thing, holding a book in its tentacles.
Barbara, Tim, and Jason voted for Clark’s card, but Bruce and Dick voted for the alchemist.

“This one is mine.” Clark pointed.

The three who voted for it all gave their own small cheer.

“This one was mine.” Tim pointed to the alchemist.

“Okay, how is this related to what you said?” Dick asked Clark.

“The Emperor’s New Groove.” Clark declared.

“Yes.” Damian backed him up. “When the angel on Kronk’s shoulder tells them ‘From above, the wicked shall receive their just reward,’ and then Kronk, the angel, and the devil see the chandelier and say ‘that’ll work.’ Except it didn’t, ’cause Izma was too skinny and the middle of the chandelier just went around her.”

Another chuckle went around the table.

Clark and Damian won the game that time. Since theirs was a white rabbit, Jason picked it up and started quoting Monty Python at them.

Clark had started feeling sleepy sometime around their fifth game, but didn’t say anything until he felt Damian start to droop in the chair next to his.

“Um, I think it might be getting a little late for some.” he cocked his head towards the pup.

“Aw!” Barbara declared, poutily smiling at Damian. “Gettin’ a wil’ sweepy, there, Dami?” she said in a puppy voice.

“Am not.” Damian did not help his case by rubbing at his eye at that point.

“It’s kind of late, buddy.” Bruce told him.

“Not sleepy.” Damian further condemned himself to his fate by yawning.

He glared at everyone when they laughed.

Everybody chipped in to putting away the game, declaring it bedtime.

Clark had filled several pages with notes regarding the images on the cards. He wasn’t sure what he was going to do with the notes, yet, but simply the act of taking the notes had helped his itch. It was beautiful.

***

When Sunday evening came and Martha had to go, Clark was, understandably, saddened by her departure. However, he didn’t feel any of the dread that he had the first time.

Damian slipped his hand in his. Clark gave it a little squeeze as they turned to go back inside.

That night, Damian cuddled up to him, Clark slept in the spare bed in Bruce’s room.

Bruce couldn’t help a small smile as he shut his eyes.
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

This will have some sweet teen fluff, but also some heavy social themes. It's not made obvious, but this is a few weeks later from the last chapter.

Chapter Notes

I should mention that I know Laci Green has recently gotten into drama issues with some other YouTubers in which I find she's gone overboard. But when she speaks truth, it's beautiful. At the bottom, I've included links by her that I feel are relevant and have totally legit subjects.

If you're interested in the Christopher Titus podcast I mention in this story, let me know and we'll come to an arrangement. Last I checked, it's still unavailable on YouTube.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

My first kiss went a little like this
[kiss] and twist [kiss kiss]

Well my first kiss went a little like this
[kiss] and twist [kiss kiss]

— My First Kiss by 3OH!3

“Man, this is some heavy shit for Monday morning, Jason.” The skinny, green-haired Alpha yawned to illustrate his point as he gathered his things from his locker, which was next to Jason’s.

“I need to know if I can count on you to act like an adult for court.” Jason insisted.

DA Dent had started preparing to put together the testimonies of the Omegas Digger had harassed. He hoped to press charges at the beginning of November. Jason hoped he could count on his friend, as well, who had been witness to every single one of the fights.

“Adulting is boring, man.” he ran his fingers through his bright-green hair.

“Garfield, I’m serious! You have to tell the facts exactly as you saw them.”

“I don’t get why you need me, though. You’ve got Tatsu and Speedy testifying, and I’m sure more will come out.”
“Have you ever paid attention to the news?”

“Pfft! No. Boring, man.”

“There have been four suicides of Omega teens who were raped; that’s in the last six years.” Garfield dropped his smile. “And those were just the publicised cases. They spoke out against their attackers, and their classmates slut-shamed and bullied them until they took their own lives. Another killed herself after her classmates bullied her for, supposedly, having dared to open up for more than one Alpha on the football team.” he emphasised the word with sarcasm. “No one knows for sure if she even did anything with them.”

The shorter Alpha was starting to look uncomfortable. Jason kept going.

“An Omega in Canada was asked by a judge why she didn’t just keep her legs together and told her that pain is sometimes a part of sex. She was also repeatedly referred to as the accused instead of the victim.”

Garfield’s face was starting to just slightly match his hair.

“Man, what the fuck?” he whispered.

“Omegas are seen as responsible when Alphas approach them. Because society says we’re slaves to our knots and Omegas are supposed to watch everything from how they dress to how they walk, even. You can bet that Tatsu is going to be asked how short her skirt was and they’ll ask Roy about his gymnast outfit. If Bart was testifying, they’d ask about his runner’s shorts. Digger’s defense is going to do everything to blow holes in their stories, saying they egged him on somehow, while they paint me as the hot-headed Alpha who just wants to defend my perceived territory. If I can get other witnesses, including Alpha and Beta witnesses, it’s going to pile on against him. The stories of the victims will play on the heartstrings, but that will only get us so far. We need a combination of viewpoints, because the defense is going to play hardball.”

Garfield ran his hand through his hair again, frustrated.

“I’ll be there, man. I’ll see who else will be willing to testify, too; everyone knows Digger’s a prick, there’s gotta be people who are willing to tell that to a judge.”

“Thanks, Gar.”

The two Alphas clapped their right hands together and pulled in for a one-armed hug.

“Jason!”

Jason turned to see Tatsu coming toward him. He was unable to stop the grin which broke out on his face.

“Hi, Tatsu!” he said, almost breathlessly.

“I spoke with Bart on the phone yesterday.” she grinned. “He’s changed his mind, and agreed to testify.”

Jason’s eyes widened.

“Really? I thought, from what he had been saying before--”

“Apparently, Harvey Dent contacted his parents. Before they had met, his mother, Barry, had been
assaulted by an Alpha. The Alpha in question was never brought to justice. When he and his father
found out about Digger, and that the school wasn’t doing anything, they sat him down, and spoke
with him. They said they weren’t going to force him to testify, but that he should keep in mind that if
nothing is done, Digger will be allowed to continue to hurt others, while you’ll be forced to leave if
you continue to defend us. So he changed his mind.” she finished with a grin.

Jason swallowed.

“Wasn’t his dad known as Captain Cold when he played for the Central City hockey team?” Jason
had a first edition card among his belongings; Leonard Snart had brought the Central City Rogues to
the finals every time during the seven years he was with them, and was the only one in the history of
the team to get them the Stanley Cup.

“Oh, yes. And he is furious that Digger has gone unpunished for so long. However, he is eager to
meet the Alpha who has been single-handedly defending the Omegas of the school.” she winked at
him.

Jason swallowed again, and blushed.

“Well, you know, it’s what any decent human being should be doing—”

“But you’re the only one who has been.” Tatsu said seriously.

“Well, um…” Jason was struggling for words. To him, it was the only course of action that made
sense. But listening to Tatsu, it was like she was making him out to be some kind of hero.

“You’re adorable when you blush.” she looked up at him and batted her lashes.

Jason felt two conflicting trains of thought in his head.

Holy shit, hot Omega is flirting with me! This is awesome!

What is the protocol? Do I flirt back? How do?

Better figure it out, fast! She’s closing in!

Abort! Abort! Boner alert! What if she notices?

Oh, gosh, she noticed, she-- giggled? What?

Dude, she’s laughing at your boner! Bad news!

No, wait! She’s--

Jason’s eyes fluttered shut as Tatsu gently pressed her lips to his. They were in contact for just a few
seconds when she pulled back.

“You’re really tall.” she giggled.

Jason swallowed again.

“Sorry.”

Tatsu shook her head.

“Don’t be. It would help if you could bend a bit, though.”
Jason did as she asked when she leaned towards him again. Their lips touched for longer this time, gently caressing.

“Mr. Todd! Miss Yamashiro!”

The two quickly pulled apart as principal Amanda Waller approached, cutting a wide path through the students, as they seemed eager to get away from her.

A stern, dark-skinned Alpha woman, Waller was known for swift punishments and almost never smiling. If she smiled at you, you were in trouble.

“This is a high school. A place of learning. NOT the mall. Keep your romantic interactions until after class!” she snapped.

“Ma’am, yes ma’am!” Jason answered, unable to keep from the sarcasm from his tone.

“Are you disrespecting me, mister?” she narrowed his eyes at him.

“No, ma’am. I agree that a place of learning should not be defiled by any perverse act. It’s just too bad that some manage to keep getting away with it.”

“Let’s get something straight, Mr. Todd. I don’t like you. You’re a troublemaker with no respect for authority. I suppose I shouldn’t be surprised that an orphan taken in by one of the richest families would turn out to be such a brat. But continue to disrespect me in my school, and you’ll find yourself out on your ear. Are we clear on that?”

“Crystal clear, ma’am.” he frowned.

“Get your wisecrackin’ behind to class, now.” she turned on her heel. “And that goes for the rest of you! Bell’s in two minutes!”

Jason looked down as he felt Tatsu lace her fingers with his.

“I’ll see you in class?”

“Yeah, I’ll be right there.” Jason smiled at her.

“Great. Don’t be late!” she turned and went down the hall.

“Damn, Todd!” Jason jumped, having forgotten for a moment that Garfield was even there. “If I’d known it would get me some, I’d have had your back for every fight!”

“Would you shush, Gar?” Jason hissed. “Can you pull your brain from your knot for two minutes?”

“Pfft! Like you’re such a saint! Ow!”

Garfield rubbed his arm where Jason had punched him.

***

“Omega rights movement.” Mr. Crane wrote the words in large, neat letters on the whiteboard in purple marker, then turned to face the class. “Used to be, those that identified themselves as being part of that movement were called Suffragettes. Today, they are called?”

“Omeganazis.” Mark Mardon declared.
A few people giggled, causing the blonde Beta to smirk.

“Wrong, Mr. Mardon. We’ll get into the differences between actual supporters of the movement and the easily-triggered SJWs of Tumblr later. Anyone else?”

Tatsu raised her hand.

“Miss Yamashiro?”

“Omegists.”

“Correct. And, contrary to popular belief, this term is not restricted to Omegas who are fighting for equal rights. This term may be used for anyone, of any presentation, who believes in equal rights for all presentations. Yes, Miss Beecher?”

“But Omegas have equal rights, here.” Karen, a bushy-haired, dark-tan complexion Alpha spoke matter-of-factly. “It’s only in places like the Middle East where they’re oppressed.”

“Interesting thought. Who here can name the amount of Omegas who currently have seats in Congress?”

The class was silent.

“Have we ever had an Omega president?”

The class continued to be silent.

“And how many of you are aware that most Omegas are paid seventy-five cents on the dollar compared to their Alpha counterparts in the same position?”

Continued silence.

“And those are the better amounts,” Mr. Crane continued. “Usually given to white, male Omegas. Male Omegas of colour, female Omegas, and especially female Omegas of colour, are often paid less, if they get into those positions at all, even if they have the same or better education than Alphas in the exact same position. Male Omegas usually manage to make up for it by taking up hard-labour jobs, but back-breaking work is called that for a reason.”

Jason felt rather uncomfortable. He already knew most these facts, of course. Bruce had encouraged research into the Omegist movement, and every year took the family to the Take Back The Night march in the downtown square. Since he had presented as Alpha, Jason couldn’t actually march, but rather stayed with Bruce and the other Alphas while Dick took Tim and Damian on the march. The Alphas were given a sort of workshop on how they can help their Omega loved ones who have been assaulted.

At the end of the march, volunteers from the Victims’ Services department would read stories from survivors of assault. They always cut Jason to his core.

Dick would have to work twice as hard as him to get a sustaining career.

Tatsu would have to work even harder, especially being the daughter of immigrants.

Just as Tatsu had already experienced sexual harassment at school, both were likely to continue to face it as adults in the workplace.

Clark had been talking lately about wanting to go to college so that he could have better job.
prospects to be able to raise his pup. College education or not, Jason knew he would no doubt get passed up by a lot of employers being a single Omega mother.

“We’re going to the computer lab.” Mr. Crane broke through Jason’s thoughts. “I’m going to divide you into pairs, and you’re going to look up some facts about the Omegist movement, past and present. Remember to cite your sources.”

Mr. Crane moved through the rows of chairs, pairing people off. He paused when he reached Jason, looked behind him, where Jason knew Tatsu was sitting, then gave him a little smile.

“Mr. Todd, you will be paired with Miss Yamashiro.”

Jason tried not to look too pleased with himself.

***

“So, where should we start?” Jason asked.

“I don’t know. We may not be as oppressed as the Middle East, but, Japanese tradition means my parents definitely have a somewhat antiquated idea of how Omegas are supposed to behave.” she blushed as she lowered her voice to a whisper. “If they found out about me kissing you, they’d probably have a cow each.”

Jason let out a small smile.

“Do you have earbuds?”

Tatsu looked intrigued.

“Yes?”

“’Cause, I have a splitter, and I know of some videos I think you might like.”

“We’re supposed to be working.” she chided.

“Sorry, I mean videos about the Omegist movement.”

“Oh!” she perked up, smiling as she dug her earbuds out of her black messenger bag.

Jason went to YouTube and typed in Laci Green.

“These four are the best,” he said as he looked through her channel, opening each one in a separate tab. “We can take notes while we listen, and then go through her citations at the bottom, or Google what she doesn’t cite.”

Jason became aware that Tatsu was looking at him, and blushed.

“You’re a pretty cool Alpha, Jason Todd.”

Jason swallowed. Tatsu pecked his cheek, then took the mouse from him and readied herself to click play for the first video while he set up the splitter for their earbuds.

“Guys, I am no stranger to dirty words.” the video called The O-Word started off. “I mean, I teach Sex Ed! Sometimes I say ‘penis’ or ‘vagina.’ Tee-hee! But no word is so dirty, as Omegism.”

Tatsu rolled her chair closer to lean against Jason’s arm as they watched the video.
By the end of the class, they had amassed a ton of information about the origins of the movement for the Omegas’ Right To Vote, to more modern victories such as the changing the FBI definition of rape to include Alphas and Betas, since the original definition had read “the carnal knowledge of an Omega, forcibly and against their will.”

The revised definition, which took effect in 2013, now read: “Penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.”

“We’re going to have to figure out how to put this all together in a way that works for our report.” Tatsu said as she scribbled footnotes for her notes.

“Um, would you be interested in coming to my place this weekend?” Jason offered. “I’ll have to check with my dad, first, but, y’know, we could work on it there. And my dad is involved with a lot of charities and stuff regarding Omega rights, so I’m sure he’d love to help.”

Tatsu grinned at him.

“I’d love to.”

“Great! Um, I’ll--”

The bell rang, signalling lunch.

“Would you like to have lunch with me?” Jason said in a rush.

“Yes.” Tatsu grinned wider.

***

When Jason got back home that day (Tim went straight to his computer lab), he was feeling quite light on his feet. He and Tatsu had kissed good-bye, exchanging phone numbers under the promise that he would ask Bruce that night about her visiting on the weekend, and then text her immediately.

Bruce was working on his computer, and both Dick and Clark were in armchairs with open laptops. Damian, who would have arrived an hour earlier, was also in Clark’s lap, asleep.

“Uh, hey.” Jason greeted. Everyone except Damian looked up at him. Dick offered a ‘hey’ and a wave; Clark offered a shy wave of his own.

“Hi, Jason.” Bruce greeted, turning his chair fully to look at him. “How was school?”

“Awesome.” Jason blurted out before he could stop himself. Then turned a deep red. “Um, Mr. Crane has us studying the Omegist movement for Social Studies. We’re partnered off for the next few weeks to do reports. He also mentioned he’d have us watch Suffragette later this week.”

Bruce nodded.

“I’ve yet to see it, but that’s supposed to be a very good film.”

“Um, also, I wanted to ask, both you and Clark, is it okay if Tatsu comes by this weekend?”

Clark started at being named.
“She’s an Omega.” Jason assured him. “She’s really sweet. It’s just, we’re gonna be working on our report together, and I thought it’d be nice if she came here.” Jason felt his face burning the longer he talked.

“Yeah.” He bit the inside of his cheeks, trying not to laugh at Jason’s blush. “As long as Bruce is okay with it, too.”

Bruce shook his head.

“We need you to be comfortable, Clark. If you’re nervous with anyone being here, we won’t bring them in.”

“No, it’s okay.” Clark said. “Another Omega is fine.”

“Alright, then.” Bruce agreed. “Would Friday at dinner be acceptable? We’ll have to use the dining room, what with your mother and Barbara coming by as well, but I think it would work out nicely.”

Clark nodded, giving a small smile.

“Awesome!” Jason grinned. “I’ll let her know.”

Not wanting to wait, he immediately pulled out his phone and flopped onto the sofa as he began texting her.

**JT:** all good on my end for this weekend! you?

**Dragon:** Yes! :D

**JT:** awesome! Dad said you could join us for dinner on friday. We’re already having a couple of guests, so after we eat we can work on our project while the other stuff is going on.

**Dragon:** At first my parents were worried, but I told them your dad would be there and when I name-dropped ‘Bruce Wayne’ they were suddenly fin

**Dragon:** fine*

**JT:** lol good to know :p

...

**Dragon:** omg, my mom is packing me an overnight bag! Did you mean for me to stay all weekend?? o.O

**JT:** I’ll ask dad, but we have plenty of room. It’s just that he’s support for an Omega through the clinic atm, so we have to make sure that he’s ok with stuff.

**Dragon:** aw, that’s so sweet! Yeah, I’ll let my mom know that I probably won’t be able to stay. Remember when I mentioned old-fashioned values? If he could send me on horseback in case it rains, forcing me to stay the night, he would. Knowing that your dad would be home, of course.

**JT:** Don’t laugh, but I understood that reference.

**Dragon:** With or without zombies? lol
JT: Keira Knightley comes first ;p

Dragon: Almost correct! Colin Firth comes first! :P

JT: Uh, phrasing? ;p

Dragon: lmao! I wanna dress as Lana Kane for Halloween!

JT: If you dress as Lana, I’ll dress as Archer ;)

Dragon: YES!!!
Rising_Dragon: Okay :)

Jason sent the file, then waited patiently during the time he hoped Tatsu was using to listen to it.

…

Rising_Dragon: Wow. Everyone in Congress needs to hear this.

Gunslinger451: IKR? I love the bit at the end where he says he can’t comment on abortion because he’s an Alpha, and that he’s only willing to let fat, white-haired older Alphas make the decisions on the subject once they’ve experienced the issues surrounding unwanted pregnancies.

Rising_Dragon: He certainly doesn’t mince words, does he?

Gunslinger451: Nope. In two of his shows he warns “You better lighten the fuck up ’cause we’re going a lot farther than that tonight.”

Rising_Dragon: I think I’ll have to look those up :)

Gunslinger451: They’re all on YouTube, last I checked. Hang on, I’ll send you the first one.

The remainder of the evening was spent watching the videos and commenting back and forth to one another. When Alfred told the boys it was time for bed, Jason made sure to place a blanket securely over his door before resuming his communications with Tatsu.

Their fatigue became obvious to one another as more and more typos slipped in, and sometimes random characters or numbers would get sent to the other unintentionally. They started teasing each other about their errors.

Jason wasn’t sure who passed out first; only that he woke up the next morning with his laptop still in his bed.

Chapter End Notes

Here are my top picks for Laci Green videos on Feminism:
50+ Reasons why I'm a Feminist
The F-Word
Does Sexism Hurt Men?
Abortion Under Attack

Below, there is a small list of girls who took their lives on account of bullying/slut shaming from their peers, mostly after they had been sexually assaulted.

Cherice Moralez 1993 - 2010
Felicia Garcia 1997 - 2012
Amanda Todd 1996 - 2012
Audrie Pott 1996 - 2012

Rehtaeh Parsons 1995 - 2013
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Remember, remember the fifth of November...
Clark remembers an encounter with Lex... and the illusion is shattered.

Chapter Notes

Warning for flashback with references of sexual abuse.

For those of you who missed it, I have uploaded a one-shot that's part of the series for which this is the main fic. In this chapter, I mention Harley going into heat; the one-shot is Pam helping her with that.

Shout-out to awesome beta-reader ottertrashpalace. You rock!

Reminder of my Photobucket Album which features who I think the characters should look like. Any ideas for Pamela? Let me know!

Follow me on tumblr @Chrisx1987.

Remember when we were small?
And that wooden cabinet seemed so tall?
But we conquered it together.
And celebrated our victory
Just beneath the chestnut tree,
With milk and cookies
— Childhood musings by Clark Kent

Clark knew routines; he had had one for nearly every day of his life during his marriage. It was comforting for him over the past month to have built a new one.

Wake up with Damian for breakfast; spend some time with his laptop in the lounge re-learning social media while Bruce worked; also write. He had begun writing up all sorts of random things which ran through his head regarding his feelings, ranging from a single word to a few lengthy paragraphs. He hoped he could make sense of it all eventually. Sometimes poems shot up at him, like an artist’s call for a brush and paint.
Have lunch with Bruce; go for a walk around the grounds with Bruce, enjoying the crisp air which, halfway through October was just starting to smell like autumn; return to the lounge until the boys got home; help Damian with his homework; dinner with the family; going through the puppy books while Damian sat on his lap, sometimes answering the pup’s questions or talking about sections of the books with him.

Breakfast was getting easier, now. When the chatter would get to be too much, Clark would go stand in the hall for a bit, quickly followed by Bruce so that he could scent him, and then return to the table.

Weekends were different, especially this upcoming one with not only his mother but two other guests in the manor; however Clark steeled himself to get through it. He began to realise just how lonely he had felt all those years. Even though he knew that the moment Lex got home it would be to go straight to the bedroom (which he knew would make him feel emptied out after), he always felt better just for having his Alpha nearby after long hours of being in an empty penthouse.

Bruce never made him feel uncomfortable, and made it clear that if Clark wanted to talk about anything, he would give him his full attention.

Clark wanted to go to some of the places Bruce had suggested. He’d looked them up on the Internet, and they seemed to be calling to him to leave the house.

He was also terrified to leave the house and break his routine.

He promised himself he’d change that; Damian was starting to be excited for Halloween, and he was determined not to disappoint the pup. He and Clark sometimes spent the evening in the theatre room using the Playstation to look up videos on YouTube, and Clark had been finding some of his childhood favourites to show him. After several viewings of The Cat In The Hat (which Damian said he preferred to the Mike Myers version; victory to nostalgic cartoons!), Damian had declared that he would dress as Thing 1, while Clark would dress as the Cat, with a sign on his growing belly indicating Thing 2.

Bruce had brought them to get the materials the weekend before, and their past few evenings after dinner had been spent laying out everything on the lounge floor as Clark measured, cut, and pinned the pieces together. They were almost ready for sewing, for which Alfred had offered to lend his sewing machine.

Clark had used to team up with Lana to make costumes for school plays as part of the drama club. He hadn’t done much beyond simple patchwork and button repairs in years, but found the whole thing quite easy to get back into. He also hoped having the project to work on during the weekend would keep him grounded with the extra guests in the house.

That Friday morning, just as Alfred was herding the boys into the Lincoln, Clark stepped up to him.

“Alfred, do you have cornmeal and brown sugar?”

Alfred looked thoughtful for a moment.

“Brown sugar we should have plenty of. I’m afraid I can’t recall the last time I purchased cornmeal, however. I could get some after I’ve dropped off the boys.”

Clark swallowed.

“I don’t want to cause trouble--”
“Nonsense.” Alfred gave him a smile. “I have to get some things for tonight’s dinner in any case. I’ll get some cornmeal.”

“Thank you.” Clark looked relieved.

“Anything else?”

“Um… buttermilk?”

“Not a problem.”

“I’m thinking you probably have baking staples fully stocked.”

“Absolutely.” Alfred smiled again.

“Thank you.”

“Not at all, Master Clark. I’ll see you later.”

Clark nodded.

“See you later, Alfred.” Bruce said.

Alfred saluted, then stepped into the Lincoln and drove off.

“Planning on making something?”

Bruce smiled at Clark,

“Yeah… it’s something I kinda made up when I was twelve. I figure it’ll make mom happy to see it.”

“Do I get to try any?” Bruce teased.

“Well, yeah, I mean, it’s your house, and--”

“Clark, I didn’t mean it that way. If you want to make yourself a dozen cookies and not share any, you can go right ahead.”

Clark smiled.

“I might just do that; now I’m craving cookies.”

“Alfred keeps the kitchen pretty organised. It’s pretty easy to find things. Do you want a hand?”

Clark thought for a moment.

“No, I think I’ll be okay.”

“Okay. I’m going to shower and head to the lounge, then. Let me know if you need anything.”

“Thank you.”

***

Alfred did indeed keep the kitchen very well organised. Clark decided to take things a step further by mixing the chocolate chips into oatmeal cookies.
He’d always liked baking. There was a calming effect with it.

He ended up quadrupling the recipe, hoping to keep some on hand for the boys for after school and to bring to the clinic for Damian’s class. He smiled as he imagined the look on Damian’s face.

The kitchen had two ovens, stacked one on top of the other, so Clark was able to get large batches cooking at once. He started salivating as the smell filled the kitchen, even though he’d eaten breakfast not that long ago. To keep it at bay, he took a rubber spatula and ate at some of the raw dough. He felt a little flutter of joy tickle his heart.

“If this is your way of saying you like cookie dough, pup, just wait until they’re cooked.” he smiled down at his stomach.

Clark looked up as Bruce walked into the kitchen and started sniffing.

“Smells delicious.”

Clark smiled.

“Pup thinks so. Likes the dough, too.”

“Is it kicking?”

“No, not yet. It’s just, sometimes I feel stuff that I’m pretty sure comes from it.”

Bruce grinned and walked over, very quickly dipping a finger into the dough and scooping some up before immediately placing it in his mouth, causing Clark to laugh.

Bruce felt a sort of warm feeling spread over him.

Clark’s eyes sparkle when he laughs. He observed.

The moment was broken when the timer started beeping. Clark stood, leaving the bowl on the table as he put on the oven mitts, then opened the doors to both ovens and removed the pans, large enough to take up all the room in each oven, and placed them on the stove to cool.

Bruce felt his mouth water.

“Those smell really good.”

“Well, they’re too hot right now, but, they should be fine in ten minutes.” As he said this, Clark put his hand on the stove to lean against. Unfortunately, he was too close to the pans, and let out a curse as the side of his hand made contact with one of them. He quickly pulled his hand away, and Bruce was immediately at his side, taking the hand in both of his, inspecting the burn.

“That doesn’t look like it’s too bad. Let’s get it under some cool water and I’ll get some Polysporin.”

He led Clark to the sink and set the cold water to a gentle flow before guiding his hand under it.

“Keep it there for a bit while I get the first aid kit.”

Alfred kept a kit on top of the fridge, which Bruce brought down and placed on the table to start rummaging through. He found the Polysporin in no time, then went to shut off the water, bringing Clark to sit at the chair he had been in a moment before.

Bruce brought another chair closer and carefully dried at the burn with a clean dishtowel before
applying the Polysporin.

Clark felt his heart hammering in his chest.

*Why can’t I just tell him I can look after it myself?*

*Because you don’t want to. You want Bruce to take care of you.*

*But this is dumb. I’m not a pup. This is basic stuff I can take care of on my own.*

*But don’t his hands feel nice?*

Clark swallowed.

“Sorry, did that hurt?” Bruce paused in his movements of gently rubbing the salve on the burn.

“No.” Clark hated that his voice came out much higher than it should have.

“You’re sure?”

Clark nodded.

Bruce resumed rubbing the salve, then blew gently on it.

“As I said, it’s not a bad one; didn’t even blister, so I think we can forgo a bandage. Just keep it dry for a while so that the salve can do its work.”

“Thank you.” Clark said in a muted tone. “I’m sorry.”

“No need to apologise; you’re the one who got hurt.”

“But I could have taken care of it. I should have. Instead I let you do it.”

Bruce shrugged. “I don’t mind, Clark. I have four boys, I’m used to it. Bumps, bruises, scraped knees, even a broken leg, once.”

“But I’m pushing thirty; I’m not a pup.”

Bruce gave a sad sort of half-smile.

“No, you’re not. But I think we should all have people in our lives who look after us, for big and small things. Reminds us that we’re cared for. Saying the words is nothing compared to the little things people can do for each other.”

*Lex would call during his lunch to ask how I was. He always made sure I came.*

*Lex would ask if you were being good; there’s a difference. He never asked if you wanted to. He just did it.*

*But…*

Clark shut his eyes tight as he felt a headache starting, distracting him from further thought.

“Headache?” Bruce asked; this wasn’t the first time, so Bruce had been able to observe how Clark reacted to a sudden headache.

“Yeah.” he pressed the heel of his palm to the part that hurt.
“I’ll make your tea.” Bruce stood from the table.

“I’m sorry.” Clark mumbled.

“Don’t be.” Bruce assured him.

When Bruce placed a steaming mug in front of him a couple of minutes later, Clark squashed down the urge to squeak when Bruce quickly pecked him on the top of his head.

“I’ll be in the lounge if you need anything,” Bruce said as he made a quick exit from the kitchen.

Clark felt his face burn a bright red.

***

*Stupid stupid stupid.* Bruce berated himself as he sat in front of his computer.

It was just so easy to want to shower Clark with all the affection he could think of.

He needed to work harder to draw the line.

Stop making a big deal out of this. He told himself. *Lots of friends give each other affection through hugs and kisses.*

True, but how many of them are from an Alpha to a gorgeous Omega?

Shut up.

Clark was living with him. They were getting close. Of course physical affection would happen. He’d already held Clark during his episodes, allowing him to scent for comfort. As long as he didn’t do anything inappropriate (the thought of which angered him, anyway, knowing what Luthor had done to him), what were a few kisses between friends?

After a few minutes, Clark placed a small plate of cookies with a glass of milk on his desk. Bruce smiled.

“Thank you, Clark.”

“You’re welcome.”

Clark returned to the kitchen for a while, presumably to keep an eye on the next batch of cookies. After a time, he came back to the lounge with his own milk and cookies, and settled himself on the sofa with his laptop.

***

Clark’s appointment with Harley had gotten pushed back because she’d gone into heat unexpectedly that Wednesday, but she promised she’d see him the week after.

Damian was very happy to see him, especially when Clark showed him the cookies they’d brought with them; Clark had packed enough in a large Tupperware to share with all the pups in the crafts class, which proved to be a hit.

Dr. Karlo helped himself to four.

“These are really quite excellent.” he told Clark through a mouth full of chewy cookie. “Perhaps
you’d be interested in helping with one of the cooking classes? I’m sure Mrs. Fries would love it.”

Clark shrugged, trying to cover his nerves.

“Um, maybe? I’ve never really talked in front of a lot of people, before.”

The Beta shrugged nonchalantly.

“Food for thought. Ha, get it? Food?” he waved his half-eaten cookie.

Clark smiled at the lame joke, then excused himself as Bruce motioned for him to follow with Damian to leave the classroom.

Normally, Dick would be waiting outside the crafts room for them, but he wasn’t there this time. Bruce seemed to know where to go, however.

They made their way down the hall to a room where there were a handful of volunteers, each helping someone. Clark watched, fascinated, as Dick was signing with a young dark-haired woman. He had never learned sign language, but watching the two of them converse was really beautiful. The young woman signed something which made Dick laugh, causing Clark to smile.

Dick noticed them at that point, and gestured for the girl to follow as he stood and made his way to the door.

“This is Clark.” Dick spoke as he signed. “He’s staying with us for a while. Clark, this is Cassie.”

Clark waved, feeling awkward. Cassie started signing to him, Dick translated.

“She said you’re glowing. And to give the puppy lots of love.”

Clark was taken aback.

Dick signed something to Cassie and she nodded.

“Cassie just gave me permission to explain. She was severely neglected as a pup; practically no human contact at all. It’s why she doesn’t speak. She couldn’t read or write or anything when she first came here. That’s why she told you to give your pup lots of love.”

Clark felt his heart break for her.

“I will. I promise.”

Cassie opened her arms, the question on her face. Clark nodded and pulled her in for a hug.

***

Martha ended up beating them to the manor by only a couple of minutes this time, leaning against her car as they pulled up. Clark greeted her eagerly, and they made their way inside and to the lounge, which is where they were when the other two boys got home from school. Tim, as usual, went straight for his computer.

“Dad? Clark?”

Jason’s voice called from the hall.

“In here!” Bruce replied.
Jason appeared in the doorway, an Asian-featured, dark-haired girl behind him.

“Hey, Mrs. Kent.” Jason walked forward to the sofa, hand outstretched.

“Hi, Jason.” Martha smiled as she shook his hand.

“So, everybody, this is Tatsu Yamashiro.” Jason indicated the girl, who smiled brilliantly as she waved.

“Hi, everyone.”

Jason started pointing to the people in the room.

“Tatsu, this Clark, who we’re helping out. His mother Mrs. Kent. That’s my youngest brother, Damian. Big bro Dick is over there, and this is my dad, Bruce Wayne.”

Bruce stood and held his hand to Tatsu.

“Pleased to meet you, Tatsu. I understand that you and Jason are working on a project involving the history of Omega rights?”

“Mr. Crane is teaching it in our Social Studies course.” she affirmed. “Jason knows quite a bit about it, already, though.” she grinned at him. “He said you’re really involved with helping the cause?”

“I fund several charities both in and out of the city, a great number of which are focussed on Omega rights.”

“Well, you’re clearly a great role model for Jason.” she eyed the younger Alpha as she said this. “He’s an amazing Alpha.” she pecked Jason on the cheek.

Jason turned beet red.

Clark couldn’t help but grin, watching the display.

He turned to his mother, who was also smiling, and they shared a knowing look.

Jason cleared his throat.

“Um, I’m gonna show Tatsu around. See you guys for dinner.”

As they left the room, Alfred poked his head in.

“Master Clark, I’ve obtained the ingredients you requested.”

“Oh!” Clark had nearly forgotten. “I’ll be right there.” he tried to gently slide Damian off his lap, but the pup clung to him.

“Take me with you?”

“Damian,” Bruce began gently.

“No, it’s okay.” Clark smiled as he stood, holding Damian to him. “I’ll teach you how to make my cornbread pudding.” and he left for the kitchen, Damian nuzzling his throat contentedly.

Bruce thought he felt his heart stutter for a moment.

***
“See, normally poor man’s pudding is made with regular flour,” Clark explained as he dissolved the brown sugar on the stovetop. Damian was mixing the dry ingredients for the cornbread.

Alfred was working on the main course for the evening (a sublime roast, which had Clark’s mouth watering as the smell of the spices began to waft around the kitchen), but was only too happy to help Clark when he needed to know where to find ingredients.

“But this one day, when I was about twelve, there was a Christmas party in our class, and one of the pups’ moms had sent along cornbread. I had never tried it before. I found it was delicious, so I asked mom if she could make some at Christmas.”

“Clark, is this well-mixed?” Clark turned to the table where Damian sat.

“Yes, looks right. Hang on.” He moved the saucepan with the sugar and water to a cold burner.

“So your mom mixed it with the other recipe?” Damian asked as Clark gathered the dish with the wet ingredients, giving them a fresh stirring before adding them in with the dry ingredients.

“No, she had made them separately, but when I put them both in my plate, some of the sugar sauce got onto the cornbread, and, well, I guess you could say I had an epiphany.”

Clark startled when Damian erupted in giggles.

“What’s so funny?” he asked, smiling himself at seeing Damian’s mirth.

“I learned that word from Hook.” Damian explained, still grinning from ear to ear. “Every time I hear someone say it, I think of Smee saying that lightning struck his brain.”

Clark laughed (causing fresh giggles to burst forth from Damian), remembering the exact scene Damian was talking about. When had he last seen that movie?

Too long. He thought.

“Do you have that movie, Damian? I haven’t seen it in a long time.”

“Yup!” he smiled brightly.

“Maybe we could watch it sometime, if your dad doesn’t mind.” Clark had finished mixing the cornbread.

“We could do movie night!” Damian exclaimed, clapping his hands together. “We haven’t done one in a while! I know father would say yes!”

Clark grinned.

“Perfect.”

Damian leaned in for an Eskimo kiss, which Clark returned, before turning to grab a couple of medium-sized rectangular baking pans, then proceeded to slather butter on the inside to grease them.

The final step was adding a measured amount of melted butter to the water and brown sugar mixture, making it into a syrup. Once that was done, Clark set to scrubbing off any dishes no longer in use, and adding them to the dishwasher. Between his and the ones Alfred had used, the dishwasher was filled in no time, so Clark added soap and set it running.

“The vegetables will be ready to add in with the roast soon, Master Clark. I could pop in your dessert
for you, give you a chance to sit down.”

“Um, sure. Thank you.”

Clark told Alfred the baking time and temperature, as well as the instructions of pouring the batter in before pouring the syrup on top, then let Damian pull him back to the lounge; there was animated conversation and laughter going on.

Jason and Tatsu were still absent, but Barbara had arrived and was cozied up with Dick on a loveseat. She turned as Clark approached the people gathered.

“Hi, Clark!” she said jovially.

“Hi, Barbara.” he returned. He wasn’t feeling as threatened by her presence anymore, having seen her a handful of times since her first visit. He took his place beside his mother on the couch again.

“Hey, baby bat!” Barbara greeted Damian.

“Only Jason calls me that.” Damian said as he curled up on Clark’s lap.

“I’m sorry.” Barbara told him. “I thought it was cute.”

Damian shrugged. “It’s okay. You can call me that if you want. It’s just no one except Jason did before.”

Barbara grinned at him.

“Thanks, baby bat.”

Damian giggled. Clark ruffled his hair.

***

The dining room table could have easily sat twenty people, but Alfred had thoughtfully arranged the seating to one end so that people weren’t spread too far apart.

Bruce sat at the head, of course, with Clark to his right and Damian to his left, just like at the kitchen table.

Martha sat to Clark’s right, followed by Dick and Barbara. Next to Damian sat Tim, with Tatsu on his left, and Jason on her left.

No one would have thought of it consciously, to have the Omegas and pups more or less surrounded by the Alphas. It was one of those things where instinct had guided them to sit in the best arrangement for their protection.

Also instinct-driven, Clark and the pups received their food, first, followed by the other Omegas, and finally the Alphas, Bruce last of all.

Though there were five adults present, Clark couldn’t drink due to his pregnancy, so Bruce had requested that Alfred serve a sparkling apple juice instead.

“So, Jason, did your teacher end up showing you Suffragette like you’d mentioned?”

Jason and Tatsu nodded.
“It was really good. I think it really deserved its PG-13 rating, though.” Jason shook his head.

“There was nothing gratuitous,” Tatsu added. “But some scenes hurt to watch.”

“Have there been films that have the wrong rating?” Clark asked.

Tim immediately rattled off:

“Frozen, Paddington, Inside-Out, Kung-Fu Panda, and the Spongebob Squarepants movie were all rated PG. According to the MPAA, Damian should not be watching them alone, and yet I know for a fact he’ll watch stuff in the theatre room by himself, and among those things has been multiple viewings of each of those movies, yet none of it has scarred him for life.”

“Neither has The Witches or Return To Oz,” Jason pointed out. “But I wouldn’t have left him to watch it by himself the first time, anyway.”

“Yeah, but you can see where those are scary.” Tim said as he added gravy to his mashed potatoes. "Those other movies I just named? Tame AF.”

“What does AF mean?” piped up Damian.

Bruce, Dick, and Jason all cleared their throats in a pointed manner (causing Damian to scowl adorably), in the way Clark was used to hearing Bruce use alone. The older boys may not be Bruce’s biologically, but, in that moment, Clark chuckled and shook his head at how much Dick and Jason emulated their adoptive father.

At least once a day there was something which bore delicate explaining to Damian, usually handled by Bruce; used to this kind of thing after a few days, and having grown very fond of the pup, Clark decided to take a turn.

“The F,” Clark explained, laughter still in his expression. “In AF is short for a word that is not to be used in polite company. The term the two mean together basically means extremely. So, Tim should have said that the movies are ‘extremely tame.’”

Bruce grinned as he took a bite of roast, eyeing Clark with something like fondness; when he caught this, Clark blushed and busied himself with his buttered greens.

“So, Tatsu, what does your family do?” Bruce asked once he had swallowed his food.

“My father, Tadashi, teaches martial arts and co-owns a dojo with a female Alpha named Makhlab Alshshaytan.”

Bruce frowned.

“That’s Arabic, isn’t it?”

Tatsu nodded. “For demon claw,” she giggled. “She lives up to the name. She’s very fierce, but is known for getting the best out of her students. Her specialty is teaching self-defense courses for Omegas.”

Bruce took a deep breath.

“Does the dojo have a website?” Bruce sounded tense.

“Yes.” Tatsu seemed a bit unsure, and everyone was now looking at Bruce.
“Could you please show me after dinner?”

“Sure.” Tatsu nodded.

Bruce became aware of the looks and changed the subject.

“What about your mother?”

“Maseo. He runs a tea shop with my grandmother which shares the building with the dojo. Grandma was a retired geisha, and taught mother everything about tea ceremony.”

“How accurate is Memoirs of a Geisha?” Tim butted in.

Jason facepalmed but Tatsu let out a high-pitched laugh.

“First of all,” Tatsu said, still giggling. “The geisha would have had more choice than what they showed in that film. My grandmother actually got to choose his first, and it was after three years of patronage, thank you very much. In fact, the Alpha in question eventually helped to pay my grandmother’s debt to the okiya and she became my grandfather. Mizuage has to do with a symbolic hair-cutting when geisha come of age. That whole other business, which I shall not detail in the presence of a pup, was more to do with Edo-period courtesans. There were some maikos who went through that, but it was not an auction so much as an Alpha coming forth to sponsor the geisha’s debut. Not to mention that practise was outlawed in the fifties. Mind you, that’s only one in a long list of inaccuracies, and I could go on for hours, but I won’t at dinner.”

Tatsu considered that settled and returned to her food, trying to keep from giggles. Her mood was infecting Jason, who was also trying not to laugh by putting food in his mouth.

“That movie must have been weird to watch for you, knowing all the stuff that’s wrong in it.” Clark commented.

“I didn’t actually know it at the time. I had first seen it at a friend’s house. I asked my parents about it later. It became the subject of my ninth-grade social studies project, showing the surprising freedom Omegas who were geisha had, especially today. Omegas in Japan don’t have many career prospects after graduation, though it is better than it used to be. Being a geisha offers an independant sort of life where they get to socialise with powerful business Alphas, artists, and academics. A geisha’s main attribute is their intelligence, because they have to be able to hold conversation with these types of clients.”

“I know this is terribly left-field,” Barbara broke in. “But I always feel so sorry for Nobu at the end.”

“So do I!” Tatsu agreed enthusiastically. “Sometimes, I just want to smack Chiyo and say ‘forget the Chairman! Nobu-san is right there waiting for you!’ Maybe it’s because I’m too into Beauty & the Beast--”

“You like Beauty & the Beast!?” Barbara exclaimed.

“Love it!” Tatsu grinned.

The two exploded into an energetic back-and-forth over different adaptations. At first, Clark was amused at their enthusiasm. After a couple of minutes, however, he began feeling the words melt into noise which threatened to overtake his senses.

Bruce was at his side immediately, guiding him to scent.
Barbara and Tatsu stopped talking, looking towards Clark, as was everyone at the table. “What happened?” Tatsu whispered to Jason.

Jason patted her arm. “Sometimes too much sound overwhelms him.” Jason whispered back. “He’ll be okay in a minute.” Sure enough, a few moments later, Clark’s breathing softened, and Bruce pulled back, locking eyes with him, but still with a hand on his shoulder and the other arm around his back. “Alright?”

“Alright.” Clark nodded, then faced the others, but quickly dropped his gaze to his plate. “I’m sorry to have disturbed everyone.” “It’s okay, Clark.” Barbara assured him as his mother rubbed his forearm.

“My mother isn’t too good with noise, either.” Tatsu said quietly. “His brother ran with a bad crowd after grandfather died, and it made things at home difficult. That’s why, after my parents married, they left Japan, along with my grandmother. My grandmother says he thanks God every day for having sent a good Alpha for my mother.”

Everyone settled back quietly to dinner, eventually bringing up more subdued conversation, broken off in pairs. Though the quieter tone was easier, Clark was inwardly kicking himself for having brought down the mood.

You just make everyone upset by acting up this way.

Clark tensed as Lex’s words went through his head. This is why I can’t take you out, Omega. Such childish nonsense won’t do in public…

Clark fought to go to his place where everything was quiet and then his Alpha would praise him for being good. It wasn’t working.

Why can’t I be good? What’s going on?

Maybe I should make you sit in the corner. If you’re gonna act like a pup, I guess I should treat you like one.

The dining room melted away, and Clark could see Lex standing in front of him. Please. Please no.

Or maybe you just need to be given something to do. Is that why you’re acting out? Because you’re bored?

Clark whimpered as Lex approached him.

You’re bored, so you can help me feel better; you’re the one who caused this upsetting mess,
after all. You want to help your Alpha, don’t you?

Lex unzipped his fly as he drew closer.

*I’m sorry, Alpha.*

**Kneel, Omega.**

Clark felt himself drop to his knees.

**Now open your mouth.**

*Clark.*

Everything froze around him as the new voice broke through.

*Shh, Clark. You’re safe.*

*Bruce?*

*He wants you to talk to him.*

*Bruce isn’t my Alpha. I have to listen to my Alpha.*

*He’s the Alpha who’s helping you with your pup. He’s the Alpha who’s opened his home to you. He’s the Alpha who makes you feel better. He wants you to talk to him.*

**Clark, come back.**

The images around him faded to black,

*He’s helping you right now.*

**Clark, it’s okay.**

*Smells so nice. Feels so warm and safe.*

“Clark? Are you back with us?”

Clark tentatively opened his eyes.

He was on a sofa in the lounge, cradled in Bruce’s lap. His mother was holding his hand, kneeling on the floor next to him.

Clark looked at his mother, registered her tear-tracks and trembling lip.

He locked eyes with Bruce. His concern was etched into his face by how pale and taut he looked.

**Clark, you need to say it. You know what happened was wrong.**

Harley’s voice.

“I think Lex hurt me.” The words hadn’t finished leaving his mouth before he tried to curl in on himself, a sobbing mess.

Bruce held him close, rubbing his arm and shoulder. Martha stood and enclosed him from the other
side, kissing his hair.
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Clark has an appointment with Harley, and realises just how close he and Damian have become. He finds out why it took him so long to get pregnant, which leads to Bruce teaching him how to throw a punch.

Chapter Notes

Warning for descriptions of past sexual abuse.

Remember to check out my Photobucket Album and please throw in suggestions for characters not yet featured.

ottertrashpalace is my awesome beta reader! *hugs and kisses*

Hit me up on tumblr @Chrisx1987

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Is this what I’ve been living?

A nightmare wrapped in a dream?

But the dream was never real.

The nightmare all too solid.

I can’t wake up.

— How is this my life? by Clark Kent

Bruce had tried to suggest that any overnight stays (aside from Martha) be issued rainchecks, but Clark said it wasn’t necessary, given the size of the house. He did, however, retreat to the spare bed in Bruce’s room. Damian joined him, armed with Bat-bear, refusing to leave his side.

Martha brought him his nest materials from his other bed, with the exception of Lex’s things.

Breakfast was delivered by Tatsu the next morning.

Jason stayed by the door, while she walked quietly to the bed with two parcels in hand; one for Clark, one for Damian. She had wrapped the breakfast in pastel-blue tissue paper, and when Clark opened it, saw that she had very carefully arranged the food inside a rectangular Tupperware container.

“It’s bento,” she explained. “In Japan, it’s considered a very important skill for an Omega to be able to arrange meals in a fancy way. This is basically an offering of friendship.” she gave him a shy
“Thank you.” he returned the smile, though it was tired and sad-looking by comparison.

Tatsu inclined her head and withdrew.

Cheesy omelette with mushrooms and green onions had been rolled and then cut into large pieces, arranged in layers on top of one another. Bacon strips had been folded around each piece to look like a gift ribbon and then fried to seal. Sausage ends had somehow been made to look like small, four-tentacled octopi.

The jewel of the lot was the fruit.

Tatsu had made a little teddy bear out of various pieces of cut fruit, nestled on a bed of honey-flavoured greek yogurt.

Clark tried not to feel too bad about eating the bear.

***

Bruce had called Harley. She was lucid, being at the tail end of her heat, but still not a hundred percent. She talked with Bruce and Clark for a bit, and moved their appointment to Monday morning.

Clark stayed bundled in his nest except for meals and bathroom breaks. Damian stayed with him, patient. When Clark needed it, they cuddled. When he didn’t, Damian stayed to one side of the bed, allowing Clark to fold in on himself.

Bruce checked on them every hour. Sometimes Martha was sitting with him, his head in her lap as she softly scratched at his scalp. Sometimes Clark wordlessly asked Bruce for scenting, just letting out a whimper which pierced Bruce’s heart every time.

“It’s a good sign.” Harley had told Bruce over the phone. “I was worried he might push you away for a while. The fact that you two connected before his realisation must’ve helped. He’ll probably be more fearful of strange Alphas for a while, though. Be mindful of this if he wants to go out.”

When Bruce emerged from his ensuite that night, ready for bed, Clark silently asked for scenting once more. Damian also scented Bruce goodnight, then clung to Clark as they settled down for sleep.

***

The next morning Bruce sat with Clark for scenting for a few minutes before heading down to breakfast.

Martha sighed as she saw Bruce arrive in the dining room alone.

“He still won’t talk about it?”

“His image of his mate has just taken a serious hit.” Bruce said as he sat down. “Harley said she’s surprised it happened so quickly. It’s still going to be a rough ride. But the biggest hurdle was always going to be getting him to see. He’s seen. Now he has to come to terms with it.”

Martha delivered Clark and Damian’s breakfast that time.

“It’s good to see you’re still hungry.” Martha told him as he chewed on some bacon, the last morsel from his dish.
“I’m not.” Clark told her in a muted tone after he swallowed, the plate clear. “I don’t want something to happen to my pup.”

Martha rubbed his back.

“Why would he do it, momma?” Clark asked, staring at his plate.

“Do what?” she asked, though she was sure of the answer.

“He made me afraid and sad. I thought he loved me.” Silent tears began to trickle down his cheeks.

“And he probably did, Clark. At first. But somewhere along the way, that changed.”

“I don’t even know what I did.” Clark whimpered.

The words cut through Martha’s heart like a whip.

“Listen to me, Clark.” she took his face in both her hands, making him look at her. “You didn’t do anything wrong. People should never treat others like that. Ever. This is his fault, not yours.”

“Some people decide to do bad things.” Damian said softly, causing Clark and Martha to turn to him. “And it’s nobody’s fault but theirs.”

“But he didn’t start like that.” Clark continued to whimper through his tears. “He was kind and sweet and—” he dissolved into sobs.

Martha pulled him into her lap, the plate falling to the floor, thankfully landing unbroken on the plush carpet.

“What did I do!” he cried.

Martha cried quietly along with him.

“You didn’t do anything, Clark. Not a damn thing.”

She motioned for Damian to go. The pup picked up his own plate, as well as Clark’s fallen plate and fork before leaving the room.

“I must’ve done something! I must’ve been bad! When I’m bad I can’t go out! He-- he--”

Clark couldn’t continue, crying too hard to speak.

When he quieted enough that Martha thought he might hear her, she said:

“Even when a pup disobeys their parents, they should never be punished in a way that makes them feel afraid. They just need to be shown the right way. Lex making you afraid, making you do things you didn’t want to do, that wasn’t love. As soon as you didn’t feel happy with what he was doing, it was wrong.”

“But why did he do it?” Clark asked between sobs.

“No one can answer that, Clark.” she leaned forward to kiss his hair. “But it wasn’t your fault. Remember that.”

Clark continued to sob in his mother’s lap.
Monday morning brought with it a bit more energy, only because three of the permanent residents of the manor and two of their guests had to get ready for school (college for Barbara). Damian was very resistant to leaving Clark’s side.

“But he’s still sad!” Damian argued with Alfred, his tiny arms around Clark’s shoulders. “I can’t leave him while he’s still sad!”

Clark brought Damian into his lap and held him close, before speaking gently near his ear, his throat squeezing with emotion, but he pushed himself to get the words out as level as he could.

“Damian, I’m going to go talk with Harley today so she can help me sort everything out. Something that would help me, is if you go to school, try to have the best day you can, and then tell me all about it when you get home. I won’t be alone. My mom and your dad are going to be with me.”

Damian’s lip trembled, but he nodded and kissed Clark’s cheek.

“Can I still eat breakfast with you?” he asked.

Clark glanced up to Alfred, who nodded, understanding.

“I’ll return with trays for you both.” he said before leaving.

Damian nuzzled against the side of Clark’s neck.

“I love you.” the pup told him without hesitation. “I hope Harley can help you. But let me help too, okay?”

Clark felt a wave of fresh tears overtake him, but he just buried his nose into Damian’s hair and held him tighter.

“I love you, too.” he responded. Because, damn it, on top of everything, Clark had developed a very deep affection for the boy. There was no denying it. He had wanted pups since he had started making extra money puppy-sitting for his neighbours. Now he had one on the way, but he felt so much like Damian was his, too. He knew it wasn’t right; Damian was Bruce’s and Clark wasn’t going to be staying.

But Damian had reached out to him and opened his heart in that effortless way which pups do. Clark felt like a mess for not being able to keep things together, wanting to somehow shield Damian from the mess of his head. But he also wouldn’t give up having him nearby when the hurt was too much for anything.

Please, no matter what happens: just let me be able to continue being in his life somehow.

Clark forced himself to be showered and dressed in time to bid Damian goodbye by carrying him to the car and buckling him in himself. They shared one last hug, Damian kissing Clark’s cheek again, before Clark pulled back and shut the car door. He stepped back as Alfred pulled away, and Damian waved sadly.

Bruce watched the exchange and felt a lurch as he followed Clark and Martha (who was holding hands with Clark) back inside.
Damian wouldn’t do well when Clark had to leave.

And yet Bruce’s hindbrain held hope that it wouldn’t happen. Even during this time when Clark was feeling incredibly low, he had put Damian first. He was clearly just as attached to the pup as Damian was to him.

And he hadn’t turned Bruce away for scenting, which was something Harley had warned might happen when he realised what Lex had been doing.

*Mate loves pup loves mate help mate* his hindbrain chanted.

But Clark wasn’t his mate. He had no right to even try approaching him after what he had been through.

*Maybe one day?*

Someday. Someday when Clark was better and had become independent again and had his life together. Not while Bruce was technically in a position of power. He was a support Alpha, a caregiver. And he had no right to put Clark into that position.

*Harley stayed with Pam.*

*Alice stayed with Edward.*

*No.* He firmly told himself. Just because they and others happened to work out didn’t give him any right.

Because Clark was beautiful and loving and smart and had been betrayed in the worst kind of way by someone who should have loved him. And Bruce had no right to just swoop in while he was at his most vulnerable.

***

Clark sat cross-legged in the blue recliner, his hands in his lap.

Harley waited for a while to see if he would start on his own, but Clark didn’t seem to be able to broach it himself.

“You remembered something.” It wasn’t a question.

Clark shook his head.

“I never forgot. But, I saw it differently.”

“What was it?”

Clark hesitated. He shut his eyes, and began to speak.

He told her everything. Once he’d started, it was like he couldn’t stop, until it was all coming out.

How Lex had slowly isolated him until he no longer left the penthouse. How he was expected to let Lex manipulate his body to use as he saw fit. How empty and miserable he felt every time because Lex always made sure he was slick and that he came, so that Clark thought something was wrong with him because if he really didn’t want it, how could he be having orgasms?

The first time. The first time Clark hadn’t wanted to have sex but Lex did it anyway.
“We’d been drinking. Lex had gotten some absinthe. I didn’t like it much, because it tasted like black liquorice, but he insisted. I was feeling sluggish and slow. I went to bed to sleep it off. Lex came in after me. I think I tried to stop him, but I had no coordination. I cried when it was over, but he told me I was just confused because of the absinthe.”

“You came so hard, Clark.” Lex had told him. “You’re just confused because you’re drunk. I know my mate. You wanted this.”

“He said I had to have wanted it, because I wouldn’t have come otherwise. That as my Alpha, he knows when I want him.” Clark started crying as his story reached its end. Harley handed him the box of tissues.

“But you felt bad every time.” Harley concluded once he’d quieted some.

Clark could only nod.

“Clark, the genitals and surrounding areas have very sensitive nerves and nerve endings. Through touch, a person can be made to feel pleasure in these areas. Even if a person doesn’t want to do a sexual act, if someone is touching these areas, the person’s body will still experience pleasure. Just because Lex was able to bring you to orgasm, doesn’t change the fact that this was a violation.”

Clark nodded, tears still streaming down his cheeks.

“I-- I get what you’re saying, but…”

“You’ve been so used to following what he said, that even though you know better, you’re having trouble accepting it.”

He nodded again.

“You said you saw a memory differently. What do you think brought this on?”

Flashes of thought, disjointed images flitted through his head.

“I think it was mostly Bruce.” Clark said. “He’s so good with his pups. And Jason is really nice, too. And Barbara with Dick. And Dick is allowed to go drinking with his friends if he wants and Bruce doesn’t try telling him stuff like it’s dangerous for an Omega by himself. And when I get sad they don’t tell me I’m acting like a pup, they just try to help me. And having everyone around me saying the opposite of what Lex told me. It’s like, I started to think differently about things, and then when I remembered Lex telling me to not act like a pup, this time, it was like I finally saw. Why would he tell me these things if he loved me, when everyone else tries to help me?"

He paused. Harley waited.

“At first I thought I must have done something wrong, if he didn’t love me anymore. But mom told me that nothing I did should make someone act like Lex had. So now, I just wonder why? If he didn’t love me anymore, why did he keep me? Why not just divorce me instead of…” he stopped again.

“Because abusers enjoy the power.” Harley told him frankly. “Lex had a multi-billion corporation and everything he could possibly want. But to be able to force someone to obey them who was not an employee, to have complete control over that person’s life, that would have been a power trip for him.”

Clark’s sobs increased and decreased, back and forth.
“There’s no easy way to say it, Clark. Maybe he did love you at first. Maybe he never stopped thinking he loved you, but it turned into ownership. He wanted you to be his, completely, and so he did things to make sure you wouldn’t leave. And because you belonged to him, he used you. But Clark,”

He looked up as she laid her hand on his arm.

“This isn’t your fault. He did bad things. And now that you’re able to see that, I can help you to recover from it, if you’ll let me.”

Clark nodded.

“I--” Clark stopped.

“What is it, Clark?” Harley urged him.

“Would he have changed, if I would have been able to get pregnant sooner?”

Harley closed her eyes, almost like she was in pain, then opened them again.

“Clark, that wasn’t your fault.”

“But as his mate, I was supposed to be able to--”

“No, Clark. It really wasn’t your fault.”

Harley brought her soft briefcase into her lap, ruffled through it, then pulled out a small stack of papers. She held onto them, hands shaking before handing them to Clark.

“Lex had obtained a prescription for birth control injectors for you; probably used them when you were sleeping. Normally, a physician should see the Omega for a full examination before issuing them, but money talks and Lex knew how to find a doctor that wouldn’t question why an Alpha was getting these without his mate present.”

Clark barely understood the words as they swam in front of him, but he was able to see that this went back years.

Lex hadn’t wanted him to be pregnant.

He’d just wanted to keep him there, and…

Clark couldn’t finish the thought.

“I think I’d like to go for today.” he said quietly.

“Okay, Clark. If you’re sure?” Harley asked him, concerned.

“I’m sure.”

***

Martha offered to stay at the manor longer, which Bruce was perfectly willing to accept, but Clark ended up asking her not to.

“You need to work, mom. I can’t keep asking you to take time off for me. I need to know you’ll come back in two weeks like before. For years, I wanted to see you and couldn’t. I need us to be
able to say goodbye, knowing you’ll be back."

Martha nodded and pulled him into a hug.

“You’ll get through this, Clark.”

Clark could only nod before scenting her.

***

Halfway back to the manor, Bruce became aware of the scent of angry Omega. He turned his gaze slightly to look briefly at Clark, who had his elbow on the armrest, using his arm to prop his head up as he looked out the window. His other hand was cradled almost protectively around his belly.

Harley had texted Bruce to warn him that Clark now knew about the contraceptives; he was pretty sure of the source of Clark’s anger.

It was somewhat of a shock to smell, because even though Clark had had moments where he was frustrated with himself before, this was the first time Bruce had ever known him to be truly angry.

“Clark?”

“Mm?”

“Did you want to stop somewhere?”

“Mm-mm.”

“Do you want to talk about it?”

“No.”

Bruce took a deep breath and let it out through his nose slowly.

“Let me know if that changes.”

“Mm-hmm.”

When they got to the manor, Clark was out of the car as soon as it was in park, but before Bruce turned off the engine.

Bruce followed him inside.

“Clark, are you sure you don’t want to talk?” Bruce asked as he walked behind him. “Is there nothing I can do to help?”

“Not unless you can find some way to turn back the clock and tell teenage me that if ever life looks like it’s turning into a fairy tale he should probably remember that most fairy tales involve the character going through hell before they get a happy ending.” Clark sounded like he was trying not to shout.

“Okay, hang on.” Bruce finally caught up and stopped Clark with a hand on his shoulder. Clark turned and the glare on his face made Bruce let go, holding his hands up.

“May I make a suggestion?”

Clark sighed heavily.
“Sure.”

“I may not be able to fly around the world to make it turn back on itself until we can fix our mistakes, but I think I know something that can help to ease your stress now.”

“Tea?” Clark asked, unimpressed.

“Tea later. Follow me.”

Clark trailed after Bruce as he led him down the hall to the grandfather clock. Bruce opened the switch, then stepped aside to let Clark go first.

“Letting yourself physically express your stress can help you to get it out of your system and then you’ll have more focus to be able to deal with the problems causing your stress in a constructive way. It’s not for everyone, but, you’ll never know until you try, right?”

Bruce had come to stand next to one of the punching bags as he spoke. He now waited for Clark’s answer.

“So, I’m gonna punch my way out of this?”

Bruce shrugged.

“You think about the things that are making you angry, and then take it out on the bag.”

Clark let out a heavy sigh.

“Okay.”

Bruce stepped away from the bag and towards the shelves on the wall. He took something from them, then turned back to Clark.

He held out a roll of tape and another of gauze, trying to hand them to Clark, but Clark didn’t take them.

“Um…” he hesitated.

Bruce gestured for him to follow him to a bench and sit beside him.

“Here, give me your hand.” Clark held his left hand out to Bruce. “The tape and gauze will support the alignment of your joints so that you don’t hurt yourself.”

He wrapped the gauze carefully and securely around Clark’s hand. When he finished taping it off, Clark held his right hand up, and Bruce wrapped it, as well.

Bruce led Clark back to the bag, then smacked it.

“Don’t hold back.” he stepped aside to give Clark room.

Clark took a few rapid breaths, then punched.

Pa-pa-paf!

He felt ridiculous.

Pa-pouf!
A bit better.

Clark threw several punches in rapid succession.

“Stop.” Bruce told him, stepping back into view. “How do you feel?”

“I think it’s working?” Clark said, uncertain.

“Okay. Let’s work on your stance, now.”

Bruce helped him form his fists better, place his legs so he would be more steady on his feet, and place his fists in front of himself for better blocking.

“A stronger punch involves your whole body. Push with your legs, and push your upper body forward as you swing. The power should push from your shoulder through your arm to your fist.”

Bruce stepped back again.

Clark positioned himself, and punched.

It felt stronger. He punched again.

Bruce watched as Clark punched the bag repeatedly, his stance improving as he went.

Clark was attacking it, becoming red in the face as he increased in ferocity.

After several minutes, Clark took a lunge towards the bag, an angry yell ripping from his throat as he collided with it. He stood leaning heavily against the bag as he broke down, gradually sliding his way down to the floor, his breathing heavy and choppy from the effort of the punching and his sobs.

Bruce approached him slowly, gently placing his hand on Clark’s shaking shoulder. Clarke leaned his head against Bruce’s arm.

***

Nearly a half-hour later, Bruce and Clark were sitting at the kitchen table, the Omega holding a cup of tea between his clasped hands, his eyes puffy and red from crying.

“You know,” Bruce said after a while. “Harley had warned me that when you became aware of the abuse, that you might not want to be around me for a while, and that I should be ready to give you space.”

Clark frowned as he drank his tea.

“You smell safe. And you never hurt me. And you’re good to your boys. If anything, it’s thanks to being around you that I was finally able to see. Besides, I need your scent so that I don’t go into heat.”

Bruce was taken aback at how simple Clark made it sound.

“I’m glad. You smell nice, too.” he sighed. “When I hear about Alphas hurting Omegas, it makes me feel kind of ashamed just being the same presentation. So I’m really glad you still want to be near me.”

“Don’t feel ashamed because of them.” Clark said. “You’re a good Alpha. You can be an example to show how Alphas should be. Jason’s a good Alpha, too. You did a good job raising him. All of
them."

“I tried, anyway. I’ve had days where I’ve wondered. But then I see the way Damian is with the pups at the clinic that he knows need help, and the way he gravitated towards you so fast. I look at how Jason thought nothing of standing up for those that needed help at his school; the way that Dick never misses out on an opportunity to help at the clinic, even goes above and beyond most of the time. And Tim, well, he doesn’t socialise, much; not offline, anyway. But he’s never intentionally hurt anybody. And when he does go to the clinic, he lights right up working with the pups.”

Bruce took a deep breath.

“I guess I’ve mostly just tried to lead by example and hoped for the best.”

“Well, it was a good example.”

“Alfred helped a good deal in that regard. I wasn’t the easiest pup to raise. And while I was never like Digger, lack of consent always was a turnoff, I spent way too many years letting my knot call the shots.”

“Doesn’t sound like you.” Clark frowned again.

“Try Googling me sometime. Actually, don’t; the drunk antics I used to get up to are enough to make me want to take my younger self by the wrist and say ‘listen here, you little shit.’”

Clark giggled as he drank some more tea, causing Bruce to smile.

“So what made you change?” Clark asked, his cup now empty.

“Selena Kyle.”

“You’re telling me it was the power of love?”

“Cliché, I know, but it’s the truth. She was the opposite of any Omega I had known before, and she didn’t take any crap. She was the one who got me to start doing charity work.”

“How come you guys broke up?”

Bruce sighed.

“She wasn’t the kind to settle down. Neither was I, at the time, though we were each other’s first relationship that lasted more than a couple of weeks. We stayed together for six months. And then I signed up to be a support Alpha. I requested at first that my scent only be shared with pups, which I think they would have done anyway, given my playAlpha past. They lifted it after Jason and lots of volunteer hours at the clinic.”

“So did you support any adult Omegas before?” Clark asked.

Bruce shook his head. “Only pups. All three of which I adopted. You’re the first adult who responded to my scent.”

Clark hummed.

“I don’t know if I would’ve been able to adjust as effectively if they hadn’t been here, to be honest.” Clark said after a while. “The idea of being alone with a strange Alpha terrified me when Harley first told me about it. I only went through with it because I wanted to keep my pup safe. Even though meeting everyone was overwhelming at first, it made things easier, knowing there would be other
people. Now, part of me know you would never do anything, but--”

Clark stopped, breathing rapidly through his nose.

“It’s just that Lex had started out so perfect,” Clark blurted before he could stop himself. “And it’s like even though I know you wouldn’t hurt me, it’s like there’s this dread that even this is going to blow up in my face, and how am I supposed to be a mom when my head’s all messed up and--”
Clark slammed his fist on the table, trying to diffuse his tension. He didn’t start crying again, but his breathing became choppy.

Bruce gently laid his hand on Clark’s.

“You’ll be a great mother, Clark. I know because you already are. You’ve been absolutely wonderful with Damian and he adores you. Your pup is going to grow up knowing so much love.”

“It doesn’t bother you that he spends so much time with me?”

“Clark, he’s been so happy having you around. And as your support Alpha, why would I disapprove of something which is clearly helping you?”

Bruce left out that seeing the two of them interacting was also something his hindbrain thoroughly approved of.

“Does that mean, after my pup is born and I have to leave, I could still visit Damian?”

Matelovespuplovesmatelovespup his hindbrain chanted happily.

“Of course, Clark. In any case, no one said you have to leave after your pup is born. You can stay as long as you like.”

“Thank you.” Clark whispered, relieved.

Bruce gave his hand a squeeze.

“I’ll make us some lunch.”

***

When he got off the bus later that day, Damian ran all the way to the manor, through the door, and then straight to Clark. The Omega was waiting in the hall, and bent to his knees to receive Damian in a squeezing hug.

“My teacher told us to make a Halloween card for our parents. I made one for father and one for you, too.” Damian said quickly while still next to Clark’s ear.

Clark let Damian pull away to remove his backpack. He reached in and pulled out a folded piece of black construction paper, which he handed to Clark. On the front were several stickers of pumpkins and ghosts, with the word BOO! made from orange construction paper glued in the middle. Clark opened it to reveal a piece of plain white paper glued to the inside. On the left in pup cursive were the words ‘May Halloween lift your Spirits’ with a ghost made from off-white construction paper attached to a rectangle of black construction paper glued below. On the right was a drawing Damian had made which could not be mistaken for anything other than The Cat In The Hat, holding the hand of Thing 1, with a circle on the Cat’s belly with the red and blue Thing colours labelled Thing 2.

Clark felt a lump form in his throat as he pulled Damian into his arms again.
“I love it.” he said. “Thank you.”

Clark stood to let Damian take off his boots which he by the entrance. Clark helped him get his coat up onto a hangar in the large closet.

“I’ll go get my slippers.” Damian told him. “What do you want to do after?”

“Like we always do.” Clark told him without hesitating. “I’m going to help you with your homework, and after dinner we’ll work on our costumes.”

“Really?” Damian asked him, probably happier at the idea of working on costumes than on homework.

Clark gave him a small smile. “Sometimes, being sad the way I get means I don’t feel like doing anything. But right now I’m in a place where I feel like doing nothing would make me feel worse.” He took a deep breath before continuing. “Right now, I feel like if I do nothing, it would mean that my Alpha is still hurting me even though he’s gone. That doesn’t work for everyone all the time, but, it’s how I feel right now. I want to do something that’s made me happy before, to show myself that I can get better. Because if I just stopped doing everything, it would mean he wins.”

Damian nuzzled Clark’s palm until Clark pet him back.

“I’ll help you win.” he declared.

Clark smiled a little wider.

“Thanks, buddy.”

Chapter End Notes

I chose absinthe very deliberately. Can anyone guess why?
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Clark attends a support group, then the press show up.

Chapter Notes

Warning for descriptions of past domestic abuse and teen sexual abuse.

Yay to everyone who guessed correctly that I selected absinthe because of its green colour, which is also the colour of Kryptonite. Not as obvious was back in chapter 2 when I mentioned through a flashback that Clark's engagement ring had emeralds, the picture of which I imagine it looking on the Photobucket Album.

How blind I have been?

To have not seen the source of my pain?

How dark was this cavern?

That you so easily kept me in?

How could I stand still?

While you took and pushed away everything?

How could I not realise?

That in return you gave me nothing?

— *This Emptiness Inside* by Clark Kent

Thursday evening, by Harley’s recommendation, Clark attended a support group of abuse victims, accompanied by Bruce. Harley told him he didn’t have to say anything unless he wanted to, but that attending and hearing others would help him.

Harley was there, along with Pam. There were some Betas and Alphas there, as well. Some were there to support their Omega partners, but, as Clark discovered, two of the Alphas present were victims themselves.

“I thought I couldn’t leave because of my daughter.” The Alpha named Floyd started. He was dark-haired, with a square face. His right eye was milky in colour, sightless.
"I thought if I left, she’d be stuck with her mother, and I wouldn’t be able to protect her. The courts are often skewed in the mother’s favour. I mean, I know it’s better than just giving the say to the dad. I know that. But I didn’t think I stood a chance if I tried to go through the courts. So I stayed. Been messed up since my service was up, I had so much trouble holding down a job."

He stopped, taking a shaky breath.

“One night, Zoe had knocked over the end table. Broke the lamp on it. And Susan grabbed the baseball bat. She’d used it on me a few times, but this was the first time she went after Zoe.” Tears had begun streaming down his cheeks. “I didn’t think, I just stood in front of her, and told her she could hit me all she wanted, but to leave Zoe alone. So she started bashing me with it. She knocked me to the ground when she got me in the head.” he held his hand to his blind eye. “And I didn’t see Zoe run.” he paused, clenching his jaw.

“I always kept my old service pistol locked up, ’cause I didn’t want Zoe hurtin’ herself with it. But she managed to open up the cabinet. The next thing I knew, between hits, there was a bang and then Susan fell to the floor. Zoe had fallen back from the recoil, ’cause she was so small. She was just lookin’ like she couldn’t deal. When the cops showed up, I told them I did it. I said I shot her, ’cause she was gonna hurt my little girl.” he laughed again.

“But this one cop, he din’t believe it. He got someone to run fingerprints. He saw how beat up I was, and knew somethin’ was wrong. When they matched Zoe’s prints, he promised she wouldn’t be in trouble. He got me set up in an Alpha shelter that accepts pups. They helped me find a job and an apartment.”

“So, you’d think, now that she’s dead and I still got my lil’ girl, it’d be unicorns and rainbows. But, it’s like Susan’s still in my head. Every piece of crap she fed me in the three years since I got discharged, it still plays in my head. Not all the time, but it’s there. Things like tellin’ me how I ain’t good enough for my job, for Zoe, how I’m a deadbeat and everyone would be better off without me. Because without her, what am I? Well, some days it’s easy to ignore the voice, sometimes not. But the one constant has been Zoe. Keeping her safe, keeping her happy. The doc says she doesn’t remember it, not really. Sometimes she asks me, ‘Mommy’s never coming to hurt you again, right?’”

He swallowed. “The first time she asked that, I realised she was aware of all of it. Fuck, how much she saw, because I didn’t leave before, because I thought I was protecting her by staying. So now, I guess I’m tryin’ to make up for lost time.”

There was silence for a few moments.

“Everything’s been a process, but it’s been gettin’ better.” he was smiling through his tears now.

“Zoe turned eleven last week, so, before she started school this year, I wrote her up a Hogwarts letter and got all kinds of neat stuff so it’d be like she’s takin’ a correspondence course. Even got her a kitten. Then I signed her up for that Pottermore site. She was so excited. Every time I see her smile, it’s like the world doesn’t exist, ‘cause my lil’ girl is happy, and that’s all that matters. She’s what keeps me goin’.” Floyd sat down.

Clark ran his hand on his belly, slowly but surely getting bigger.

Happy pup.

Happy pup was an amazing scent; he knew from his cuddles with Damian that it was probably one of the best scents in the world, not to mention how one smile from the pup could probably melt Mount Everest.
He would do whatever it took to make his pup happy.

His pup would know the love Lex had denied him, further fueled by the fact that if Lex had had his way, his pup wouldn’t be.

He tried to picture the tiny life gestating in his womb, floating in a warm, watery sac, blissfully unaware of what was going on in the world.

He felt a deep affection towards it. He knew he’d do anything for it.

Clark gasped aloud.

“Clark, are you okay?” Bruce whispered urgently, worried.

“I’m fine, it’s just--” he stopped as he felt it again.

Harley, who was sitting near him with Pam, turned to look in his direction, a concerned frown on her face.

He took Bruce’s hand and placed it on the side of his belly.

“Right here.” Clark said, feeling his throat swell with emotion.

He and Bruce held still. It was a few seconds before he felt it again.

Bruce’s eyes widened, his features afterward softening into a smile.

“Wow.” he whispered. “Hello to you, too, pup.”

Clark didn’t feel like he was going to cry, though his eyes did water.

He looked up to meet Bruce’s gaze, but Bruce was looking at his belly where his hands were, waiting for another kick; his expression was one of pure awe.

Clark felt like he would cry, then.

\textit{Shit, when did this happen?} He asked himself as he felt his heart swell.

He wasn’t ready for another relationship. But, in that moment, he realised that somewhere along the way his heart had decided all on its own that it was in love with Bruce Wayne, and his head was only now catching up.

But would Bruce feel that way about him?

\textit{Gorgeous Alpha, great with pups, he’s been the absolute best to you. What’s stopping you?}

\textit{He has to be nice with me. I’m not saying he’d be like Lex if left to his own devices, but as my support Alpha he has to follow certain rules.}

\textit{Like kissing owwies better?}

\textit{Shut up. Besides, we’ve been down this road: why would the head of a multi-billion corporation be interested in a farm boy? Because I’m a sucker, apparently. Bruce wouldn’t do that, which means he’s got no interest in me beyond helping me get better.}

The fact of the matter was, even if Bruce was interested, Clark wasn’t ready to dive into another
relationship. He’d allowed his independence to be stripped from him. His education stopped with a decade-old high school diploma, and he had no work experience beyond farming, puppy-sitting, and odd jobs. He needed to fix that. He wasn’t sure where he was going to start, but he knew he needed to get his shit together if he was going to be any kind of example for his pup; he couldn’t live off his mother forever.

Even as he told himself this, he knew it wasn’t going to be easy. The kind of lapse he’d had on the weekend, he knew it would happen again.

He could have a flashback again.

“Clark?”

He turned to Bruce.

“Are you okay?” he whispered.

Clark nodded.

“Just… a lot of stuff on my mind.”

“Did you want to go?”

Clark shook his head.

“I’m okay."

He returned his attention to the front of the room where another Alpha (Eddie, Clark reminded himself), the one leading the meeting, had been speaking.

“The important thing that we all keep in mind, is that it’s not our fault. The only one at fault, ever, is the one committing the abuse. Whether it’s physical, or psychological.”

Eddie was tall, skinny, and wore thick-rimmed glasses. They reminded Clark of the glasses he used to wear before Lex got him to go for LASIK. Lex had surprised him with the appointment as a birthday present.

That was one of the earliest instances Clark could remember that Lex coaxed him into doing something he didn’t want. The very idea of going for the surgery scared the crap out of him (lasers on his eyeballs? No thank you!). But Lex wore him down. Promised him he’d be getting the procedure done by the best surgeon Lex could afford (which basically meant the best in the world), and that he’d take good care of him while his eyes healed.

He had to admit, not needing to wear glasses was less hassle, but that was one more thing in which he hadn’t really had say, because Lex had already made up his mind.

He missed his glasses.

He wondered if his pup would need glasses.

He hoped so.

“Alice,” Eddie continued, gently. “You said you wanted to say a few words today?”

A slight, blonde Omega girl stood, only a few spots away from Clark. She was trembling as she went to stand where Eddie was.
“My father passed when I was small, and my mother didn’t feel she could care for me on her own. When I was twelve, she sent me to live with her brother.” Alice shut her eyes, her chin trembling harder.

Eddie placed a hand on her shoulder. She flinched before relaxing, placing her hand on his.

“I had presented before going to live with him. At first, he left me alone. Seemed like he only wanted to help me. Got me toys.” Her voice broke on the last word. She gripped Eddie’s hand harder.

“To use during my heats, he’d said.” she was crying, but determined to go on. “One day, one of my friends at school showed me a clip from a video. It was black and white and grainy, so that you couldn’t recognise my face easily, but I recognised my bedroom.” She sobbed for a bit before continuing.

“My friend warned me that people were already talking. I skipped the rest of the day, knowing my uncle would be away at work. I found the camera, and ripped it out of the wall.”

She was crying harder, unable to go on. Eddie helped her sit down. He whispered something to her, and she nodded.

“Alice has given me permission to tell the rest of the story.” Eddie said, silent tears streaming down his cheeks. “She never returned to school after that, because when she confronted her uncle, he used his Voice and Alpha strength to shackle her to her bed. She was thirteen, and he kept her there for two years, before her friend from school finally found a police officer willing to take him seriously enough to investigate. Jervis Tetch was sentenced to life imprisonment, but the only reason he got the maximum was because of the video evidence and her age at the time.” Eddie took a deep breath.

“Not all of them get sent to prison. The older the victim, the less society seems to blame the abuser and instead we enter the realm of blaming the victim. A sixteen year-old Omega was once deemed by a judge to have not been raped because her rapist had made her orgasm.”

Though his gut had been wrenching throughout Alice’s story, Clark felt something clench anew at the mention of this; he knew what it was to have one’s body forced to feel things he didn’t want.

“When an Alpha is in any way sexually abused, they’re often not believed because Alphas are supposed to want sex. Omegas are deemed responsible for being in situations where an assault could occur. And because society perpetuates these beliefs, it’s all-too common for the victims to blame themselves, as well. The very important message I want all of you to leave with here, today, is that it was not your fault. No matter what the situation was, as soon as you were not okay with it, it was the abuser who was at fault.” Eddie looked at his watch. “That’s our time for today. Please, enjoy the snacks.”

Clark couldn’t stand. Bruce placed a hand on his shoulder.

“Are you okay?”

He almost nodded, but stopped and shook his head instead.

“Do you want to leave?”

Clark shook his head again.

“Just sit for a bit.” he said quietly.

Bruce nodded and sat back, taking Clark’s hand.
Clark couldn’t fathom. Even before his situation, he’d known abuse took place, of course. But having a general knowledge that it existed and hearing first-hand accounts were very different things.

“Would you like some?”

Clark looked up to see Alice holding out a rather large piece of chocolate brownie for him on a napkin. Her smile was watery, but genuine.

“It’s salted caramel.” she said, pronouncing it ‘carmel’.

“Thank you.” Clark told her as he took it, smiling back, feeling a lump in his throat.

Eddie came to stand beside her.

“I don’t think we’ve met.” he said kindly. “I’m Eddie.”

“Clark.”

“I’m Alice.” she held her hand up in a small wave.

“This is Bruce.” he pointed behind him.

“Mr. Wayne is well-known to the group.” Eddie explained with a smile. “He often helps members in need of education and employment through his charities.”

Clark turned to look at Bruce, who shrugged modestly, even turning a little pink around the tips of his ears.

Their attention was drawn to a commotion at the door to the room.

“Excuse me.” Eddie said as he made his way there.

From what Clark could see, a blonde woman (he couldn’t tell her presentation from where he sat) was being denied entry to the room by Pam and Harley. Eddie reinforced this when he got there, but the woman seemed insistent on getting in.

“Clark.” Bruce said quietly. “Come this way.” he urged him to stand.

Already the Alphas present (minus Pam and Eddie) were quietly corralling the Omegas to the end of the room nearest the snack table, forming a protective guard around them, the few Betas acting as extra protection.

“Mr. Kent-Luthor!”

Clark looked up as the blonde woman had succeeded in getting past Eddie, Pam, and Harley, coming to a stop as close as she could get to him, holding out her cell phone.

“Do you have anything to say about the allegations that you and Bruce Wayne were secret lovers even before Lex’s death?”

Clark felt a flash of hot and cold panic rise inside him.

“Are you aware that, should these allegations be proven, you will be legally denied your inheritance?”

Clark was only vaguely aware of some of the Alphas, including Bruce, ganging up in front of her,
causing her to back up.

“This is a safe place for abuse victims.” Harley came up to her, hands on her hips, emanating an Alpha-like type of dominance. “NOT a source for your gossip column, Willis.”

“So you’re not denying that the rumours surrounding the true nature of Lex’s marriage to Clark?” she said, turning her phone to Harley.

“I’m saying that you try so hard to be the next Cat Grant, Leslie.” Harley told her firmly. “But even she has the decency not to outright attack trauma victims. The few times she has done pieces on victims, she has approached them respectfully and let them choose to come forward on their own terms, leaving the dirt-digging towards the dirty. You want a juicy piece? Go find one of the multitude of abusers who received shortened, if any, prison sentences, and ask them how they can sleep at night.”

Leslie Willis smirked at Harley, pressed a few buttons on her phone, and left, heels clicking obnoxiously as she practically strutted from the room.

Bruce turned to Clark and the others parted a path for him to approach. He took Clark gently by the shoulders.

“Clark? Can you hear me?”

Clark nodded weakly. Bruce helped him into a chair which someone else had brought.

“Do you want to leave?”

He nodded again.

“Okay, hang on a second.”

He walked to Eddie and exchanged a few hushed words before Eddie nodded and left the room.

Bruce cast a worried glance back at Clark. He was looking pale and shaky, barely holding himself in the wooden folding chair.

“Clark?” he approached gently, laying his right hand onto Clark’s left shoulder.

Clark grabbed onto his hand and let out a whimper.

Bruce came in closer and bent down to hold Clark to him for scenting.

Bruce could feel the tension easing from Clark as he scented, his breathing becoming more relaxed.

“The paps are blocking the entrance.” Eddie had returned. “I’ve called commissioner Gordon, but the police can only do so much. It’s a public building, they technically can’t tell them to leave, only keep them a certain distance from you when you try to get to your car.”

“What about the alley?” Bruce asked.

“Hang on.” Eddie went to one of the large windows and looked down. “It looks clear. But there’s still the matter of your car.”

“I know. Is there anyone who parked on the other side of the block?” he asked the room.

“I did.” said Floyd. “I always park a distance away from a building and walk around the block a few
times before I go inside.”

“Okay. Clark, I need you to let go for a minute.” Clark let go for Bruce to straighten up.

“Clark, we’re going to leave, now, but I need you to keep close and quiet, okay?” Clark nodded.

“Floyd’s going to come with us. He’s gonna help get us out.”

Another nod.

“Okay, let’s go.” He helped Clark stand, then handed him his jacket before putting on his own.

Bruce led them down the stairs and round to the back of the building, inside a large room which looked like it hadn’t had a fresh coat of paint since the seventies.

Bruce hit a switch under the dark wood panelling which took up the bottom half of the walls. There was a grinding sound and a click, and a door was suddenly visible. Bruce pushed it open, and the crisp fall air greeted them.

Floyd whistled.

“How’d you know that was there?”

“I’ve got experience dodging the paparazzi. I scope out buildings I’m going to be spending any length of time in. This place used to be a speakeasy."

“Wait here.” Bruce told Clark, leaning him against the wall, before ducking his head through the door; the sun had set long ago, being after nine o’clock in October. He looked both ways, then took Clark’s hand, reassuring him of his presence.

“Floyd,” Bruce addressed the other Alpha. “Can you pull your car up to the mouth of the other alley? Once we try to turn that corner, we might get spotted. They probably won’t pay you any attention, but if they see us, they’re going to come running.”

“You got it, Wayne.”

Floyd took off down the left side of the alley. Bruce watched as he looked to his left where one alley intersected the other, before taking off down the right.

Bruce waited, counting to sixty, mindful of Clark’s hand in his.

“Bruce, why do they think we’re lovers?” Clark’s voice sounded small.

“They don’t, not really. Stupid people just like having theories to gossip over. Come on, we better get to the mouth of the alley.”

Bruce tugged him gently along, closing the door behind them. The brick matched up perfectly.

“How long has this been going on?” Clark asked, sounding like he was on the verge of hysteria. “Has my name been in the papers all this time? Since Lex’s death? What the hell else have they been saying?”

Bruce was worried about how Clark’s voice was increasing in volume. They were at the corner now, backs to the wall. Bruce could see some police officers guarding the mouth of the alley on the end
opposite of where he meant to escape, some paps just beyond them; the other route was still empty, no sign of Floyd.

“Don’t worry about it, Clark.” Bruce told him. “We’ll get it sorted out.”

“I can’t, Bruce! What if they show up when I go to the clinic? At the manor? Dear God, what if they show up at Damian’s school—”

Bruce’s mind was a jumble of stupid-yesyummy-noidiot-more as he did the one thing he could think of to get Clark to shut up; he kissed him.

He held Clark gently so that he could break away if he tried, but clearly the intended shock factor which Bruce had been going for had temporarily paralysed him.

He was pressing his mouth to Clark’s for all of ten seconds, then let go and took in the wide-eyed expression on the Omega’s face.

“Sorry, but you were kind of freaking out. The traditional method of stopping hysterics is a hard smack, but I didn’t really want to do that.”

Clark nodded, disbelief still etched on his features. Bruce looked away to scope the alley again, yelling at himself in his head.

A white Corolla pulled up down the right-hand side, passenger-side closest to them, and the automatic window rolled down to reveal Floyd in the driver’s seat.

“Come on.” Bruce tugged Clark behind him and dashed forward down the alley. He made sure Clark got in the back seat, first, then slid in beside him.

“All in, Floyd.” Bruce told him.

“Got it.”

Floyd shifted gears and took off at an easy pace, trying to blend with the traffic.

Clark looked so tense a simple poke might make him shatter. Bruce decided touching him would not be the best thing right then.

“Where we goin’?” Floyd asked.

“The Omega clinic on Sudbury.” Bruce said immediately. “They have gated parking, and no one is allowed in unless they have actual business with the clinic; be it patient, support, volunteer, or staff. I have a pass in my wallet.”

“Gotta.”

The ride was quiet and tense, though Bruce could see Clark slowly relaxing in his peripheral.

Nice going, genius. You realise you’ve chased him back to his bedroom, right? You’re gonna get him home, and he’s gonna run straight to his room and lock the door.

I know. He told himself bitterly.

Bruce took out his phone and dialed Alfred.

“Sir?”
“Complications, Alfred. I need you to come and get us at the clinic. You and Dick will pick up the Mercedes tomorrow.”

“On my way, sir.”

“Thanks, Alfred.”

He clicked his phone off and leaned back in the seat, feeling exhausted.

“I really am sorry, Clark. We’ll talk about it when we get home.”

Clark nodded quietly, but his thoughts were analysing the past few minutes.

He knew Bruce wouldn’t do anything against his will. Knew it. This was a man who so deeply believed in consent of touching that his eight year-old followed it.

His initial reaction to the kiss had been to fight back, but he realised quickly enough that Bruce wasn’t holding him tightly; Clark had his way out.

And then he’d apologised. And Clark had no doubt that his apology was sincere.

But on the other hand, he worried about the apology.

Did this mean that Bruce had no interest in kissing him outside of necessity?

He was angry at himself for going down this road of thinking, but he couldn’t stop.

Once he’d found himself not being forcibly held, he’d felt a light inside him, which he recognised from the first kisses of a relationship: first with Lana, and then with Lex. The floating feeling.

And then it was over.

Fuck-fuck-fuckitty-fuck.

If he needed more proof he’d fallen for Bruce, this was it.

***

Floyd got them safely to the clinic without trouble. There was a moment when they feared they were being followed, but Bruce recognised Harley’s car behind them. She’d apparently made a guess as to Bruce’s game plan.

She parked near Floyd’s car in the clinic parking lot. Both she and Pam got out, but Pam stayed by the car while Harley went to Clark.

“The paps cleared out. Eddie watched the window and told us when you were safely away. We waited five minutes then went to tell them you were gone.”

She took a deep breath.

“They should never have been there in the first place, Clark. It’s a safe space and they violated that. That wasn’t your fault.”

“I didn’t realise they were even talking about me. I didn’t think I was important.”

“Having been Lex’s mate means you’re part of the upper crust.” Harley explained. “I’ve actually
been paying close attention, in case they approached you. Due to your non-existent presence in society, since Lex’s death there have been many sources questioning Lex’s treatment of you. Even the most unsavoury member of high society parades their trophy mate on their arm during functions, and yet you weren’t seen for five years. The story she said about you and Bruce being lovers before isn’t one that’s been circulating; she just wanted to get a rise out of you. Though there has been plenty of speculation about whether this is true now. This is fuelled by the statistic that seventy-four percent of adult Omegas end up mated to their support Alphas.”

Clark could feel his blood rushing in his ears. People suspected that he had been abused? Had he been the only one blind to it? And people honestly thought that after less than six months he would already be mated to another Alpha?

Clark knew so little about this expanding world he had become part of. He’d been ignorant of that statistic. He was simultaneously hopeful and fearful. He’d had no time to examine his newfound feelings, yet. It was too soon. Had Bruce known about the statistic? He must have, having worked with the clinic for so long. Was he counting on it? Was he indifferent to it?

Clark had no sense of any change occurring, and yet he was suddenly aware of being in a moving car. He bolted upright, stopped by the seat belt.

It was a large car, and he had been lying back in the middle seat on the driver’s side.

“You passed out.” Bruce’s voice said gently.

Clark looked to the front. Bruce was in the passenger seat, looking back at him.

Clark crossed his arms and curled in on himself. He wasn’t crying, but he didn’t want to talk just then. He heard Bruce sigh as he turned his eyes back to the front.

When they got to the manor, Clark ejected from the car as fast as he could. Bruce didn’t try to follow him.

The plan had been to lock himself in his room and cry himself to sleep. Unfortunately, he had forgotten about Lex’s pillowcase.

He hadn’t slept in his room in a long time, so he hadn’t had cause to think about it.

Overcome by a single-minded rage, Clark seized the pillowcase and stormed his way back down the hall.

At the bottom of the staircase he passed a concerned Alfred on his way to the lounge, but didn’t acknowledge him.

The fireplace had only a low glow left to it, but this didn’t concern Clark too much. Back on the farm, they had a wood stove in the barn to keep the animals warm, and he had had plenty of practise keeping it going during the winter months.

Clark took sheets of newspaper and junk mail from the box on the other side and crumpled them into balls, scattering them on the glowing embers. Next, he took small pieces of dry wood from the same box and added them, then stoked the mass a bit, encouraging some sparks. As the flames licked around the paper, they began to catch the small pieces. Last of all, he took a log from the stack on the other side of the fireplace and laid it carefully on the small flames which had started, using the poker to guide it into place.

He sat back and waited while flames grew around the log. When he deemed them big enough, he
took the pillowcase and threw it on top. He quickly stood and placed the protective screen in front of the fire, then sat back on the hearthrug and watched the blaze.

Everything was made of natural fibres, so it burned well, smelling of woodsmoke.

He began to feel oddly at peace as the material gradually disappeared into thick, pale smoke wafting up the chimney. Looking down at his left hand, the ring finger now devoid of his wedding band and engagement ring, he thought it was probably a good idea he'd left them with his mother before coming to the manor; they probably would have ended up on the pile, too.

For the mass of fabric, it was gone surprisingly quickly. Clark took a deep breath, then leaned forward on all fours, verifying that the fire was at a manageable level which could be left alone. The log was already half-out, probably consumed faster during the blaze from the pillowcase.

Satisfied that everything would be kept at bay by the screen, Clark stood and left the lounge.

He took a shower in his ensuite, feeling like most of the baggage from the day was going down the drain.

As he stood drying in front of the mirror, he stopped to examine his growing belly in the mirror. It was quite firm, starting to give his plus-sized jeans trouble. He’d have to switch to the maternity pants his mother had bought for him soon. There was also some more noticeable swelling around his nipples, now, though this would still be easily hidden behind his compression bras. Obtained on the same shopping trip as the maternity pants, they helped keep the growing pains at bay.

Clark sighed heavily as he looked down to his belly, rubbing over it. As though in response to the attention, he felt a tiny push from within.

“Sorry I freaked out, pup. That’s probably still gonna happen for a while. Maybe I’ll have a better head on my shoulders before you’re ready for toilet training, ’kay?”

Another push made him smile.

“Sounds like a deal to me.”

Clark hung his towel and returned to his room in search of pajamas.

He was about to just crash on his bed, but stopped.

Spending some time alone awake was one thing. Sleeping alone, letting his guard down, no.

He needed to be in Bruce’s room.

Statistics and confused feelings be damned. Bruce was his support, and he was an amazing father, and had plenty of people who spoke of his charity work; not only in raising funds, but in personal hours dedicated to helping others.

He was safe with Bruce; this he knew almost on an instinctual level. Clark put on his slippers and made his way down the hall.

Bruce’s room was open a crack, which was unusual, as it was normally closed at night. Clark felt a nice little flutter at the thought that it might have been left open for his benefit. He slowly pushed it open the rest of the way.

Bruce was facing the side of the room opposite the door, sleeping on his side. As Clark slipped past
the door, he saw Damian asleep belly-down in his bed, having left plenty of room for Clark to join him. At some point while waiting for him, he had started sucking his left thumb, and it was still in his mouth; his right arm was around Bat-bear. The covers had been kicked off to the foot of the bed.

Clark turned to slowly shut the door, turning the knob so that the click wouldn’t be audible. He then walked softly across the room to his bed, kicking his slippers off beside it, then quietly slipped into the bed, pulling the covers over himself and Damian.

Clark lay on his side just a few inches from the pup, smiling softly at him. Suddenly realising just how tired he was, it was no effort to let his eyes fall shut.

Just before sleep took him, he felt Damian snuggle closer to him, bringing a sleepy smile to his face.

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Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

Bruce and Clark have a day out, Tim's having growing pains, and the family has a sleepover.

Chapter Notes

I can’t really think of anything to warn against, so... have fun!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

I’m cold and yet I’m warm

I’m shaking but I’m whole

I’d spent so long in darkness

That I’d come to fear the sunlight

I waited for the pain

But love was all you gave

I almost didn’t see the gold in front of me

Thinking it to be iron bars keeping me chained

— Moonset and Sunrise by Clark Kent

Friday morning broke in the same manner as usual: Alfred woke Damian, which woke Clark, and then the butler moved off to wake Bruce.

The familiarity felt reassuring.

Clark turned to look towards Bruce, just in time to see him go to the ensuite, and sighed with relief. He needed to talk to Damian about carrying him, and didn’t really want to do it in front of anyone.

Damian clung to him as he slid up into a sitting position, ending up with the pup in his lap. Clark Eskimo-kissed him, which Damian returned sleepily.

“Morning, pup.”

“Morning.” Damian returned unenthusiastically before yawning and pressing his nose to Clark’s throat, causing the Omega to smile and sigh happily.
He rubbed Damian’s back for a bit, drawing out the moment.

“Damian, I think we’ll have to switch to someone else carrying you downstairs for breakfast.”

Damian pulled back, devastated.

“It’s not that I don’t want to,” he was quick to assure him, cupping his cheek. “It’s just that I’m getting further along in my pregnancy and I’m not supposed to be carrying anything heavier than thirty pounds. In my lap is okay, I just can’t carry you.”

Damian nodded. He still looked sad, but understanding.

Clark gave him another Eskimo kiss, which brought a small smile to the pup’s face.

Clark felt a little push.

“Damian, feel.” he took the pup’s hand and placed it on the side of the bump where he’d felt the movement.

They waited, breathless, for a few seconds, and then there was another little push.

“Wow!” Damian seemed much more awake now.

“It’s saying good morning.” Clark smiled at him.

“Good morning, puppy.” Damian leaned against Clark, holding his hand to the spot, giggling when it moved again.

Clark laid his head on top of Damian’s, then noticed Bruce in the doorway of the ensuite, leaning against the frame. He straightened up when he saw that Clark caught him watching.

It just felt so… domestic. Something Clark had remembered feeling in the early months of his marriage, when he and Lex sat together at the table. Except that what he recognised as fondness in Bruce’s gaze, he realised he had never seen in Lex.

How could I have been so blind?

Lex’s gaze was more… hungry. Possessive. Like Clark was a tasty morsel just for him. And while Clark could definitely see a time and a place for such a look, the fact that he now realised that the warmth which Bruce sometimes gave him had been lacking from his marriage spoke volumes.

He still wasn’t ready to pursue anything, but, as he gave a soft smile and cocked his head to beckon Bruce closer so that he could have a turn feeling the kicks, he thought it worth to sit back and see what may happen.

The three of them sat for a few minutes, feeling the movements of Clark’s puppy, before Bruce pointed out that Damian needed to eat breakfast and get ready for school.

Clark knew that there were more storms to come. But, here and now, he was beginning to feel hopeful.

***

As Alfred drove off with the boys that morning, Clark thought back to the conversation he’d had with Damian a few days before.
If I just stop doing everything, it would mean he wins.

“Bruce?”

“Yes?” Bruce halted his path to the stairs and turned back to look at Clark.

“I want to go to the art gallery. Please.”

He said it without hesitation. Bruce nodded and gave him a small smile.

“Okay. We’ll go as soon as you’re ready.”

Clark smiled back and continued his way up so that he could shower and get dressed for the day.

***

An hour later, dressed in a warm, navy blue turtleneck sweater and maternity jeans (he decided it was time for his plus-sized jeans to admit defeat), Clark and Bruce (wearing a black turtleneck stretch shirt and looking similar to a cartoon character Jason had recently introduced Clark to) were on their way to visit the Gotham City Fine Arts Gallery.

Clark would be lying if he said he wasn’t nervous, but he hoped that with the end of the tourist season there would be few people there.

***

The front desk was operated by a round-faced, plump Omega girl with short dark hair and rectangular glasses. She had a sketchbook open in front of her and put down her pencil as Clark and Bruce walked up.

“Hi, Mr. Wayne!” she greeted cheerfully.

“Hi, Christina.” Bruce replied kindly.

“Dropping in for a visit?”

“Yes. This is Clark.” he indicated. “It’s his first time visiting.”

“You picked a great time to do it.” she said ecstatically. “The Masterworks from the Beaverbrook Art Gallery are being crated up next week to be sent back to Canada.”

“Oh,” Clark tried to sound interested, but he really had no idea what she was talking about. He had been to some galleries with Lex, but didn’t know much beyond the big names like Van Gogh and Rembrandt. It wasn’t that he had no appreciation for art, it was just that he wasn’t immersed in the culture.

Seeming to pick up on this, Christina rushed from the desk and took a book off the shelf from the front of the gift shop, just across the entrance from the desk.

“The collection is made up of a lot of European artists.” She explained as she handed Clark the book. “The crown jewel, which I’m told gets them visitors from all over the world, is the Santiago El Grande.” she rolled her r perfectly. “It’s by the Spanish artist Salvador Dalí, and is about eighteen feet high.”

The book was hardcover with a dust jacket that said Masterworks in stylish, loopy blue letters. The background image was a painting of a fountain in what appeared to be a sumptuous garden.
“Um, wow.” Clark said.

“You can borrow that while you go looking, if you want. And if you decide you want to buy it, Mr. Wayne is a life member, so it would be twenty-five percent off.”

Clark looked from Bruce to Christina.

“Um, I’ll think it over. Thank you.”

“No problem!” She said, grinning.

“Ready to start?” Bruce asked him.

Clark nodded. “Yeah, let’s. Um. Let’s do that.”

***

It turned out the gallery had wisely placed Masterworks at one of the points furthest from the entrance to make sure that people saw other exhibits along the way. Fortunately, there was a café in that wing, as well, so that they could sit and have lunch before continuing on. Clark’s feet were starting to swell from the rapid weight-gain.

“I thought a Mediterranean sandwich would have had chicken in it.” Clark stated as he ate. “But it’s vegetarian. Still very good. Can’t go wrong with feta cheese; it’s just that I was expecting chicken.”

“Good thing you got a chicken salad sandwich to go with it.” Bruce smiled over his coffee.

“Mm-mm.” Clark shook his head before taking a drink of his chocolate milk. “Tuna salad sandwich. There’s chicken in the pesto sandwich.”

Bruce shrugged, an amused smile on his face.

***

The Santiago El Grande was indeed something to behold.

The blue-purple colours which made for most of the background perfectly complimented the pale gold of Santiago (or Saint James, as the book gave the translation of the title as Saint James The Great) and the white of his horse, which was centerpiece to the painting.

In front of the coloured sky were white criss-crossing beams like a majestic cathedral, with a few distant angels flying upwards through the gaps.

Santiago seemed to be reaching out to a rising Christ (also pale gold), while another figure in white robes watched from the ground below.

It was, all in all, a truly grand painting, which made Clark almost feel like he was in the presence of something blessed holy.

He and Bruce sat on the bench provided and looked at it for quite a while.

Meaning just to stretch his back out, Clark leaned back as he lowered his elbows to the cushy bench, not breaking his gaze from the painting.

“Oh.” he breathed.
“What?” Bruce asked.

“Lean back while you look at it.”

Bruce did so, and his eyes widened when he saw it.

From the new angle, parts of the image seemed to pop, almost like 3D. Clark felt himself almost get lost looking at it until the muscles in his arms began to strain, and he had to sit back up.

Clark decided to buy the book before leaving, as well as a tea mug of Van Gogh’s Almond Blossoms. It came with a steeper and lid, which could double as a rest for the steeper. Clark figured it would be easier than the little tea ball Alfred had been using for him so far.

***

“Thank you.” he told Bruce as they made their way to the clinic.

“My pleasure, Clark. You had a trying day yesterday. I’m glad I was able to take you somewhere and that you had a good time.”

Clark allowed a beat before he asked.

“Bruce, the statistic Harley mentioned yesterday; did you know about it?”

Bruce took a deep breath and sighed heavily.

“I did. But that doesn’t mean I have any expectations from you. That statistic is never, ever why anyone should sign up to be a support Alpha. My concern is helping you, whatever that may entail.” Bruce intentionally left out the fact that, in some cases, Omegas had their support Alphas help them through heats.

“It’s the scent, isn’t it?” Clark asked him. “Omegas pick Alphas based on a scent they find appealing, because it means that they’ll be comfortable around them. But it also works the other way around: if an Omega is drawn in by a Alpha’s scent, then the Alpha will also be drawn in by the Omega’s scent. It’s how people usually find their mates.”

Bruce swallowed.

“Yes.”

Clark didn’t say anything else until they arrived at the clinic.

***

“Well, your weight seems to be just right.” Dr. Jones told him as he stepped off the scale. “Any discomfort?”

“My feet hurt.” he said as he sat up on the exam table.

“Well, that’s to be expected. How about abdominal?”

“Nothing bothering me. It did start kicking yesterday, though.”

“Oh, yeah?” Dr. Jones smiled at him. “How was that for you?”

Clark smiled shyly.
“It was like… my pup reaching out to say hi.”

Dr. Jones grinned.

“That’s good. There are some mothers who feel like they’re losing control of their bodies, and the kicks make them very uncomfortable. Nothing wrong with that, as everyone is different; but it turns pregnancy, on top of all the things which can make it a bumpy ride, an even worse experience. It’s good that you’re having a positive reaction to it.”

Clark brought his arms around his belly, looking down at it.

“I can’t imagine that.” Clark said. “Every time I feel it move, it’s like hope.”

Dr. Jones placed a hand on his shoulder, causing Clark to look up.

“I’m sure you’ve already had days where you’ve wondered about whether you’ll be an adequate parent. I know because I had those days, myself. Still do, sometimes, even though my puppy’s all grown up. But if you can remember the joy and love you feel, like what you’ve just described, then take solace in that you know without a doubt that you love it. That’s all you need. As long as you know you love it, the rest will fall into place, because you’ll do whatever you need for it.”

Clark smiled.

“Thank you.”

Dr. Jones gave his shoulder a squeeze before stepping back.

“Now, speaking of my puppy-girl, she’s a certified midwife. Given Wayne Manor’s distance from the city, you’re going to need one on hand closer to your due-date. For your next appointment, would you agree to meeting her? If you’re comfortable around her, she’ll be present for every appointment from here on out, and a couple of weeks before you’re due, she’ll be staying at the manor to be on hand when your labor starts. Nice, comfortable home-birth.”

Clark found the idea quite appealing. Rather than having to rush to the hospital, he would have people he trusted around him. There was one thing, however.

“Um, while that does sound great, I’m just worried about complications. You said I’m somewhat high-risk because I conceived out of heat, and, well, my mother had four miscarriages before me.”

Dr. Jones looked thoughtful, crossing his arms.

“Hmm… do you know how far along she was before miscarrying?”

“I think she said the longest was five months.” I’m in my fifth month…

“Hmm… Well, it’s definitely something to consider. However, I don’t see any sign in your blood work or otherwise to indicate any complications. The heartbeat seemed strong under the stethoscope, too. Keep in mind, however, that we will still be meeting every two weeks. If any complications arise between now and then, we can arrange for you to stay at the clinic two weeks before your due date. Doctors and nurses would be on hand to help.”

Clark nodded. “So here if something looks off, the manor if everything sails smoothly.”

“Exactly.”

“Okay.” Clark felt somewhat relieved. “That sounds like a plan. I’ll just have to ask Bruce if it’s
“Okay.”

“Excellent.” Dr. Jones smiled at him. “See you in two weeks at two, then.”

“Thank you.”

***

“Everything good?” Bruce asked as Clark stepped out of Dr. Jones’ office.

“Yeah. Got to hear the pup’s heartbeat.” Clark smiled.

Bruce smiled back as he stood.

“Um, Dr. Jones mentioned having a midwife stay shortly before my due date?” he asked hesitantly.

“Harley mentioned that might be the case when she came to do her inspection tour before you moved in.”

“So it’s okay?”

“Of course, Clark.” Bruce said it like it should have been obvious.

Clark nodded.

“Thank you.”

“Clark.” Bruce placed a hand on his shoulder. “I’ll make sure you get anything you need that will help to make this easier for you. Whether it’s special medical attention or a jar of pickles.”

Clark cringed.

“I don’t care what the stereotype is, I have never, nor will I ever be craving pickles. Although now that you’ve mentioned food, I’m suddenly craving grilled steak out of nowhere.”

Bruce laughed and squeezed Clark’s shoulder.

“I guess three sandwiches didn’t cut it. I’ll call Alfred and tell him not to expect us for dinner. After we get Damian we’ll go to Outback.”

Clark could already feel his mouth watering.

***

Dick had plans with Barbara, and Jason was having dinner at Tatsu’s, so after leaving the clinic with Damian, Bruce went to pick up Tim at school for the four of them to go to Outback Steakhouse.

Bruce tipped the greeter to find them a corner booth well away from everyone else.

Damian sat next to Clark, and Tim next to Bruce.

They talked about their respective days (Damian was sad he had missed the opportunity to hear the puppy’s heartbeat) while waiting for their food; Clark had ordered a steak and rib platter. Everything seemed settled and cozy, somehow.

It felt like family.
Halfway through their meal, Clark glanced over and noticed that Tim seemed a bit red in the face, and frowned with concern. Catching this, Bruce followed his gaze and noticed the same.

“Tim? Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I think the sauce was spicier than I gave it credit for.” he underlined this by gulping down his glass of water. Bruce signalled the server to bring them a pitcher.

While Tim gulped down a second glass, they caught the smell.

“Tim?” Clark asked, alarmed.

Tim started shifting in his seat and let out a whine.

“Shit.” Bruce said. He called the server again and handed him four fifties. “Pack these to go, please. We’ll be in our vehicle.”

The blonde youth swallowed nervously.

“Yes, sir.”

Bruce grabbed Tim from under his arms and pulled him out of the booth, bringing him into bridal-style to carry him out of the restaurant. Clark held tightly to Damian’s hand and followed. They ignored the looks of the other patrons as they rushed past.

Bruce helped Tim into the back seat.

“He needs an adult family member to keep him grounded, but I can’t do that and drive.” Bruce said, conflicted.

“I can drive.” Clark declared.

Bruce looked at him questioningly.

“My license is probably long expired, but I did go through driver’s ed and everything.”

Bruce handed him the keys and got in the back with Tim, holding him for scenting. There were people in the parking lot staring. Some Alphas covered their noses and hurried away; a couple of others just outside the lot were sniffing the air and sporting looks that were making Clark very uncomfortable.

“Damian, you’re my shotgun.” Clark told him.

“Is Tim gonna be okay?” Damian asked while they buckled in.

“He’ll be fine.” Clark assured him. “He’s just presenting, is all. A first heat is really hard, because your body’s not used to it, but he’ll get through it. We’ll help him.”

It didn’t take long for the restaurant staff to bring out the doggy bags. They also provided a couple of jugs of water (‘courtesy of the manager’ one of the staff said). After thanking them, Clark started the engine.

Getting out of the parking lot was a little tricky (he hadn’t driven in almost ten years), but, once he was on the road, things started coming back to him. Despite the chilly air, Clark had to roll down the windows to keep the scent from saturating the interior of the car. Tim seemed thankful for the breeze, as well.
He stayed just on the speed limit as much as he could until they hit the highway to go towards the manor (Tim already finished one of the jugs of water), Bruce directing him as needed.

Bruce used the voice command in the car to phone Dick.

“Hey, Bruce!” Dick greeted him.

“Dick, Tim’s presenting. He’s in heat. Do you have supplies that I can easily find once we get him home?”

“Ah, shit. Hang on, lemme think.” A few seconds passed with unintelligible mumbling before Dick spoke again.

“Okay, I keep water jugs and protein bars on the floor in my closet, and there’s an unused toy still in its packaging in the bottom drawer of my nightstand.”

“Thanks, Dick.” Bruce told him. “I’ll call you again if we need anything.”

“Hey, that’s my little brother. You better call.”

Bruce and Clark both smiled.

“Not going to be a problem.” Bruce told him.

The call disconnected.

Bruce called Alfred next, and asked him to put a plastic sheet on Tim’s bed, as well as to get the supplies ready in Tim’s room to save time.

They were nearly there when Tim started crying, clutching his stomach.

“Daaad, it h-h-hurts.”

“He’ll need a hot water bottle.” Clark said, remembering his own heat cramps.

Bruce dialled Alfred again and asked him to get that ready, as well, apologising for the rush.

“I’ve already dealt with three adolescent presentations, Master Wayne, including your own. This isn’t new territory.”

“You’re a Godsend, Alfred.”

“You’re welcome, Master Wayne.”

When at last they arrived at the manor, Clark drove the car right in front of the door so that Bruce could take Tim inside directly. He then brought it around to the garage (parking a bit crooked), where Damian helped him get the doggy bags to bring to the kitchen.

When they came into the entrance hall, Alfred was lighting scented candles (chocolate espresso) all around.

“These will help to clear the scent from Master Tim’s passing through. I’ve also set up those automatic sprayers on small tables on both sides of the hall, either side of Master Tim’s room. Pheromone-diffusers. A light fruit scent that should keep things from spreading too far down the hall. They’re timed to go off every ten seconds.”
“You never do this when Dick’s in heat or dad or Jason are in rut.” Damian pointed out.

“That’s because you’re all family, here.” Clark told him. “You don’t have to worry about someone’s rut or heat setting everyone off because your dad and Jason are probably synced, anyway; now that Tim’s presented, he’ll probably sync with Dick, soon. But I’m not family; smelling too much of someone else’s heat or rut might make me go into heat, because my body is trying to compete, which is why people of the same presentation who are around each other a lot sync in the first place. But if I go into heat while I’m pregnant, it could be dangerous for the pup.” Unless I mate. Clark kept that part to himself. “If I was family, it wouldn’t be a problem, because my body wouldn’t be seeing Tim as competition.”

Damian nuzzled Clark’s hand.

“You smell like family.”

Shit.

Unlike mating bonds, familial bonds didn’t require anything as solid as biting. The two base requirements were an enormously large amount of time of the two people being together, and complementary scents. Throw in the fact that Damian was a pup and Clark was pregnant, and really he shouldn’t have been surprised. Clark should have recognised it before: the beginning threads of familial bonding. Clark already thought of Damian as his, the links were actually forming; had probably taken on a strong jump on the weekend, especially.

Clark swallowed the lump in his throat as he pet Damian’s hair.

“Let’s go sit in the lounge and wait for your father. He should be down, soon.”

Damian slipped his hand in Clark’s as they walked.

***

It was at least forty-five minutes before Bruce finally did come join them in the lounge, as he had spent some time showering away any traces of Tim’s scent from himself.

Clark was working away at his Cat In The Hat costume on Alfred’s sewing machine, while Damian was trying on his now-completed Thing 1 outfit, minus make-up.

“Father, look!” Damian ran up to Bruce excitedly and spun to make sure Bruce got a good look at it.

“You look great, Damian!” Bruce knelt down to be at Damian’s level, grinning.

“Is Tim okay?” Damian asked.

“He’s got everything he needs to get through his heat, and he’s got a walkie if he needs to call Alfred. He’ll be just fine.” Bruce assured him.

Clark flicked off the machine and stood.

“Bruce, can I talk to you for a minute?”

Bruce looked up and saw the nervous look on Clark’s face, then nodded.

“Damian, how about you go show your costume to Alfred?”

Damian nodded, but he wasn’t fooled. He knew that whatever was going to be said between Clark
and his father was serious. However, he did obediently leave the room.

“Are you okay, Clark?” Bruce asked him as he stood, concerned.

Clark sighed heavily, clenching and unclenching his fists before speaking.

“Damian and I have started to bond.”

Bruce swallowed.

“And you don’t want to?” Bruce inquired.

“It’s… I shouldn’t. He’s not mine. It’s not like I’m adopting him, he’s yours. He has a family.”

“Clark.” Bruce walked up to him. “Remember what you said before, about wanting to stay in Damian’s life even if you leave? And I told you that I could see how close you two have become?”

Clark nodded.

“That still stands. I’m not going to try to stop it, because it’s obviously good for both of you. Unless you don’t want it, that is.”

Clark shook his head.

“No, it’s not that I don’t want it. It’s just…” Clark sighed. “Are you sure you’re okay with this? What if you meet someone you want to mate, one day? They would have more claim over being Damian’s mother than me.”

“Clark, even if I did have a mate, say his biological mother, for instance: it doesn’t change the fact that you two are becoming family. This isn’t about choosing between anybody; this is about the bond that you two have formed. Sometimes when two people mate, one forms familial bonds with their in-laws. It doesn’t make them any less their parents’ pup; it means they’ve gained extra parents.”

Clark wrapped his arms around himself and dropped his gaze to the floor. That did sound right, but he still felt uneasy. Like bonding with Damian was something he had no right to.

Bruce’s slippered feet appeared in his field of vision, but he couldn’t bring himself to look up.

“Clark, take it from someone who lost their family at a young age: life is too short to not take those opportunities it gives us to form bonds with those who make us happy. I could never forbid you from forming a bond with Damian, because it would mean hurting you both. You’ve come to mean so much to each other in the short weeks you’ve been here, and I think that’s such a beautiful thing, especially now. You’ve come to realise that your trust was betrayed so completely, and you could be bitter about it. Instead, you’ve been refocusing your efforts on getting well, and part of that has been spending time with Damian and he’s been happy. And I can tell that makes you happy.”

Clark looked up, locking his blue gaze with Bruce’s hazel.

“Thank you.” he whispered.

Bruce smiled softly.

“Thank you, Clark.”

Clark took a deep breath and sighed, feeling like a weight had fallen from his shoulders.
“Do you need to scent?” Bruce asked him. “Given the situation.”

Clark nodded. “Probably a good idea.”

Bruce led him to a sofa and opened his arms for Clark to lean into him. Clark buried his nose into Bruce’s throat and breathed. Some more tension Clark hadn’t realised he had ebbed away.

“His birthday is May twenty-second.” Bruce said quietly.

Clark smiled lazily.

“Thank you.”

He began to feel sort of sleepy, floating on Bruce’s comfortable scent.

He hadn’t realised he’d fallen asleep until he opened his eyes and found that Bruce had also fallen asleep, his cheek on Clark’s head. Damian had come to find them at some point, apparently, and he was snoozing comfortably in Clark’s lap, Bruce’s left arm draped over him. Clark smiled and shut his eyes again.

***

When he opened his eyes again, it was because Damian had started tugging at his shirt.

“What’s wrong?” Clark whispered, as Bruce was still asleep.

“I have to go to the bathroom.” Damian whispered back.

Clark frowned, confused.

“And… you want me to go with you?” Damian had never needed accompaniment before.

“All the lights are out and the bathroom is on the other side of the hall and I don’t have Bat-bear with me.”

Clark sighed, smiling.

“Alright, pup. Let’s see if we can get out of here without waking daddy Alpha.”

Damian had the easiest task of sliding out from under Bruce’s arm and off Clark’s lap. Clark had to do a bit more careful maneuvering, but was eventually able to move himself out from the tangle of Bruce’s arms, as well.

In the dimness of a nightlight near the sofa, Clark was able to see that someone (probably Alfred) had laid out some sleeping bags and pillows on the large plush rug, as well as left some pajamas for them. Dick and Jason, also wanting to avoid picking up Tim’s heat scent (most likely to avoid spreading it to where it might affect Clark) were already bundled in sleeping bags not far from the sofa where he, Bruce and Damian had been sleeping.

Clark grabbed his and Damian’s pajamas to take with them so that they could change in the bathroom before coming back to the lounge.

Clark unfurled one of the sleeping bags upon their return; it was almost the size of a double, so when Damian asked if he could get in the bag with him, there was plenty of room for the two to snuggle.

Clark thought briefly of the set-up around him: pup in his arms, pup growing inside him, Alpha on
the sofa, and Damian’s three older brothers (though one was on the other side of the house); not to mention the amazingly patient and helpful Alfred, practically an uncle to the boys, who had helped to get everything settled to make things easier on everyone. It really did feel like family.

Clark sighed happily as sleep took over again.

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Chapter End Notes

- The book Clark bought.
- The mug Clark bought. I have one and it's awesome :)
- The Santiago El Grande
- My workplace. Hi!
Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

The day following Tim's presentation, the family are off doing various activities. This may all seem like filler at first, but there is some character development, and a couple of important sub-plot threads which are given more prominence here than they had before.

Chapter Notes

Warning for description of violence against a child.

I apologise that this is a few hours later than when I usually post. I usually post right after midnight, but last night I was exhausted, so I'm getting this up before getting ready for work.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

I gotta feeling

That tonight's gonna be a good night

That tonight's gonna be a good night

That tonight's gonna be a good, good, good night.

— I gotta a feeling by the Black-Eyed Peas

Jason had invited Tatsu to accompany him to the clinic for volunteering on the weekend. He worked with the pups who were orphaned, abandoned, or removed from abusive homes. They were often timid and wary of strangers. In order to get them ready to go to foster families, volunteers would spend one-on-one time with them, encouraging quiet game play. They tried to get the pups to spend time with different volunteers each time; different presentations, as well, for variety, as there was a wide range of foster families available.

Having pairs of volunteers working with them helped to simulate cases where the pup might be going to a mated couple, which is what Tatsu was going to help Jason do.

“Oh, poor Tim.” Tatsu said sympathetically as she wrote her name in the clinic’s visitor log. Jason had told her about his younger brother presenting the day before. “I started my first heat during my fourteenth birthday party, while in a Chuck E. Cheese.”

“Shit, were there a lot of people?” Jason asked.

“Well, it being Chuck E. Cheese, there were a ton of pups running around, of course. I had also
invited the cheer squad, so that was almost twenty people, and a good number of them had at least one parent with them. So, all these people are focused on me, because my cake has been brought to me, the candles are lit, and they’re all singing Happy Birthday.”

Tatsu was facing Jason, hands waving about as she told her story.

“I had been feeling warm under the collar and very thirsty. I’m telling myself ‘Just wait. They’re almost done singing, then I’ll blow out the candles and drink my juice.’ They’re all looking at me, and then the most horrid cramps I have ever felt started, and it took me so completely by surprise that I let out a sound that was almost a scream and I gripped the sides of the table. Everyone just stops and they’re all staring and then my parents are asking me what’s wrong and I could barely think let alone talk. I think I started crying, and then my mother must have caught on because he told my father in Japanese to get me to the car while he took care of the guests. So my father picks me up and brings me out to the backseat of the car and is keeping me grounded while mother fixes everything. Grandma goes to the grocery store across the street and comes back with a twenty-four pack of water bottles which I started chugging down like I had just come from the desert. Also, we have one of those Costco boxes of hand-warmer things in the trunk, right? Grandma gets my father to hold me with me lying on my back while he opens up a bunch of them one by one and lays them on my stomach under my shirt. It helped with the cramps, but it was kind of funny when mom finally came out of the restaurant, some of my friends in tow to help get the food in the trunk, and then started driving us home, because while dad is holding me so that I can scent, grandma is trying to hold all these little hot-packs in place on my stomach.”

Jason wasn’t quite sure what to say, so settled for damn with a chuckle.

“Miss, before you can go back there, I need to see your background check?” the receptionist was holding her hand out for the envelope which Tatsu had just out of reach throughout her hand-talking.

“Oh, right, sorry!” she handed him the envelope. The receptionist looked over the letter carefully, then placed it in the file which Tatsu had just filled out.

“This is your temporary badge until you are issued a full card.”

“Thank you!” She smiled at the receptionist, then at Jason. “This is going to be so much fun!” Tatsu squealed as she pinned her visitor badge on.

“It really is great, especially when they start getting over their shyness.” Jason agreed. “Don’t be offended if the pup doesn’t want to play right away, though. Their trust has been broken, and it can take time for them. You might also want to try grounding yourself a bit.” he added in an undertone. “Right now, you smell really excited. You’ll want your scent to be more subdued.”

“Oops.”

Jason stopped as Tatsu took some time to work her way towards a more neutral state.

“After the pup we work with gets more comfortable with us, it’ll be fine to let your excitement show, because then it will work like positive reinforcement.” Jason explained as they continued down the hall.

“I didn’t realise there would be so many.” Tatsu said as they passed patient after patient in white garb.

“They’re just the ones that get found.” Jason told her. “The estimates for the amount of Omegas who would need to be here but are on the streets or stuck in abusive homes are huge. Some time, if you
want, I can take you to a street crawl. We bring bags with food and warm clothes and pamphlets for the clinic, looking for the homeless. We also have pamphlets for the Alpha shelter on 9th street, depending on who we find.”

“I’d like that.” Tatsu smiled at him as they entered a room on the left side of the hall.

“Jason! There you are.”

A blonde Alpha woman walked up to him, greeting him cheerily, but in a subdued sort of voice.

“Kara, this is Tatsu.” Jason used a similarly neutral tone as he introduced her. “Tatsu, Kara Zorel. She runs the pup integration program at the clinic.”

Tatsu shook Kara’s offered hand.

“What made you want to work with the pups, specifically?” Tatsu asked, catching on to the quiet speaking tone so that the pups wouldn’t be spooked. She knew Jason worked with pups because he had been adopted and wanted to help others in similar situations.

“My aunt had been forced by her parents to give up her pup.” Kara explained. “She was only a teenager when she got pregnant. Her boyfriend was totally ready to stand by her and take responsibility, but they didn’t much approve of him. Her parents are very politically-motivated; Republicans, Christian families first type of thing. Whereas my grandparents are more scientific, liberal, etc. They pulled her out of state to have the pup and made sure it would be a closed adoption. She only knows she had a son. As soon as she was eighteen, she left them and mated with my uncle anyway, but they were never able to find their son.”

Tatsu’s mouth was open slightly, saddened.

“That’s so awful.” Tatsu said, simultaneously trying not to let her sadness affect her too strongly, lest her scent become a problem for the pups.

“It’s been instrumental in my devotion to this work. In cases where we have abandoned pups, I also work to track down the birth parents. You’d be surprised at how many of them are by Omegas who were pressured by their partners or parents. We help them to work around that. If they want their pups, we give them the resources they need to take care of them. If they don’t feel like they can take care of them, we help make a more positive transition towards fostering and adoption.”

Tatsu felt better at that.

“That’s beautiful work.” she said.

“Thank you.” Kara said gratefully. “Since this is your first day, I thought you might want to start with something easy. Come with me.”

Jason and Tatsu followed as Kara led them past the stations of volunteers with pups and games to another room beyond. Tatsu looked enraptured as she took in where they were.

It was a nursery.

“Puppies need what’s known as Touching Empathy.” Kara explained. “They need to be held and to be able to scent as often as possible, or their growth can be stunted.”

She led them past empty cribs, each of them with a chart with a name list attached to them, to one which had a little puppy whose brownish skin had an almost bronze sheen to it. She was clutching a
pink blanket, wearing a purple onesie, reddish hair in tiny pigtails, sitting up looking at them. She had huge green eyes and eyed them through the bars carefully.

“This is Koriander, Kori for short. Her mother insisted, because he said all his family were all named after spices.” Kara wrote Tatsu and Jason’s names on the chart, then lowered the crib side.

“Go ahead.” Kara indicated.

Tatsu thought her heart would burst. She took a deep breath, then stepped forward and placed her hands under Kori’s armpits, using her fingers to brace behind her head as she lifted her up. Kori didn’t make a sound, was still looking at Tatsu like she was studying her. Tatsu smiled and brought Kori to her chest, face near her scent gland. She shifted one hand to support Kori’s bottom and the other cradled her head. Kori made a little sigh and burrowed her face further into Tatsu’s neck, grabbing fistfuls of Tatsu’s shirt in her tiny little hands. Tatsu pressed her cheek to the top of Kori’s head. Happy puppy smell was rising from the tiny body and Tatsu thought she would love to go on smelling it forever. Kori’s own personal scent was something like spices, which Tatsu found very appropriate.

Kara left them to it. Jason, having done this before, made sure to grab the pink blanket and helped set it on Tatsu so that Kori would be on it, but still have access to scent Tatsu.

“According to her chart, she’ll need to eat in about a half-hour. Did you want to sit in here or out in the other room? There’s cushy rockers here, but out there are toys and stuff.”

“Toys sounds like a good idea.” Tatsu said, shifting her weight so that she was gently rocking Kori.

Jason brought her back to the first room and grabbed a couple of bean bags from against the wall before leading her to a corner and setting them up.

“I’ll go grab a few things from the toy box while you get comfy.” he told her.

After selecting a few items, Jason turned back and just stared at Tatsu for a few seconds.

Though he knew full well he wasn’t ready to settle just yet, he felt a surge of Alpha pride at the sight of Tatsu holding a pup. He knew he wanted a family, of course, but he recognised that he and Tatsu were still teenagers. Heck, they hadn’t even had sex yet, for all of Garfield’s teasing that Jason was getting some. They had been in each other’s classes for years, but had only gotten to know each other recently.

Jason returned to Tatsu’s side and held out a plush butterfly, giving it a squeeze. It had something inside which made a crinkly sound. Kori gurgled and held out her tiny arms. As soon as she had it, she proceeded to start chewing on it, making contented noises. Jason and Tatsu laughed quietly, happy.

***

Bruce sighed and drummed his fingers on the steering wheel, looking at the sign above the dojo.

“So this Makhlab might be Damian’s aunt?” Clark asked.

“It could just be a coincidence. It’s just that his grandfather’s name means the Head of the Demon. Talia’s sister’s name was Nyssa, but, I know for a fact that she left the family years ago; didn’t like their father’s dictatorship of their lives. The fact that there’s a female Alpha who goes by the name Demon Claw and is living in Gotham?” Bruce sighed again. “I just need to be sure.”
“Do you want me to go with you?” Clark asked.

“On the one hand, no, because I don’t know what she might say if it is her. On the other hand, I’d rather not leave you in the car where anyone passing on the street might see you.”

“I could go to the tea shop next door?” he pointed out.

Bruce considered this.

“Okay.”

They stepped out of the car, and Bruce used the auto-lock on the car remote.

“You’ll be alright?” he asked Clark. This would be his first time alone in a store in a very long time.

Clark peered through the window of the tea shop.

“Looks pretty quiet. I’ll just tell them I know Tatsu and how and I’m sure it’ll be fine.”

Bruce nodded.

“Just call if you need anything.” He had bought Clark a smartphone two weeks ago. Clark was instantly addicted to Nom Cat.

Clark nodded with a smile.

“I’ll be fine, worrywart Alpha.” he told him as he poked Bruce in the ribs.

Bruce snorted and rolled his eyes.

Clark went into the tea shop; Bruce heard a bell chime as the door opened and closed.

Bruce sighed yet again, and went to the door of the dojo.

There was a place to leave one’s shoes just inside, which Bruce did, then went through an archway covered with a black curtain. The floor was covered in tatami mats. At the opposite end of the room, there was a group of children paired off practising winding their way through punching bags hanging from the ceiling in a pattern.

Bruce’s gaze locked on the dark-haired Alpha woman supervising them.

An Asian man whom Bruce assumed to be Tadashi approached.

“May I help you?” he asked.

“I need to speak with Makhlab Alshshaytan.” he said simply.

Somehow knowing she was being spoken about, Nyssa turned and saw Bruce. She locked eyes with Tadashi and nodded.

Tadashi inclined his head to Bruce and walked away to go watch the children was Nyssa walked up to Bruce. Bruce had never met her before, but there was no doubting that this was Talia’s sister.

“How did you find me?” she asked.

“One of my sons is dating Tatsu. She mentioned this place when she spent a weekend in my home. The name Makhlab Alshshaytan stuck out to me, because I recognised it as Arabic. When she told
me it meant Demon Claw I got suspicious.”

Nyssa nodded.

“I suppose I should have guessed it would get noticed eventually. All the same, I refuse to use the name of Al Ghul.”

“And Nyssa?”

“I still use it. Makhlab Alshshaytan is what you might call a professional name.”

Bruce nodded.

“I saw your picture in the paper the other day.” Nyssa continued. “You have left your charge alone to come see me?”

“He’s in the tea shop next door.”

Nyssa nodded approvingly. “Maseo will watch him.”

“Why didn’t you ever reach out?” Bruce asked her.

“For what purpose?” Nyssa countered. “My sister is dead. You and her may have shared a season, but you were not mates.”

“I wanted to be.” he told her.

“If you had mated her when you had the chance, my father would not have taken her away, as he would no longer have been able to marry her off to someone he deemed more worthy. He would have disowned her. Because you did not mate her, she is dead.” Nyssa said with quiet fury.

Bruce swallowed.

“If I had known, I might have done things differently. We hadn’t known each other long, which is why I wanted to wait. I tried to get her away from him. The district attorney is a friend of mine, he was helping me.”

“But you failed. I do not blame you completely for her death, Bruce Wayne, but you definitely had a hand in it. Any ties we might have had are therefore dissolved.” She turned to leave.

“What about your nephew?” he asked.

Nyssa froze. She turned back to Bruce.

“What?” she whispered, eyes wide, mouth open slightly.

“Birth control isn’t infallible.” Bruce told her. “One day, a man showed up at my door with a puppy in a carrier and a video on a jump drive. Talia feared what might happen if he stayed in Saudi Arabia, so she sent him to me.”

Nyssa’s lip trembled.

“How old is he?” she finally asked.

“He’ll be nine next May, and his name is Damian. I haven’t told him about you beyond what Talia had told me. But I wouldn’t do anything to stop you from being in his life.”
“Does my father know you have him?”

“Yes.”

“He has not tried to take him from you?”

“He blames both of us. Your father was the one who came to tell me of your sister’s passing. The incident ended with a vase to Ra’s head.”

“He--” Nyssa couldn’t finish. Her hands were clenched into shaking fists. She swallowed and took a deep breath.

“I will… consider… meeting with-- Damian, did you say?” Bruce nodded. “I must think this through.”

Bruce stepped forward and withdrew a business card from his coat.

“Use my cell number. I haven’t been in the office lately, since I’ve been support for Clark.”

Nyssa took the card and studied it for a moment before pocketing it.

“You evidently have no trouble with caring for offspring which are not your own.”

“They may not be blood, but they’re every bit as mine as Damian.”

“I just wonder: the Omega you’re caring for is pregnant, and the rate of support Alphas mating their charges is known to be quite high.”

“That’s not why I became a support Alpha.”

“Perhaps not. But it doesn’t mean it can’t happen.”

Bruce wasn’t conscious of doing anything out of the ordinary, but Nyssa suddenly flashed a crooked smile before returning to the pups. Bruce left the dojo quickly.

***

Clark looked around as the door of the shop shut behind him. There was a calming music playing, which Clark identified as being done with one of those Asian guitars he didn’t know the name of.

“Welcome.” A slight Asian man appeared from a door with a blue curtain behind the counter. His long hair was tied at the nape and he wore a red silk kimono.

“Hi.” Clark said, slightly nervous.

The man inclined his head.

“May I offer you some jasmine tea?”

He indicated a cast iron pot sitting on a stand with a lit candle beneath it.

“Um…” Clark hesitated.

“It is safe for your puppy, I promise. The greatest harm is the caffeine, but there is significantly less than in coffee, and even the occasional cup of coffee will not harm a pup in the womb.”

“Okay.” Clark accepted.
The man used a cloth to hold the wire handle of the pot as he lifted it and poured into a small plastic cup about the size of a donair sauce container pizza places provided with garlic fingers. Having had this thought, Clark was now craving garlic fingers and made note to ask Bruce if they could stop somewhere that sold them for lunch.

Clark breathed in the almost perfume fragrance of the tea before taking a sip.

“This is good.” he said honestly.

“Jasmine tea is excellent for nerves.” the other man told him.

“Thank you.” Clark said before taking another sip. “So, um, are you Maseo?” he asked.

“Yes. And you are the one Mr. Wayne cares for?”

Clark’s eyes widened.

“Oh, yeah. How..?”

“Your picture was in the paper recently, and Jason had told us that his father was caring for an Omega in need.”

Clark shrugged.

“Yeah, pretty much.”

“You are fortunate in your misfortune, then. To have gone through what you did is not something to be wished upon anyone. However, you now have a pup on the way, and Mr. Wayne is well-known for his generosity. He will make sure you have all you could need.”

Clark swallowed. Though he had come to acknowledge feelings for Bruce, he saw settling too quick as voluntarily locking himself in another cage.

“Well, yes, and I am grateful for everything he does. But I need to be able to pick myself up as soon as I’m able. Otherwise, if I go from what happened with my mate to just letting Bruce take care of me, what kind of example am setting for my pup?”

“An admirable goal.” Another man, much older with silver hair, walked up to Clark. He wore a deep blue silk kimono. Clark thought he recognised some familial features between the two men.

“However, do not become so wrapped in what is practical and logical that you miss the opportunity to be happy.”

Clark swallowed again.

“Now, if I may suggest?” the older Omega took a jar of herbal tea from a shelf on the wall next to the counter. “Strawberry, very good. Serve hot to help keep warm, serve cold just because it’s fun.”

Clark smiled.

“That sounds delicious.”

***

Alfred rapped his knuckles against the dark wood door.
“Master Timothy? May I come in?”

“Yes.” was the tired reply.

Alfred balanced the tray of food in one hand and turned the knob with the other.

The strong heat-scent assaulted his nostrils, but Alfred Pennyworth remained calm. He had familial bonds with each of the boys, so the scent simply spoke that he had a vulnerable pack-member who needed care.

Tim had used a sheet to cover himself, but Alfred knew it must feel very uncomfortable. The window was open and Tim had rescued his box fan from the closet and was using it to bring cold air in from outside.

“I thought this might serve as a better-tasting alternative to the protein bars.” He laid the tray next to him on the bed.

“Thanks, Alfred.” he managed a weak smile.

“I’ll be buying some Depends for you later today.”

“What do I need those for?” Tim seemed insulted at the suggestion. “I can still get to the bathroom!”

“They’re for after your heat, Master Timothy.”

Tim groaned when he realised what Alfred meant. Pads and tampons didn’t really work well for male Omegas; their best option was a diaper.

“The bleeding’s only supposed to last a few days, right?” he asked Alfred, clearly not happy about it.

“That depends. As it’s your first heat, it could be as long as a week, which is about how long your heat is likely to last.”

Tim whined.

“I’ll leave you to it.” Alfred told him. “Is there anything else you require?”

“No, thank you.”

“Very good, sir.”

As soon as Alfred shut the door behind him, Tim threw the sheet off himself and pulled his tablet out from under his pillow. Even though his heat meant he didn’t need much help getting off, he nonetheless liked having some visuals.

“Okay, Pornhub, what have you got for me?”

***

Dick smiled as he watched Damian making his way up the climbing cage. Bruce had texted him and said they’d be on their way after picking up some pizza and garlic fingers.

“Dick Grayson?”

Dick looked up into the face of an Alpha woman with dark hair and tan skin.
“You must be Nyssa.” he told her. “You look a lot like Talia.”

Nyssa nodded once.

“I can call Damian over--”

“No.”

Dick nodded in acquiescence, indicating the empty space on the bench next to him, which Nyssa took.

“He’s the one in the Captain America coat.”

Nyssa looked.

“There is much of Talia in him.” she said.

“There is. His eyes are the same dark brown.”

“There is also much of Bruce Wayne.”

“He’s learned compassion.” Dick told her.

“He would never have learned that from my father.”

“No.” Dick was suddenly tense.

“Bruce Wayne came to see me today.”

“I know.”

“He said my father harmed Damian. What happened?”

Dick took a deep breath.

“I certainly never raised my daughter to use such poisons!”

Dick inched his way down the hall, the sounds of shouting and smells of angry Alpha making his heart pound in fear.

“She was already using when we met, Ra’s.” Bruce’s voice, more temperate, but still elevated. They were in the foyer.

“After she knew you she became completely impossible to control!”

“You mean after I treated her like a person instead of her presentation?”

As Dick got closer, the smell of frightened pup assaulted his nostrils, and he noticed a crouched figure by the door.

“Damian?” he whispered.

The boy looked up at him, tears streaming down his face. Dick approached him as quickly and quietly as he could, the slap-slap of his bare feet against the stone floor echoing too loudly in the empty entrance hall.
He knelt by him.

“They’re talking about mother.” Damian whispered. “I-- I think she’s dead.”

Dick held the small pup to him. Talia had been writing letters, promising she’d eventually visit as soon as she could get away from her father. Bruce would read them out to him over breakfast whenever a new one arrived. Damian hadn’t seen her since she had arranged for his arrival at the manor as a baby; he only knew her through her letters, and what Bruce would tell him about her.

Dick was suddenly aware that the shouting had abated and heard booming footsteps getting closer.

“Come on.” Dick whispered urgently as he tried to stand with the five year-old in his arms. “We shouldn’t be here.”

Too late, he thought, as the tall figure of Ra’s Al Ghul stood in the doorway between the foyer and the hall.

Dick felt himself scrambling to hold on as Ra’s ripped Damian from his arms, losing balance and falling backwards when Ra’s shoved him, his behind painfully meeting the stone floor. Bruce ran around Ra’s to him.

“You little bastard.” Ra’s said in a harsh whisper, holding Damian by his upper arms.

“Ra’s, put him down.” Bruce’s tone was at once a command and concern as he helped Dick to his feet.

“You are as much to blame as your sire!” he screamed into the pup’s face, provoking more tears.

“Ra’s!” Bruce barked at him.

“She is dead because of you!” Ra’s raved.

The next few moments seemed to be at once slow-motion and too fast for Dick.

In a movement so quick, Ra’s’ hands went from holding Damian by the arms to holding him by the neck in one hand, using the other to send a powerful backhand to his face.

Damian’s cries pierced Dick to his core.

“Ra’s, let him go, now!” Bruce went to stand off to Ra’s left side. Dick recognised the Mawashi Gedan Barai stance; ready to block, but also poised to attack. But how to stop him without hurting Damian further?

Ra’s threw—there was no other word for it, Damian to the ground with such force, Dick thought for sure he felt his heart stop at the anguished cry which ripped from the pup’s throat; but it was nothing compared to the sound which occurred when Ra’s brought his heel down hard on Damian’s leg. In the next moment, Bruce had attacked, and the two men were at each other with such ferocity, the smell of warring Alphas was making it hard to breathe. Dick scooped the screaming Damian up and ran to the kitchen. He laid Damian down on the table, trying to soothe him as he went over his injuries: throat bruised, a scratch surrounded by more bruising along his cheek where Ra’s had backhanded him while wearing the ring bearing his family crest; his leg had a curve in the wrong direction.

Dick was trying and failing to keep his own sobs down.
“Okay, Damian? You’re--- you’re gonna be okay. I-- I’m gonna-- I’m gonna call an am-

“I’ll call the ambulance, master Dick.” Alfred laid a hand on his shoulder. “I’ll also be asking for

Dick already felt better for the Beta’s presence. He tried to sit in one of the chairs but winced as his

He leaned over Damian, who was still crying hard, shaking all over. Dick lowered himself so that

“Dick, what’s happening?”

Jason and Tim stood in the doorway, having been similarly roused from bed, eyes wide with fear.

Dick shook his head and held a finger to shush them.

As Alfred relayed the essential information over the cordless phone, he bustled about the kitchen,

Dick leaned to press his forehead to Damian’s, running his fingers through his hair, then shifted to

Eventually, Bruce had succeeded in knocking Ra’s unconscious by breaking a rather nice (read:

Alfred drove everyone else to the hospital to be near Bruce and Damian, though they had to suffer

Ra’s lawyer fought for diplomatic immunity, and it was granted, on the condition that he leave the

Bruce also later learned that this was thanks to DA Harvey Dent making some well-placed phone

didn’t suffer from the one missed day. We also did group therapy together, having

Bruce arranged for Damian to start going to the clinic on Fridays instead of school; he’s a bright

“I have long hated my father for how he treated my sister.” Nyssa said, leather-clad fists clenched.
“But to attack a pup? This is unforgivable.”

“You sure you don’t want to meet him?”

“Not yet. Certainly not now. I need time to collect my thoughts. It would not do to meet him while I am angered.” she sighed heavily. “Thank you, Dick Grayson.”

“You’re welcome.”

She left.

Only about five minutes later, Dick turned to the sound of a car horn honking.

“Father! Clark!” Damian climbed down the climbing cage and jumped to the ground when he was about two feet away, before running to the SUV. Dick got up and followed, smiling.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact I had meant to include with earlier chapters to which they actually relate, but forgot when the time came to post:

Geisha was originally a male profession, as they were also expected to provide advice to their shogun masters on battle strategies during the Feudal era.

With a few rare (usually unnamed) exceptions, every character I have included thus far is from the comics/cartoons/other. Do you know them all?

***

Damian was fortunate in that his abuse was a one-time event. Other children are not so lucky.

Estimates are that about 70% of children who die as a result of abuse are 2 and younger. 80% have never seen a day of kindergarten.

80% of fatalities involve at least one parent as the abuser.

In 2014, over 1500 children died from abuse and neglect in the United States.

80% of abused children had suffered neglect. 18% experienced physical abuse. 9% sexual abuse.

78% of overall abuse cases are caused by at least one parent.

Requiescat in Pace et in Amore to these and all little Angels gone to Heaven too soon…

Aurore Gagnon 31 May 1909 – 12 February 1920
Sylvia Marie Likens January 3, 1949 – October 26, 1965
Angela Palmer November 10, 1980 – October 27, 1984
Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

Clark finds himself feeling turned on for the first time in a long while... things don't work out well in that regard...

Chapter Notes

As I had posted the last chapter in a rush before work, I didn’t think of adding something in my notes regarding the child abuse it contained, beyond a warning. A reader pointed this out to me, and so I've written up a little something which I've added to the end notes of the last chapter.

This chapter is being posted after I'm already at work as, like last time, I was too tired to do it at midnight, but then I couldn't do it the next morning because we got almost a foot of wet snow overnight and my power went out... :(  
Good news: I was still able to take a hot shower.

I am protesting the fact that they re-cast Harvey Dent in the 90s Batman movies by making my Harvey Dent Billy Dee Williams. Mind you, Batman Forever was the beginning of the end for the franchise (the stake being well and truly driven in by Batman & Robin two years later), so, maybe Mr. Williams is better off not having that gunk in his filmography. All the same, Billy Dee Williams is an excellent actor and I wish he was known for more than just Star Wars. I think he would have made a fine Two-Face if they would have just picked a director that was not Joel Schumacher.

Okay, I'm sorry. Enough ranting. Enjoy the chapter!

This poison in my soul

Ever lingering

Just when I think it's passed

You drag me back again

— This Emptiness Inside by Clark Kent

Alfred Pennyworth wasn’t surprised by much anymore. The day he’d been contacted by police to be informed of his employers’ murder, subsequently leaving him responsible for their only pup, he had learned that life could throw anything at you, so he learned to take things in stride as much as possible.
So to see his employer, dare he say surrogate son (their proximity over the years had long ago formed a familial bond), currently exchanging fond looks across the breakfast table with the Omega he had taken in didn’t shock him at all.

It did, however, make him cautiously optimistic. Cautiously, because Bruce hadn’t had much success in relationships. Optimistic, because it didn’t look like anything might stand in the way. Despite his hesitance and still healing from his past trauma, Clark was clearly growing in his attachment to the elder Wayne, though his bonding with the younger Wayne was much more obvious.

“Tea or something cool this morning, master Clark?” the Beta asked.

“I’d like to give the new strawberry one a try, if that’s alright?” Clark inquired.

“Of course.”

“Thank you.” Clark smiled.

“Can I try some?” Damian piped up.

“I’ll make a pot, then.” Alfred told him with a smile. “Master Clark,” he said, turning back to the Omega. “If I may borrow your steeper? I never thought to buy anything larger than the tea ball.”

“Of course! Please.” Clark told him.

“Thank you.”

The breakfast banter resumed as Alfred set about making the tea. He took the opportunity of having freshly-boiled water to make a mug of chamomile tea to take up to Tim. A whole week later, though the worst of the heat symptoms had gone down, he was still cramping some and feeling exhausted. From what Alfred had observed when Dick had first presented, this was to be expected. His body would eventually adjust after going through a few cycles.

“Damian,” Bruce turned to his youngest. “Since Tim’s still not well enough for school, Jason has to meet with Harvey later, and you usually have half-days on Fridays anyway, would you like to take a day off?”

“Yes, please, Father.” Damian grinned brilliantly while trying not to sound too excited.

“I hope for Tim’s sake that he’s feeling better on Monday.” Dick added as he spread strawberry cream cheese on his blueberry bagel. “He was really looking forward to wearing his Starlord outfit at school.”

“Who is Starlord?” Clark asked. “I heard him talking about it, but I’ve never heard of it before.”

“He’s from Guardians Of The Galaxy.” Jason explained. “He was a comic-book character in the seventies or eighties, but then they made a movie recently. If you ask Tim, he’d probably love to show it to you. It’s a really good movie. Awesome soundtrack, too.”

“Sounds like sci-fi, and I love sci-fi.” Clark responded, smiling before scooping some oatmeal into his mouth.

“Oh, shit. Shoot.” Jason corrected just as Bruce cleared his throat at him. “Sorry. Tim has, like, the largest collection of science fiction, well, anything. You should definitely ask him about that.”

Clark felt excitement bubble within. Maybe Tim had Roswell? He had been unable to purchase the
DVDs before, though the first season had come out the year before he graduated. Lex hadn’t been much into science fiction, or any kind of fiction, really. They watched the news in the evenings over dinner and first thing in the morning as he got ready for work, but, beyond that, Lex preferred having the TV off. At first, Clark watched stuff during the day while he was away, but, as he had been gradually brought down, he’d lost interest.

Suffice to say, Clark had been immensely enjoying access to Netflix and the Wayne’s huge Blu-Ray collection.

“Is it okay if we finish Avatar, first?” Damian asked. “We only have the last season of Legend of Korra.”

“We can probably get through most of that this morning.” Clark assured him, causing the pup to grin.

“Here you are.” Alfred placed a cup full of strawberry tea in front of both Clark and Damian, and placed the pot within easy access for Clark.

“Thanks, Alfred.” Clark said, grateful.

“Thank you, Alfred.” Damian repeated.

The butler inclined politely before returning to stirring the oatmeal on the stove.

No, Alfred Pennyworth wasn’t surprised by much these days. Which is why when, a few hours later, he saw through the opening in the theatre room door that Clark was leaning into Bruce, the Alpha’s arm around him, he only smiled.

***

Damian had been excited and alert at the beginning of their viewing of Legend of Korra, but his energy started to deplete as time went by. Almost three hours in, he was snuggled with his head in Clark’s lap, trying valiantly to stay awake, while Clark was leaning against Bruce’s side, feeling warm and safe with Bruce’s arm around him.

When the seventh episode wrapped up, Clark stopped the disc, feeling sluggish and not wanting to miss anything if he fell asleep.

“Hey!” Damian suddenly perked up.

“Damian, you’re falling asleep, and so am I.” Clark explained gently. “If we keep going now, we’re just going to end up missing bits.”

“I’m not--” Damian yawned wide, then scowled as Bruce and Clark chuckled at him.

“It’s okay, pup.” Clark ruffled his hair.

“We could nap for a bit before Harvey shows up.” Bruce offered. “Could even do that right here.” he said while indicating the cushy leather sofa they were on, the ends of which were built-in recliners. Bruce, being on the right end, had his seat back.

“Sounds good.” Clark said, further pushing into Bruce’s side, too sleepy to do much else. Damian positioned himself partially on Clark’s thighs and hip, his head on Clark’s side.

Then the puppy kicked.

Damian gave an excited gasp and adjusted his head so that his cheek was right on the spot where the
kick had come from. He giggled when it happened again, causing Clark to chuckle softly.

“Never gets old.” he said through a yawn.

“No.” Bruce agreed as he arranged himself so that he could lean back comfortably without disturbing Clark. He set an alarm on his phone to wake them in an hour, then put it on the end table before kissing Clark’s hair and closing his eyes.

Clark felt a brief, excited surge of wakefulness burst through him at the kiss before falling asleep with a smile.

***

Clark felt himself feeling calm, peaceful, and warm. He could feel the solid bulk of Bruce beneath him, could smell him. Strong Alpha. Safe, protection. Good sire.

Clark’s eyes flew open as he became aware of a tightness in his pants.

Shit.

A bit of morning wood wasn’t unusual, but usually went down almost immediately when he’d help to get Damian up for breakfast. It was easy to ignore.

This wasn’t.

His eyes darted around the room for a bit as he tried to think on what to do.

He was going to have to shower, anyway. There would be no way of completely doing away with the smell, but he was sure Bruce would have the decency not to mention it.

Clark tried to carefully get up, which his belly and Damian on his side made difficult.

As he managed to sit up, he tried to carefully maneuver Damian so that he could place him against Bruce without waking either of them. He thought he’d succeeded when a tiny voice mumbled:

“You smell funny.”

Damn.

“I know. I’m going to take care of it.” Clark whispered.

“Did you start a heat?” Damian suddenly asked, worried, and loud.

“Shh.” Clark shushed him gently. “No, this isn’t like that.” Clark whispered to him as he eased him against his father’s side. “I’ll explain later. Go back to sleep.”

He made his way into the entry hall, running into Dick on the way.

“Oh, hey, I was going to check on you guys.” Dick greeted brightly.

“Damian and Bruce are still asleep.” Clark indicated the direction from which he’d come. “Um, it should be safe for me to go upstairs, now, right?” he asked tentatively.

“Yeah, Alfred’s been really good at clearing the smell out. Just stay away from Tim’s room and you’ll be fine.”
“Thanks. I’m, uh, going to take a shower.” he rushed past Dick and up the stairs.

He wasn’t feeling quite as turned on as he had when he’d first woken, probably due to having to work his way past first Damian and then Dick. However, his initial arousal had already led to his wetting his pajama pants a little, so he was going to have to deal with that, at least.

Clark entered his room, quickly grabbed a change of clothes and laid them on his bed, sneezing at the strong scent of pheromone diffusers Alfred had used. Beneath that, Clark could also make out Pledge, vinegar, and bleach. Not to mention that his clothes and sheets nearly reeked of a strong, lavender fabric softener. He was grateful that Alfred had placed his nest materials in a large Ziploc on the other end of the manor before they had arrived home with Tim the previous week.

Clark went to his ensuite (the bleach scent was especially strong here) and turned on the shower to steaming, letting it run while he stripped down. His pajama shirt especially smelled of Bruce where he had been sleeping cuddled against him. His cock showed renewed interest, and he spent a few seconds with the shirt only half-off, breathing in the Alpha’s scent.

Stepping under the hot spray, as Clark’s body felt more relaxed, it was almost second nature to let his right hand glide down himself and take hold of his member, giving it a light squeeze.

He made a satisfied “mmph” sound at the flush of pleasure. He was focused on the memory of Bruce’s scent and the comfort of the hot water as he gave his cock a slow stroke, wondering just when was the last time he taken himself in hand.

You look so pretty when you touch yourself for me, Omega.

Clark whined, panicked, and let go of himself like he’d been burned.

The shock of such an opposite feeling to his earlier arousal was enough to make him sink to the stone floor of the shower and let out a sob.

“Fuck.” he whispered harshly.

Was this going to be his life, now? Unable to jerk off without Lex coming to haunt him?

He grew angry at the thought.

That’s not fair.

Even though he wasn’t aroused anymore, he still wanted to get off, if only out of spite.

I can’t let him win. Clark thought bitterly.

He leaned his head back against the wall and tried to focus on how he felt before: warm, comfortable, safe … Strong, kind Alpha… he tried reaching down again… and he saw Lex’s hungry eyes.

Clark growled in frustration. It was like he didn’t have proper ownership of his body, like it still belonged to Lex somehow.

“Dammit dammit dammit!”

“Clark?”

The sound was muffled, but undoubtedly Bruce.
“Just a minute!” he called back, proceeding to stand, using the wall for support, and then grabbing the shampoo to start washing up.

“Fuck!” he barked. He’d tried to put the bottle back on the shelf after lathering his hair, but, due to his hands being full of suds, lost his grip and knocked it, the conditioner and bar of soap to the floor of the shower.

He growled again as he rinsed the shampoo from his hair and hands, then squatted to pick up the items (he didn’t like bending anymore if he could help it, just to be safe), forcing himself to be more careful as he placed them back on the shelf.

*Acting out again I see?* Lex’s words taunted.

The tears began in earnest this time, mixing with the water as Clark braced himself against the wall.

“Clark.” Bruce’s voice, closer this time, probably holding the bathroom door ajar. “Can I come in?”

Clark couldn’t find it in himself to worry about his being naked in front of him.

“Yes.” the answer came out choked, but Bruce evidently heard it, because in the next moment Clark felt a draft from the open shower stall door and Bruce reached across him to shut off the water. Clark looked up and Bruce was holding a bath sheet for him, keeping his eyes averted. He stepped forward, meaning to take it from him, but once he was close enough Bruce closed the distance and wrapped him in it himself, gently rubbing his shoulders in reassurance.

He guided Clark mutely to his bedroom, and had him sit on the bed.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Bruce asked him gently.

Clark shook his head; he was starting to shiver from no longer being under the hot water as steady drops leaked from his hair down his neck and shoulders.

“Do you need to scent?”

Clark whimpered as he nodded.

“Would you rather get dressed, first?”

Clark nodded, though he didn’t really care if Bruce saw him at this point; he was just cold.

“Do you want me to leave the room?”

Clark shook his head; he didn’t want to be alone. He let the towel drop from his shoulders and started work on getting his compression bra on. In his peripheral, he noticed that Bruce turned around, granting him some privacy.

“You can turn around.” Clark said when he had finished dressing, his voice slightly croaked.

Bruce came to sit beside him. Clark immediately leaned into him, breathing in his scent.

“Would you rather stay upstairs when Harvey comes by?”

Clark thought to the few times Lex had people over at the penthouse. He was always told to stay in their bedroom and sleep until the guest was gone.

“No.” he said quietly. “I’ll look at cat videos on YouTube or something until he gets here.”
“Okay.” Bruce started stroking his hair with his right hand.

The Alpha was having to work hard to keep his focus on remaining calm, so that he could help calm Clark.

He wanted to take Lex Luthor by the throat and threaten him, terrify him, break every bone in his body for having dared to lay a hand on Clark. He wanted to bundle Clark in his nest, bury his nose in his throat and keep his arms around him, cradling his swollen belly. No one would ever hurt Clark ever again if he had anything to say about it.

But Clark wasn’t his to hold in that way. He hadn’t given him permission to scent him. Any action he wanted to take against Lex was useless because he was already dead. He couldn’t hide Clark away, because that was something Lex had done.

Clark took his left hand, which Bruce had been keeping in his own lap, and pressed it to the side of his belly. Bruce let out a happy sigh as he felt the pup move, tension easing from his shoulders.

He had woken more than once from dreams of holding Clark in the best nest he could put together, warm and soft, saturated in his scent. He and Clark were naked in these dreams, though there was nothing sexual about them; just base, primal pack mentality. Clark would be holding his puppy to feed at his breast, leaning against Bruce’s bare chest. Damian was curled up with them, because he and Clark had become so inseparable it would have been impossible to have these Alpha-fantasies without his youngest in them.

“You’re doing that Alpha thing.” Clark said quietly, a hint of amusement in his tone.

“What Alpha thing?” Bruce asked, genuinely bewildered.

“Whenever you feel the pup move, it’s like you go all fuzzy. You smell like, super-happy.”

Bruce smiled softly.

“I am happy.”

Bruce shifted his chin from Clark’s head as Clark pulled back slightly.

“I guess you didn’t get to go through this stuff with Talia when she was pregnant with Damian.”

“I didn’t know she had been pregnant until someone showed up on my doorstep with Damian in a carrier and a video from her on a jump drive.”

Clark bit his lip, deliberating. Reaching a decision, he bared his throat, and guided Bruce to scent.

Bruce closed his eyes, taking in Clark’s scent slowly, like it was something to be savoured.

Clark’s eyes fluttered shut, a small smile on his lips. Being able to feel happy with Bruce helped him feel like he had control of himself, again, because he knew it was something Lex would have hated. He still didn’t feel like starting a relationship, but there was nothing stopping him from testing the waters. Again, the knowledge was instinctual that Bruce would not pressure him, would not force anything, would not hurt him. Seeing how he was with his boys was the basis for this knowledge; knowing him for these few short weeks enforced it.

He was here for at least the duration of his pregnancy, and Bruce had already offered that he could stay longer. His life had already changed overnight once; who knew what a few months could do?
Clark and Bruce were sitting together on the sofa with Damian squeezed between them (his head against Clark’s belly) when the doorbell rang. A few minutes passed and Alfred stepped into the doorway of the lounge.

“How are ya, Bruce?” he greeted in a carrying voice.

Bruce stood to greet him.

“Staying out of trouble.” Bruce grinned back as they hugged.

“Only took ya a couple of decades.” Harvey teased with a laugh.

Clark felt slightly put-off by Harvey’s loudness, but not as strongly as he may have been a few weeks ago.

Harvey approached the sofa.

“You must be Clark.” he held his hand out to shake. “Your family reached out for advice, given my long history of Omega defense cases. I’ve been following your case with great interest.”

Clark noticed that Harvey lowered his tone when addressing him, like he didn’t want to spook him.

“Thank you.” Clark shook his hand. Clark was feeling some misgivings about the money, lately, but hadn’t told his mother, yet.

“You’re lookin’ pretty comfy there, Dami.” Harvey addressed Damian, who was still leaning against Clark.

“The puppy’s kicking.” Damian told him.

Harvey laughed much in the way one laughs when a furry creature does something adorable.

Clark felt more relaxed. With his growing bond with Damian, anyone who treated Damian well more easily endeared themselves to Clark.

“So.” Harvey turned back to Bruce. “Where’s Jason?”

“Alfred’s probably getting him, now.” Bruce responded. “Can I get you anything, Harv? Coffee?”

“Nah, no thanks. Gilda’s got me on a health kick. Organic stuff I can’t pronounce to avoid the processed stuff I can’t pronounce and she’s got this whole slow-cooker thing panned out. One day a month, we cut, peel, grate, and whatever else we gotta do to prepare a meal. Then, we put everything in Ziplocs, stick them in the freezer, and every day we just gotta take something out, put it in the slow cooker on low before we leave, and supper’s ready when we get home.”

“Sounds great.” Bruce said, impressed.

“It’s been amazing, Bruce.” Harvey told him earnestly. “We have more time to ourselves in the evenings, Gilda’s moods have improved, not to mention mine. I feel like I have the energy I had more than a decade ago.”
“Fountain of youth, huh?” Bruce said, clearly amused.

“Laugh all you want, but--”

“Oh, I’m not knocking it.” Bruce interrupted, hands out in a peaceful gesture. “It works for you, enjoy. But I have four boys in the house, three of which are under eighteen. Not to mention I’d be living in fear for my safety if I denied Clark his ice cream.” Bruce winked at Clark. “Have you ever tried getting at a pregnant Omega’s sweets?” he turned back to Harvey.

“I’m not that bad--” Clark tried to defend himself.

“You growled a tiny bit when father asked if he could try some last night.” Damian told him. Clark screwed his eyes shut and hid his face in his palm, his cheeks burning.

Harvey and Bruce chuckled.

“Hi, Mr. Dent!” Jason greeted as he entered the lounge.

“Hey, trouble!” Harvey turned to shake his hand. “Still fighting the good fight?”

A tiny voice came from the sofa before Jason could respond.

“Ja-son has-a giirl-frieeeend.” Damian chanted, unsuccessfully hiding his grin behind his hands while still curled into Clark’s side.

“Damian.” Clark whispered, only half-chastising as he grinned himself, glad to no longer be the focus of teasing.

Bruce and Harvey chuckled as Jason turned bright red.

“Can it, baby bat.” Jason said quietly, though not harshly.

“So, where did you want to do this?” Harvey looked to Bruce and Jason in turn.

“If Clark has no objections, we can pull up some chairs to my desk? Do it right here?” Bruce turned to Clark for confirmation.

“Um, I could leave--” Clark began.

“I’m not chasing you out, Clark.” Bruce said. “If you want to stay here but would rather not be around for our discussion, we can go to the kitchen. If you want to go elsewhere, that’s your prerogative, too.”

“It’s likely to be a very publicised case in any event.” Harvey told him. “Once I level the charges against Harkness, it’s bound to be on the evening news and all over social media. ‘High school suspends billionaire’s son for violence; sex offender he fought goes unpunished.’ The Internet is gonna eat this one up for breakfast.”

Clark had been told by Dick about the fights at Jason’s school; it had been one of those things which had helped Clark relax more around the young Alpha in the early days of his visit. He was curious about the details if he was being honest with himself.

“You can be at the desk. I’ll stay here.” Clark decided.

“If at any point you want to sit closer,” Bruce said. “You’re welcome to join us.”
Clark nodded slowly.

“I think I will.”

Bruce and Jason set to bringing a couple of armchairs and one of the loveseats closer to the desk. Clark sat sideways in the loveseat with his legs extended, Damian in his lap. Harvey and Jason each took an armchair while Bruce sat in his plushy computer chair.

Harvey sat back in his chair and crossed his legs, taking an iPad from his briefcase.

“Now. You’ve got four witnesses who have been willing to come forward, three of them being victims of Harkness’ assault. However, we might be able to get another witness, if we can find out who it is.”

He turned the iPad to show them a video.

“My assistant found this on YouTube. It’s been titled Alphas Gone Wild.”

The video was Jason and Digger kicking the crap out of each other. Clark instinctively covered Damian’s eyes; the pup struggled against it.

“If we can find out who filmed this,” Harvey continued. “We might be able to have another testifying witness. Even better, maybe they have more footage?”

“I’ll try asking at school.” Jason said. “Someone must know who runs the channel.”

“I’ll send Bruce the direct link.” Harvey assured him. “Now, Mr. Allen’s parents have asked to meet you. I figured we could arrange to have one, big get-together to go over everything as soon as possible before I lay the charges. This would include the Queens and the Yamashiros. I know you and Roy are already friends, but this will be your first time meeting the Yamashiros, correct?”

“Um, actually--”

“Tatsu is Jason’s girlfriend.” Damian explained, wearing the same teasing grin as before.

Jason sucked his lips between his teeth, looking like he was almost chewing them as his face burned red again. Harvey tried not to look amused and failed.

“I take it this is a new development?” he asked, smiling. Jason nodded, exchanging his lips for biting the inside of his cheeks.

“Relax, Jason. Tatsu’s a lucky girl.” Harvey clapped a hand to Jason’s shoulder.

“Alright.” Harvey continued. “Once the charges get laid, you’re going to have to more than ever make sure you avoid getting into scraps. You need to show that you’re trying to cooperate. Basically, we need to make it look like you know you screwed up, and now you’re trying to make it right. That’s why this legal battle is all about charging Harkness with sexual assault, not the school for suspending you. If it gets brought up, you say something like you recognise why the school felt the need to discipline you at the time, you just wish they would have also disciplined Harkness for his reprehensible behaviour.”

Jason nodded. He needed to be reasonable about this. Needed to sound like a responsible adult with a good head on his shoulders.

“If at any point Harkness’ defense tries to paint you like an over-aggressive Alpha trying to fight for
pack dominance, we point out your volunteer work, the fact that you work with traumatised Omegas and pups. I’ve already contacted your supervisor at the clinic, Kara Zorel?” He double-checked his notes on his iPad, then turned back to Jason. “She’s willing to be available for character witness in your defense should the need arise.”

Harvey went over the expected proceedings for at least a half-hour, concluding that he intended to go over it all again and more when they would meet with the other witnesses and their parents.

“Um, excuse me?” Clark said.

“Yes, Clark?” Harvey responded.

“Um, as someone who’s been spending their recovery living in the same house, would I make a good character witness?”

Bruce felt at once pride and worry.

“Yes, you would.” Harvey responded. “I suggest you think it through very carefully, however. Harkness’ defense might ask you some uncomfortable questions.”

“Like what?”

“Trying to make it look like your motivations for defending Jason are based on having designs on his father.”

Clark felt the blood drain from his face.

“What?”

“Any reasonable person would know better, Clark. However, there are already places among the tabloids that are theorising that you managed to seduce Luthor into marrying you and now you’re trying to do the same to Bruce to stay in the high lifestyle.”

Clark felt like he was going to be sick.

Damian took Clark’s hand and started by nuzzling his wrist. As they were now on the path of familial bonding, he took it one step further and gave some gentle nips to the meatier parts of Clark’s hand. Clark was staring ahead as he took Damian into his arms, burying his nose in his soft hair.

Bruce had come to stand beside him and placed his hand on his neck, rubbing it soothingly.

“It’s okay, Clark. Like Harvey said, reasonable people won’t be thinking that.”

“You don’t have to testify for me, Clark.” Jason assured him. “You’re on my side, and that’s enough.”

“Before I married Lex,” Clark said quietly. “I wanted to be a reporter. Is this what it takes to be one? A piranha for people’s pain?”

“They’re not all like that.” Harvey said. “I work regularly with a reporter from Metropolis who makes it her mission to bring the kind of attention to a story that helps those that need public sympathy. And Cat Grant, though she’s basically paparazzi, is the kind of person I can count on if I need dirt on my opposition. Just last year she brought the public opinion so strongly against an Alpha who ended up pleading guilty; she had secretly mated her own Omega daughter when she was sixteen. The girl’s mother had been trying to get help, but his Alpha succeeded in making people
believe he was crazy, so no one did anything. When the story fell in my lap, I knew public outrage was what I needed if I was gonna be able to lay a finger on her. So I sent what I knew to CatCo Worldwide Media, and sat back while Grant sicced her sharks.”

Clark was quiet as he considered this information.
Chapter 19

Chapter Summary

Halloween!

Chapter Notes

Warning for flashback to sexual assault, also talk about a past rape.

I make a reference to a mini-series here by naming the president a very specific name. Who here know who I'm talking about? Hint: his son his gay.

I've been having issues with Writer's Block for this story (meanwhile I've started two other unrelated stories), so I was worried that I might not have chapter 20 done before posting chapter 19, but then I saw the length of what I had for chapter 20 so far and was able to wrap it and move on into chapter 21, which is the continuation of chapter 20's situation, so now I feel much better.

Be on the look out for a short fic from me and another author in the future. It's another Harley/Ivy, but not part of this series. Not sure when it will be up, but I did start it today.

This is Halloween!

This is Halloween!

Halloween! Halloween!

— This is Halloween by Danny Elfman

Monday morning had a charged energy to it. After all, what better motivation to get pups out of bed than the promise of free sugar?

Both Clark and Bruce had to work to convince Damian that it would be better to eat breakfast first and put his costume on after. Because he was in elementary school, he wasn’t allowed to wear the face-paint; Clark would apply that when he got home. Similarly, no grades were allowed to wear masks, so Tim opted to leave his Starlord mask at home.

Tim was grumbling slightly over breakfast. Past experience with Dick told Bruce, Jason and Damian not to ask him about it, but rather try to indirectly cheer him up. Clark knew from his own heats the sour mood which usually followed, and did likewise.

“Are you sure they’re not going to confiscate that, Jason?” Clark asked while he helped Damian ensure he had everything in his backpack. He was referring to the flask which Jason had filled with
iced tea as part of his Archer costume, in addition to a black stretch turtleneck and lines drawn on his face to look like the drawing style of the cartoon.

“If they do, I’ll get Roy to get it back. He’s got light hands. Wouldn’t be the first time he’s liberated confiscated items.”

Clark smiled and shook his head.

Damian tugged Clark’s shirt, so Clark knelt down in front of him.

“What’s wrong, Damian?” Clark asked.

“What if the other pups ask me where Thing 2 is?”

Clark shrugged.

“Tell them that Thing 2 isn’t ready to come out and play, yet.”

Damian chewed his lip. Clark sighed and took hold of the pup’s hands.

“You can tell them that your father is looking after an Omega who’s dressed as The Cat and that Thing 2 is the pup in my tummy.”

Damian grinned and reached out his little arms, encircling Clark’s neck and shoulders. Clark hugged firmly back.

***

After showering and dressing for the day, Clark had taken post in the kitchen.

If one entered the kitchen at that moment, one wouldn’t be able to see the surface of the table for all the ingredients and dishes Clark had set on them. He had more than one recipe he wanted to make, and wanted to be on his feet the least bit possible, so he’d placed everything on the table at once.

Clark was speaking to his mother on speakerphone as he mixed the wet ingredients for a white cake.

“You’re sure you’re alright?” she asked for about the fifth time. She’d been so worried when Clark had called the weekend before to tell her she’d better not come due to Tim’s heat having pushed everyone into the lounge in their effort to escape the scent.

“I’m fine mom, I promise. Tell me how things are in Metropolis! How’s grandpa?”

Clark heard his mother sigh.

“He’s not doing well, to be honest. He’s healthy!” she was quick to assure him. “That’s not the problem. I think he’s just been disillusioned. This whole business of Lex not writing you into his will and Powers’ fight not to give you anything, well…” She sighed again. “He was good to grandma, and his parents had a good marriage, too. But when you’re at that level in society, you learn to turn a blind eye and not rock the boat, because you want to be accepted. So he just didn’t see all the bad things. I think... seeing what happened to you, he’s become more aware of things, and he’s blaming himself for being blind to it for so long.”

Clark paused in his mixing, took a deep breath, and sighed.

“Mom, about the money… I’m not sure if I really want it. I mean…” he shut his eyes and swallowed. “There are other ways I can go to school, and, well.” he sighed again. “It feels like… did
you ever see the alternate ending to Titanic?”

Martha took a moment before responding, confused.

“No?”

“Well, you know how at the end of the movie, Rose throws the necklace in the water? There’s an alternate ending where the guy who headed the expedition saw her just as she was going to do it and tried to stop her. She explained that every time she thought about selling it, she thought of her ex-fiancée, and then managed to get along without his help. I don’t want to rely on Lex anymore.”

There was silence.

“Clark, I understand that completely and am very proud of you. This fight isn’t just about the money, though. It’s about what you should have had without question, but because of badly-written laws people like Powers are trying to keep it from you. So how about this: we keep fighting, and then you can donate the money somewhere. Put it to good use. Would that be alright?”

Clark mused for a moment on that as he added vanilla pudding to the bowl. Lex had used him like a toy, and now the new head of the company was trying to discard him like one. He knew exactly where he wanted the money to go.

“The clinic gets the money.” Clark told her. “No, wait. Half to the Omega clinic, and half to the Alpha shelter on 9th. They helped a friend of mine.” he explained, then frowned. “In fact, I want a portion of it to go directly to that friend.” He stopped stirring. “How large is the settlement supposed to be?”

“As the widow of the head of LexCorp? Huge. Why?”

Clark smiled.

“I'll e-mail you a list.”

***

“Hey, Quill.”

Tim felt a small bloom of pride that he was being addressed as his character and turned to see the pale face of Rachel Roth. Or, some of it, anyway. She had a dark-blue hood drawn up over her head, obscuring most of her face, only her mouth and chin visible. Tim recognised the get-up from her concept art of her mage character in online gaming.

“Raven.” he greeted back.

He noticed she was sniffing as she leaned in, seemingly unaware she was doing so.

“Rachel?” Tim asked. He was feeling a bubble of panic as he backed against his open locker.

Her face was inches away from his throat, now.

“Rachel!” Tim said, louder, higher-pitched from panic.

Rachel froze. She tilted her head up and Tim could see her eyes, now. They were unfocused at first, but gradually widened in shock and she pulled back very suddenly as she removed her hood, revealing her dark purple hair.
“I’m so sorry!” she said. “It’s just-- Oh, gosh, you presented, didn’t you?” she asked.

“Yeah.” Tim said, deflated. Raven, though still in junior year, was nearly a year older than him and had already presented as Alpha.

“I’m sorry!” Raven told him, and she looked devastated. “I didn’t mean to go at you like that, it’s just you smelled so good-- Oh, gosh, I’m making it worse. I’m sorry, I’ll go.”

She raised her hood again and took off quickly.

Tim grabbed his things in a hurry, slammed his locker shut and fumbled much longer than he wanted to with getting his lock locked, then took off in the direction Rachel had gone.

“Rachel, hang on!” he shouted after her as soon as she was in view again.

“Rachel, it’s okay.” He told her when he succeeded in passing and coming to stand in front of her.

“Rachel, relax, you didn’t do anything. You got carried away for a second, but you backed off. It’s okay.”

“No, Tim, you don’t get it. I stopped this time, but what if another time I don’t?”

Tim frowned.

“You think you wouldn’t?”

Rachel looked at the floor.

“Hey, come here.” Tim took her by the arm and led her into the supply room (whose lock was forever being forced so the school had stopped trying to fix it).

“Rachel, you’re a nice girl. Ever since we were pups, you and me, we’ve been a team, helping out the ones getting picked on. Why would that change?”

Rachel sat on a stack of boxed textbooks.

“Tim, the reason my dad’s not around… he raped my mom.”

Tim’s jaw dropped.

“And..?”

“I have to be careful.” Rachel said, her eyes still locked on the floor. “Mom explained it to me: Alphas, sometimes, we smell an Omega, and it’s like hindbrain just takes over. Mom was in pre-heat and just wanted to pick up some Chinese before heading home. But then he smelled her, and he couldn’t stop himself.”

Tim found himself growing angry. He was angry at her mother’s rapist, but he was also angry at her mother for making Rachel think that this was how things worked. He tried not to, realised that it meant her mother was suffering from a type of victim-blaming, which had probably been taught to her by her own parents or maybe even been told to her by her attacker and others around her. But still; to teach those things to her daughter so that Rachel felt like she was somehow inherently bad? No. This was wrong.

“Rachel, listen to me: it’s no one’s fault except that scum Alpha who raped your mom. You would never do that, and you know how I know? Because when you worried about hurting me, you
stopped.”

“Yeah, this time—”

“You wouldn’t do it. I know it, because I know you. I can tell how much this is eating you up. You don’t want to hurt anybody, so I know you wouldn’t. The ones who rape? They don’t care. Heck, they get off on the control. You’re not like that.”

“You’re not an Alpha, Tim—”

“No, but I know Alphas. I knew my dad. I know Bruce. I know Jason. I know countless others who work and volunteer at the clinic who devote themselves to helping Omegas in need. Rape is never the fault of anyone except the one who did it, and I know you would never do that, because you don’t want to.”

Rachel drew her arms around herself and shivered.

“Listen, how about you come to dinner at my house sometime and I can have Bruce and Jason talk to you? I won’t tell them about any of this if you don’t want me to. I’ll just let them know that you’re scared about hurting Omegas because you’ve been told that an Alpha can’t help themselves. That’s all they need to know.”

Rachel nodded.

“Can I hug you?” Tim asked.

She nodded again and Tim pulled her into a secure hug. He didn’t let himself worry about the bell ringing, only leaving when Rachel felt better.

***

Sometime later, the round cakes Clark had baked (plus one large cupcake for Tim, to try to lift his mood) were cooling on the counter while he carved out orange bell peppers, giving them jack-o-lantern faces. The dishwasher hummed in the background.

“Knock knock.” Bruce said from the door.

“Hi.” Clark smiled at him.

“Busy bee in here. What’s going on?”

“A Halloween supper. I had some ideas and figured I’d give Alfred a break, but I wanted to surprise him, which is why I’m getting everything done early.”

“Can I help?” Bruce asked. “Lots of hands for the work or something like that?”

Clark shook his head, a grimace smile on his face.

“Many hands make light work.’ And thanks, you can cut the onions.” Clark pointed them out.

Bruce sat and grabbed the slap chopper, a plate, a small bowl, and a knife, and proceeded to remove the peel from the onions.

“So what are we having?” he asked.

“Rice-stuffed bell-pepper jack-o-lanterns, meatloaf in the shape of a skull with a cream of mushroom
soup for the sauce, and bats in cobwebs pasta, which is bowtie pasta in cheesy sauce. Oh, and a couple of bat-shaped cakes for dessert.”

“Are you sure you’re going to get all that ready in time before Alfred gets here?” Bruce asked. Alfred would run errands after dropping off the boys and be back just after eleven.

“I just need to get it to the point where tonight everything just needs to be tossed in the oven. Well, except for the cakes: they’re cooked and I’ll be decorating them later.”

Bruce checked his watch.

“It’s ten thirty.”

Clark’s heart sank.

“Dammit.”

“Hang on.” Bruce took out his phone and dialed. Clark couldn’t hear when Alfred answered.

“Yeah, Alfred, are you still in town? Good, um, would you be able to go check in with Fox if he got my reports last week? I haven’t been able to reach him, so I thought checking in with him directly might work best. Thank you. I’ll see you later.”

Bruce ended the call and immediately dialed again.

“Fox? Hi. Listen, Alfred is going to be stopping by in a bit regarding the reports I sent you last week. Can you keep him busy for about an hour? Thanks. Oh, and feign some reason for having not been able to return my calls when he mentions I had trouble getting a hold of you. Thank you.” Bruce ended that call and smiled at Clark triumphantly as he returned to cutting the onions. “Factoring in the fifteen to twenty minute traffic bottle-necking that happens downtown around this time, the hour Fox will be spending distracting him, the hour it will take him getting back here after that, and we should be able to get your masterpieces ready in plenty of time.”

“It sounds like you’ve done this before.” Clark frowned, amused.

“I can’t use it for his birthday anymore, he sees it coming.” Bruce said as he cut an onion in half and placed one half in the slap chopper. “I used to get Harvey and Selina in on it, too.”

“So you can’t surprise him for his birthday?” Clark asked.

“Oh, I still do. I have four extra set of hands belonging to Dick, Jason, Tim, and Damian. Like you said, many hands makes speedy work.”

“Light work.” Clark chuckled.

“Whichever.” Bruce proceeded to slam down on the chopper repeatedly for a time, then lifted the chopper. “This was one of my gifts to Alfred, incidentally. He used to get me to chop onions when I was a pup, but of course it was with a knife and took longer, which led to me scowling at him while my eyes are leaking streams.” Bruce placed the chopped onions into a bowl, using the knife to correct any which were still too big.

“Scented candles help, too.” Clark told him.

“Oh, it probably would have.” Bruce agreed as he readied the next half. “But that would have been besides the point. He didn’t get me to chop onions because he needed help in the kitchen. Chopping
onions was my punishment when I acted up. I think there was one month when there was a huge Tupperware container full of chopped onions in the fridge.” Bruce started chopping the next half as Clark snickered.

“Were you that bad?” Clark asked when the chopping stopped. He had finished the seventh bell pepper and started slicing mushrooms.

“Generally speaking, no. At least, not at home. Put me and the other rich brats together, though, and who knows what trouble we’d get up to. When I was sixteen, we used spring break to go to Washington, and, thanks to President Hammond’s son being a friend of ours, actually succeeded in TP-ing the front of the White House.”

“How?”

“Because we did it from inside.” Bruce told him, smirking. “Any time Secret Service were doing their rounds, we just hid inside the window, letting the paper unravel to the floor. As soon as they finished passing, we fed the unravelled paper outside. And yes, that’s on Google, too.”

Clark laughed at the absurdity of Bruce as a teenager letting miles of toilet paper fall from windows of the White House.

“Ugh! Bruce!” Clark’s laughter turned to disgust as Bruce ate an over-sized piece of raw onion.

“What? You can eat them raw.” Bruce argued.

“Debatable. That’s disgusting.”

“It’s delicious.” He demonstrated by eating another.

Clark scoffed and returned his gaze to the mushrooms. “Just don’t expect me to kiss you.”

“Were you going to?” Bruce asked, one eyebrow hitched.

Clark shrugged, looking like he was suppressing a smirk.

“You never know. And now you’ll never get to know because you went and ate raw onion.”

“Well, I could always just grab the Listerine-- hey!”

Clark had kicked him.

Bruce kicked him back.

Clark kicked again.

Then the pup kicked.

“I think pup wants in on the action.” Clark said, chuckling, looking down his side where he had felt the kick.

“Hang on.” Bruce got up and placed his hand roughly in the area Clark had looked, but Clark had to adjust his hand.

The pup kicked again.

“There, you both got to kick me, happy?” Bruce said, grinning as he sat back to the onions.
“You still have lousy taste in appropriate raw-produce snacking.”

“Bruce eating raw onions again?” Dick mumbled sleepily from the doorway, still in his pajamas.

“You mean this is a regular thing?” Clark asked with a grimace.

“Raw onions on his burgers and hot dogs, once ate a garlic clove which Alfred had in the frying pan to season steak, and once drank some pickle juice just because he knew it would get a rise out of Tim.” Dick sat down and yawned.

Clark turned back to Bruce.

“To answer your question: no. I am never kissing you.”

“Aw.” Bruce pouted. “Alpha sad.”

“Alpha eats like a bridge troll.” Clark chastised.

“Hm. Never tried goat.” Bruce sounded like he was actually considering it.

“Anything you’d like me to do?” Dick offered.

“Carrots.” Clark pointed. “Peel and chop.”

Dick grabbed the necessary implements and got busy.

Everything was laid out neatly in the fridge shortly after Fox told them Alfred had left Wayne Enterprises. With less than an hour to go and the food ready for baking that evening, the trio lunched on roast beef sandwiches, then Bruce and Clark went to the lounge as per usual; Dick joined them after he’d showered and dressed.

And if Bruce used some Listerine when he took a turn at the bathroom before going to the lounge, that was his little secret.

***

Journal entry, October 31st, 2016

I flirted with Bruce. I’m somehow managing a calm exterior, but, inside, I feel like something’s gonna pop. I am seriously experiencing flashbacks of teenage emotion.

At twenty-nine.

While pregnant.

Dammit, Clark.

***

Since the boys would be out trick-or-treating they ate dinner early (easy facilitated since everything had been prepared early; they managed to convince Alfred to sit down with them). Clark blushed as even Alfred gave his well-informed opinion on the fare. He had dutifully made meals for himself and his Alpha while living with Lex, but Lex had never praised his cooking so much as thanked him for fulfilling his expected role.

Having Bruce and the others react to his cooking felt special. Like he was actually being appreciated.
He resolved to make sure his future thanks to Alfred would be better.

Clark was adjusting Damian’s make-up in the entrance hall, Tim holding his mask at the ready, and Jason waiting anxiously to get going as he was going to be dropped off at Tatsu’s; Clark had seen a picture of the two of them at school which Jason had posted to Facebook. Dressed as Lana Kane, Tatsu was wearing thigh-high boots, and circumvented the school dress code by wearing nude leggings under her long sweater, double-holster with dollar-store guns in place. Clark had laughed at the short video the two had made reenacting one of the Danger Zone scenes from the show.

Clark looked up as he heard Bruce’s footsteps coming down the stairs, and almost did a double-take. The Alpha looked like he had stepped off the set of a film noir.

Bruce was dressed head-to-toe in a dark grey suit, a sleek fedora on his head, a cloak trailing behind him as he made his way down the staircase.

He looked powerful and mysterious.

Clark swallowed as he felt his heart stutter.

“Seriously, dad? Again?” Jason shook his head at him.

“Hey, it’s a classic.” Bruce chastised him playfully. He turned to Clark and his grin dropped.

“Clark? Are you okay?”

“Huh?” Clark started at being addressed. “Uh, yeah. Um, you look…” he had to stop and clear his throat. “You look really good.”

“Oh, great, another Gray Ghost fan.” Tim whined half-heartedly.

“Uh, I don’t know what that is.” Clark said quietly.

“What have you done, Tim?” Jason said in mock horror.

“I didn’t know!” Tim cried over-dramatically.

“What are they talking about?” Clark asked, confused.

“They know I’m about to tell you all about... The Gray Ghost!” Bruce swooshed his cloak in front of him for effect. “But, as we do have a time constraint, I’ll keep it short, and wait until we’re in the car. Where’s Dick?”

“Right here!” Dick came barreling down the stairs, grabbing the rail partway down and launched himself over the side. Clark just about had a heart attack until Dick landed with a practised tumble to the large rug near the door, returning to a standing position in one fluid motion. The boys started applauding.

“Dick, please, not in the house!” Bruce exclaimed, looking like he’d nearly gone into cardiac arrest, too.

“Sorry.” he shrugged.

Clark took in the grey floppy ears and stuffed fleece onesie.

“Are you his sidekick?” Clark asked, associating the grey between the two costumes.
“Nope. I’m Runt.” Dick grinned. “From Animaniacs. Babs is dressing as Rita.”

“Oh!” Clark said excitedly. He cleared his throat again and altered his voice to be higher and somewhat gravelly. “Skippy, can you tell me the name of the band on stage?”

“Who.” Tim joined in, adding pitch to his voice.

“The name of the group.”

“Who.”

“The group on stage.”

“Who.”

“The group playing on stage.”

“Who.”

“You're starting to sound like an owl, Skippy.”

Everyone gathered were laughing.

“Classic.” Dick said gleefully.

“Alright,” Bruce interrupted. “Let’s get you young whippersnappers in the car.”

“You can’t tell me that when I know for a fact Looney Tunes and Scooby-Doo was on when you were a pup.” Clark teased.

“Yeah, back before they had team-ups with John Cena.” Bruce countered.

“Did they do that?” Clark looked to Dick as they made their way outside; he had to take his hat off to avoid hitting the doorframe, and decided to keep it off for the car ride.

“Yep. Scooby-Doo’s been teaming up with lots of characters lately. Jury’s out on just how close John and Velma are.”

“So… you’re saying Cena likes the nerdy types?”

“Best way to get an intelligent conversation. I totally relate.” Dick grinned. He was, of course, referring to Barbara.

Everyone piled into the car and Bruce set off towards town; Alfred was staying behind for a night off.

***

Dick was going dancing with his group of old friends from high school including Barbara, and then spending the weekend with her. Jason was going to a haunted house with Tatsu, and then trick-or-treating afterward.

This left Tim and Damian with Bruce and Clark to be among the first wave of trick-or-treaters.

“So you watched old 40s serials with your dad?” asked Clark as they walked up to the first house. Bruce had just finished giving him the Cliff Notes version of The Gray Ghost.
“His father did with him; he was just carrying on the tradition.” Bruce clarified. “I tried getting the boys to watch it, but, past a certain age, they end up giving me commentary on all the flaws from the special effects to continuity errors. Damian hasn’t started that, yet, thankfully.”

Clark smirked.

“I’m sure there are things I used to watch that have those issues, but it doesn’t stop it from being a good time.”

“Not usually, but when Tim starts pointing something out every five minutes...” Bruce poked him in the back of the head for emphasis, earning a ‘hey!’ in protest.

“Hay is for horses.” Bruce told him.

Tim and Damian groaned in disgust, causing Clark to chuckle and ruffle Tim’s hair, while giving Damian’s hand a squeeze.

“As I’m sure your big brothers have already discovered, the dad jokes don’t stop.” Clark warned them.

“Your father did those, too?” Damian asked.

“And embarrassed me in front of my friends more than once with farmer jokes. The number of times I had to hear the one about the farmer and the steam roller...”

“Why would a farmer use a steam roller?” Damian asked.

“Ah, jeez...” Clark sighed. “Here’s how it goes: did you hear about the farmer who ploughed his field with a steam roller? He wanted to grow mashed potatoes.”

Damian giggled, which made Clark smile.

“Can we knock, yet?” Tim asked. They had stopped a few feet short of the front step.

“Go ahead.” Bruce told him.

Tim used the metal knocker to rap on the door. The door opened to reveal a tall, bearded Elsa, gleefully commenting on their costumes. Most likely to go with the theme of his (her?) costume, Elsa gave them Icy Squares and Andes chocolate mints.

The next house had an Omega couple dressed as Captain America and Bucky Barnes who handed out crunchy Cheetos and soda pop cans. Dick had once explained to Clark why he ‘shipped those two hot Alphas so hard’, as did a large portion of the Internet.

Quite a lot of time later, they had filled three pillowcases each, Damian was being carried by Bruce, and Clark was wishing he could be carried, too, as his feet were throbbing quite painfully.

As they settled into the car, Clark let out a painful breath through his nose.

“Are you alright, Clark?” Bruce asked him.

“Yeah.” he grunted as he sat back in his seat. “Dr. Scholl’s may take the edge off, but he is not the miracle-worker his commercials claim.”

“Wanna sue?” Bruce joked.
“Totally should. Pregnant Omegas everywhere would benefit if it urges them to make a foot pad that actually works for hours, not to mention retail and fast-food workers.”

Bruce chuckled.

Clark had already resigned himself to the fastest shower ever when they would return to the manor, so that he would be able to get to bed faster.

After Bruce had finished in the ensuite, however, so that Clark and Damian could change and wash off their make-up, Clark found that Bruce had taken the time to fill the large, round tub with very warm water and bubble bath.

He and Damian both made full use of the gift, and Clark found the water soothed not only his feet, but some aches in his back he’d been barely aware of.

Damian somehow found reserves of energy to start playing around with sud-beards and hair, giggling as he looked at his warped reflection in the shining faucet. His good mood helped Clark’s.

By the time they were in their pajamas and re-entered the bedroom, Bruce had turned off all the lights in the room save the lamp by Clark’s bed.

Clark looked at his bed, then back towards Bruce, who was curled up asleep near the center of his California King.

“Damian,” Clark whispered. “How would you feel about us sleeping in your dad’s bed?”

Damian nuzzled Clark’s wrist and took a gentle hold of the skin below the thumb-joint with his teeth.

“That’s a yes.” Clark smiled at him.

He had Damian crawl in first so that he’d be between them, then bracketed from the other side. Damian was out like a light.

Clark had to take a moment to calm, because his heart had started pounding despite the fact that this was not the closest he’d been to Bruce before. Something about them being together in an actual bed had triggered a mild sense of panic, and it didn’t take him much reflection to know the reason why.

This is Bruce. This is the same Alpha who has been helping you this whole time. We’ve slept side-by-side before with nothing happening, for that matter we’ve slept curled up with nothing happening. There is a pup between us, nothing is going to happen.

Clark forced himself to take slow, deep breaths through his nose. Both Bruce and Damian’s scents wafted to him, and he gradually began to drift.

***

You were made for this, Omega. Lex was working his fingers inside him.

No, please no.

Look at how you open for me. Such a good boy. So wet.

I don’t want this. I don’t.

It’s not real, Clark.
*Bruce*

*It's not real. You’re having a nightmare.*

“Why won’t it stop?” Clark whimpered.

Bruce was holding him in his lap, petting his hair. Damian was holding one of his hands and giving him light nips.

“It’s always going to be something you carry with you, Clark.” Bruce said softly. “Over time, it will be less present. But know that when it becomes too heavy, you have people who are willing to help you.”

Clark was clutching Bruce’s shirt with the hand not being nuzzled so hard he had white-knuckled. He took short, rapid breaths through his nose and forced himself to let go; the fabric was crinkled where he had gripped it. He nuzzled his nose closer to Bruce’s throat, at the same time taking hold of Damian’s hand.

“It’s okay, Clark.” Bruce told him gently as he stroked his hair. “You’re going to be okay.”

It was the first time since he’d come to stay that Clark found himself believing those words.
Chapter 20

Chapter Summary

Veterans' Day holds a special place in Clark's heart... which means it's time for a trip to Smallville and meeting old friends at last.

Along the way, could it be that Damian's not as recovered from his encounter with his grandfather as anyone thought?

Chapter Notes

I am SO sorry I didn't upload as soon as usual. Last night was the staff Christmas party and this morning I had errands to run. Just now had time for a breather for taking care of this. Enjoy!

P.S.: this chapter isn't beta'd as my beta reader is currently battling finals. When she does get the chance to look at it, I will post corrections afterward.

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Well I'm going home,

Back to the place where I belong,

And where your love has always been enough for me.

I'm not running from.

No, I think you got me all wrong.

I don't regret this life I chose for me.

But these places and these faces are getting old,

So I'm going home.

— *Home* by Daughtry

Clark sighed deeply through his nose, chewing on a piece of Tootsie roll from his Halloween stash as he looked over the calendar on his computer. Veterans’ Day was just over a week away. He hadn’t been to a ceremony in years, but he knew he wanted to go. It used to be a tradition in his family every year, as his father would bring out his great uncle Conner’s old medals and tell him the story of how Conner Kent had taken his brother Hiram’s place in the war.

If he was being honest with himself, Clark didn’t just want to go to any ceremony; he wanted to go
to the one in Smallville. He wanted to sit in his family’s living room and hold the medals in the glow of the firelight from the hearth.

He wanted to see his father’s grave.

“Clark?”

Bruce had come to stand in front of the sofa where he was sitting.

“Hey.” Clark said, muted.

“May I sit?”

Clark nodded and closed his laptop, placing it on the end table. Bruce sat.

“Do you want to talk about it?”

Clark curled his arms around his belly and sank his chin downward.

“Veterans’ Day is coming up.”

“Yes, it is.” Bruce confirmed. “Did you want to do something for that?”

“I’d like to go to a ceremony.”

“Okay. That’s no problem.”

“In Smallville.”

“Okay, so we’ll have to do some packing. Do they have a hotel or B&B?”

Clark frowned at Bruce.

“Just like that? You’re fine with it?”

“Clark, this is something I don’t usually brag about in small talk, but I do have a private jet. We could leave after the boys are done school on Thursday and stay the weekend if you want.”

The next minute, Bruce had an armful of weeping Omega in his lap, as Clark whispered ‘thank you’ over and over again. Bruce held him and rubbed his back soothingly.

When Clark settled down, he pulled back from Bruce and gave him a watery smile.

“I think I could do one better than a bed and breakfast, though.

He pulled out his phone and dialed.

“Mom?”

***

Clark had slept on the plane, but made Bruce promise to wake him when they arrived in town before they piled into the car (they had brought the Lincoln from Gotham). Though they were now an hour behind Gotham, it was currently after seven, and therefore dark. Clark was somewhat glad of this, because he knew locals would stare at the Lincoln, but he wouldn’t be recognised in the dark through the tinted windows. Sure enough, he could make out people on the sidewalks staring at the car.
They passed a Wal-Mart on their way into town, which definitely hadn’t been there before, and it looked like a lot of the more historic buildings had been spruced up.

Still, there were some things which had definitely not changed.

Pete’s father’s garage was looking the same, and Clark felt a tug at his heart at the thought of his best friend. That brought on a flood of memories as thoughts of other friends popped up and he started to wonder if coming back had been such a good idea.

“Clark, are you okay?” Bruce must have sensed his panic.

“I haven’t seen these people in over ten years.” Clark said, his voice choking.

“I’m sure it’ll be fine.” Bruce told him as they started down the road leading away from the town.

Martha Kent hadn’t had the heart to sell the farm. Her father instead helped her to arrange hiring extra help in addition to the ones they already had to keep the place running, as well as a couple of people to clean the house once a month; Martha had also surrendered most of her best-selling recipes to the trust of some friends from town who continued to sell the results under the Kent name in the local coffee shop and weekend market. Martha used all proceeds, from the baking, milk, wool and all, to put back into the farm.

Therefore, thanks to a few phone calls, everything was ready for them when Bruce pulled up the long driveway at the end of their two hour drive from Dwight D. Eisenhower National airport in Wichita.

The lights in the house were on, there was a pick-up outside, and Clark almost felt momentary panic as he saw the front door open.

Lana Lang was waiting for them.

Clark slowly opened the door and stepped out. Lana looked just the same and yet different, perhaps a little more filled out than she used to be, but her genuine smile crinkling her eyes, which bore some remnants of her Chinese grandmother, was just the same.

“Welcome home, Clark.” she greeted him.

Clark hesitated before answering.

“Thanks. Um…”

“It’s okay. You don’t have to explain anything.”

*Oh, God, mom’s told her everything…*

“We can talk inside. I’ve got some of Mrs. Frank’s fried chicken and other fixings laid out for you. When your mother called more than a few people chipped in to make sure you’d all be fed for the weekend.”

It should have made Clark feel warm and cared for, but at the thought that more than a few people might know what had happened to him, Clark felt his knees buckle. Thankfully, Bruce was right there.

“Whoa, Clark, it’s okay.” Lana said gently as she came up to him. Bruce was holding him from falling to the ground. “Come on, maybe we should talk first and eat later. Hi, I’m Lana Lang.” She
said this last to Bruce.

“Bruce Wayne.”

Lana helped him to bring Clark into the house while Jason, Dick, and Tim worked on grabbing the luggage. Damian was holding onto a fistful of Bruce’s shirt, eyeing Lana warily.

They sat Clark in one of the two armchairs in the living room. Clark had shut his eyes and was breathing through his nose. Beneath the smell of the food was the smell of everything he remembered of his childhood.

He gradually started to calm down and opened his eyes. Bruce was holding his left hand and Lana was kneeling by his right leg, still smiling, but in a more sympathetic sort of way.

“Hey, Superman. You okay?”

He smiled a little at his old nickname.

“I think so.”

“His name is Clark.” Damian’s voice came from behind Bruce’s hip.

“Yeah,” said Lana. “But no matter how bad the football team was doing, he always managed to pull a miracle win. So he was nicknamed the Superman. Coach was spitting mad when one of the scouts who came to look at him decided not to take him because of his presentation. They still don’t let Omegas in the college teams.”

“Now, Clark,” she said seriously. “I know you, and I know you’re thinking the worst, but you shouldn’t be. Your mom just explained that you’re with a support Alpha and that a big crowd wouldn’t be a good idea. I’m also the only one she told this to, because she knew if she left things in my hands I’d take care of it. Chloe and Pete would like to see you, but they’re waiting for the go-ahead from me, and I won’t do that without your permission. They only know you’re in town, they don’t know any of the specifics.”

Clark knew that Lana had probably already guessed the rest, or at least most of it. He didn’t want a pity party, and he knew Lana wouldn’t give him one. This was the girl, woman, with whom he’d shared his first kiss. They’d figured out together that though they care for each other a great deal, they weren’t what they wanted for the rest of their lives.

He needed to tell her.

“Bruce, can I have a moment alone with Lana, please?” He looked up into the Alpha’s eyes.

Bruce gave his hand a squeeze and a small smile.

“Sure.”

He ushered the boys onto the porch and shut the door. Lana sat in the other armchair.

“How much do they know?” Clark asked.

“That you went through a broken bond and that you’re pregnant.”

“How much do you know?”

Lana chewed her upper lip for a moment.
“That what you’re about to tell me will make me want to skin Lex alive.”

Clark told her. He told her how most of the past several years had been like an awful dream he hadn’t been able to fully face. He’d felt broken, useless. Like he must have been somehow responsible for his Alpha’s changed treatment of him. This had finally changed when he found out that Lex had been using the birth control without his knowledge.

“And even now, after knowing it all, I don’t hate him. I’m angry, but I’ve tried to hate him and it’s just not there.”

“Hate is a very strong emotion that is very exhausting to maintain. After all you’ve been through, isn’t it better that you can focus your energy on healing?”

“You sound like my therapist.”

“School teacher. Which sometimes means providing therapy for my students.”

“Thank you, miss Lang.” Clark teased. Lana rolled her eyes.

“Are you going to bring a wreath?” Lana asked. “For the ceremony.” She clarified, when Clark’s brow had furrowed. “That’s why you came, isn’t it?”

“Yeah.” Clark said weakly. “I’m not sure I thought this through.” he said as he fell back in his seat. “I mean, everyone I knew growing up is going to be there. What are they going to say?”

“Nothing at all.” Lana told him. “You’re going to be there with a wreath for your great-uncle like you were at your father’s side for years.”

“Except pregnant and not with the Alpha I left married to.” Clark pointed out.

“Clark, people around here are pretty smart. Most have already heard about Lex’s death, and I did make sure they knew that Mr. Wayne is your support Alpha. They may not know about the abuse, but they know you went through a broken bond and that you’re carrying Lex’s pup. That’s all they need to know.”

Clark sighed.

“Thank you.”

“No problem.”

“So, besides being a teacher, what’s new?”

“Tina and I broke up several years ago.”

“Shit, what happened?” Tina was another Omega Lana had started dating after he and Lana had ended their relationship.

Lana took a deep breath.

“She… had self-confidence issues, I think. I tried to help her, but, she was also easily jealous, and started accusing me. I think it might have had to do with not fully accepting being gay. She was sure she was going to lose me to an Alpha at some point, and it turned into accusations, needing to know where I was every minute.” Lana shook her head. “She even showed up while I was in class at college. I swear, I’m surprised she didn’t pee me every morning just to make sure others knew to stay away.”
Alpha children could often be identified long before presenting because they were prone to marking their territory by urinating until they were old enough to understand that it wasn’t polite. Paleontologists had found that it had once been common for Alphas to mark their mates and pups in this manner to be sure that other Alphas would know they were protected. It was a practise long since abolished as humans evolved to be more civilised, but still referred to in cases of over-protectiveness. Exceptions sometimes existed, such as Jonathan Kent marking the perimeter of the barn and poultry enclosures to keep raccoons, coyotes, and foxes away from the animals.

“I’m sorry things turned out that way.” Clark told her. Lana shrugged.

“It hurt, but I’ve made my peace with it. Someday, you will, too, and you’ll be better off for it.”

Clark nodded. Then his stomach growled.

“Mrs. Frank’s fried chicken did you say?” he asked.

“With Mr. Goldstein’s peach cobbler for dessert.” Lana smiled.

Clark grinned and pushed himself to stand, going to fetch Bruce and the boys, first.

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Lana promised she would meet them the next morning along with Pete and Chloe at Bill Ross’ (Pete’s dad) garage. Also, given the lateness of the hour and the fact that he wouldn’t have the opportunity the next day, she promised to find him a wreath to lay at the ceremony.

“Your mother had the box delivered via courier. It’s in the master bedroom.” she said as she gave him a parting hug, leaving Clark and the Waynes to settle in.

“She means my great-uncle’s medals.” Clark clarified when he turned to Bruce after Lana left.

They sat to the fare which Lana had laid on the table for them. Clark bit into a drumstick and had been chewing for just a few seconds when he burst into tears as the taste, combined with the setting and the smells, brought in a flood of memories.

He waved Bruce off when the Alpha stood, wanting to comfort him.

“It’s okay, I’m fine, I just…” he spoke through his blubering. “It’s been such a long time since I had this and since I’ve been in this house and—” he sniffed loudly. “I’m fine, I promise.” He blew his nose on a piece of paper towel from the roll he’d placed on the table to use for napkins.

Clark gradually stopped crying as they continued through dinner in silence.

“After the ceremony tomorrow I could take you to the barn and show you the animals.” Clark said after a while, still sounding stuffed up, but better. “Well, I’ll want to visit my father’s grave, first, but, after that.”

“What kind of animals?” Damian asked.

“I’m not sure if mom kept all of them, but, when I was younger, we had goats, chickens, and turkeys. Actually…”

Clark stood and went to the fridge. Sure enough, there were a few packages of goat cheese. He picked one up and brought it to the table, spreading some on a bun, then handed it to Damian.

“That’s goat cheese. It’s made right here on the farm.”
Damian sniffed it, then took a bite. After chewing it for a bit, he swallowed and declared:

“Tastes weird, but I like it?” he seemed confused.

Clark laughed.

“A lot of people don’t like it their first time trying it, but end up liking it later.”

Bruce tried some next. He’d tasted goat cheese before, but it was usually accompanied by toppings such as oysters at society functions.

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After everyone had finished off the peach cobbler (Lana had left some vanilla ice-cream to accompany it), Clark went upstairs to fetch the box containing his great-uncle’s medals.

The red mahogany box was ornately carved and possessed a small lock. The key for it was in an envelope next to the box, along with two folded pieces of paper. The first was from his mother.

Clark,

Your father wanted you to have these a long time ago. I tried several times to contact you about them, but Lex kept asking what it was about, hanging up when I refused to tell him. I felt then that there was something wrong, but I froze. I didn’t take the steps I should have to get you out sooner, because I thought I was meddling. Because I thought I needed to let you be an adult and be in control of your life.

The biggest enemy of anyone in trouble is silence. I kept mine for far too long because I doubted. I have a dim memory of someone on a talk show saying that human mothers are the only species who will talk themselves out of their fears. Apparently I was very convincing.

Your father asked for you before he slipped away. When I found out what you had been through, well… I don’t think I ever hated myself more.

I can only hope you’ll forgive me my silence one day. Please know that if you call I’ll come running, as I should have done before.

My never-ending love,

Momma

Clark noted the smudged letters before he took notice of his own tears. He opened his father’s letter with a near desperation.

My special boy,

I’ve been more tired lately. It’s been making me think a lot. We haven’t talked in so long, and that shouldn’t be. I’ll try to see you real soon, because what I want to give you shouldn’t be mailed. I need to give them to you in person.
These signs of love belong to you, now. I call them signs of love, because though they were rewards of bravery in battle, they represent a higher kind of bravery: that of one brother’s love for another.

I’m sure you remember the story, but I’ll tell it to you twice more: once when I give them to you, and once here so you’ll have it for keeps.

Conner Kent and Hiram Kent were twin brothers, though one presented Alpha and the other presented Omega. All through their puppy years and beyond they were the best brothers could be.

One day, Hiram proposed to Jessica, an Omega girl they had known growing up, and of course Conner was going to be his best man. Some weeks later, Conner was fetching the mail and saw a letter addressed to his brother from the Sedgwick County Board. This was in February of 1942, and young Alphas were being drafted all up and down the country in the wake of Pearl Harbour. Sure enough, he opened the letter, right there at the side of the road, and it was a call for physical examination.

Conner hid the letter. He’d made up his mind before he stepped back into the house.

Conner went in Hiram’s place. Pulled all sorts of tricks to make people think he was an Alpha. Lied to his family about a job out of town to explain why he’d go away for weeks at a time for basic training.

The day before he shipped out, he and Hiram went fishing. This was a week before the wedding. When they got home, Conner and Hiram made a pillow fort in the attic like when they were pups. Conner made Hiram promise him that he’d take Jessica fishing the day after their wedding.

Conner paid someone in the next town to call the day of the wedding, claiming the road was out, explaining why Conner couldn’t make it for the wedding. Hiram knew his brother, and realised something was wrong. So he checked his tackle box. Conner had left him a note telling him everything.

At this point, Clark used the tiny key to open the box, because this was the part where his father always explained the medals. On top of the medals was an old black and white photo of two boys, almost completely identical save one was taller than this other, but only by a couple of inches. They were holding fishing rods, standing side by side, each with one arm around the other’s shoulders.

Conner Kent received the Bronze Star for rescuing a small group of fellow officers while they were being led at gunpoint by Nazi soldiers.

He received the Silver Star when he led his regiment out of a hot zone alive, after they had managed to turn tables on an enemy regiment camped near Anzio.

When members of his regiment were called to help in the bombardment of Germany, he won the Distinguished Flying Cross for heading off a group of enemy planes who were trying to surprise our boys from behind some hills. This is the same battle which earned him the Purple Heart, as well as the Prisoner Of War Medal posthumously. Though he was later rescued, he died of massive infections in his wounds before he made it home. By this time the truth about his name and presentation came out, but he had done such service the army didn’t try to remove any of his honours. He became a hero back home, and inspiration to Omegas wanting to help with the war effort.
The only reason I’m not named after him, my father said, is because Conner told Hiram in a letter not to name any pups after him. I’ve decided to honour that by not naming you after him, either. But you know what? If you should have a son, don’t let that letter stop you. I’m not telling you to name any of your pups after him, but I’m not telling you not to, either.

I hope I’ll see you real soon, and hand this to you in person. I’m not ashamed to admit I’m scared I won’t, though.

Some nights I wake up and I can’t move, my heart beating too quick. It wakes your mother, because she can sense through our bond that something’s wrong. So if this should reach you by other hands than mine, you’ll know why.

Since we took you home I’ve been knowing you’re something special. Watching you grow up, how you use words where others might use their fists... Clark, you’re going to inspire people someday with the words you speak and write. Just don’t forget your daddy when you publish your first book, okay?

I love you with all that I am,

Daddy

Clark was crying silently, curled on his side on the bed, the letter open beside him when Bruce came up to check on him. He held him for almost an hour when Clark insisted they gather in the living room after everyone had changed into their pajamas. Clark sat on the sofa with Damian in his lap, Bruce at his side, Tim on Bruce’s other side, and Dick and Jason in the armchairs.

The fire was blazing merrily in the hearth, and Clark took a deep breath as he opened the wooden box before everyone.

“I have a story to tell all of you.” He took a deep breath and pulled out the photograph. “Conner Kent and Hiram Kent were twin brothers; one presented Alpha and the other presented Omega. All through their puppy years and beyond they were the best brothers could be...”

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Though somewhat jet-lagged the next morning, everyone managed to be ready in time to be dressed in the dark suits they had packed after they had eaten a good American breakfast of eggs, bacon, sausage, and toast; the eggs were laid by the farm hens.

True to form, Pete, Chloe, and Lana were waiting for them just inside the garage, which was just a short walk from the Cenotaph; they were going to leave the Lincoln there for the duration of the ceremony.

Pete whistled as they stepped out of the car.

“Don’t know how my dad’s gonna react seeing a fancy thing like this in his garage; he might pass out.”

Clark grinned, his throat constricting, but he was determined not to cry this time.

“Hey, Pete.”
“Hey yourself, duchess. What’s with this mop?” Pete indicated Clark’s hair, which was now just below his ears; he hadn’t had a haircut since the week before Lex died. Lex had taken it upon himself to cut his hair, and Clark had to admit he didn’t do too bad a job.

“I’m trying to grow a mullet.” Clark jed.

“Ew, don’t even joke about that, man.”

Clark chuckled as they hugged. Pete’s Alpha scent was familiar to him, non-threatening.

“Is this what it’s like to live in the city?” Pete said, turning his attention back to the Lincoln. Clark could tell Pete was just itching to touch it.

Chloe rolled her eyes and walked out to Clark, arms outstretched.

“Hey, you.” she said as Clark hugged her.

“How’ve you been, Chloe?” he asked as they released each other.

“I’ll be heading up your way in a couple of weeks, actually. My cousin Lois got me an internship at the Daily Planet. I’ll only be a couple of hours away!”

“That’s great!” he congratulated her.

“Thanks!” she smiled in that cute way of hers where her nose crinkled up and her eyes got all squinty. “How’s puppy?” she looked down and reached out, but stopped short of touching his belly.

“It’s okay, go ahead. Not much going on right now, though.”

Chloe had undergone a hysterectomy when they were teenagers, due to a nasty infection leaving her unable to have pups. Doctors agreed it would be better for her mental health to have everything removed so that she wouldn’t experience heats, as they would only serve as a reminder to what she couldn’t have. In spite of, or perhaps because of this, she was the most puppy-crazy of the group, doting on pups whenever she got the chance. Clark could see a hint of sadness in her smile as she rubbed over his puppy-pocket.

“You’re going to be a great mother, Clark.” Chloe looked up at him, her eyes shimmering.

“I hope puppy will have auntie Chloe visit often.”

Chloe bit her lip and nodded.

“Dammit.” Chloe wiped at her eyes as she backed away.

“My aunt had a few left.” Lana turned to point at two wreaths of red roses and carnations, white carnations, and light blue hydrangeas. Two small American flags criss-crossed in the middle; Lana’s aunt ran a florist’s shop.

“Lana, this is…” Clark felt his throat constrict again. “How much?”

“Nothing. Don’t you even try to pay.”

Clark felt a traitorous tear roll down his cheek. Bruce placed a hand on his shoulder.

“We can leave one in the car for you to take to your father’s grave, later.”
Clark nodded, sniffed, and cleared his throat.

“Um, sorry, I, uh… should introduce you. This is Bruce Wayne, he’s my support Alpha. Bruce, this is Pete and Chloe.” Chloe waved. Pete, did, too, but he was simultaneously running his fingers on the hood of the Lincoln.

“This is Damian, Bruce’s youngest, and there’s Jason, Tim, and Dick.” he pointed at them in turn, save for Damian, whose hand he took in his.

Lana had met them all last night, of course. The introduction was for Pete and Chloe’s benefit.

“Hi, sweetie.” Chloe smiled at Damian, bending to be more at his level.

Damian walked forward, still holding Clark’s hand, and sniffed carefully in front of Chloe’s face.

“You smell nice.” he concluded.

“Aw, thanks, honey!” she sported another crinkle-smile.

Damian smiled back but backed next to Clark, leaning against his hip.

“‘Sup, lil’ man?” Pete strode forward, full confidence, and held out a hand above Damian in what should have been a peaceful gesture. If Pete had greeted Clark with that, Clark, knowing Pete, would have held his hand out, they would have smacked, and probably hugged.

Damian froze.

Clark felt the pup’s grip on his hand tighten, smelled sudden fear emanating from him.

Bruce stepped forward, placing himself between Pete and Damian, but not in an aggressive stance; he knew Pete was no threat, it was merely a show of protection to reassure his son. Pete stepped back.

“Damian.” Clark spoke softly as he knelt next to him, holding him to his throat for scenting.

“Damian, it’s okay. Pete’s a friend. He won’t hurt you.”

Jason came forward, too, a second Alpha family member to help ensure the feeling of safety. Dick walked up to Pete directly.

“Don’t take it personally. He was attacked, once. He’s in an unfamiliar place, and you’re an Alpha he doesn’t know. It was a few years ago, we didn’t think this might happen.”

“Shit.” Pete said softly. “Who the hell would attack a pup?”

“Long story, but he’s in jail, and that’s what matters.”

Chloe, Pete, and Lana watched as Tim came next to kneel beside Damian, whispering words of reassurance to his little brother.

Clark rubbed Damian’s back and carefully pulled him away enough to look him in the eye.

“You okay, pup?”

Damian nodded, though still looking a little shaken.

Pete didn’t move forward, but lowered to his knees, keeping his hands folded in his lap.
“I’m sorry, buddy.” he said softly. “I’m really not so bad. Here.” he held out both hands low to the ground, palms up.

Damian went to his father, holding his hand as he got closer to Pete. Pete slowly held one hand up for Damian to smell. Bruce could feel the tension ease from Damian instantly as, in the next moment, Damian used his other hand to shake Pete’s.

“I’m sorry. I know you’re Clark’s friend. I don’t know why I got scared.”

“It’s because another Alpha hurt you. I understand.”

“Like when I get scared, Damian.” Clark told him gently. “It’s not your fault.”

Clark was working hard to maintain a calm exterior. He hadn’t known Damian had issues with strange Alphas, as they had yet to encounter it before. He was having to fight the instinct to bundle him up and hide him away.

“It’s probably because you raised your arm above him.” Bruce explained. “Subconsciously, he saw it as a threat.”

Damian hadn’t had an incident since the mall Santa the year before. Bruce made sure that he would check around so that he would only bring him to Santas who were Betas or Omegas from then on out.

Maybe that’s part of the problem.

School, clinic, home. Sometimes a restaurant or the park. Damian otherwise didn’t go many places, so the opportunity to meet other Alphas was small. That wasn’t healing; that was avoiding the situation. Pete shook Bruce from his thoughts with his reply.

“Aw, man. Sorry, buddy.” Pete said to Damian.

“It’s okay.” Damian told him.

Bruce picked him up.

“Maybe we should get going.” he said, trying to keep the situation light. “The ceremony will be starting, soon. We can put the wreath for your father in the trunk, if you want, Clark.”

“Thanks.” Clark picked one of the wreaths and placed it in the back.

Lana, Chloe, and Pete led the way as Clark fell into step beside Bruce, still holding Damian, while the rest of the boys followed behind.
Chapter 21

Chapter Summary

Veteran's Day Ceremony and Saturday at the Kent Farm. Some fluff between our lovely almost-couple. An old bully proves himself to be a changed man.

Chapter Notes

Warning for a graphic nightmare partway through the story and heartstring-pulling at the beginning of the chapter. Fluff shall break up the clouds afterward.

I would like to apologise for the delay in posting. Again, this chapter is not beta'd. I just haven't been able to keep up. I may get one more chapter up before the end of the year, but I think I may try to take the rest of 2016 to just write ahead and then get back to a regular posting schedule in the new year. Very sorry about that, everyone.

I highly recommend you all look up the song I put in the beginning of this chapter. It was written following the story of a man in a Canadian store who, during the two minutes' of silence the store was encouraging everyone to follow, intentionally tried to engage staff in conversation and was being very rude and loud in general, like he didn't give a damn about what day it was. There's a music video for it and everything. ;)

Merry Christmas, everyone!

Take two minutes, would you mind?

It’s a Pittance of Time

For the boys and the girls who went over

In peace may they rest

May we never forget why they died

It’s a Pittance of Time

— Pittance of Time by Terry Kelly

Clark’s childhood friends did a good job of navigating the crowd so that they could get close to the front without going through the largest mass of people.

He sometimes thought he caught one of the townsfolk looking at him, but everyone seemed to be sticking to themselves and leaving him alone. He recognised some people, like teachers and
neighbours, but also a few new faces, as well as the faces of those he knew he must have seen before, but had never known.

The overall tone of the gathering was solemn, as a recorded list of the honoured dead from wars past and present sounded from the speakers set up around the area, and the grey sky overhead reflected the mood.

The groups of various uniformed organisations (police, ROTC, scouts, etc.) filed in marching around the cenotaph, stopping in separate formations surrounding the monument.

Clark folded his arms and bowed his head for the prayer led by the Baptist minister.

He felt like his throat was in a perpetual state of constriction as poems were read and Star-Spangled Banner was sung.

At last, it was eleven o’clock and a lone trumpet played taps as the crowd remained very still, though the first of the cannon booms took Clark off-guard. He took a look towards Bruce and Damian; the pup had tightened his grip around Bruce’s shoulders, but seemed otherwise fine as Bruce rubbed his back.

Clark looked up when he realised that the moment of silence had continued a few beats past the sound of the trumpet. The air force colonel who had been MCing was looking right at him. Clark hadn’t really looked before, but now he realised it was Whitney Fordman.

“We are now going to hear a poem written by one of my graduating classmates.” Whitney finally said. He unfolded a piece of paper from the pocket of his uniform, and proceeded to read it himself.

“A brother’s love is not about blood,

It is about service.

This service I do for you,

Without wanting anything in return.”

Clark thought he was going to pass out. Whitney Fordman, who gave him a hard time on the field, who teased him relentlessly about his writing, his glasses, who had laughed in his face when he secured the college scholarship instead of Clark, was reading his poem.

“I fight not for glory,

But for freedom.

I take up arms, not for honours,

But for love.”

Clark could see the emotion in Whitney’s face, could hear the strain as he threatened to choke with it.

“I do these things, not because I want to die,

But for you to live.

I want to fight for a world

Where you won’t have to.
Because brothers do that for one another.

They bandage scraped knees,

They comfort during moments of fear.

And when the cry comes to fight injustice,

They pick up the call.

Truth will prevail over falsehood,

Justice will triumph over injustice,

And America will shine on in its way.

This beautiful land which you and I call home,

My brother.”

He stepped down and made a gesture to a fellow officer who took his place at the podium, and announced for the crowd to sing *Faith Of Our Fathers*.

Clark found himself shedding silent tears; because the words of the hymn hit too close to home, but also because he felt like this was Whitney’s way of apologising. Something he never thought he would ever get.

The hymn ended, and one last prayer was said before the gathered were invited to lay their wreaths and bouquets. First was the mayor, then other representatives of organisations, finally the ordinary citizens.

Bruce silently offered Clark help for the wreath, but Clark gently shook his head. He needed to do this himself.

The wreath felt much heavier than it had carrying it there. Clark could feel his legs trembling beneath him, but he pressed forward.

At last, he made it up the short steps of the cenotaph, and propped the wreath directly against it. He wasn’t aware of having made the decision consciously, but it was on the side depicting the World War II soldiers, and the name Conner Kent stood out to his gaze with no effort.

When Clark turned, Whitney was waiting for him at the bottom of the steps. Clark walked down to him, and they locked eyes with each other.

Somehow, it felt like second-nature to pull Whitney into a hug, even as he felt his throat constrict. Whitney’s scent merged from worried to relieved.

They let go without saying a word as Clark made his way back to Bruce and the boys.

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Clark emptied half a box of tissue before they even made it to the cemetery, stopping along the way to leave the boys at the house.

“How come I can’t come?” Damian asked tearfully, confused before Clark and Bruce took off.

“You’re sad. You shouldn’t be alone when you’re sad.”
“Damian.” Bruce chided gently. “He hasn’t been able to go to his father’s grave before. This is a private moment for him. He’ll let us know if he needs.”

Bruce knew what this was like. Although he had eventually brought the boys to his parents’ graves, he preferred being there by himself. It was a moment of reflection, when he could say things those which weighed heavily on his heart.

“I’ll be back, Damian.” Clark assured him.

Damian nodded solemnly before Clark gave him a hug.

Bruce parked the car in the center path where Clark indicated, and pulled the switch for the trunk so that Clark could retrieve the wreath from the back. As requested, he stayed in the Lincoln while Clark made his way through the headstones to the line nearest the edge.

There were markers with the name Kent going back five generations, mostly large ones with space to name spouses and, occasionally, children.

The newest one, with his father’s name, had space for his mother, and although there was space for his, as well, it wouldn’t look too blank if he ended up being buried elsewhere.

Before, he assumed he would be buried near Lex.

Now, he would be buried with his parents.

He thought to the time his father explained how their family buried their dead, and a fresh wave of tears poured as he sobbed, losing his grip on the wreath and falling to his knees.

_We don’t waste money on fancy boxes_, his father’s voice echoed through his head. _We take our loved ones to their resting place, and gently wrap them in a white shroud. We use this time to say our last goodbyes, and carefully lay them in the ground. Then, we do the bulk of the burying with our hands, pushing the pile into the space. It’s been like that in our family for longer than anyone knows._

“I’m sorry, dad.” Clark sobbed. “I’m sorry I wasn’t here. I should have been here!”

He dug his fingers into the earth, like he could somehow reach his father.

“I miss you so much! I-I-I can’t—” he sobbed loudly. “My head’s all messed up and I’m supposed to take care of my pup and I’ve been bonding with another Alpha’s pup and I don’t know what to do! Some days, I think I’ll have it all figured out, but other days, dad, I’m terrified!”

He sobbed for a few minutes, unable to speak. He felt his pup move; not kick, so much as just shift. Clark could almost swear it was trying to reassure him.

He took a shuddering breath and continued.

“And now, I feel like I might be falling for Bruce, but I don’t know what to do about it. He kissed me once, but, it was to stop my hysterics. A couple of weeks ago, I flirted, and he flirted back, but, I used to flirt with Pete, too, and we both knew that neither of us ever meant it.”

Clark realised he was babbling now, but babbling meant he wasn’t crying as hard.

“But I think I want it to mean something with Bruce. Except that I’m scared. He’s been great, he’s been patient and caring and everything, but he’s my support, so he has to. What if I fall too hard and he doesn’t feel the same? But what if he does? What example am I showing my pup? That I can’t
take care of myself? That I need an Alpha just to get through life?”

Clark felt a hot-cold flash of shame as he thought of how long he had let Lex play him like a puppet. What would his father have said?

_That poor man._ His father’s voice sounded in his head, clear as day.

Clark could almost picture the scene when he was sitting with his family in the living room when the news had broken the story of a Washington congressman who, it was discovered, had been abusing his Omega-husband for decades, until their grown-up pups finally managed to get the attention of the press who exposed the congressman for having, among other things, hosted gatherings where his friends would take turns knotting the Omega.

_Some Alphas should be castrated and never be allowed within fifty feet of an Omega._ His father had said.

_Why didn’t he just run away?_ Clark had asked, naïve at twelve.

_Because when someone hurts someone in just the right way enough times, they feel like they can’t run._ His father explained. _There’s no shame in that, Clark. The only one who should ever be ashamed is the one who caused the hurt._

“Fuck.” Clark sobbed anew for a few minutes.

“I love you, dad.” He finally said before sniffing loudly. “I love you so much.”

He leaned forward to press his forehead to the headstone and cried for a bit longer.

His breath still shaky and coming in little gasps, Clark stood and took the wreath from where he’d dropped it, then propped it in front of the stone before turning to return to the car.

Which is when the sky let go of the rain it had been threatening all day, soaking Clark through before he got back to the Lincoln, despite the fact that he’d jogged the rest of the way; he’d tried to run, but his puppy-pocket proved to be an immediate no for that.

Bruce didn’t press for conversation, for which Clark was grateful.

When they returned, Clark took a hot shower to combat the cold which had settled thanks to the rain, then changed into some sweats. Bruce had lit a fire in the grate and Jason made some cocoa. They ate leftovers from the night before while spread around the living room. Damian latched himself onto Clark almost as soon as he made himself comfortable on the sofa.

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Later that afternoon, Clark looked through the chest which doubled as a coffee table, finding an old Apples To Apples game.

They were maybe ten minutes in, laughing at the description for the Construction Worker card, when Tim suggested that sometime they should all play Cards Against Humanity after Damian was asleep.

“How come you never let me play?” Damian whined.

“Because I think if Bruce didn’t know I already play it with my friends he would never let me play, either.” Tim said with a smirk, not meeting Damian’s eyes.

“What’s Cards Against Humanity?” Clark asked.
“It’s basically Apples To Apples, but offensive.” Dick said.

“Like, massively offensive.” Jason continued. “You basically have to check your sensibilities at the door. None of this ‘Not in Macklemore’s America’ crap.” Jason had said the quote with a deliberately high, scandalised voice. “You quickly find out just how much dark perversion you’re hiding in yourself, not to mention the people around you.”

Bruce cleared his throat, warning them away from their current subject in Damian’s presence.

Clark felt a flash of mischievousness akin to when he and his friends did things like carpool to the next town over where they knew this one store where no one would ask for their IDs before letting them buy liquor. They always had the sense to drive back to Smallville before drinking it, but, all the same.

“Got a good card, Clark?” Bruce asked him, a small smile teasing his lips.

“Just thinking I would like to give that game a try when we get a chance.”

Bruce suddenly looked worried.

“Some of the cards are extremely…” he trailed off.

“I’ll send you the link to the Tabletop episode where they play it.” Dick assured him. “It’ll give you a feel for how bad it is. Now, back to the matter at hand: show me your most ‘Intelligent’ cards.” He laid out the green card labelled Intelligent where everyone could see.

***

Come evening the rain had stopped and Clark led Damian to the barn. Everything was laid out for the animals to be fed. The farm hands would be coming by later, but Clark wanted to show Damian before they showed up.

There was a sink inside the barn for washing their hands, and Clark showed Damian how to spread the hay for the goats in their troughs. Afterward they went to the chicken enclosure which was on one end of the barn and the turkeys on the other end (“They have to be kept separate from the turkeys because turkeys often get a parasite which is more dangerous for chickens.” Clark explained), washing their hands between each feeding.

After the goats had eaten, Clark carefully approached them in turn, trying to determine the most friendly. They weren’t the ones he had known before marrying Lex, so he couldn’t immediately tell.

At last, he found a white and brown one which not only excitedly sniffed his hand, but seemed quite eager to get out of its pen. Clark opened the latch and let it out, sitting on the barn floor with Damian (after he had determined there was no poop in the immediate vicinity).

“Here, Damian: hold the carrot by the green and the very end.”

Damian just barely got a proper hold of the carrot before the goat went after it, chewing very quickly through the vegetable, causing Damian to giggle.

“There.” Clark said, grinning. “Now you can pet him.”

Damian mimicked Clark’s actions of stroking along the side of the goat’s neck. The goat seemed to like the contact very much and settled right into Damian’s lap, causing another eruption of giggles from the pup.
After a time Bruce came to join them, kneeling down on the floor.

“Having fun?”

“I think so.” Clark said, a peaceful smile on his face as Damian giggled while he fed the goat another carrot.

Bruce smiled, too, and switched to a sitting position before petting Damian’s hair.

Clark’s focus was pulled to Bruce’s other hand, laying face-down on the floor mere inches from Clark’s left. Clark bit his bottom lip and, hoping he was being subtle, moved his hand closer.

Clark’s gaze was still occupied on the remaining space between their hands that he didn’t see Bruce’s small smile, because the Alpha had noticed the move; he extended his pinky and laid it on top of Clark’s, leaving him an easy out.

*Screw it,* thought Clark as he took hold of Bruce’s hand, a feeling of warmth spreading from the closeness and easing his nerves as Bruce gave his hand a squeeze in return.

*Maybe it doesn’t have to be so scary.* Clark thought as he laid his head on Bruce’s shoulder.

***

**Did you think you could keep this from me?**

Lex was holding Clark on his knees with one hand on his shoulder, the other gripping his hair painfully, pulling his head back, exposing his throat in a position of forced submission. Unlike other dreams, however, this was no flashback. Clark’s belly was as swollen as it was when he was awake.

*Please, no. Let me go.*

**You are my mate. This is our pup. You can’t be running off to another Alpha.**

**You didn’t want pups.**

**Looks like I need to teach you some manners. Can’t be having the mother of my heir raising it into betraying me.**

The scene shifted, and Clark lay in a bed, his wrists tied above his head. He was cold, not helped by the fact that from the waist down the bed was soaked. He tilted his head up as he pulled at the restraints, and saw that his belly was no longer round, and that the wetness was blood.

A scream caught in his throat as he saw Lex standing beside the bed, his arms full of naked, bloodied pups. He threw his bald head back and laughed.

***

“Clark!”

Clark felt a jolt and he grabbed onto Bruce’s shirt.

“The pup! He-- Lex-- he killed--!” He was gasping for air as he clutched at Bruce.

Bruce held him close in his lap, stroking the side of his head as he made soothing shushing noises.

“Shh. It’s okay, Clark. Your pup is fine.”
Bruce stopped stroking and gently pried one of Clark’s hands from his shirt to place it on the puppy-pocket, moving it in a circle over the firm skin. After a moment, Clark felt the puppy shift, and grasped Bruce’s hand to hold at the right spot.

It was over ten minutes before Clark’s breathing normalised, though he was still trembling. He finally looked away and had only the briefest inclinations that something was off before it hit him.

“Where’s Damian?”

Bruce stroked his belly some more.

“I wasn’t able to wake you right away, and you were screaming. I had Dick take him in for the night.”

Clark ran his hand over his face, his throat constricting.

“Fuck. Is he okay?”

“He’ll be fine. Dick will look after him. We’ll see him in the morning and it will all be okay. That’s what family is for; we all pitch in to help each other out.”

Clark tried to ignore the way his heart gave a small stutter when it almost sounded like Bruce was including him in that definition.

“Would you like some water?” Bruce asked him after a time. Clark nodded and Bruce took a glass from the nightstand, holding it to Clark’s lips as the Omega took grateful sips.

After drinking down half the glass, Bruce went back to holding Clark, stroking the side of his face.

“I’m sorry I woke you.” Clark said after a while.

“It’s not your fault.” Bruce said, before kissing Clark’s hair like it was the most natural thing in the world.

Clark felt his heart sputter again.

Bruce was trying to keep calm while mentally kicking himself for being careless. That is, until Clark snuggled closer into Bruce and placed a light kiss near his collarbone, right above the neck of his shirt.

Clark felt a sense of peace wash over him when happy Alpha scent met his nostrils.

They eventually fell asleep again, knees touching, right hands entwined.

***

When Clark woke again the next morning, he couldn’t remember having any other dreams. He felt incredibly serene when he opened his eyes and saw Bruce’s face only a foot away from his, still sleeping at first, but then he, too, gradually opened his eyes as Clark watched, smiling softly when he saw Clark.

“Morning.” Clark greeted quietly.

“Good morning.” Bruce replied. Then his mouth opened in a huge yawn which he delayed in covering with his hand, causing Clark to wrinkle his nose in disgust.
“Ew. Morning breath.”

“Sorry.” Bruce snorted. “Doubt yours is any rosier.”

“Omegas automatically have minty breath and floral body scent.” Clark teased, remembering an old Internet joke about how Omegas supposedly never farted.

Bruce’s eyes narrowed and his lip curled up on one side in a mischievous grin.

Clark bit the insides of his cheeks, anticipating trouble.

Sure enough, Bruce quickly darted a hand forward and proceeded to tickle Clark’s side where his pajama shirt had ridden up, causing Clark to shriek with laughter while Bruce stuck his face near Clark’s armpit and sniffed.

“Nope.” He said, drawing back, grinning triumphantly. “Omegas are most definitely as stinky as Alphas first thing in morning.”

Clark stuck his tongue out briefly, but grinned back.

Today felt like a good day.

***

Damian ran to Clark as soon as he and Bruce reached the bottom of the stairs. He was clutching Bat-bear and proceeded to nip Clark’s hand. Clark sank to his knees and hugged Damian.

“Sorry for scaring you.”

“You had a bad dream?” Damian asked.

Clark shivered slightly at the memory.

“Yeah. But your dad took care of me and helped me feel better.”

“What happened here?” Bruce asked.

Clark turned and saw a mess of pillows and blankets in the living room, including the cushions from the furniture. The trunk containing games as well as the two armchairs had been arranged around the couch to form a perimeter with the fireplace on the open side.

“We meant to clean up before you guys woke up.” Jason said tentatively from where he stood at the stove flipping bacon.

“We made a pillow fort.” Tim explained.

“It helped Damian to have the three of us around.” Dick added, stirring a bowl of pancake batter.

“You guys did a good job.” Clark said. “We can clean it up after breakfast. Thanks for that, by the way.”

“No problem.” Jason was eager to say.

“It’s part of the experience.” Tim said.

“The experience?” Clark asked.
“Well, this is a farm. You grew up here, right?” Tim asked.

“Yeah…” Clark said, wondering where he was going, his brain not fully awake yet.

“Well, your parents didn’t do everything for you, right? You had chores, right?”

Clark smiled.

“You’re right.”

“I do chores.” Damian said, frowning.

“Alfred gets us to keep our rooms clean and make sure we put our clothes in the laundry chute.”

Jason pointed out. “Most pups have to pitch in with meals, mopping, et cetera. I had to clean up after the incubator drunk herself unconscious, but that’s a special case.”

“The incubator?” Clark asked. He wanted to get up, his lower legs were starting to cramp (it was amazing how easily aches and pains happened the further he got into his pregnancy), but that was easier said than done.

“The woman who gave birth to me. She was never a proper mom to me, and my seeder was only there a couple of times a month. That’s why I call Bruce dad but Tim and Dick still call him by his name; they got to know their parents and they were good people. As far as I’m concerned, Bruce is the only real parent in my life. The other two might have brought me into the world, but I wasn’t welcomed by them.” Jason started putting cooked strips onto a plate with a layer of paper towel.

Clark was surprised by how easily Jason could discuss those things.

*He’s put it behind him.* He realised. It didn’t mean it didn’t still hurt, but he was moving forward. It gave Clark hope. If Jason could get such a bad start in life but eventually build himself into a kind person who fought for those that needed defending, then surely Clark could push his problems in the past, too. It would take time, and it would probably always linger like a bad scar, but he’d live.

His legs were really starting to hurt, now.

“Do you need some help?” Bruce leaned down and held out his hand.

“Yes, please.” Clark took hold and used his other hand to grab around Bruce’s elbow and the Alpha pulled him to his feet.

“Ow.” Clark held on to Bruce’s arm while he helped him into one of the kitchen chairs.

“You okay?” Damian asked.

“Yeah, it’s just pins and needles. It’ll pass.”

Damian started looking at Clark’s legs and feet.

“Where?”

“Where what?”

“Where are the pins and needles?”

Clark and Bruce chuckled.
“He means when the blood circulation gets cut off, baby-bat.” Jason explained. “You know, when your foot falls asleep?”

“Oh.” Damian said, understanding.

“It’s okay, pup. I’ve got the sleepy-brain thing going, too.” Clark ruffled Damian’s hair.

They sat down to breakfast, sunlight spilling cheerily from the windows and screen door in contrast to the rain from yesterday.

Clark proposed he show the animals to the other boys later, since they didn’t get a chance to the day before. Tim was starting to miss having an internet connection and so Clark was trying to think of ways to distract him (since no one lived in the house full-time, there was no sense in maintaining a connection to the property).

As they cleared up after breakfast, Clark went to Jason and pulled him into a hug.

Jason was thrown a little off-guard; although Clark had clearly become comfortable with his presence, there was still this unspoken barrier which prevented them from getting too close, let alone touching. Clark was surprised with how easy it felt to hug Jason, suddenly.

“You’re a good pup, Jason.”

Jason usually got ticked at adults referring to him as a pup (Dick seemed to love getting a rise out of him), but he understood where Clark was coming from with it; it was a mother thing. Jason had explained where he’d come from, and now Clark’s mothering instinct (made stronger due to his pregnancy) was telling him to nurture and care for Jason.

Jason didn’t feel like dissuading him, and returned the hug, feeling something similar to the day Bruce told him he was going to sign the adoption papers, making him smile.

***

“It really smells in here.” Tim pointed out as they made their way into the barn.

“Hey, I just cleaned the place out.”

Clark was startled by Whitney’s voice as he emerged from a stall.

He was wearing worn jeans and a windbreaker, with his old high school baseball cap settled on his blonde hair.

“Sorry, didn’t mean to spook ya.” he said in response to Clark’s stiff posture. “I cut across the woods this morning to get the animals fed.”

“I hadn’t asked my mom who she had hired.” Clark said as he gradually relaxed. “I doubt you’d have made my list of guesses.”

Whitney laughed.

“Yeah, a lot of things have changed, Kent.”

“Guys, this is Whitney Fordman.” Clark introduced. “We were on the football team together.”

“Tell it like it is, Kent. I was an ass—” his gaze dropped on Damian. “Idiot jerk who should’ve been put in his place a hundred times over. And pup? That’s me using words that aren’t swearing, when in
fact swearwords would be much more accurate.”

“He hurt you?” Damian looked up at Clark, concerned.

“He said some bad things that were hurtful.” Clark said. “But I think he learned later not to do that.”

Whitney shook his head and rolled his eyes.

“You make it sound like I was a pup who didn’t know what bad words meant.”

“Before Lana and I dated, she had been with Whitney.” Clark explained to Bruce, who had unconsciously placed himself in a position where he could make a quick shift to stand between Clark and Whitney if he deemed it necessary; Clark had told him about the bullying the day before on the car ride back from the cemetery, but not the specifics.

“I blamed him for ‘turning’ her gay.” Whitney used air-quotes. “After they broke up, I thought I had a chance, but then she started seeing Tina, and Clark ended up with Lex, so I got even angrier at him because I felt like he had been playing it the whole time just to piss me off. I didn’t have much of an education in the LGBTQ spectrum to know that bi was even a thing. Not an excuse for being an ass- um, jerk, but… anyway, you get the picture.”

“All the same,” Clark said. “You eventually realised you were wrong and you’re owning up to it. Not everyone does.”

“He’s done more than that.” Dick said. “You were posted at Fort Hamilton, right?”

Whitney frowned.

“Yeah. How’d you know?”

Dick grinned and turned to Bruce.

“Remember? Steve mentioned a Fordman who helped him when those other Alphas cornered him?”

Bruce, surprised, turned to Whitney, who looked equally surprised.

“You know Steve Trevor?” Whitney asked.

“He and Diana are good friends of mine.” Bruce said, feeling less on the defensive.

“Man, I haven’t seen him since he switched to counterintelligence. How is he?”

“Full hands, and a full belly. He's actually just a couple of months behind Clark, and it’s his fifth pregnancy.”

Whitney laughed.

“Man, those two can’t keep off each other, can they?”

“Not for long.” Bruce shook his head.

Whitney cocked his head, switching his view to Damian; the pup was holding Clark’s hand and was half-hidden behind his hip.

Whitney fell to his knees, dropped his shoulders, and slowly raised his hand to Damian.
Clark looked down to Damian and gave an encouraging head tilt. Damian looked to his father, first, who did the same.

One little foot in front of the other, Damian walked forward and sniffed Whitney’s hand. After a few seconds, he drew back and shook it.

“I’m Damian.”

Whitney smiled.

“Nice to meet you, Damian. I’m Whitney.”

Bruce made sure Whitney got his business card before he left, inviting him to the Wayne Enterprises Charity Bash, promising that Steve and Diana would be there.

“By the way, Clark,” Whitney said as he and Clark stood at the door of the barn.

“I ended up quitting the team after the first year. I was basically surrounded by other Alphas who reminded me way too much of how I had acted toward you. I came back home, not sure what to do, and then that VD Day they had published your poem in the flyer for the ceremony. That’s why I enlisted. I wanted to make a difference, and you helped me see that.”

Clark swallowed and hugged his former teammate.

“Another beetedub,” Whitney whispered. “I can tell you like Wayne and he seems to like you, too. Don’t be afraid of trying to be happy. But if he hurts you I’ll come up to Gotham and kick his ass. Consider it a promise from your brother from another mother.”

Clark snorted and pulled back.

“Thanks, Cannonball.” Clark used his old football name.

“No problem, Superman.” Whitney grinned at him, then turned and left.
Chapter 22

Chapter Summary

You know that moment when you blurt something out you really wish you hadn't? If you're lucky, no one dwells on it: they chuckle and move on. Clark is lucky. Oh, and it's Thanksgiving.

Chapter Notes

What madness is this? A new chapter already? Yeah, I was working on chapter 22, and most of it kind of wrote itself, and it became the right length thanks to me going over some stuff and realising I had forgotten to write about Clark meeting with his OBGYN's daughter. My bad. Not beta'd.

Also, I meant to include a link to this video last chapter. Sorry: Cards Against Humanity on Tabletop

See the end of the chapter for more notes

More precious than diamonds,

Silver, or gold,

My family is what

I most tightly hold.

— Thanksgiving by Clark Kent

They had a late lunch picnicking on a small hill on the property, overshadowed by a cottonwood tree.

"Man, I'm still weirded out by how it's warm enough to eat outside this late in the year." Tim said.

They still had to wear sweaters, but it was considerably warmer than the East coast area Gotham was situated in.

"Yeah, my first winter in Metropolis was pretty much just establishing a nest of blankets in front of the fireplace." Clark said, smiling. "At first, I was excited, because I had never experienced snow on such a level before, but after a while it wore off."

"So you're not one for white Christmases, then?" Bruce asked.
“Nah, I still like the beauty of snow on pine. I just like being able to observe it from behind a window while I’m standing in a toasty room.”

“Did you ever get to play in the snow, though?” Tim asked.

“Well, I built a snowman on the roof of the penthouse that first year.”

“But you never had your friends play in the snow with you?”

“Well, I was in Metropolis, they were here.”

Jason, Tim, and Dick shared a look and grins between the three of them.

“Clark,” Dick said, still smiling. “Half the fun of coming in to a toasty room with blankets and cocoa, is after having thoroughly exhausted yourself making an army of snowmen, snowangels, and a snowfort, with which to have snowball fights.”

“The snow has to be perfectly sticky.” Jason continued. “On days where it’s sticky enough, the temperature is just a couple of degrees above freezing, so it’s not that cold out.”

“Sugar icicles!” Damian added. “Don’t forget sugar icicles!”

“Yeah!” Tim agreed. “When the snow melts and refreezes from the fir trees on the grounds, it makes long icicles, and we dip them in Kool-Aid powder and suck on them. Wait!” Tim’s eyes had gone wide and he looked like he had just discovered the secret of life. “Bruce, can we bring Clark to the sugar shack upstate?”

“The best time for that is in the spring, though.” Bruce pointed out. “That’s going to be awfully close to Clark’s due date. Actually, wait,” he turned to Clark. “You’re due in March, right?”

Clark nodded.

“I’m not saying we can’t go before then, but there might be some things they’re not doing during this time of year that they’d be doing if it was spring time. He’ll probably be missing on some of the finer points of the experience.”

“Can’t we go after the pup is born?” Damian asked.

Bruce and Clark locked eyes and almost simultaneously shook their heads softly.

“There’s a whole adjustment period after a pup is first born.” Clark explained.

“Clark’s going to need a lot of rest and have bonding time with his puppy.” Bruce added.

“And the puppy is going to be very small and going to need time to get used to being in the world before I start bringing it outside.” Clark continued. “Especially while it’s cold out.”

“Okay, but even if he’s missing on some things, it would still be fun if we went, like, in January, right?” Tim asked.

“I’ll make some calls.” Bruce said.

The boys each gave their own sound of triumph, confident that they were going to be giving Clark a proper winter experience.

“But it’s a good thing you had this nice weather the rest of the year growing up.” Tim said. “Since
you wouldn’t really get to enjoy summer vacation.”

Clark frowned.

“Who says I didn’t enjoy summer vacation?”

“Well that’s when you have to do the bulk of the farm work, isn’t it?”

Clark shook his head.

“Plant in the spring, harvest in the fall. Only work that gets done in the summer is looking after the animals and repairing any spots in the fence that need it, but those are year-round jobs, anyway. Whoever first said that summer vacation is so that farm kids can do farm work never did farm work a day in their life.”

“Huh.” Bruce said. “That was what I was brought up to think, too.”

“Yeah, no. Not how it works.” Clark said, taking a sip from his hot cider.

After they finished their meal, Dick insisted they take a picture to commit the occasion to memory.

At first, they weren’t sure how to fit six people in one picture, until Tim declared he’d brought his selfie stick and ran off to get it.

Since Bruce had the farthest reach, it made more sense to have him on the outside of the frame, so they opted having Clark on the other side, the boys bracketed between them, all sitting on the ground, except for Damian, who stood behind the rest. They were right up against the cottonwood tree, and grinning happily.

Dick sent the photo to all of them, but it didn’t go right away due to the low signal in the area.

Bruce received his just as he was getting ready to get into bed, Clark and Damian already curled up. He smiled, a small tug at his heart that was like a sweet pain.

Clark looked like he belonged there.

They looked like family.

***

Clark and Bruce sat waiting outside Dr. Jones’ examination room the following Friday. Due to another patient going into labour early, Clark had yet to meet the doctor’s daughter, but she was supposed to be there today. Their coats hung on a coat rack on the opposite side of the waiting area.

“Bruce?” Clark asked tentatively.

“Yeah?”

Clark swallowed, trying and failing to keep his leg from bouncing due to his nerves.

“If you’re interested, I’d like you to go in with me from now on.”

Clark saw Bruce turn to look at him in his peripheral, but kept his own gaze ahead, so he couldn’t determine Bruce’s expression.
In the next moment, Bruce was pressing his forehead against Clark’s shoulder.

“I’d love to.”

Clark tilted his head so that it was leaning on Bruce’s.

“Thank you.”

They startled from their positions when the door opened.

“All ready for you, Clark.” Dr. Jones said from the door.

Clark and Bruce both stood.

“Um, I’d like for Bruce to come in with me, if that’s okay.”

Dr. Jones smiled.

“No problem with me.”

Clark breathed a sigh of relief and Bruce placed a hand on his shoulder just before they went inside.

“Hi!” An excited female voice greeted them. “You must be Clark! So glad we finally get to meet.”

The source of the voice was a young woman only slightly lighter-coloured than Dr. Jones, her dark hair sporting a reddish tint. Clark’s immediate thought was that she looked adorable.

He smiled as he shook her hand, her good mood infectious.

“Clark, this is my Megan.”

“Good to meet you, Megan.” Clark said earnestly.

“So, Clark, if we can get you lying on the table. Mr. Wayne, you can sit in that chair, there.”

Both went to carry out the instructions given them.

“Now, Clark, I’m just going to go through the exam as usual, and Megan is going to partake and do her own exam, and then we’ll talk arrangements for closer to your due date.”

Clark nodded before responding while Dr. Jones lifted his shirt.

“Okay.”

“Any discomfort to speak of?” Dr. Jones asked as he felt around his belly with latex gloves on.

“It’s been getting kind of tight lower down.” Clark described. “Usually when my pup moves.”

“That’s to be expected.” Megan offered. “It’s kind of like a practise contraction. Your uterus is learning how to contract and relax, getting ready for birthing.”

“It’s also been itchy right around here.” He indicated the underside of his belly. “I think I read about that in one of my puppy books: it’s drying out from the stretching?”

“Exactly.” Dr. Jones confirmed. “I can give you a tub of cream to take home today, but with the dry air from the winter weather, I suggest you stock up.”
“Have you been experiencing any constipation?” Megan asked.

“Um, not exactly? I think it might have gotten a bit harder to go, but not that bad?” Clark reddened a bit discussing his stool in front of Bruce.

“All the same.” Megan said. “You should start taking Metamucil or similar fibre-based laxative. I’d suggest the berry one; it goes down easier, though still not that great.”

“She’s right. Constipation is common this late in the pregnancy, and it’s only going to get worse. For a female Omega, this is painful enough. For a male Omega, we want to avoid it altogether, since it’s the same place your pup will be passing.”

Clark swallowed at the thought.

“Okay.”

“You mentioned he’s a high-risk pregnancy?” Megan asked as she looked through the file.

“Yes, but so far everything’s looked pretty textbook.” her mother replied.

“I’m just thinking that maybe we should do one extra ultrasound before it gets too late in the pregnancy; it’d be good to take a look just in case, but we don’t want it too close to his final one.” Megan explained.

Dr. Jones considered this and nodded.

“Would that be alright, Clark?” he asked.

“I’m all for anything to make sure my pup’s okay.”

“Alright. I’m just gonna take a blood sample, first, and then Megan will get you set up with the ultrasound. Sit up for a moment, please.”

Clark sat up. He was wearing a t-shirt because he’d suspected they might want to check his blood iron levels (Dr. Jones had been doing every time so since their second visit), and thought it’d be easier.

He braced himself as the needle went into the vein in the crook of his arm; it didn’t matter he did this every two weeks, he still hated it. He had a brief flash of defensive Alpha scent hit his nostrils and looked up to see Bruce eyeing him with concern. It drew his attention away from the needle somewhat as he gave Bruce a small smile. This seemed to calm the Alpha, who smiled back at him.

“If you’re okay with it, Clark, I can go get this processed while Megan does the ultrasound?”

“Yeah, sure.” He nodded while Dr. Jones pulled the needle from his arm and pressed a cotton ball to it. Used to the routine, Clark started applying pressure to it.

After they applied a bandage to the site, Clark was bade to lie down again and Megan began applying the cold gel on his stomach.

“Do you want Mr. Wayne to come closer? It’s okay if he does.” She smiled knowingly at Clark.

Clark turned his head to Bruce and smiled.

“Yeah, come on, Bruce. You’ll get to see my pup in real-time.”
Bruce smiled back as he stood, walking up to Clark and placing a hand on his shoulder. Clark felt butterflies and his pup gave a kick.

“Oop! Someone’s eager to get on camera.” Megan grinned as she turned on the monitor. “Might have a future YouTuber in there.”

“A what?” Clark asked.

“I’ll get the boys to explain YouTube culture, later.”

“I know what YouTube is, it’s just… nevermind.” he concluded as Megan started pushing the wand through the slime.

“Okay, it should be a bit easier to find now that you’re further along… ooh! There it is!”

Clark turned and looked where she was pointing; it wasn’t easy to miss.

There was a more defined shape this time, clearly showing the head attached to the body, and even an arm.

“Puppy seems to be a good size.” Megan declared happily.

Clark felt Bruce squeeze his shoulder. When he turned his head to look at him, though, Bruce was focused on the monitor. Clark felt his heart squeeze in a sort of painful joy when he saw a single tear rolling down Bruce’s face, then turned back to look at his puppy.

“Would you like to hear the heartbeat?” Megan asked.

“Yes!” Clark and Bruce said at the same time.

Megan grinned that knowing smile again, and flicked a switch on the monitor.

The sound was much louder than through the stethoscope. It sounded kind of weird, like a sound effect from a sci-fi movie. But it was steady and strong. Megan pointed to the place on the ultrasound where the beating heart was visible.

It was Clark’s turn to shed a tear… or ten.

As they watched, the puppy moved around, sometime offering a good view of its ribs and spine, depending on the position, and the steady heartbeat pulsed on.

“Now, I’m going to stop,” she unplugged the wand and flicked a switch. “And rewind to just about… here. Lookie there.”

She pointed to a section of the screen. Clark’s pup was turned in such a way its legs were almost spread-eagled, but at an angle where its behind was facing them.

Clark squinted.

“Um…”

“Well, it’s not certain,” Megan explained. “But five’ll get you ten that that’s a penis.”

“Oh!” Clark exclaimed.

“Now, all we can tell for sure from this is that it’s not an Omega girl. When the time comes for your
final ultrasound, if you’re willing to pay extra, we could do a 3D ultrasound, and be more certain as to the gender. 3Ds aren’t covered by the usual clinic funding, I’m afraid.”

“I don’t mind getting that for you, Clark.” Bruce offered.

“Uh, I’ll think it over.” Clark said, unsure about letting Bruce pay for something which was no doubt going to be costly.

“I can e-mail you the video, if you’d like?” Megan offered as she wiped the gunk from Clark’s stomach a little later.

Bruce turned to Clark who nodded enthusiastically. Bruce took one of his cards and wrote Clark’s e-mail on an available blank space before handing it to the midwife.

“Now.” She said after Clark was sitting up again. “I’d like to discuss birthing procedure. In addition to being a midwife, I’ve also trained as a doula. This means I know a full range of naturalistic birthing procedures to try to make things as comfortable for you as possible. If you want, we may even be able to avoid pain medications altogether. I’ll basically be helping you with positions, massages, and emotional support throughout the experience to make everything easier for you.”

“That sounds really nice.” Clark said. As much as he wanted to finally meet his pup, the thought of the actual birthing had been scaring him more than a little.

“I’d like to be able to visit in a couple of weeks, if I may. One of the things I was considering was a waterbirth. The warm water will help to lower your own stress, and makes things easier on the pup as it comes out. It will mimic the amniotic fluid, and help for an easier transition from your body to the outside world. I just have to make sure you have a tub adequate for this.”

“If it’s not, I’ll install one.” Bruce promised.

Clark felt his heart swell at the idea that Bruce was willing to install a special tub just for him to give birth in.

Dr. Jones came in at that point.

“Your iron is looking somewhat low.” he said. “I’d recommend some iron pills, but only one a day; no more.”

“We can pick those up on our way home, later.” Bruce said, turning to Clark.

“Okay.”

“And here’s a tub of cream for your abdomen.” He handed it to Clark. “Apply three times daily, more if you need it.”

“Thanks.”

That evening after dinner, when Clark happened to glance up from his laptop, he saw that Bruce was looking up tub styles.

Clark bit the inside of his cheek as he felt a blush come over him and continued his research into water birthing which he was showing to Damian.

***

Thanksgiving almost snuck up on Clark. He was on the phone with his mother on Monday the week
leading up to it, and she was asking if he wanted her to bring grandpa with her for her next visit. At first he didn’t register that to be at all unusual, simply replying “Of course, please do.” Except that he’d picked that moment to start digging in the deep freeze for a tub of cappuccino frozen yogurt (the pup had developed an addiction), and stumbled across a gigantic ham. That’s when it hit him.

Thanksgiving.

“Mom, will you be bringing rhubarb pie?”

Clark hope he was being subtle when he insisted that his mother only bring pie. He was going to tackle recreating both her funeral potato recipes.

***

Alfred kept the potatoes in an ancient-looking wooden box near the kitchen door. On Wednesday morning, Clark loaded up a bunch of them in a spaghetti pot while another sat in the sink filling with water so that he could rinse each one as it was peeled while sitting at the table. Then he started to worry about the weight. How was he supposed to lift the pots? It wasn’t for lack of strength, but out of worry for his pup.

“Busy bee again?”

Clark smiled at the sound of Bruce’s voice and his pup gave a kick at the same time. He turned to look at the Alpha.

“Uh, yeah, I didn’t really think this through, though. Could you lift the pots and place them on chairs by the table for me? I’m worried about the weight.”

Clark positioned himself on one chair with two other chairs on either side in front of him, just at the right level so that he could reach the potatoes no problem.

What he didn’t expect was for Bruce to take yet another chair and sit facing him, another peeler in his hand, taking a potato and setting to work.

Clark smiled and started on a potato, too.

After the potatoes were peeled and rinsed, Clark set to cutting half of them into tiny cubes while Bruce used the slicing option on the cheese grater to slice the other half.

Dick wandered in around that time offering his services, and Clark got him to start crushing cornflakes.

“Did you know that cornflakes were meant to stop us from jerking off?” Dick said.

Clark looked up, frowning.

“No?”

“Barbara got me to watch this video on YouTube. Kellogg had invented what he believed to be a perfectly bland food that would curb our base instincts so that we wouldn’t jerk off. That’s where circumcision became rampant, too.”

“What?” Bruce looked up.

“Yeah, the show doesn’t go into detail about it, so I looked it up: the idea was supposed to be that if you caught your pup jerking off, you would make a big deal about it, make sure they knew you were
angry, and then take them to the doctor to be circumcised without anesthetic so that they would associate their attempt to please themselves with a painful outcome. Now it’s just seen as normal, being passed from parent to child. That’s why so many people who aren’t Jewish or Muslim practise it.”

“What about non-Alpha girls?” Clark pointed out.

“Carbolic acid on the clitoris. That one didn’t take off, thankfully.”

“I don’t meant to sound prude,” Bruce said. “But can we not do this while we’re preparing for Thanksgiving dinner?”

Clark bit his cheeks before blurting out:

“But not being cut is something I can be thankful for.”

His cheeks immediately burned red as the words left his mouth and he started chopping potatoes with renewed vigour as Bruce and Dick each chuckled.

Please just take it as a brief turn in dirty humour and don’t dwell fuck why the fuck did I just blurt that out what the fuck is wrong with me?

“Well, I’m thankful that after my first heat Bruce gave me some cash and let me loose at San Francisco’s to pick my own toy instead of either him or Alfred picking one for me.”

Clark looked up.

“I take it there’s a story behind this?”

“Alfred had a toy picked out for my first rut before it even happened.” Bruce explained. “I guess I marked a lot of territory when I was a pup. But still, as matter-of-factly as Alfred went about it, it’s still kind of embarrassing knowing your guardian went to a store and picked a toy for you. And when I was that age I didn’t have the benefit of San Francisco’s which sells all manner of things and won’t bar people under eighteen from their premises.” Bruce was hand-talking, now. “No online shopping, either. I had to make do with the toy Alfred got me until I was of age to go into an adult store myself. So after Dick presented, I searched around and found out about San Francisco and decided ‘this is something that is best selected by oneself.’ So I gave him the cash and let him go choose without me being anywhere near.”

“Mail-order existed before online shopping.” Clark said.

Bruce turned to look at him.

“Mom got me a magazine after I presented.” Clark clarified. “I ordered from there.”

“Why the hell didn’t I know about those?” Bruce looked frustrated. “I mail-ordered other stuff. Why didn’t I know about mail-ordering toys?”

“Well, did you ever look at Alpha magazines?”

“Maybe not the right ones?” Bruce looked genuinely confused. “Seriously, I ordered Gray Ghost memorabilia and spy gadget stuff through mail-order all the time. How did I miss that I could order sex toys?”

Dick and Clark shook their heads and rolled their eyes.
Thursday they met with Martha and William at the Wayne Enterprises building to watch the Thanksgiving Day Parade from the boardroom on the second floor. There was a party being held in a larger room higher up for staff and their families, but Bruce didn’t want to overwhelm Clark too much by throwing him in a room with a bunch of strangers just yet. Which wasn’t to say he was completely isolating him; Lucius Fox was ready to greet them on arrival, and some of the other board members came by to wish a Happy Thanksgiving, as well.

Clark eagerly greeted Martha when she arrived with a hug and scenting before she pulled back to marvel on his puppy-pocket.

“You’re getting so big!” She declared happily as she ran her hands all over his belly. “Have you been able to sleep alright? How’s your back?”

“I’ve been sleeping fine, mom.” He smiled at her fussing. “My back, well, some days are better than others.”

“You should be sitting down.” She tried to bring him to a chair.

“Mom, I’ve just had an hour drive from the manor, and my back is fine. I need to stand.”

“Are you sure, sweetie?”

“Martha, Omegas have been having pups for millennia.” William intervened. “I know from watching your mother that no one knows best what to do than the one doing the carrying. If he says he wants to stand, let the man stand. His body will tell him when that needs to change.”

“What happened with grandma?” Clark asked. Due to William Clark and Jonathan Kent clashing, he hadn’t been able to see his grandfather very much growing up.

“The doctor insisted she still had another four hours before she should start pushing, but she could tell your mother wanted out now.” William told him with a smile. “Your mother was born while your grandma was holding onto the walking bars in the hallway in front of three other expecting Alphas whose mates were in labour. The doctor was some flustered at having been proven wrong, I can tell you.” he chuckled.

Clark laughed at the visuals his mind provided from the story.

“Your mother tells me you’ve got an Omega doctor helping you out?” William asked, a note of approval in his voice.

“Yes. And his Omega daughter is a certified midwife and trained doula. Unless any complications arise between now and my due date, she’ll be coming to stay at the manor a couple of weeks before my due date to help me before, during, and after the birth.”

“I’ve never heard of a doula.” William folded his arms, brow furrowed in curiosity.

“A doula helps kind of for a more natural kind of birth. Like, it’s more than just being present for assistance: she can help me position myself in ways that help to relieve pressure and stuff throughout the labour so that the pain isn’t as intense, knows massage techniques, and can provide emotional support. If everything goes well, I should be able to forego pain meds, which is what I’m hoping to do. We’ve also been discussing having a water birth: it’s supposed to be better for the pup.”

William nodded approvingly.
“Sounds like you’ve got everything sorted out.”

“Well, mostly.” Clark gave a nervous laugh. “It still feels overwhelming a lot of the time.”

“That’s normal.” William assured him, placing a hand on his shoulder. “No one ever thinks they’re ready for parenthood, no matter how much preparation they do. The key is take it one day at a time.”

Clark felt his throat grow tight as he placed a hand on his grandfather’s arm, then leaned in for a hug.

His grandfather stiffened from the contact at first, but then melted into the hug.

Clark carefully scented his grandfather, and was scented in turn, then felt his grandfather tighten his hold on him.

“I’m sorry, Clark.” His voice sounded strangled. “If I hadn’t been so stubborn—”

“Don’t.” Clark told him as he returned the squeeze. “Let’s leave the blame where it belongs. We’re family, and it’s Thanksgiving.” He cast his eyes to his mother. “That goes for you too, mom. The one person who deserves any blame isn’t here, and I refuse to talk about him today.”

Martha added herself to the hug, Clark and William each opening an arm to pull her in.

From across the room, Bruce saw the scene and smiled softly.

“It’s starting! It’s starting! It’s starting!” Damian bounded across the room and started by pulling on Bruce’s hand to urge him towards the window then rushed to tug on Clark’s sports coat.

“Alright, pup, we’re coming.” Clark grinned as he allowed himself to be pulled towards the window.

In addition to Clark’s family, the guests in the second-floor boardroom included Harvey and his wife; Barbara, her brother (holding his newborn puppy) and her father, Tatsu and her family, and Tim had invited an Alpha girl named Rachel. Damian had been carefully introduced to every Alpha one by one with no mishaps, though he commented that Rachel smelled sad and proceeded to hug her.

Bruce knew it was a small step forward, but it was a victory nonetheless.

As Clark had already met Tatsu’s mother and grandmother, meeting her father hadn’t been too difficult. He had been a little intimidated by Barbara’s father at first, but Jim did that to everyone until Barbara gradually revealed the kind-hearted softie he was underneath. It was this kind-heartedness which drove him to fight hard for those that needed it most.

Clark had also invited Chloe, but her editor had sent her out to cover the parade by asking people in the street questions as part of testing her mettle in her new position.

“Look look look!” Damian was pointing where the parade was rounding the corner towards them.

In the line-up were classics such as Charlie Brown, Felix the Cat, and a Thanksgiving turkey; but new ones (at least, new to Clark) such as Paddington, Spongebob, and Scratch from Ice Age (with his acorn) were also present. Clark laughed seeing a Red Power Ranger, surprised they were popular enough to be represented; how many play-fights had his mother caught him and his friends at? Of course, each one was always preceded by a round of ‘not it!’ to determine who would play the villain.

The adults and teens learned to keep a couple of feet from the windows as Damian ran back and forth along the wall to focus on different figures in the parade.
At long last, Santa came into view, and Clark went to sit in a chair while he waited for it to be over. His feet were killing him, and his back had started to twinge.

“So you alright?” Bruce had come to stand next to him and placed a hand on his shoulder.

“Yeah, just swollen feet and my back’s starting up again. No biggie.”

“I can call Alfred and ask if he can pick up some A535 on his way with the pizza?”

“It’s okay. I’ll be alright in a little while.” Clark gave Bruce a reassuring smile.

Bruce returned the smile and swooped his hand down to squeeze Clark’s. They looked up as a new figure appeared in the doorway. Clark didn’t recognise the tan-skinned, raven-haired woman, but Bruce did.

It was Nyssa.

Chapter End Notes

My two funeral potato recipes, one of which is from my aunt which we make every year at Christmas. R.I.P. ma-tante.

Karin's recipe:
1 cup onions, fried
1 cup sour cream
3 cups of cheddar, grated
2 cans of cream of chicken soup
1 package of hashbrowns (the store brands that typically sell for around 2$)
Cornflake crumbs

Mix everything minus the Cornflake crumbs together and set in a greased pan (grease with butter for better taste), then spread Cornflake crumbs on the top. Bake at 350 for at least an hour, some ovens may vary. For better results, allow hashbrowns to thaw.

Mom’s recipe:
3 cups of cheddar cheese, grated
Enough sliced potatoes to fill a rectangular baking pan (size of potatoes vary)
Whipping cream (buy at least four of the 500ml cartons, to be on the safe side)
Onion salt

Grease the pan with butter.
Pour some whipping cream in the bottom, then lay down a layer of sliced potatoes. Cover with whipping cream, then sprinkle onion salt for flavour (be careful as you will be salting the other layers not to overdo it!).
Add some cheese on the layer.
Lay another layer of sliced potatoes, cream, salt, and cheese. Repeat until full, but do not cheese the top layer right away.
Bake at 350 for an hour and a half, then add cheese on top, and bake for another half-hour.
Enjoy!
Chapter 23

Chapter Summary

Really, grandpa? Can’t an emotional, hormone-addled Omega get cuddles from the Alpha they have a crush on without revealing said crush?

Chapter Notes

I'm back!

Thank you to everyone who's been sticking it out while I took a break, especially for any words of encouragement left while I got stuff figured out. You guys' comments are my sustenance for creative flow!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Wise man say: “Forgiveness is divine, but never pay full price for late pizza.”
— Michaelangelo, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (1990)

Bruce gave Clark’s hand another squeeze and patted it with his other hand before going forward to greet the newcomer.

“Nyssa.” he held out his hand and she shook it.

“I thought to take you up on your offer and see my nephew.” she said simply.

“I’m glad.” he offered her a small smile, then leaned in to say quietly. “He still gets jumpy around strange Alphas unless given the chance to smell, first. I had avoided the issue instead of trying to help him with it as I should have until very recently.”

“A memento of my father’s visit?”

Bruce nodded.

“I shall be cautious.”

Bruce led the way to where Damian had come to listen to Clark’s belly.

“Clark, this is Nyssa--”

“Raatko.” she cut off. “Nyssa Raatko.”

Bruce nodded approvingly, seeing that she had decided to drop her father’s name.
“Pleased to meet you.” Clark said holding out his hand. “Forgive me for not standing.” He smiled while indicating Damian, who still had his ear planted firmly to his puppy-pocket, but was eyeing Nyssa.

“No apologies necessary.” She smiled back.

“Damian,” Bruce knelt to his level. “This is your aunt; your mother’s sister. She’d like to get to know you.”

Damian lifted his head from Clark’s belly, still eyeing Nyssa carefully. She took the hint and knelt down, then carefully raised a hand, palm upward. Damian gingerly took hold of her hand and sniffed it, then let her hand lower while still holding it as he stepped closer.

“You look a lot like the picture of mother.” he told her.

Nyssa nodded.

“Yes, I imagine we do look quite similar. You share some of her features, as well.”

Damian stepped forward and sniffed a bit more, right in front of Nyssa’s face.

“My old puppy blanket smells a bit like you; like funny spices. I imagined that was what mother smelled like.”

Nyssa nodded and swallowed.

Damian stepped closed and threw his arms around Nyssa’s neck, and she hugged him back.

Clark cursed hormones as the Kodak moment made him wipe his face with his sleeve.

Sometime later Alfred arrived with several pizzas and the gathered guests sat at the board table to eat. Bruce was at the head of the table, Clark at his right, followed by Damian, who had urged Nyssa to sit on his other side.

“Hey! Who started the party without me?” A loud voice sounded from the doorway.

Clark looked up to see a well-dressed male Alpha, flanked by a female Omega, two teenage boys and one younger boy of about ten, and a female Alpha standing behind them. They were all of them blonde.

“The party included watching the parade, Ollie. The parade is over.” Bruce chided cheerfully.

“Well, we watched it from ground level.” Ollie said, good-natured ribbing in his tone. “It’s more fun that way.”

Bruce shook his head and rolled his eyes.

“Everyone, this is Oliver Queen, his mate Dinah, their sons Robert Queen (the youngest), Roy Harper, and Connor Hawke. And hanging in the back is Dinah’s sister, Sarah. Ollie, this is Clark, his mother Martha Kent, her father William Clark, and Nyssa Raatko; Damian’s aunt. I believe you might have already met Tatsu and her family?”

“Yes.” Ollie said. “Finally found a tea I didn’t feel like spitting out.”

“The scorched leaves which the English call tea has lost all benefits, not to mention taste.” Tatsu’s grandmother said.
“I do beg your pardon, sir.” Alfred said, seeming slightly affronted. “But those ‘scorched leaves’ are the foundation of civility in the empire.”

“Begging your pardon, sir,” Tatsu’s grandmother said, narrowing his eyes but with a small smirk playing at the corner of his mouth. “But I believe Sir Winston Churchill and F.E. Smith had something much stronger in their glasses.”

Alfred sighed.

“Cannot argue with that.”

“What did Churchill have in his glass?” Damian asked Clark as a chuckle was heard around the room.

“Liquor.”

“Oh.”

“Speaking of stronger substances,” Ollie asked as he and his family sat down. “Bruce, where’s the beer?”

“Root beer. Soda boxes are at the back.”

“No booze?” Ollie asked, a pout on his face.

“No.” Bruce said, perhaps a bit more firmly than he’d intended.

In addition to not being able to consume any while pregnant, Bruce had come to understand that Clark was actually uncomfortable around liquor consumption due to Lex’s use of it to control Clark on occasion. That had come to light one night when Bruce took a nightcap, and then Clark seemed to unconsciously keep his distance. Clark had already told him about Lex sometimes forcing Clark to drink before using him, so his sudden distancing spelled out to Bruce quite clearly that this was a problem. Some friends of Bruce and members of the board subsequently received bottled gifts just because, Oliver included, leaving Bruce with an empty liquor cabinet.

“Okay, no problem.” Ollie let the matter drop and made sure his mate and pups had servings of pizza and soda before serving himself.

Conversations around the table gradually began to pick up as everyone settled. William made sure his daughter had food before himself, and was going to serve Clark as well, but Bruce had gotten there, first.

In fact, William was quick to notice that Bruce tended to Clark as though he was part of his pack.

Nyssa noticed this, too.

Across the table, Barbara was talking with Rachel. By Tim’s request, he was sitting on Rachel’s left, while Barbara was on her right.

“Of course there are times you get close to someone you’re attracted to.” Barbara said. “And you’re feeling like everything’s running at a hundred miles per hour. But if you really care about the person you’re with, and you don’t want to hurt them, then you just make sure you ask them a lot of questions. It sounds like it would ruin the mood, but, believe me, the hottest thing ever is knowing that the person you’re with really wants to be there, and that they feel as good as you do.”
“And you’re never worried about losing control?” Rachel asked.

Barbara shook her head.

“I know my own mind, and I know I don’t want to hurt anyone, so I know I’ll take steps to make sure I don’t.”

Rachel picked a piece of pepperoni off her pizza and studied it for a moment.

“I wish mom could know it wasn’t her fault.” She put the piece of pepperoni in her mouth and chewed slowly.

“You know,” Barbara said, dropping her voice. “There’s a support group for people who were attacked or abused. Clark,” she said, pointing. “Goes there. She doesn’t even have to talk if she doesn’t want to. She can just go listen, and see how everyone is there for each other.”

Rachel nodded.

“So, Jimmy, how’d you manage for your pregnancy?” Jason asked Barbara’s brother.

“Well, I have a lot of Alpha friends, so I hung out with them as much as I could to avoid a heat.” Jimmy said, bouncing his daughter on his lap while supporting her head, trying to get ahead of a tantrum. It wasn’t working; she screwed up her little face as it turned red and proceeded to cry in a fashion which sounded a lot less piercing than from older puppies as she was still fairly new.

“Alright, princess, I know, you’re hungry.”

Jimmy tried to balance leaning her against his belly so he could open his shirt one-handed, but Dick was quick to help him out.

“Thanks, man.” Jimmy said.

“No problem.”

Jimmy had to pinch himself a bit to get the nipple taut before helping his daughter to latch on. She still seemed determined to let her mother know she wasn’t happy while trying to suck at the same time. In the end, hunger won, and she quieted down.

“So easy to please. Milk, clean diaper, and a soft bed. Don’t change.” Jimmy kissed her head.

Nyssa was trying not to stare. She knew things were more liberal in America, but to be openly breastfeeding in front of people who were not one’s relatives? Such behaviour would have not been tolerated in Saudi Arabia.

Bruce, ever mindful of his surroundings, noticed Nyssa’s discomfort.

“It’s funny, isn’t it, Jimmy?” Bruce said. “If we were at a restaurant somewhere, you can almost bet that at least one other patron would take one look at you and your daughter and say that what you’re doing is disgusting. But take a walk down the mall and see how many pictures of female models in lacy underwear are blown up to have their breasts bigger than my head and no one bats an eyelash.”

“I’m just feeding my daughter.” Jimmy said, frowning.

“Exactly my point.” Bruce continued. “You’re doing the healthiest, most natural thing in the world, feeding your child, but the way society has become over the last little while, they see it as disgusting. Something to be kept at home.”
“It’s a rather recent development, too.” Alfred pointed out. “Omegas as recently as the sixties would feed their puppies in public and no one said a word. Somewhere along the way, someone decided it was indecent, and it spread.”

Jimmy humphed.

“If ever someone tells me off for feeding my daughter when she’s hungry, I’ll gladly tell them to f--find a hobby that does not involve looking at Omegas feeding their puppies.” Jimmy had stopped short of swearing, suddenly remembering that though his daughter was too young to remember, Damian wasn’t.

“I once had to deal with a case,” Harvey said. “Where this lady actually tried to claim that her pups seeing an Omega breastfeed at the table next to them was psychologically damaging.”

“She actually took the mother to court?” Tatsu asked, shocked.

“Oh, yeah.” Harvey said, taking a sip of his bottled water. “Thing is, her pups happen to have regressive autism, and she’s been trying for years to find outside things to blame to get money for all the special treatment they need. Even tried suing the doctor that gave them their vaccines. Like you pointed out, Bruce, I asked the lady if she ever brought her pups to the mall. She said ‘Of course I do, they need to learn to interact with people.’ I’m not against that; in fact, it irks me when people try saying ‘special needs’ pups should stay home. Well, anyway, I asked her if she shields them from passing by the lingerie stores. She couldn’t answer. Case was done in thirty minutes, I’m astonished the judge bothered. I think he just wanted to see how far she would take it.”

There was laughter throughout the room.

Nyssa wished fervently that her sister could have lived to hear something like that instead of dying while still stuck under their oppressive father’s thumb.

When the food was finished and everyone was getting ready to go, she offered to help Damian with his boots and coat. Kneeling beside him, she whispered:

“Damian, what are your thoughts on Clark?”

“Clark’s really nice,” Damian immediately blurted. “And he made my Halloween costume this year, and he lets me talk to his pup--”

Nyssa held up a hand to stop the speech.

“What I mean is…” she took a deep breath and sighed. “If he and your father were to mate, how would you feel about that?”

Damian’s smile dropped.

“But they won’t. Clark’s going to leave after his pup is born.”

“And you don’t want him to leave.” she concluded.

Damian bit his lip and shuffled a bit on his feet.

“I never knew what it was like having a mother. But… I like to pretend sometimes like Clark is my mother.”

Nyssa pulled Damian into a hug, letting go when she heard her name. She looked up to see Bruce
coming up to them.

“I was wondering if you’d like to join us for Thanksgiving dinner at Wayne Manor?”

“I think perhaps I’d better leave for now.” She stood. “But I would like to visit another time.”

Bruce nodded.

“Maybe Christmas?”

“That sounds lovely.” she smiled.

Bruce and Nyssa shook hands and Nyssa turned to leave.

“Uh, one second!”

Nyssa turned to see Dinah’s sister Sarah come up to her.

“We didn’t get to meet properly.” The blonde Alpha, slight for her presentation, held out her hand. “Sarah Lance.”

“Nyssa Raatko.” she shook the offered hand.

“So, I’m just gonna skip all the pointless bush-beating: can I buy you a drink?”

Nyssa frowned, noting the way Sarah was smirking at her.

“What gave me away?”

Sarah shrugged.

“Takes one to know one?”

Nyssa smiled. This, too, would have been forbidden in Saudi Arabia.

“Maybe I’d like to buy you a drink?”

“So first one to the cheque, then?”

Nyssa grinned further, and she and Sarah left the boardroom together. Oliver came up to Bruce.

“Should you warn your friend that Sarah’s gay and is most likely trying to pick her up?”

“I think Nyssa knew quite well what Sarah was up to.” he smiled with a sort of smugness.

Oliver rolled his eyes.

“So, a pregnant Omega, huh?” Oliver asked.

“Yes.” Bruce affirmed.

“You managed to clean up better than me.” Oliver said. “I think I still look too irresponsible without Dinah for them to allow me to be support to pups. The fact that I got Roy is a miracle. Without Dinah to rein me in, they’d probably be worried I take the boys out jet-skiing in the middle of the Pacific or something.”

“You did take them jet-skiing in the Pacific.” Bruce pointed out. “That year you brought them to
Disney Land."

“But we stayed in view of the land and we all had life-jackets.” Oliver said, taking on what was no
doubt meant to be a dignified stance, but it looked more like the type a pup might adopt when trying
to sound grown-up.

Bruce smiled and rolled his eyes.

“Well, nice of you to drop in, Ollie. I have to get this bunch back to the manor, now. Clark’s family
is also joining us for Thanksgiving dinner.”

“Can you smuggle me out?” Oliver asked, suddenly sounding desperate. “Dinah’s parents are
coming over.”

“Just don’t get so drunk that your rebuttals sound like a toddler and you’ll be fine.” Bruce said,
patting his shoulder.

“Easy for you to say. Her dad grills me every time.”

Bruce had been witness to this on more than one occasion. Quentin Lance was a cop and had been
the one arresting Oliver more than once when they were in college, and he never wasted an
opportunity to remind him.

“Instead of trying to defend yourself, change the subject. What’s past is past, and he should respect
that. Be the bigger Alpha; it’s your house, and you want to have a nice dinner with your family.
Punctuate that. Make it your focus. If he brings up stuff you don’t like, talk to your wife and pups
instead. Compliment Mrs. Lance on her jewelery. Something! Don’t go where he tries to bring you.
That’s how the fight breaks out. Actually,” Bruce was suddenly inspired. “You really want to one-up
him? Don’t serve any alcohol at all. He gets into it just as bad as you. See how far you get without
your head being clouded.”

“He’ll be pouring from his flask.” Oliver pointed out.

“And that’s where you’ll get him. You’ll be sober, he won’t be.”

Oliver thought this over.

“Worth a try, I guess.”

“Of course it is.” Bruce gave him a friendly fist-bump to his shoulder.

Oliver smiled and offered his fist for a bump, which Bruce did, then they embraced and Oliver went
to collect his family.

“Old friend of yours, I take it?” Clark asked, coming to stand beside him, rubbing his belly.

“Partner in crime.” Bruce joked. “You’ll find his name next to mine in a lot of those old articles I told
you about. Though he has a substantial amount by himself, as well.”

Clark grinned, then leaned his head on Bruce’s shoulder.

“Can I sleep in the car?”

“Absolutely.” Bruce promised him.

They had moved so gradually to little things like this that they had no idea the reactions it was getting
from around the room.

The pups were happy, Damian and Jason especially.

Tatsu’s grandmother and Alfred shared a knowing look.

Martha, who had already met Bruce several times, was feeling cautiously optimistic.

William was struggling to keep his composure.

He knew that Bruce would have undergone plenty of checks to make him suitable as a support Alpha, but that wasn’t the point.

This was his grandson.

His grandson who he’d failed to protect.

And he was damned if he was going to let anything happen to him again.

***

While waiting for dinner to cook, everyone had gathered in the sitting room. Clark had struggled to stay awake at first, but no one tried to wake him when he finally did nod off.

“It’s draining.” Martha said, referring to the pregnancy as she carefully laid a throw where Clark sat in a recliner.

“It’s also his first big social event in a long time.” Bruce pointed out as he adjusted the ottoman beneath Clark’s feet. “The Veteran’s Day ceremony he didn’t have to talk to many people. This was a lot more interactive.”

“Still,” Martha said, lovingly adjusting a lock of Clark’s hair. “I think he’s much happier than he was a few months ago.” She turned to smile at Bruce. “Thank you for helping my puppy.”

Bruce looked kind of sheepish.

“The boys and Alfred have helped, too. Clark’s really taken a shine to Damian, especially. And he’s been really determined to get well, for his pup’s sake.”

“All the same, thank you.”

Bruce nodded and returned to his seat where Damian curled up in his lap.

When it was time for dinner, Martha asked for them not to wake Clark just yet, but to hand her his plate of food, which she held under his nose until he woke up.

He promptly followed to the dining room.

The ham was juicy and tender and wonderfully flavoured with a honey glaze and pineapple juice Alfred had cooked it in.

Both potato recipes turned out perfect.

And Martha’s rhubarb pie was just as wonderfully sweet and tangy as always, served with a portion of vanilla ice cream on top.
Clark thought he might be ready to birth just then, with how full he was feeling after the meal.

“Are you alright, honey?” Martha asked him, concerned as she watched him rubbing his belly.

“Fine.” He said, a little sleepy from being so full. “Just full and tired.”

“You’ve had a long day.” Bruce told him.

“I’m sorry I’m not very good company.” He said.

“Don’t worry about it.” Bruce told him. “You can nap for a while, if you want. No one’s going anywhere.”

Clark nodded. Everyone walked to the entrance hall, Clark with the intention of going upstairs, everyone else to go to the theatre room for a movie.

Clark took one look at the staircase and groaned.

“You can use the elevator.” Bruce told him, amused. “It’s there for a reason.”

He went to lead Clark there but then William took hold of Clark’s arm.

“I’ll make sure he gets up alright.” William said. “You should tend to your guests.”

Clark, Bruce, Alfred, and the boys all froze.

Bruce had been helping Clark with these things since the start. They had been getting closer all the time.

This was a pack disruption.

William noticed this, but that only made him more determined. He wanted to be absolutely certain of Bruce. He’d turned a blind eye for too long, and look what had happened.

It was fighting every Alpha instinct Bruce had, but he stepped back. Clark wasn’t his, no matter what his instincts told him. That meant that William, as his grandfather, had the stronger say.

William waited for Clark to lead him to the elevator, but Clark stayed put.

He’d been under the thumb of an Alpha who did as he pleased without any regards to his feelings for ten years. Even though he knew that his grandfather only had the best of intentions, that didn’t mean he was about to let him step in and just take over.

Part of what so quickly endeared Bruce to him was that he asked him things.

He didn’t just do things and tried saying it was for Clark’s own good; he asked.

And William hadn’t. He’d just decided to do something without checking with Clark.

No.

“On second thought,” Clark started, very deliberately stepping away from his grandfather and closer to Bruce. “I think I’ll try watching the movie. If I fall asleep, at least the theatre seats are comfy.”

He said all this pleasantly with a small smile on his face as though nothing out of the ordinary was happening.
William stared.

So did Martha, though she felt a glimmer of triumph and was trying very hard not to laugh in her father’s face. Though she knew his concern stemmed from Clark’s past mistreatment, the parallels between this situation and when Jonathan was courting her were all too obvious.

Bruce tried not to let himself feel too pleased by Clark’s obvious act of defiance against his grandfather, and just led the way to the theatre room.

Clark noticed that his grandfather was waiting before sitting. Normally, this was just an Alpha thing to do: make sure your pack got comfortable, first, while standing watch. However, he knew based on the earlier display, that he was challenging whatever claim Bruce might have, and that wouldn’t do.

“Damian, let’s get right in the middle, here.” He led the pup to the squashy leather sofa on the lower level. “Jason, you can sit on this side, here, and Tim and Dick can share this spot. Mom, I know you don’t like being too close to the TV, so how about you and grandpa sit on the higher level in the back?” He looked around with a mild expression. “Bruce, can I use you as a heater? I always get a little chilly in this room.”

Bruce fought not to grin as he sat on Clark’s other side and lifted his arm so Clark could lean into his chest. His Alpha ego was getting major fluffing.

Clark tried not to feel alarmed when he heard a low growl from the back row.

Damian, unfortunately, didn’t have the same control, and clutched at Clark.

“Shh, it’s okay, pup.” Clark assured him. He had more trouble fitting Damian on his lap, now, but he did his best to hold him close. “Grandpa’s just feeling a little grumpy. He won’t hurt anyone, right, grandpa?” Clark said the last part a little louder, and swore he heard his mother swat William’s arm.

They watched Guardians of the Galaxy. Tim had been telling Clark how perfectly awesome it was, and it didn’t disappoint.

Clark didn’t fall asleep, but fell into his habit of using Bruce as a body pillow. The difference this time being that he was hyper-aware of his grandfather’s mounting tension from the back of the room.

The movie’s use of classic oldie songs helped to keep him in a good mood, however. When the group were headed to Knowhere and Moonage Daydream started, however, Clark nearly floated.

When was the last time he’d listened to David Bowie?

After the movie ended (including Tim fast-forwarding the credits to show them Howard the Duck), Clark asked:

“Tim, do you have any David Bowie albums?” He’d learned that for anything music in the house, Tim was the go-to guy.

“Everything. I’ll put them on a jump drive for you.”

“Weren’t you listening to Bowie when you were a pup, Martha?” William asked.

“Where do you think he got his first taste?” Martha grinned. “I let him listen to all my old vinyls. Jonathan didn’t like it, much. He was more into Elvis.”

“Big fan, were you?” Bruce asked.
An understatement, Clark thought. He’d spent much of the ninth and tenth grades wearing make-up in David’s particular early style. His father hadn’t much approved, but Martha saw no harm in it, and even taught him to apply it properly. He’d stopped around eleventh grade because he’d joined the football team at that point, and Whitney wasn’t the only team member teasing him incessantly about it.

Clark only nodded, but Martha interjected:

“On separate Halloweens, he dressed as Ziggy Stardust, Aladdin Sane, the Thin White Duke, and Jareth from Labyrinth. I daresay he had quite the crush on David.”

“Mo-om.” Clark whined, thankful she didn’t have the photo albums within her reach.

Everyone else chuckled, apart from Damian, who had passed out, but Clark only just noticed then.

“I think the munchkin needs to be brought to bed.” Clark whispered, stroking the pup’s hair.

Bruce hummed happily and he and Clark maneuvered so that Bruce could slip out from under him and he crossed over to pick up Damian.

“If everyone else wants to gather in the dining room,” Bruce said softly. “The boys can gather some games to play.”

“I’ll help you tuck Damian in.” Clark offered.

The growl which unleashed from William was enough to make everyone turn to look at him.

Years of programmed fear were telling Clark to back off, submit, be a good Omega.

Months of being allowed to grow and become his own person in the aftermath was telling him not to give in.

“What’s wrong, grandpa?”

William walked right past Clark to face Bruce, who wisely handed Damian to Dick, who led all the boys out of the room.

“He is not your mate!” William growled. “You’re supposed to be helping him. Not bringing him into your pack to be mother to your pups!”

A chorus of “Dad!” and “Grandpa!” rang out behind him.

“I have been helping him.” Bruce said firmly. “He’s grown happier, more confident. If you don’t like what’s going on, why don’t you tell him your concerns? He’s standing right behind you, and he has ears to listen, a mouth to reply, and a brain to process the conversation with.”

This was clearly not the answer William was expecting, as he finally turned around and saw both Clark and Martha fuming at him.

“Clark, I just wanted--”

“To convince Bruce to back away instead of telling me you were worried so that I could make a decision on my own like fucking adult?” Clark dropped the words in a deceptively calm tone. “I had someone make decisions for me for ten fucking years, grandpa. No matter your intentions, that’s what you were just doing.”
“Clark, don’t you see this isn’t healthy? You just came out of this situation with Luthor and now you’re helping to tuck in Wayne’s pup?”

“And I’m happy to do it. Damian is a sweet boy who I’ll gladly tuck in every night while I’m here.”

“Clark, you didn’t see how it looked when you two were in the boardroom. People might think you’re mates with how close you two are acting.”

“Maybe I don’t care what others think.” Clark said, louder. “Maybe I--” he stopped, his throat swelling painfully, and his eyes darted from his grandfather to Bruce, who quickly became blurred as his eyes filled with tears.

He left as quickly as he could, intent on finding the nearest bathroom.

“Good job, dad.” Martha said, slowly leaving the room as well, wanting to find Clark but wanting him to have a head start so he could be alone for a few moments. “Please try not to kill each other.”

Martha found Clark in the bathroom just off the entrance hall, sad Omega being her first clue, the muffled sobs as she got right next to the door being the second.

“Clark?” Martha called as she knocked gently. “Can I come in, sweetheart?”

There was no reply, but Clark unlocked the door and shuffled away from it so his mother could come in. She locked the door behind her again and sat next to him on the floor, encouraging him to lay his head in her lap.

“These damn hormones.” Clark said. “Emotions change at the drop of a hat. I broke down watching The Land Before Time with Damian last week.”

“I don’t doubt it.” Martha told him, stroking his hair. “But I would like an honest answer right now: do you have feelings for Bruce?”

Clark’s sobs increased.

“He’s perfect, momma! He always checks to make sure I’m comfortable, he’s gonna get a new tub installed so I can do the water birth thing, he holds me when I have nightmares, he smells so good! I don’t know what to do!”

Martha didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. She settled for leaning down to kiss Clark’s head.

“You’ll get there, honey. You’ll get there.”

Clark’s sobs gradually began to quiet.

“I spend a lot of time with Damian.” he told Martha after a while.

“I can tell you two have gotten very close.” She said.

“We parent-bonded.”

Martha was silent for a moment, slightly shocked, but not overly so.

“We won’t tell grandpa.” she promised, patting his shoulder.

“Thank you.”
Well, a combination of various things such as writer's block, gastro-intestinal problems, my brother's emergency hospital visit, and some soul-searching on my part have all contributed in the delay of the story returning. This is one of three chapters which came together quite suddenly in the past few days.

By soul-searching, I mean that since I am no longer attending the Mormon church (I had joined six years ago, stopped attending a few months ago), I have been able to pick back up where I left off in figuring out who I am. Things which I had started figuring out but then pushed away include:
I am bisexual.
I am genderfluid.

I first realised I was bi on prom night while dancing with one of my female friends, but since I still have a preference for men I dismissed it as a phase after joining the church. The earth-shattering realisation that you have feelings for one of your female friends which then leads you to crying in the shower erases the silly notion of "phases" with great force. She doesn't know how I feel, because she's in a place where she needs a break from romantic relationships so I've kept my yap shut.

When I was in college I started going through cycles where I would dress like a guy and even had an online persona called Daniel. At the time, I had never heard of genderfluid and didn't realise what was going on. Literally two days ago I was thinking on some things and realised that, in that particular moment, I did not feel like female or male: I was just me.

Yesterday morning I woke up pissed off that I could only find my skirts and really, really, REALLY wanted to have pants, a button-down, and a tie. I still tend enough towards my feminine side that I will use female pronouns, but instead of my full name of Christina, I feel like Chris is more appropriate, and want to go back to having more men's clothing to pick from in my wardrobe.

Basically I'm learning who I am and would like to reintroduce myself:
Hi, I'm Chris, I use she/her, but I'm not female 24/7.
I would love to give Ben Affleck's abs a good once-over with my tongue.
I would also love to have Gal Gadot to hold me firmly by the hair and stick her tongue down my throat.

Boy, it's good to be out.
Chapter Summary

<3 So much love! <3

Chapter Notes

I would like to thank everyone who commented my coming out. I actually got very emotional reading them, you have no idea. Like, I can't even think of what to say further regarding them because they've basically left me speechless.

I tried Googling the word for robin in Arabic. The best I could find was the Arabian word for small sparrow. Thus Damian's middle name.

Once upon a time,
My body was no longer mine.
It had been taken,
With nothing given.
Once upon a time,
You returned it to me,
By giving of yourself.
— Being me by Clark Kent

The rest of the weekend went by more smoothly, but still with an underlying tension whenever William and Bruce were in the same room.

Clark felt guilty for it, but he was happy to see the back of his grandfather when he and Martha left Sunday afternoon.

He still hugged him before he got into the car, however, taking the opportunity to whisper:

“Grandpa, please let me try to be happy. That means having everyone I care about near me.”

His grandfather tightened his hold.

“I’m sorry.” he said, his voice thick with emotion. “I’ll try to be less ornery for Christmas, if I can come back?”
Clark smiled, still holding his grandfather.

“Of course you can.”

Clark felt as though he had been running a marathon throughout the visit, finally coming to an exhausted halt once his mother’s car was out of sight.

“I want a hot shower and a nap.” he declared as they went back into the house.

“If you’re up for it,” Bruce offered. “Maybe a bath would be more relaxing?”

Clark was starting to feel pressure from his swollen feet, not to mention that he was starting to feel chilled from standing outside and the promise of a hot bath sounded like heaven.

“Are you offering me a pampering?” Clark asked, trying to make it sound like teasing, but inwardly wishing for Bruce to say yes.

Bruce stopped in his tracks.

“Yes. Yes I am.”

“Hey, baby-bat, let’s go play Mario Kart.” Jason took Damian by the hand and started rapidly walking towards the house.

“I’ll join you.” Dick said, following behind.

“Let’s do Rainbow Road!” Tim suggested as he followed. The other boys chorused a loud “NO!”

Clark felt his heart pounding as he followed Bruce to the elevator, standing next to him as it went up, then down the hall, through the bedroom, and into the bathroom.

Bruce used a pull-stopper to plug the tub, then started up the faucets.

“You’ll have to adjust that to how you want it. I’ll get some bubble bath, be right back.”

He went to the cupboards on the other end of the room, and Clark tested and adjusted the water temperature. Bruce returned with a red bottle and a chair which Clark recognised as being from the desk in the Alpha’s room.

Bruce placed the chair next to the tub and offered Clark to it in it while they waited for the water to rise. Bruce was about to add the bubbles to the water, but stopped.

“I should have asked, is this smell okay?” he handed the open bottle for Clark to smell. A light scent which he associated with cherry blossoms greeted him. Clark nodded, smiling, so Bruce added some to the flow of the water.

Clark’s heart was still pounding when Bruce shut the water off.

“I can, um, turn around if-- okay, never mind.” Bruce said as Clark shucked off his clothes next to the chair and stepped into the tub, gripping the sides as he lowered himself in.

The feel of submersing himself in the hot water helped to ease the tension that had built in his muscles, and Clark let out a sigh of relief.

“I thought, I might, um… that is--” Bruce sighed, unable to continue.
Clark frowned.

“You’ve never sounded so flustered.”

“It’s just, I wanted to do something for you, that I thought might help you relax.”

Clark continued to frown. Bruce let out a huge sigh.

“Would you like me to wash your hair?” he blurted.

Clark’s eyes widened, but he was still frowning.

“You want to do that for me?”

Any type of grooming such as washing hair was part of pampering Alphas did for their Omegas on occasion, to show they appreciated them. It was somewhat outdated, one of those things which some couples did for each other, now, if at all. Among the upper class, as with many traditional practices, it was more expected.

Lex had never done anything like that for Clark. The closest was when they’d gone for couple massages during their honeymoon.

“It’s okay.” Bruce said, when Clark stared a bit too long. “You don’t--”

“Okay.” Clark said.

“Okay?”

“You can wash my hair.” Clark gave him a shy smile. To punctuate this, he took a deep breath and dipped beneath the water for a couple of seconds, then lifted his head back out again. After blinking the water out of his eyes, he turned to Bruce, who was giving him one of his soft smiles again.

Bruce had to go fetch Clark’s shampoo and conditioner from the shower stall before he could begin. He then sat in the chair, touching it to the back of the tub with his legs splayed on either side, and placed some shampoo in his hand. He rubbed it onto both hands before reaching out for Clark’s hair.

Bruce’s hands began gentle, making sure the shampoo got into every strand of hair. Then he began pressing more firmly to Clark’s scalp, fingertips massaging. Clark let out a pleased little whimper and closed his eyes.

Bruce was doing this for him, and he had asked permission first. And Clark said yes, because he didn’t want to belong to Lex anymore. He had the right to let another Alpha touch him, and Lex couldn’t do a damn thing. And Clark wanted this Alpha to be the one touching him. This Alpha who had done so much for him already, but when it came time to do this, to be touching him, he asked permission.

Lex did things which, physically, had caused Clark pleasure. But it was hollow and sickening. Lex never asked before doing it, he just did it and gave Clark orders.

Bruce asked.

“Ready for a rinse?” Bruce asked him, indicating the detachable showerhead.

Clark smiled and nodded. Bruce tested it on his hand, first, for temperature, then urged Clark to scoot forward so that he could rinse his hair with his head back, rather than forward.
When he finished, Bruce guided him to lean back again, then came at his scalp with the conditioner; just like with the shampoo, he took his time, working magic with his hands.

Clark started purring, which in itself made him smile; he couldn’t remember the last time he’d been so relaxed that he’d purred.

“Not gonna fall asleep, are you?” Bruce teased in a low voice.

“Mm-mm.” Clark replied, though the way in which it came out suggested he was halfway to la-la land already.

After a slightly longer time than the shampoo (it was a leave-in conditioner), Bruce told Clark it was time to rinse and Clark scooted forward again.

“I’ll get you a bath sheet and your pajamas.” Bruce told him when he’d finished rinsing him off.

The relaxing effect of the warm water and Bruce’s dexterous fingers on his scalp, a big part of the equation being that it was Bruce, had left Clark feeling aroused. He knew Bruce wouldn’t be able to smell it easily through the scented water, but, he wondered…

Bruce returned with the pajamas and bath sheet as he’d promised, folding them onto the chair.

“Bruce, can I scent you for a minute?” Clark asked, feeling a sort of thrill like when he and Lana had made out the first time; hands all over each other, the danger of getting caught because they were in the chem lab supply closet.

He knew this was dangerous, because if Bruce got close enough he would smell that Clark was aroused. But at the same time, this would also answer a lot of questions.

If Bruce wanted him, Clark would finally know.

And if he did…

“Sure.” Bruce replied, not thinking anything of it.

Balancing himself on the edges of the tub, Bruce leaned from behind for Clark to press his nose to his throat.

Clark scented, and detected the exact moment Bruce became aware of his arousal.

Bruce pulled back, looking at Clark with wide eyes. Clark kept an outward calm which reflected the complete opposite of how panicked he felt inwardly.

“I think both of us are too old for those silly mating games people play.” Clark stated simply.

Bruce swallowed and nodded slowly.

“Then I won’t waste your time: I like you. A lot. I’m not ready for… that. But if you like me, too, then I’d like to try getting closer to you by degrees. Test the waters.” he made a small splash for emphasis.

This is it. Clark thought. This is how I die. I’m about to go into cardiac arrest out of absolute mortification--

“I like you, too.” Bruce said, scarcely louder than a whisper.
Clark could feel himself trembling, fighting to hold back a shriek. Bruce cupped his cheek.

“I think I’ve liked you for a long time, but I didn’t say anything because I didn’t want to scare you.”

Oh. Clark thought.

But he needed to set the rules. He knew Bruce wouldn’t ever hurt him deliberately, but he needed to say it out loud so he could be certain of where this was going.

“I wasn’t allowed to choose stop or slow down for almost a decade. If we go through with this, I need those to be options.”

“I wouldn’t expect anything less.” Bruce vowed.

“Can I scent you again?”

Bruce didn’t hesitate, and as Clark scented him, Bruce leaned his head against his.

Bruce could feel himself getting hard in his jeans, but he didn’t do anything more than just stay there, hand still on Clark’s cheek, lightly scritching in his hair, while the Omega breathed deeply of his scent.

Clark nuzzled all along one side of his neck, then stilled before planting a gentle kiss to Bruce’s throat. The Alpha let out a low growl as he exhaled.

“Bruce…” Clark whispered.

“Mm?”

“Could you leave for now, please?”

“Okay. You’re alright?”

“Yes.”

“Do you want me to wait in the next room?”

“Yes, please.”

“Okay.” Bruce lightly pressed his lips to Clark’s temple, then slipped from the room.

Clark kept his eyes shut, breathing shallow, keeping the memory of Bruce’s scent close.

He reached down and took hold of his cock, going over Bruce’s words in his head.

*I think I’ve liked you for a long time, but I didn’t say anything because I didn’t want to scare you.*

He pulled the foreskin back, then tugged it forward again, slowly, savoring this brief intimacy he’d had without fear.

*I wouldn’t expect anything less.* Bruce had promised him.

Clark gripped more firmly, began stroking more quickly.

That musky, beautiful scent, which had shown him kindness, safety, comfort.

He quickened his movements, small moans coming from his throat, sounding louder in the echo of
I like you, too.

His climax came suddenly, almost surprising him, and his eyes shot open wide, a small cry dropping from his lips.

He sat in the water, panting, then he giggled. Quiet at first, then louder until it was a full laugh. He was sure he must sound quite insane, but he didn’t care.

Fuck, yeah. He thought.

He winced as his pup moved, causing a clench in his lower abdomen.

“I’m still grateful.” he told him.

Bruce could feel Clark leaning a bit heavily against him.

“Do your feet still hurt?”

“A bit.”

“Can I help you with that?”

“What did you have in mind?” Bruce heard the smile in his voice.

“Foot rub?”

Clark drew back, the smile gone.

“You already washed my hair.”
“You have a quota on attentions?”

Clark looked uncomfortable, staring at his belly.

“It’s just, I’m not ready to…” he swallowed. “Reciprocate.”

“Clark.” Bruce guided him by the chin to look into his eyes. “I’m not asking you to. Your feet hurt, I want to help you. This isn’t a banking of favors for something in return; this is me doing something because I know it would help you, and knowing you’ll feel better for it makes me feel like I’ve done something good. Because I like helping those I care about.”

Clark darted his eyes nervously to the bed and swallowed again. Bruce noticed his discomfort.

“If this setting is too intimate, we can join the boys down in the theatre room. They’ll be playing videogames, we can sit in the back row and I’ll massage your feet, simple as that. A family setting.”

Clark relaxed.

A family setting. The words echoed in his mind.

“That sounds nice.” he said.

“You’re sure?” Bruce checked. “I don’t want you to feel pressured. I just wanted to make sure you knew I have no ulterior motives with it.”

Clark leaned in to Bruce’s chest again, then nosed upward to scent him. He relaxed further.

“I trust you.” Clark told him.

Bruce kissed his hair.

***

The theatre room was noisy with the sound of the boys playing. They had moved on from Mario Kart to Minecraft; Damian and Dick on the Playstation, Jason and Tim on their laptops, but all all their avatars were in the same jungle.

“Tim, the rate of your gathering sulfur is alarming me greatly.” Jason said.

“I don’t see why that should be worrying you.” Tim replied.

“Nothing to do at all with how you blew up his fortress last time, then?” Dick said.

“Is no one paying attention to how Damian is currently Katnissing his way through the tree-tops, right now?” Tim said, slightly frantic as he worked his took down another Creeper.

“It’s Rue, not Katniss.” Damian corrected. “Katniss could climb trees, Rue could travel through them because her job in her district was gathering fruit from the tops of the trees. You want Katniss? Try this.”

Damian turned his avatar towards Jason’s and shot two arrows in quick succession, offing a Creeper his brother hadn’t seen.

“Wow, thanks, baby-bat.” Jason quickly gathered the sulfur just as Tim made his way towards him.

“Wait! I’ve got plans for that!” Tim whined.
“That’s what worries me.” Jason replied.

Clark had his legs in Bruce’s lap as Bruce rubbed his feet with practised precision, a lightly-scented lotion helping him along.

“Where did you learn to do this?” Clark asked over the boys’ banter, enjoying the ministrations.

“College. Took a year in kinesiology. Great pick-up at parties, I can tell you.” Bruce said with a smirk and a wink.

Clark smiled lazily, feeling like a spoiled cat. His pup was moving again, but more like a shifting, changing of position, which didn’t cause his uterus to feel tight.

“How are your feet, now?” Bruce asked him.

“Fine. I’ve been milking it for the past ten minutes.” Clark said, smirking slightly.

Bruce took his hand and kissed his fingers.

“That’s my Omega.” Just as the words left his lips, his eyes went big and his smile dropped. “I-- I mean, um…” He swallowed. “If that’s okay with you.”

Clark thought for a moment, then ran his other hand along Bruce’s arm. He licked his lips before responding. The pup stilled, like it knew not to distract its mother.

“Just, not too often, I think. Like, don’t…” he sighed, speaking slowly, trying to articulate the feelings he had been working to bury since he awakened to the shadowy hell that had been his marriage. “At some point, he was my Alpha, and I was his Omega, and that was my whole identity. I wasn’t… me, anymore. I wasn’t Clark. I was just Omega.”

Bruce squeezed his hand.

“But Clark is such wonderfully interesting person. I can’t imagine wanting to cover that up. Tells the most beautiful stories to my pup before bed.” He kissed his fingers again. “Has the most stirring political inclinations.” He used his other hand to squeeze Clark’s ankle.

“The fact that that Cheeto is going to be the next head of state is infuriating.” Clark declared, narrowing his eyes.

“See that?” Bruce smiled. “Doesn’t take much to spark your patriotic passion. All these things that make you who you are… Oh, Clark.” He opened Clark’s hand and kissed his palm, lingering there. “I would never want you to be other than who you really are.”

In their little bubble, Clark and Bruce held each other’s regard: one seeing the other as precious, a beautiful flame which had the potential to burn so much brighter, as he had brightened over the past several months. Whereas the other saw the first as the sun, already burning fiercely, his source of light now that he had been pulled from the shadow.

Outside the bubble, the boys continued their game, perhaps not altogether oblivious of the love happening behind them, but not wanting to disturb it.

“Shit! What was that?” Jason exclaimed. “What did he blow up?”

“A mine, I hope!” Tim said gleefully.

“You did.” Damian said calmly.
Tim panicked.

“Damian, where are you?”

“I’m stealing your diamonds.” Damian said in a sing-song voice.

“The hell!? You know how hard it was to get that TNT together?”

“Yep. Which was why I dug my way there, instead, backed away until you lit the fuse, then returned, a lot closer than you were because you decided to wait on the surface.”

Tim growled impatiently as he made his way down the chasm he had dug with the TNT, but having trouble because it was an almost straight drop. He had to stop and plant blocks of dirt to prevent fall damage.

“Don’t worry, Tim.” Damian said mildly. “I’ve left you lapis and gold.”

“Damian Usfur Wayne, I’m coming for you.” Tim vowed.

“You can try.” Damian told him. “But I’m now wearing diamond armour. Good luck getting through it.”

Tim gawked at the screen, incredulous.

Clark and Bruce took brief notice of the scene, smiling.

Bruce put Clark’s socks back on so he wouldn’t get chilled, before adjusting himself so that Clark’s thighs were now in his lap, and started applying lotion to the underside of Clark’s belly. Clark’s pup chose that moment to start kicking.

“Ow, pup.” Clark winced.

“He’s just saying hi.” Bruce said softly, stilling his hand where the kick had come from, smiling when the pup kicked again.

“Did you just assume my puppy’s gender?” Clark asked, smirking.

“I apologise.” He leaned in and kissed Clark’s puppy-pocket just above the belly-button, which was popping out quite a bit.

Bruce looked up when he noticed Clark sob, in spite of his efforts to keep it quiet.

“Too much?” Bruce asked.

“I’m sorry.” Clark said, even as the tears streamed from his eyes. “The damn hormones. I’m happy, really.” He hastened to reassure him with a hand to Bruce’s shoulder and a watery smile.

Damian had put down his controller and climbed over the back of the couch to get to the back row and stand in front of Clark.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” he asked him.

“I’m fine, pup.”

Clark reached out for him with his other hand.
Damian took his hand and allowed himself to be brought closer so that Clark could hug him as best he could from his position.

Damian studied the setup of Clark and his father, then chewed his lip for a moment before blurting out,

“Are you and father mates, now?”

Bruce and Clark laughed, and Clark felt his crying reaching an end.

“We’ve realised we like each other a lot.” Bruce explained.

“And we’ve decided we’re going to try things like this, to see if they work out.” Clark added.

Damian put his arms around Clark’s neck and buried his nose in his throat.

“I hope you and father end up mates.” he said, slightly muffled against Clark’s neck.

Clark started crying again, more softly this time, securing his hold around Damian.

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Chapter 25

Chapter Summary

Kisses and fluff to kick us off...

...before we get taken to school because high school sucks ass.

Chapter Notes

Warning for homophobic language, racist slur, and sexual assault.

Note: I was already advised by a reader that Kansas does in fact get snow, but I had already written some set-up for the winter stuff when they were visiting the farm, so... it's an AU, enjoy.

Although I do set into motion the court stuff to come, the next couple of chapters following this are going to be mainly fluff, especially with Christmas on the horizon for our boys.

Unaware, I just did what I always do

Everyday, the same routine

Before I skate off to school

But who knew that this day wasn’t like the rest

— Youth of the Nation by P. O. D.

Things didn’t seem to change much in the Wayne household after that, except that Bruce always found excuses to be closer to Clark.

He finally gave in and allowed Tim to move all his files to a portable hard drive so that he could use his laptop instead of the desktop and sit on the couch with Clark’s legs in his lap, his computer propped on top of them.

When he wasn’t working, the two were collaborating in their research to pick a new tub; Clark by showing him videos and pictures of male Omegas water-birthing positions, Bruce by showing him the tub styles he thought might work. Clark had tried asking him if he was sure he wanted to go that far (pretending like he didn’t know Bruce had already been looking at tubs), but Bruce just took his hand, kissed his fingers, and patted his thigh.

They had finally settled on a square one which would settle halfway into the floor, was about five feet deep, but which had a built-in bench. This way Clark would be able to lean on the bench for support while pushing, and then possibly sit down after the pup was out before it would be
completely removed from the water. There was also ample room for Megan and Bruce to help him. Clark had blushed so fiercely when he’d asked Bruce if he would hold him during the birthing, something the father of the pup was meant to do; Bruce’s response had been to take Clark’s face in his hands and kiss his forehead.

They had yet to kiss, really kiss, for all their added physical affections. Clark wasn’t sure what that meant, if Bruce was just waiting for the right moment, or if he just wasn’t one for those kinds of kisses. He certainly didn’t mind bestowing kisses elsewhere on Clark’s person: his forehead, his cheeks, his hands, his puppy-pocket, the back of his neck, etc.

Sometimes there were moments where it looked like Bruce might kiss him on the mouth, but ended up aiming elsewhere.

Sometimes Clark dreamed of Bruce kissing him;

Lying in bed, lazy touches between the two of them.

Standing in the lounge in gentle candlelight with soft music he didn’t recognise.

These dreams had him waking up with a smile.

***

The first Friday in December, the boys came home from school and declared conditions were perfect to make good on those promises they’d made at the farm about showing Clark proper winter fun.

“See?” Jason said as they traipsed out the back door. “It’s above freezing. Now look at the snow.” He picked some up between his gloved hands and made a snowball in seconds. “Sticky. This is a perfect day for being outside in the snow. Hey!”

Tim had launched a snowball at Jason’s head and was laughing while holding another one ready. Clark snickered, trying to feel at least a little bad for Jason, but the situation was just too gleeful.

“We haven’t built the forts, yet!” Jason argued.

“Then get movin’, Gunslinger!” Tim told him.

“Hang on! We said we were gonna show Clark stuff, remember?”

“Yeah, snowman, first!” Damian declared as he sank to his knees and started gathering snow together.

Clark gladly joined in, and Jason helped them to sculpt it to be as round as possible. There was a lot more snow to work with than there had been on the rooftop of the penthouse.

When they had the head secure some time later, Bruce finally came to join them with a box of supplies: a real top hat, a wooden pipe, actual coal for eyes, and about the biggest red button Clark had ever seen for the nose.

Clark felt kind of proud at the job they’d done.

Bruce took him further up the yard where the snow hadn’t been touched.

“Tim, how about you show Clark how to make a snow angel?”

Tim eagerly let himself fall backwards onto some untouched snow and proceeded to flap his legs.
open and closed, his arms up and down. When he was done, he reached his arms out and Bruce helped him up so that he could walk away from the angel without damaging it. Jason and Damian did the same, and then Clark gave it a try. Bruce had to pull a little harder to get Clark up due to the weight he’d gained from the pregnancy, but he eventually got him off the ground; only to fall backwards, Clark tumbling with him, into the cushiony snow in front of the new angel.

Bruce barely got out asking Clark if he was alright, when Clark started laughing mirthfully, rolling over to lie on his back in the snow next to Bruce.

“I think I’m getting used to snow, now.” He said, grinning.

Bruce grinned back, Clark’s good mood infectious.

Dick had been out with Barbara, but eventually returned and joined them with a box containing a few different flavours of Kool-Aid in styrofoam cups, so Bruce helped them to find some trees with icicles. There had been a very heavy snowfall only a few days prior, and the warmer weather plus last night’s freeze had left a few trees with icicles hanging from their branches.

Clark thought this wasn’t a bad treat at all, and when they had all had enough they laughed at each other’s coloured lips and tongues.

The next activity was climbing up a hill with relatively few trees and sliding down it with sleds the boys had.

Clark’s favourite turned out to be the saucer because he could sit in it cross-legged, and it spun as it went downhill, making for a wonderfully dizzy experience.

The only problem with sledding, was if you wanted to go again, you had to climb back to the top of the hill, and that was exhausting.

After a while, Clark couldn’t climb anymore, and Bruce suggested they go back inside, saving the snowball fight for another time.

It had grown dark and Alfred had the fire going and cocoa with marshmallows for all, as well as some sandwiches so that they could eat in the lounge.

“How was that for playing in the snow, Clark?” Bruce asked him.

Clark was leaning in to Bruce’s chest, chewing his sandwich thoughtfully, a smile eventually spreading. He swallowed and said:

“Perfect.”

***

The following Saturday morning, Clark and Damian woke to find Bruce wasn’t in bed; had been awake for quite a while, if the coolness of his place was any indication.

When they made their way downstairs, they saw that a transformation had taken place in the entrance.

Green fir garlands with soft white decorative lights wound around the banister, silver ones trimmed the doorframe to the lounge, and large white and blue paper snowflakes hung from the ceiling.

Eager to see what else might have occurred in their sleep, Clark and Damian went to the lounge
instead of the kitchen, and found the same soft white lights now crisscrossed the ceiling which, given
the lack of other lights, looked like stars. Shiny foil decorations of various colours, each one made
like some kind of star, hung here and there from the ceiling, as well.

Around the perimeter of the ceiling, as well as making an X from the four corners, was white and red
ribbon, very wide band, curled around each other.

“If the decorations are up, then Alfred might have gingerbread cookies, too!” Damian declared,
taking Clark’s hand and urging him forward. Clark could indeed smell gingerbread, and his mouth
watered.

At that moment, however, Bruce appeared in the doorway.

“You go ahead, Damian. I just need to talk to Clark for a minute.” He encouraged the pup, giving
him a hug as he walked past.

“Did you do this?” Clark asked, now suspicious as he indicated the decorations.

“Me and Alfred both. We normally do them all together with the boys, but I wanted to get certain
ones in place, first.”

“But not the tree?” Clark asked.

“No, we’ll be going to pick a tree together.” Bruce told him, stepping closer. “There’s actually a
place on the grounds with perfect pine trees. We pick one at Christmas, and then, in the spring, we
plant five saplings; one for each of us.”

Clark smiled.

“That sounds fun.”

“The boys certainly love it.” Bruce said, a strange, crooked smile on his lips which was giving Clark
butterflies.

“There is one other decoration which I wanted to put up, right now. I was wondering if you’d hold
the ladder?”

Clark swallowed.

“Um, yeah, sure.”

Bruce grabbed the ladder, which had been laying on its side along the wall nearest the door, and
propped it up in the centre of the room, then locked eyes with Clark as he came to hold it.

“Don’t let me fall.” Bruce said, that crooked smile still playing his lips as he began climbing.

Clark wondered if Bruce had the decoration in his pocket, because he hadn’t been holding anything
before climbing up. Once at the top, however, Bruce untucked his sweatshirt, revealing that the
decoration in question had been in there the whole time.

It had a red ribbon tied in a bow, green leaves, and white—Oh.

Clark swallowed while Bruce hung the mistletoe from a hook which he must have placed earlier.

He made his way back down the ladder, then stood very deliberately in front of Clark.
“What do you think?” he asked. “Completes it, don’t you think?”

Clark swallowed and nodded, trying not to erupt in a fit of giggles.

Bruce very carefully cupped Clark’s cheek in one hand, using the other to reach down and grasp his hand, lacing their fingers together.

“What do you think of sappy Christmas traditions, Clark?” Bruce asked.

Clark swallowed before responding, feeling in a bit of a teasing mood.

“I think when executed correctly, they can have beneficial side-effects.”

“Such as?” Bruce asked mildly, rubbing Clark’s cheek with his thumb.

“Increased serotonin, which is an excellent anti-depressant.”

“Hmm. That’s definitely something to strive for. I suppose we should try observing this, then, for our mental well-being?”

“Yes.” Clark said, his breath caught in his throat.

Bruce leaned in, and Clark’s eyes fluttered shut as he lifted the hand Bruce wasn’t holding to cup at the back of the Alpha’s neck.

Bruce’s lips was warm and inviting against his, and Clark felt his heart going a hundred miles an hour while Bruce sucked gently on his upper lip. Bruce pulled back only for a moment, long enough to get a second wind, and then he was pressing their lips together again, this time running his tongue around Clark’s bottom lip, silently requesting entry, which Clark gave in a heartbeat.

Their tongues met in the briefest of dances, a mere hello with promises of things to come, and then Bruce was pulling back, and pressed his forehead to Clark’s.

“Was that alright?” he asked.

Clark could only nod slightly, pressing himself closer to Bruce, seeking the Alpha’s warmth. Bruce put both arms around him and held him as best he could with Clark’s growing belly between them.

Bruce’s kisses felt like a gift; like something given, shared. Lex’s kisses felt like they were taking. Lex was always taking from Clark.

Bruce gave with every look, every touch.

And now he gave his kisses.

Clark wanted to give, too.

He tilted his face upward again, and pressed his lips to Bruce’s, sucking gently on his bottom lip, giving it a light nip with his front teeth.

He was starting to get turned on, but it wasn’t the urgent kind; it was just a pleasant accompaniment to the moment, and he rode it out.

They eventually left for the kitchen, still holding hands, fingers entwined.

***
“Um, Bruce?” Clark asked Monday afternoon.

“Mm?” Bruce said, showing he was listening. Clark’s legs were in his lap again, Bruce’s laptop on his shins.

“I think I should really probably go for a haircut.”

Bruce turned to see Clark indicating how his hair was now covering in his eyes.

“Did you want to go somewhere for it? Because Alfred’s been cutting mine and the boys’ for year, now.”

“Oh.” Clark said, his eyes widening.

Was there really nothing that man couldn’t do?

“Sure, if he doesn’t mind.”

“We can ask him when he gets back.” Bruce said, smiling as he rubbed Clark’s knee.

Clark realised he couldn’t pinpoint the moment when this simple feeling of domestic bliss had faded from his marriage. This simple feeling of being near the person you—cared about, knowing they cared, too, and just doing whatever.

What was that song that had come out the year they’d graduated that Chloe would sing over and over? Something about chasing cars?

Clark quickly opened a new tab and searched it.

Chasing Cars by Snow Patrol.

*If I lay here…*

*If I just lay here…*

*Would you lie with me and just forget the world?*

He smiled, remembering that he once thought the lyric was *just look at the wall*. Which in itself was pretty romantic, too, he thought. So happy to just be with the person in that moment that you would just look at the wall…

He looked up at Bruce and felt as though the world was spinning quite separately from them.

*Let’s waste time*

*Chasing cars*

*Around our heads*

***

“Huh.” Clark said as he peered in the bathroom mirror, his pajama shirt discarded for the moment.

He’d wanted to take the time to look few things over, such as his new haircut, his plumper breasts, and his rounder belly. What ended up grabbing his attention, however, was his healed shoulder.

“Something wro-- oh, sorry.” Bruce had ducked in when he heard Clark say ‘huh,’ then ducked
back out when he saw Clark wasn’t wearing his shirt.

“Hey mister ‘breast-feeding-your-pup-is-perfectly-natural,’ get your ass back in here.” Clark called out, grinning.

Bruce walked in hesitantly.

“I’m gonna be feeding my pup around in the open, you might as well get used to seeing them.” Clark told him. “The only thing that’s changed is they’re full of milk, now. Besides, you got an eyeful when you washed my hair.”

“I know, I just didn’t know if the permission was extended.” Bruce said, now assured that he could come closer.

Clark smiled.

“Well, thank you for checking.” He returned to looking at his reflection.

“I just noticed… my bond-mark disappeared. I mean, I knew it would happen, but I hadn’t noticed it until just now.”

Bruce came to stand behind Clark and looked where he was indicating, then hesitantly held his hand out until Clark nodded.

Bruce ran his fingers along Clark’s bare shoulder, causing the Omega to shiver.

Clark swallowed as he became aware that the shiver made his nipples harden, but was determined not to react. If he didn’t make a big deal out of it, Bruce wouldn’t, either.

Bruce smiled as he reached upward to tug lightly at a lock of hair which came to a perfect curl in the middle of Clark’s forehead.

“It’s always done that.” Clark explained. “Don’t know why, it just does.

Bruce kissed Clark’s forehead exactly where the curl was and then pressed their foreheads together.

***

How dare you let another Alpha touch you!?

No! Please! Wake up!

Unlike previous dreams, Clark knew he was dreaming. Knew it. But it didn’t make the feel of Lex gripping his hair any less painful.

It didn’t make him any less scared.

Wake up wake up wake up wakeupwakeupalarm…

Wake up, Clark. You’re okay.

Bruce.

I’m here.

In the dream, Clark closed his eyes and smiled, tears streaming down his face.
This would end.

It was going to be okay.

When he woke up, he was still crying, but Bruce was there holding him, and Clark immediately clutched to him, just feeling so grateful.

Bruce would keep him safe.

***

Jason and Tatsu were sitting on one of the benches in the carrefour, Jason’s head in Tatsu’s lap as she gently and slowly ran her fingers through his hair, lingering in spots lightly scratching with her nails as she would move small locks of hair aside the gain access to his scalp. The sensation was quite tranquil.

“Are you falling asleep on me, Jason?” she asked him.

“You have a magic touch.” he told her, smiling with his eyes shut. “I may never get up again.”

“You two are gonna give me cavities you’re so sweet.” Garfield declared from across the way.

“Hey, at least they’re not grabby with each other like Bart and Roy.” Victor said from another bench, prosthetic leg next to him as he massaged his stump above where his knee should have been.

“Bart and Roy?” Jason asked, opening his eyes and turning to face the dark-skinned Beta.

“Yep. They’ve mutually declared one another the hottest tail they’ve ever set their eyes on, and hands followed suit. They’re probably hiding in a supply closet somewhere right now.”

“Shoulda known Bart liked other Omegas,” Garfield said. “Never would’ve pegged Roy for queer, though.”

“There’s no one type, Garfield.” Tatsu said. “I’ve had people tell me I’m a closet queer because I do martial arts but still act all ‘dainty.’” She said the word with an air of disdain. “But I like Jason.” To punctuate this, she leaned forward and kissed his forehead.

“Aw, thanks babe.” he smirked at her, causing her to giggle.

“What’s happening?” A gleeful voice cut through and everyone looked up to see Bart being given a piggyback ride by Roy. There was a faint scent of sex around them.

“Not much.” Garfield said. “Just wondering when you two would be coming.” He finished with a wink.

“Sploosh!” Tatsu declared with a grin.

Bart nuzzled the back of Roy’s neck and the two grinned.

“Ooh… does this mean I could do both of ‘em at the same time?”

The mood changed as swiftly as if a bucket of ice-water had been poured over everyone; Bart dropped from Roy’s back and the two entered the space between the four benches.

Digger Harkness was approaching, a toothpick in his mouth as he grinned.
Jason jumped to his feet, taking a defensive stance in front of the carrefour, essentially blocking Digger from being able to approach any of his friends. Tatsu came to stand beside him, taking a pose she had learned from her father. Victor carefully took out his cellphone and hit the video option, taking aim.

“Got a whole harem goin’, Todd?” Digger cowed.

“These are my friends. I just want to make sure you don’t touch them.”

“Well then maybe they should’ve taken a shower before coming out smellin’ the way they do.” he snorted. “Two wet Omegas with their hands all over each other. Just missin’ a knot to give ‘em a good poundin’.”

“That sounds like inappropriate talk for school grounds,” Victor said.

“I don’t see a teacher.” Digger shrugged.

“No, but it’s still a form of sexual harassment.” Tatsu countered.

“Shut your mouth unless you wanna swallow, Jap. Now, if you wanted to go get your fan and give me a dance–”

“Leave her alone.” Jason growled.

“I wanna start another fight, Todd? Come at me, if you’re Alpha enough.”

Jason took a deep breath.

“This doesn’t have to be a fight. Just leave my friends alone.”

“Do ya give it to greenie, too?” Digger said, gesturing to Garfield. “Fellas on the team been talkin’. Likes to present like an Omega.”

Garfield was red from his neck to the roots of his green hair.

“Takes it right up the ass like a little bitch,” Digger added.

Garfield didn’t say anything. Jason hadn’t known, not that it mattered to him what his best friend’s orientation was. But that was a conversation for another time.

Bart started trying to slip away.

Digger made his move to grab him, but Roy body-checked him and Bart ran.

Jason wasted no time coming to Roy’s defense as Digger used his Voice to get the Omega to go pliant and grabbed at his genitals in what was quite clearly a painful grip.

Some students had begun to gather and now chanted “Fight! Fight! Fight!” as Jason and Digger went at each other.

By the time Bart returned with Mr. Crane, Jason had a bloody lip, a cut above his right eye, and his sweater was torn with multiple scratches on his torso and arms. Digger had a bloody nose and a dislocated shoulder and was having trouble breathing from bruised ribs where Jason had elbowed him.

***
Principal Waller expelled Jason without ceremony, telling him to leave the premises before she called
the police. When Victor Stone tried to tell her he had video evidence that Jason was provoked, she
tried to confiscate his cell phone, even had school security physically try to restrain him. One shout
and a well-timed throw to Garfield and the green-haired Alpha was running down the hall with the
phone in hand, making his way out of the school as soon as he found a door.

Clark was the one who took the call from the school as Alfred was out and Bruce was in the
bathroom. He tried asking how badly Jason was hurt and who had started it, but Waller hung up on
him after saying the words “Make sure Wayne gets his brat far away from my school.”

He called Jason’s cell, and Jason told him he was at the bagel place across from the school.

Bruce drove them over right away, calling Harvey while on the road.

By the time they got there, Tatsu, Bart, Garfield, and Roy had all come to the bagel shop, as well.
Tatsu had called her parents, Bart and Roy called theirs, as well, though either set had yet to arrive.
Bart was holding Roy’s head (he still looked pale as a sheet and was shaking) to his chest,
whispering soothingly to him as he ran his fingers through his hair.

Harvey met with Bruce and Clark in the parking lot and when they went inside everyone worked to
push a bunch of tables together; Bruce told them all to order whatever they wanted and he’d pay for
it.

Harvey asked the teens to tell him exactly what happened, before, during, and after the fight.

“Victor’s been arrested.” Tatsu said after Jason finished his bit. “Waller called his refusal to hand
over his phone interfering with an investigation. She wants the cops to pick up Garfield, too.”

Garfield looked mortified.

“Give me the phone, Garfield.” Harvey asked. “If the cops ask you about it, you tell them it’s been
given to your lawyer as defense evidence.” Garfield handed it over mutely. Harvey took out his
laptop and booted it up.

“Does this mean I’m goin’ to jail?” Garfield asked, clearly terrified.

“It will look better for you if you turn yourself in. I’ll drop you off personally so that they know
you’ve got legal defense. Bruce, can you handle their bail?”

“No problem.” Bruce said.

Clark was cleaning the cut above Jason’s eye with the bagel shop’s first aid kit.

“What the hell did he use?” Clark fussed.

“He’s got this ring on his right hand; a boomerang. He can use it as a bottle-opener.”

“Geez.” Clark muttered as he carefully dabbed with an alcohol wipe to remove the congealed blood.

“I hope you got him for it.” Clark said.

“Pretty sure he broke his nose.” Tatsu said, beaming.

Clark grinned and kissed Jason’s temple before continuing with the cleaning.

“Attaboy.”
“Well, the suit against Harkness has finally gone through.” Harvey said, checking his e-mails. “That took its time.”

“What happened that took so long?” Bart asked.

“Finding a judge I knew would be objective and not fall for the ‘pups will be pups’ excuse.”

“Bart!”

Everyone looked up to see Bart’s parents with a boy pup and a girl pup of about six or seven in tow running towards him.

Barry Allen-Snart was like having a preview of what Bart would look like in a decade or so; the same slim build and brown hair that seemed to grow all over the place with gentle, green eyes.

Leonard Snart seemed at first glance to live up to his hockey persona of Captain Cold, with a steely look emanating from his blue eyes. His concern for his adopted son, however, was obvious.

“I’m okay, mom.” Bart told Barry when he reached him. “He got Roy again, though.”

“And where’s the fucker this time?” Snart growled, in a low tone that somehow made itself heard clearly.

“Daddy said a bad word!” The little girl gasped. Barry gently shushed her.

“Last I saw,” Tatsu said. “Heading to the hospital to deal with the damage Jason caused. But Waller’s not even talking about suspending him.”

“And let me guess,” Snart drawled, turning to face Jason. “You did get suspended.”

“Expelled.” he said, too pissed to even care that this was hockey legend Captain Cold in front of him.

“What’s expelled mean?” the young boy asked Barry.

“It means the principal of the school won’t let him go back to school anymore.” Barry said.

“What did he do?” the girl asked.

“There’s an Alpha who’s been doing bad things to Omegas,” Barry explained. “And Jason has been trying to stop him. This meant they were fighting at school. Instead of punishing both of them, the school has only been punishing Jason. They don’t care that the other Alpha has been doing bad things to Omegas. So now, we’re going to bring the Alpha to court so that a judge can make sure he gets punished.”

“Did the Alpha do bad things to you, Bart?” his younger brother asked, tears in his eyes.

“Yeah, he did. And Jason defended me. Just like he was defending Roy this time.”

“Are you going to help punish the bad Alpha, daddy?” the girl asked, going to tug at Snart’s shirt.

“Damn straight, sweetheart.”

“I love you, daddy.” She hugged where she could reach, which was pretty much at hip-level. Snart bent down to pick her up and held her close.
“Roy!”

Oliver and Dinah Queen had arrived, making a beeline for their son. Roy dissolved into silent tears when his father hugged him, not saying a word.

“Digger used his Voice on him.” Bart informed Oliver.

“Shit.” Oliver held Roy tighter. “Roy, you’re gonna be okay.” he spoke in a low timbre, and everyone recognised trace amounts of Voice. “He’s not your Alpha. We’re going to stop him. Daddy’s here for you.”

Roy sobbed louder, like someone had finally turned off some sort of mute button.

“Dad! He--he--he--” he couldn’t get the words out, only sobbing some more.

“I know. We’re gonna fix this.” Oliver wasn’t using his voice anymore.

“What happened?” Bart’s little brother asked.

“When a strange Alpha uses their Voice to make an Omega or Beta do something they don’t want, it freezes you up.” Barry explained. “While any other Alpha could counter it, the best source is an Alpha the Omega or Beta trusts. In this case, Roy’s dad. Because then they know the good Alpha is going to protect them.”

“Why is this Alpha so mean?” the girl asked. “Daddy’s an Alpha and he’s perfect.” She hugged Snart’s neck for emphasis, a scowl on her little face.

“Some people, no matter their presentation, are mean.” Clark said. Satisfied that he had cleaned the cut properly, he applied a bandage above Jason’s eye. “I used to be married to a bad Alpha, but now Bruce is helping me with my pup; he’s a good Alpha.”

“Is your pup at school?” the boy asked.

“Beetedubs, everyone,” Bart piped up. “This is Don and Dawn; I call them the Tornado Twins because they can pick up a whirlwind running around the house.”

“Now you know how I feel.” Barry told him.

Clark chuckled before turning his chair to face Don.

“Actually, my puppy hasn’t been born yet.” he indicated his round belly.

Don’s eyes grew as wide as saucers.

“The puppy’s in there?” he asked, amazed.

“Yep. Should be born in March.”

Dawn struggled until her father put her down and came to stand next to her twin, just as blown away.

Clark grinned.

“It’s kicking, wanna feel?”
The twins nodded eagerly and Clark indicated where to place their hands so they could feel the movements. Don shrieked when he felt the first kick and instinctively withdrew his hand, but then put it back and giggled along with his sister at the movement.

Barry went to his husband and scented.

“Can we have another one?” he whined.

“You were just saying this morning how much they exhaust you.” Len frowned, smirking.

“But I miss being pregnant…” he said, keeping the whining tone.

Len shut his eyes and hugged Barry, nosing at his temple.

“You tell me how you’re feeling after Christmas.”

Barry grinned and nuzzled further into his Alpha’s embrace.

“Mom’s gonna have you eating right out of his hand again.” Bart shook his head at his parents.

“No, he’ll be eating out of my hand, because I’m his Alpha, and I make sure my mate is fed, especially when he’s carrying my pups.” Len finished by gently pulling Barry’s head back by his hair. “Right, sweetheart?”

Barry’s face was plastered with a shit-eating grin just before he started kissing Len with a sweet passion and not at all being shy about it.

Bart just rolled his eyes and looked away, but the twins proceeded to make sounds of disgust at the display.

“Hey.” Clark chided them. “How do you think you guys came to be? Your mommy and your daddy love each other a lot and they did stuff and then you two started growing in your mommy’s tummy.”

“It’s still gross to watch.” Don complained.

“So you love your Alpha very much and then you made a pup together, too?” Dawn asked.

Clark suddenly felt a wave of cold overcome him and the smile dropped from his face.

“Um, it’s, uh, complicated… actually. And—”

Barry came to his rescue.

“That’s a story for later at home, guys. Come on.”

Barry went to take the twins away, but locked eyes with Clark for a moment, and there was an understanding there which spoke quite plainly that Barry knew with almost an exact certainty what had happened.

He knew because he had been there. He’d been through it, or something like it.

Clark nodded ever so slightly, and then Barry turned away and the moment was past.

Harvey continued to go over the particulars of how he expected the next few week to go.

He expected the Harkness’ would receive the subpoena right before Christmas.
“Merry Christmas, Digger.” Jason muttered.
Chapter 26

Chapter Summary

Some important details are revealed over drinks between Harvey Dent and Jim Gordon near the end of the chapter. Tatsu gets suspended.

Chapter Notes

Starts out lighthearted, but turns pretty heavy at the end. I promise that after a heavy start, the next chapter will be lots of fluff of the Christmas variety.

Warning for violence carried out against a teen by an adult.

Sorry for the many hours late that this is.

*Never knew we were living in a world with a mind that could*

*Be so small*

*Never knew we were living in a world and the world is an*

*Open court*

*Maybe we don't want to live in a world where our innocence is*

*So short*

— *Anthem for the year 2000* by Silverchair

Tatsu had an ally in Mr. Crane to make sure Jason could keep up with homework. He even offered to meet at the library for all tests and exams between now until the end of the year.

This way, whether Dent got Jason back in school or Bruce enrolled him in a different one, Crane could show the evidence that Jason had kept up with everything and he wouldn’t have to graduate any later than he would have without this mess. Other teachers who had beef with Waller approved of the plan wholeheartedly, and made sure to pass things from Jason’s other subjects to Crane, who then gave them to Tatsu to take to Jason.

Clark took it upon himself to work through the subjects with Jason. He’d had pretty good grades when he was at school, though he did have to brush up on math and physics formulas to be of any help.

History proved to be challenging.
“This is so boring!” Jason whined while Clark tried to help him memorise key points of the revolution.

“Would it help if you had visuals to go along with it?” Clark asked.

“Most movies suck at accuracy, though.” Jason pointed out.

“I wasn’t thinking of a movie.” Clark smiled. “In any case, the point I was trying to get to is that if you had interesting visuals to go with it, it would make it less tedious for you to memorise.”

A few clicks later, and Clark had pulled up Assassin’s Creed III on his laptop.

Tim had introduced him to Assassin’s Creed a few weeks ago. He wasn’t usually one for violent games, but the story kept him engaged and he loved exploring the ancient locations.

“Tim got me hooked on these. He says you prefer first-person shooters, but I think you’ll like this if you give it a try.”

Clark often felt drained due to the pregnancy lately, and being in a house full of pups made him feel old, especially when the boys kept making references he didn’t get.

But sitting next to Jason on the couch, explaining the mechanics since the teen wasn’t used to them yet, Clark felt pretty rad.

Bruce had been taking a conference call in another room, and came back just as Jason exclaimed:

“Fuck you, bear! Hidden blades, bitch!”

Bruce actually crossed his arms and frowned.

“I thought you were helping him with his history homework?” he asked Clark.

“I am.” Clark looked up at Bruce with a grin. “Currently, we’re studying how the fur-trade was one of the few ways the natives could actually get anything out of the colonials, and we’ll eventually be taking part in the Boston Tea Party.”

“Really?” Jason asked as he fought off a wolf attack.

“Yep. And we’ll even get to meet George Washington.”

Jason declared “Awesome!” and laughed.

Bruce put his face in his palm and shook his head.

“You better get an A on your next test.”

Clark and Jason laughed.

***

As the first court date wouldn’t be until mid-January, everyone took the time to relax and try getting more into the Christmas spirit. With less than two weeks to go, Clark found himself feeling overwhelmed trying to find a gift for Bruce.

The boys’ presents had come to him surprisingly easy.
Jason was helping him to put together a storybook for Damian telling the adventures of Bat-bear vs the monster under the bed (formed when the bed’s occupant didn’t pick up his dirty socks). Clark wrote the story, Jason was doing illustrations.

One day while exploring downtown with Bruce, Clark had come across a $300 set of a hundred and twenty coloured pencils by a company called Faber-Castell, which, by most accounts, was a very reputable art supply company. The art store in question was having an advent sale, and the pencils were due to go on sale for $200 on the twenty-third. After conferring with Bruce, plans had been made to go to the art store on the twenty-third to pick them up for Jason.

Barbara had privately told Bruce of her plans to propose to Dick on Christmas eve. After Bruce told this to Clark in hopes of getting ideas for a Hope chest (using Martha Wayne’s old wooden chest), Clark cried happily for ten minutes before starting a list of what he thought would be the best things for it.

Tim was a bit more of a challenge, but, Clark eventually found what he thought to be the perfect gift. He’d discovered that there was a video game set in the same universe as Assassin’s Creed called Watch Dogs. There were two of them, in fact. Somehow, this had slipped under Tim’s radar, as Clark was able to confirm by getting Jason and Dick to casually go through Tim’s things without raising suspicion.

No hard copies of the game, and nothing in his PSN or Steam accounts, either.

The two discs were wrapped in young Marvel wrapping paper to avoid suspicion, as it looked more like it would be for Damian.

But what to get Bruce?

The boys weren’t much help, because they, too, had dried up their ideas on what they should get him.

“How do you get the dad who has everything anything?” Jason lamented.

Clark tended to notice things, but didn’t always put together meaning behind what he observed until it was needed; like collecting the pieces of a puzzle, but not always seeing the whole picture they made until it was relevant.

Bruce often looked sad.

When Clark entered a room where Bruce was, until Bruce was aware of his arrival, he had this down look on his face. Sometimes, even when Clark was already in the room, unless they were in close contact, if enough time went by in silence, the look came back. The arrival of one of the boys erased it, too.

“Dick, are there any video recordings of you or the others from when you were younger?” Clark asked him one day.

“Um, not so much me and Jason.” Dick replied. “When Tim joined us, though, he had a camcorder, and liked filming stuff going on. He’s more sneaky about it, now. Like, he tends to get moments without asking us to do anything, just aims his phone and you don’t even know he’s filmed you. I think losing his dad, and later his mom, made him want to do it. Capture every moment he could, because he couldn’t be sure when he might lose people.”

Clark smiled sadly.
“It must be rough, losing your parents.”

Dick knew he was including him in this sentence.

“Yeah, it is. But Bruce is probably the best I could have asked for as far as adoptive fathers go.”

Clark reached out to place his hand on Dick’s shoulder and squeezed it affectionately. Dick placed his opposite hand on Clark’s and smiled.

***

Tim was overjoyed to go over the footage with Clark. They decided to make the present from the both of them, since Tim had been stuck, too.

Every evening after dinner for the next week, Clark went to Tim’s room for at least an hour so that they could work on edits. Clark had once made a few music videos using footage from movies when he was a teen, so although the technology had updated, he did have some vision when it came to direction. Tim was impressed, and the two often seemed to be along the same wavelength as they worked on the project.

The wrap-up of the video was filming each of the boys sitting in an armchair of the lounge (brought to the ballroom so that Bruce wouldn’t see), each of them saying how much Bruce meant to them.

They also worked with the other boys to gather photos which captured certain moments there were no videos for.

Putting it together was enough to drive both Clark and Tim to occasional tears. They couldn’t wait to present it to Bruce.

***

The night of the twenty-second, Clark asked Damian if he wouldn’t mind sleeping in his own room. Damian agreed without fuss, as he had been feeling less of a need to be Clark’s shadow since the Omega had been clearly happier lately.

The following day, Friday, Martha and William would be coming over, and they were all going to be attending the Wayne Enterprises Christmas party.

Before the chaos, he wanted to be able to relax, and he hoped Bruce would be willing to help.

He filled the tub with the same bubble bath they’d used when Bruce had washed his hair, heart pounding the whole time.

He had no plan as to how far it would go.

He knew he wasn’t ready for being mounted (not that he knew how that would work with his protruding belly, anyway), but he knew he wanted to get closer.

He knew Bruce wouldn’t do anything without his consent.

But he was still terrified.

You can do this. You can do this. He told himself as he forced himself to take deep, slow breaths.

He had his pajamas and bath sheet ready on the windowsill, and had already placed the chair next to the tub.
Clark turned off the water when it was done filling, just in time to hear the bedroom door click shut. He quickly shucked off his clothes and carefully got into the tub.

“Clark?” he heard Bruce call.

“In here.” Clark felt his voice nearly crack.

He didn’t turn, so he didn’t see so much as felt Bruce appear in the doorway to the bathroom.

There was a heavy moment of silence, and then Bruce cleared his throat.

“You’d like me to wash your hair again?” Bruce asked, in a tone much calmer than what he felt.

“Yes, please.” Clark said, barely audible.

Bruce hesitated before walking forward. He could smell that Clark was scared, and it made him want to wrap him in blankets and just reassure him until he fell asleep.

But clearly Clark had other ideas, so he’d go with it, for now.

As he massaged his scalp, Clark gradually relaxed, and the fear began to dissipate.

“Nervous about tomorrow?” Bruce asked him in a gentle tone.

“Yeah.” Clark said, though it wasn’t the source of the near-panic he’d had working a few minutes ago, and he knew Bruce must have smelled it.

“Anything else bothering you?” Bruce asked.

Clark swallowed.

“Yeah.”

“Rinse.”

Clark leaned forward and Bruce used the shower head to rinse the shampoo.

“What’s on your mind?” Bruce asked him.

“I don’t want to be afraid of sex anymore.” Clark blurted.

Bruce sat back on the chair and didn’t move for a moment, then adjusted the placement of the chair so he could face Clark.

“What’s going on?”

Clark couldn’t meet his eyes.

“I know I’m nowhere ready for--” he swallowed. “You know, penetration. It’s not like we’ve been doing this whole testing the waters thing long enough for that anyway.” He took a sudden, sharp breath. “I-- just--” He closed his eyes and breathed rapidly through his nose for a while before taking a shaky breath through his mouth. “Like, last time, I had to ask you to leave. I don’t want that.”

“Clark, look at me.” Bruce urged.

Clark looked up and Bruce cupped his cheek.
“It’s great that you want to move forward. But you shouldn’t push yourself too hard.”

“It’s not anything big, I just-- I want to be able to smell you when you’re excited without it freaking me out. Last time, I know you were getting turned on, but you were trying to keep it from being too obvious. I don’t want that to be a problem anymore.”

Bruce nodded.

“What did you have in mind?”

“Just… keep doing what you were doing, and we’ll see what happens?” Clark asked, hopefully.

“Okay. But you’ll let me know if it gets to be too much?”

Clark nodded.

“Can I kiss you?” Bruce asked.

Clark lit up at the question.

“Yes.”

Bruce smiled and leaned in, a sweet, slow kiss, then leaned his forehead to Clark’s.

“You like it when I ask?”

“Yes.” Clark beamed.

“I can definitely do that.”

He adjusted the chair to be behind Clark again.

“Shall I continue?”

“Yes, please.”

Bruce proceeded with the second round of shampoo.

Clark felt more at ease for having talked it out, and was able to more sink more fully into the feel of Bruce’s fingers on his scalp.

By the time Bruce was rinsing the conditioner from his hair, Clark had managed to let himself fall into a similar place he had been the first time.

“What do you want, now?” Bruce asked.

“Scent?” Clark asked. “And, could you scent me, too?”

“Okay.” Bruce replied.

“And-- um…” Clark took a deep breath. “Could you take your shirt off?”

“Okay.”

He didn’t mean to stare, but Bruce had come to stand next to the tub while he took his shirt off, and Clark became mesmerised but the sight. Bruce clearly worked out more than Clark had suspected, as his build was, for lack of a better term, beefy.
Clark shocked himself with a stray thought of licking a well-sculpted pectoral.

Beneath the water, he felt himself get hard.

“Alright, Clark?” Bruce checked.

“Yeah.” he said, his voice coming out in a near squeak.

“You’re sure?”

Clark nodded rapidly.

“It’s just…” he swallowed again. “You look really good.”

“Thank you.” Bruce smiled, then sat back on the chair and adjusted it.

He leaned forward so that he could have his arms around Clark’s shoulders, angling his neck so that he could scent Clark while being scented in turn.

“You look really good, too.” Bruce told him.

Clark hadn’t thought it possible for his cheeks to burn any hotter.

Clark breathed in the musky Alpha scent, picking up on some hints of arousal. The first time, it had just sort of happened, giving him no time to think, and he’d been swept away in it. This time, he’d been thinking altogether too much and he began to worry that he would have another nightmare.

“Do you want me to stop?” Bruce asked.

The question alone was enough to calm him.

“No, it’s okay.” Clark told him, before pressing a kiss to his throat. Bruce responded in kind.

Clark hesitated touching himself. It still felt new with Bruce, like a line he wasn’t ready to cross. But he wasn’t ready to stop scenting just yet.

“Can I kiss you?” Bruce asked again.

“Yes.” Clark breathed.

Bruce changed position so that he could take Clark’s face in both his hands. This kiss was hungrier than any they’d shared before, their tongues eagerly pushing one against the other, but Clark could still feel that give behind it. Bruce was sharing this with him, not taking.

Clark lifted his hands from the water and laced his fingers behind Bruce’s neck as he let out a soft whimper.

Bruce broke the kiss.

“Do you need me to go?”

Clark was torn between the need to get off and the wonderfully heady feeling he was getting from being with Bruce like this.

As though he could read his mind, Bruce stroked his cheek before saying:

“We can always make out some more after, if you want.”
Clark couldn’t help the giggle that slipped from his throat. Hearing Bruce use the term ‘make out,’ like they were teenagers, felt somewhere near exhilarating.

Bruce grinned at Clark’s reaction.

“Another kiss?” he asked.

Clark nodded and grinned.

“Yes, please.”

Bruce was gentler this time, slowly licking his way into Clark’s mouth.

Feeling bold, Clark tried sucking on the inquisitive muscle, lightly pressing with his front teeth. Bruce moaned, and the sound went right to Clark’s cock and his pulsing hole.

When they let go for air, Clark’s breathing was rapid and shallow.

“Um, I just, uh, need a minute.”

Bruce nodded.

“I’ll be in the next room.”

He kissed Clark’s forehead and left.

Clark felt more sure of himself this time, as he took hold of his member and proceeded to stroke. Wanting to go a bit further, he leaned his right side against the tub as he reached behind himself with his left hand (his belly prevented access from the front), and adjusted until he could slide a finger inside himself.

The shivery pleasure that gave was something he hadn’t realised he’d been missing until it was suddenly there.

Like the last time, he kept his eyes closed, better able to focus on keeping Bruce in his mind. He imagined Bruce touching him there, as he easily added a second finger, his passage already slick from when Bruce had been scenting and kissing him.

Beautiful, Adonis-like Bruce, who asked before he did things. Who did things with Clark, not to him.

He came with a shuddering moan, and just stayed there for a while, leaning against the side of the tub, panting.

When at last he was dried and dressed in his pajamas, Clark entered the bedroom hesitantly.

There was a lingering smell of Alpha arousal and come; Bruce must have gotten himself off while waiting. At the moment, however, he was just sitting on the edge of the bed, holding his pajamas in his hand.

“I thought I might take a quick shower myself, so that the smell isn’t too strong.” Bruce explained.

Clark pondered this for a moment. The scent was already around the room, so his first thought was ‘why bother?’ But then he realised that if he got right next to Bruce in that instant, it would be much stronger.
“Yeah, maybe that would be best.” he agreed.

Bruce gave him a smile as he got up to pass him on his way to the bathroom.

Clark noticed, despite Bruce’s efforts to hide it, a solitary sock held in the hand not holding the pajamas, but forced himself not to snicker until Bruce was out of the room.

He climbed into the bed, and sniffed tentatively as he got closer to the pillows. They didn’t seem any heavier with Bruce’s scent than usual, so Clark guessed that Bruce wasn’t laying back when he’d jerked off.

Clark tried to allow himself to relax against the pillows, curling up beneath the blankets, breathing in Bruce’s scent, even as his heart began thudding painfully in his chest. The set-up, being alone in the bed after climax, was too similar to just about every encounter with Lex. The difference, however, was that the sheets were not freshly changed, and still saturated with his, Damian’s, and Bruce’s scents.

Lex, for all his demanding of sex, always showered after and expected Clark to have changed the sheets and cleaned himself before they went to sleep. Having not-recently cleaned sheets where he could still smell Bruce was only just holding him from falling off the edge into panic as he buried his nose in Bruce’s pillow.

“Clark, are you alright?”

Clark hadn’t noticed the time go by, hadn’t heard Bruce return to the bedroom, his hair still damp, now in his pajamas. The Alpha had one hand on his shoulder, his eyes full of concern.

Clark was holding one of the pillows very tightly and was shaking. He hadn’t realised he was doing it.

“I’m sorry.” Clark whimpered.

“What do you need, Clark?”

“Hold me.”

Bruce didn’t hesitate, getting in under the sheets and pulling Clark to him, guiding him to scent.

“Do you want to talk about it?”

“Not now.”

“Okay.”

They lay together in silence for a half-hour, before Clark spoke.

“It was too similar.”

“What was?”

Clark explained how after every time Lex used him, things had to be cleaned right away.

“You taking a shower, me alone in the bed, it was too similar. Having your scent because the sheets weren’t fresh helped, but it was still too close. I didn’t realise it until I started getting in the bed, and then I started getting scared.”
Bruce kissed his hair, tightened his embrace.

“Next time, I’ll go duck into your room and use the shower there before you leave the bath. Or, if you get more comfortable, I can use the shower stall in the master bathroom while you’re still in the tub.”

“I hope…”

“Mm?”

“I hope that… one day, you won’t have to leave.”

Bruce kissed his hair again.

“Whenever you’re comfortable. I can wait.”

Clark tilted his head upward and locked eyes with Bruce, then moved in for a kiss Bruce eagerly returned, hand moving through Clark’s hair, stroking his scalp.

They fell asleep entwined, the rhythm of one another’s heartbeats soothing them into oblivion.

***

“What can I get ya, commish?”

“Jack Daniels double.”

“Make that two.”

“Hey, Harv.” James Gordon smiled as Harvey Dent came to stand next to him at the bar. “Thought you quit?”

“Some days, I just need the burn. Can we get a table?” Dent asked.

“Sure thing.” Gordon said as they took their glasses and made their way to a corner booth.

“So, you said you found your black hole?” Dent asked, referring to the fact that any of Waller’s interactions with the police never led to any punishment towards herself or Harkness.

“She hasn’t been calling the department. She’s been calling Detective Arnold Flass and Lieutenant Max Eckhardt directly. That way, she can show she called the cops without actually getting anything done.”

“And they just go with it?” Dent asked before taking a gulp of his whiskey.

“Harkness’ father pays them. He’s also the major backer to the entire athletics department of the school, which is why Waller lets him get away going after the Omegas. George senior is on mate number two, his ex alleging marital rape on the scale of both Trump’s exes, but of course he’s got the money to get people off his back.”

“What about teachers? Are they getting paid off, too?”

“No. Eckhardt and Flass take their statements, but of course they just file them away and don’t say anything. One teacher did actually come to the department directly after the last incident, but Flass quick to step in. Montoya noticed, and that’s how I knew to start looking into things. We found the files of past teacher statements, and that’s when I called you.”
“And the teacher who came in?”

“Jonathan Crane. He received a notice of suspension this morning.”

Dent sighed heavily.

“So, what now, Harvey?”

“They all go down. Harkness, Waller, your guys, they all go down.”

“Going after Harkness senior?”

“Not directly. If we can get your boys to roll on him, though; admit they were being paid off, then we get him. First things first, we get junior on his assault charges. Prove that he shouldn’t be allowed around Omegas, get him to go to juvie, at the least. Then, I’m going after Waller for endangerment of minors; she knew what was happening and did nothing to stop it.”

“Here, here.” Jim lifted his glass and Harvey tapped it with his, then they both knocked their heads back and drained what was left of the whiskey.

***

“Don’t be afraid to speak up! If you are witness to Digger’s actions against Omegas, please call the number on the card! We shouldn’t have to put up with this in our school!”

Tatsu was standing with Bart and Roy, each of them holding a stack of Harvey Dent’s business cards. Jaime Reyes, an Alpha friend of Garfield’s, and Karen Beecher, who had had a change of heart as to Omega’s suffrage, stood on either side of the three Omegas like guards. It was the last week of school before the Christmas break, and Tatsu was determined to get some more witnesses together.

Victor and Garfield were still suspended.

“You’re loud.” Bart said to Tatsu.

“Just defying expectations. No quiet ‘heeheehees’ from me.” She did an imitation of stereotypical Japanese wife giggles.

A goth girl with hair almost obscuring her face, cargo pants and a see-through top over a spaghetti-strap one (all black) walked up to them.

“Hi! Got information?” Tatsu smiled at her, holding out a card.

The girl looked side to side, then quickly pocketed the card.

“Waller’s twenty seconds away from coming around that corner.” she said in a raspy whisper, pointing to her left, then quickly walked away in the opposite direction.

The others looked to Tatsu.

“Scatter.” she told them.

Roy and Bart went off in the same direction as the goth girl, Karen leaned against the wall where she stood, popped a piece of Hubba-Bubba in her mouth, and took out her phone, looking inconspicuous; Jaime went with Tatsu as far as the Beta girls/Omega bathroom at the end of the hall, then went into the Beta boys/Alpha one.
Tatsu went to the middle stall and locked the door. She hoped it wasn’t fear, but she really did need to pee suddenly.

She heard the door to the room open again, and the sound of clicking heels slowly entering the room.

The sound of her urine hitting the water seemed much too loud in the anticipation she felt as one of the other stall doors was pushed open. The next one was opened, too.

She finished peeing just as the stall door next to hers was pushed open, then hurried to clean herself.

Someone tried to push open her stall, but was stopped by the lock.

“Miss Yamashiro, come out this instant.” Waller’s voice nearly caused her heart to stutter out of shock.

“Just a minute!” she called out, flushing the toilet and standing to pull her jeans up. She took out her phone and hurried to activate the recording option.

“I mean now!”

“I’m not decent!” she tried stalling as she fumbled with the zipper and her headphones; they had a microphone attached to them, and would better pick up on sounds while not in her pocket. She put them around her neck in what she hoped was a casual-looking position.

She managed to finish just as Waller rapped sharply on the door.

Tatsu swallowed and opened the stall door.

Amanda Waller, two-hundred and fifty pounds of chocolate fury, was standing with her arms crossed and peering down at Tatsu.

“My office, Yamashiro. Follow me.”

“Can I wash my hands, first?”

Waller looked like she was about to say no, but sighed impatiently and told her to hurry, instead.

The walk down to Waller’s office felt like the longest Tatsu had ever done. The bell rang and students went off to their afternoon classes, and Tatsu desperately longed to join them instead of having to put up with whatever tirade Waller had waiting for her.

“Sit.” Waller told her once inside the office.

Tatsu hastened to comply, bumping her behind somewhat painfully against the arm of the chair in her hurry.

“I thought you should know that because of your boyfriend’s exploits, Mr. Harkness is having to miss some school, and team practises. Are you proud of that fact?”

“I’m sorry it came to violence.” Tatsu said, honestly. “But I’m proud that Jason was willing to stand up for Roy.”

“Mr. Harper hit Mr. Harkness first, if I recall.”

“After Digger tried to go after Bart.” she corrected, trying to stay defiant.
“And how do you know Digger would have harmed Mr. Allen?”

“Because he’d done it before.” Tatsu said. “Just like he’s done to me, and Roy before, and I’m certain there are others, but they’re too scared to come forward.”

“Just because you can’t stand some Alpha getting a little too friendly--”

“He had used his Voice and his hand was in my underwear!” Tatsu whimpered, tears in her eyes at the memory.

“You think Todd has the right to take the law into his own hands?!”

“Well maybe if you had taken action against Digger when you should have he wouldn’t have to!” she yelled, no longer caring if her voice carried, crying in earnest, now. “If you would have suspended him, called the police for sexual assault, maybe Digger would have learned that doing what he’s been doing is a crime! Instead you’ve taught him that you’re willing to let it slide just because his father gives the school money! So he keeps doing it, because he knows he’ll get away with it! Because of money!”

Waller backhanded her, cutting off her cries with a shocked gasp.

“Don’t talk about things you don’t understand. You have no idea what it takes just to keep this school running. Pack your bag and go home, Yamashiro. You’re suspended until the end of January.”

Tatsu was frozen in place for several seconds, her hand to her cheek, the physical sting of the slap nothing to the sting that it had actually happened, at the hands of someone who was supposed to be helping her. Helping Bart, helping Roy.

She finally turned and left without sparing Waller a second glance.
Chapter 27

Chapter Summary

Follow-up to Tatsu's situation, followed by fluff and a much-needed talk between Clark and William, because grandpa's still in "[Grand]Father knows best" mode, though he gets brownie points for not starting a fight with Bruce this time.

Chapter Notes

I am SO sorry for this chapter being late! I fully intended for a completely fluff-filled chapter that I thought would be easy to write, but things complicated themselves. Go figure.

I am by no means an expert in Japanese, but I do watch a lot of anime, and I have been trying to teach myself some basics. In this chapter, Tatsu and her family converse in Japanese as indicated by «». I occasionally use some actual Japanese terms, as translated below.

«Japanese words» :
Okaasan - Mother
Otosan - Father
Arigatou goazaimasu - Thank you
Koishii - term of affection like dear or darling
Chikan - pervert
Kusottare - Shit drip
Bakka - Idiot
Subarashi - Awesome
Yoku ganbattane - Good job

Note: The Japanese aren't generally as affectionate as we are (which isn't to say they're cold, it's just not socially as common), so pet names aren't as widely used as we do in the west, which is why I just have the one featured here. Also, while we generally know hentai to mean anime porn, it's actually a common Japanese term for pervert. But, since we associate it with anime porn, I looked up other words and chose one.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Say it loud, say it clear
You can listen as well as you hear
It's too late when we die
To admit we don't see eye to eye
Once she had her things, Tatsu went to June Moone, one of the history teachers who had taken over some of Mr. Crane’s Social Studies classes. She went to join Tatsu in the hallway.

“Tatsu, are you leaving?”

“I’ve been suspended.” Tatsu’s face screwed up as she finished speaking and she broke down crying again.

Ms. Moone closed her eyes, sighing through her nose.

“Leave me your address. I’ll make sure you and Jason still get your assignments.”

“Thank you.” Tatsu sobbed quietly.

Ms. Moone frowned, then reached out and took Tatsu by the chin, turning her head to look at the right side of her face.

An ugly, purple bruise was forming along her upper jaw bone.

Ms. Moone took Tatsu in her arms and pet her hair.

“Do you still have the DA’s cards?”

“Mm-hm.” Tatsu whimpered.

“Give me one. I’ll offer myself up as a witness. You did nothing wrong. You’ve been very brave.”

Tatsu let out a fresh sob, crying into her teacher’s shoulder, as she reached into her pocket for one of Harvey Dent’s business cards.

Ms. Moone took it and pocketed it.

“Have you called your parents?”

“Mm-hm.”

“Would you like me to wait with you until they get here?”

“Your class--”

“It’s okay. I have a good group this period. Just give me a minute.”

Ms. Moone went back into the room and spoke to the class for a couple of minutes, then returned to Tatsu with a plastic shopping bag and a box of tissues.

“Come on.” she smiled kindly.

They sat on the sidewalk where the buses lined up, and Tatsu went through quite a lot of tissue as they waited for her parents to show up.

Maseo Yamashiro arrived in the family’s blue Toyota Sienna in less than ten minutes, and immediately stepped out to hug his daughter. Tatsu tried to keep her face angled so that her mother
wouldn’t see her bruise.

«Tatsu-kun.» He addressed her, the suffix a sign of affection from parent to child.

«Okaasan!» she cried, tears starting anew.

“I thought you should know, Mr. Yamashiro,” Ms. Moone spoke up. “That Tatsu has been very brave, and has been standing for what is right, even if Amanda Waller disagrees.”

“Thank you, miss?”

“June Moone. I’ll be making sure Tatsu gets her assignments so she doesn’t fall behind.”

“Arigatou gozaimasu. Thank you.” Maseo inclined his head to bow as best he could while still holding his crying daughter. June bowed in return out of respect.

***

«What else happened?» Maseo asked Tatsu once they were on the road heading towards their building which housed, not only their family, but the dojo and the tea shop, as well.

«Nothing, Okaasan.» Tatsu said quietly.

“This is not a time for falsehoods. You have been fully willing to make sure that chikan gets punished for his crimes up until now. If something has happened, you must let it be known. This is the only way I can help you, koishii.»

Tatsu blew her nose and put the used tissue in the plastic bag when she finished with it.

«Waller-san struck me.»

Maseo gripped the steering wheel until his knuckles went white.

«Kusottare bakka!» He swore in a harsh whisper.

Tatsu felt an improvement to her mood from her mother’s insult towards Waller. He didn’t often allow himself to swear, so to hear him do it on her behalf was special.

«I recorded the audio.» She held up her headphones, giving her mother a watery smile.

«Subarashi! Yoku ganbattane!» He praised.

«We are calling Dent-san. Hopefully he can meet us at home.»

Maseo activated the car’s phone capability and Tatsu read out the cell-phone number from one the business cards.

“Dent.” He answered.

“Mr. Dent, this is Maseo Yamashiro. Tatsu was suspended from school today.”

There was a heavy sigh.

“Thank you for keeping me apprised of the situation.”

“She was also struck by Waller.”
The silence which followed was nearly tangible.

“Can I meet you at your home and may I bring some police?”

“Yes, please. We are nearly there ourselves. Tatsu says she also has audio recording.”

“I’ll be there in half an hour.”

The click sounded in the car as the call ended.

«The police, Okaasan?» Tatsu said, clearly not looking forward to it.

«Dent-san will be bringing good police. This needs to be reported. I know it’s difficult, koishii.» Her mother reached over and took her hand. «But you have been very brave thus far. I know you have it in you to continue being brave.»

«I will try, Okaasan.»

Her mother squeezed her hand.

Tatsu now understood with better clarity why some victims didn’t report what had happened to them. Even though she knew and was expecting to have to testify against Digger when the court case came up, it still seemed on some level to be far away, abstract.

Speaking with the police the same day made it too sharp, too real.

But she was determined to be brave.

***

“It’s going to be difficult getting an arrest warrant this close to Christmas.” Commissioner Gordon said after they had listened to the recording on Tatsu’s phone. He’d also brought Lieutenant Renee Montoya with him, who had taken a picture of Tatsu’s bruised cheek.

“Most judges are away for the holidays.”

“Van Dorn will listen.” Harvey promised. “She’s also the one who’ll be heading the trial against Harkness.”

“However you can help us, we are grateful.” Tadashi Yamashiro affirmed from where he stood in the living room. He was fighting his instinct to go track down Waller himself and teach her a lesson for laying a hand on his pup, knowing that would just make the situation worse. His husband and mother-in-law were bracketing Tatsu on the sofa, and he longed to hold her, as well, but he knew he was too tense to be of any help to her at the moment.

“I’ll send her an e-mail right now.” Harvey said. He’d taken out his laptop to copy the audio file, so it was short work to connect to the Yamashiros’ Wi-Fi and work up the e-mail. “I’m also sending you a copy, Jim.”

“Thanks, Harvey.”

They went over Tatsu’s testimony once more, and then left.

« Otosan? » Tatsu called her father softly.

«Hai, Tatsu-chan?» He turned to look at her, his husband was stroking her cheek.
«Did I go too far? Should I have just waited for the court case to speak?»

Maseo clasped her hand as Tadashi crossed the room to the sofa and scooped her up, holding her to him as he had when she was small, angling his neck to get her to scent as he sat down on the sofa with her on his lap.

«You spoke the truth, and you spoke for what was right. Sometimes, this makes others angry, which can make us doubt ourselves. But you did nothing wrong, koishii. I’m proud at how brave you’ve been.»

Tatsu whimpered and clutched closer to her father, crying softly again. Maseo scooted closer and pressed his nose to Tatsu’s hair, one hand on her shoulder.

«I’ll go make some tea.» Maseo’s mother said as he stood from the sofa. He leaned in to kiss Tatsu’s hair before leaving.

***

Clark grinned as he held Damian’s hand, bringing up the rear of the party on their way to find a Christmas tree. Bruce walked just ahead of them, wanting to be near in case Clark needed help (the snow made walking difficult), letting Dick, Jason, and Tim lead the way, Dick and Jason holding a sort of stretcher made from a pallet that they would use to drag the tree back to the manor.

“You’re sure you’re alright?” Bruce stopped and turned to Clark.

“I’m fine.” Clark told him. He was out of breath, but happy.

“That one!”

Clark and Bruce turned to see Tim running ahead (as best he could) towards the edge of the tree line on the left. Dick and Jason hastened to follow, Bruce waited for Clark and Damian.

It was a fine-looking tree, its branches dense enough to almost completely hide the trunk all the way around, and about a foot taller than Bruce.

“What do you think, Clark?” Bruce asked, smiling at him.

Clark smiled back, trying to hide his blush by burrowing his nose into his scarf.

“I think it’s perfect.”

“Boys?”

Everyone agreed that this was the tree.

“Jason, I think you’re big enough to cut it, now.” Bruce said as he took out the axe. “If Dick’s alright with that, of course.”

Dick shrugged.

“Fine by me.”

Jason grinned as he took the axe from Bruce. Bruce indicated the proper technique (figure out which way the tree was leaning, cut a notch out about halfway through from that end, then get to the other side and push), then stood back with the others and watched Jason as he set to it.
It took some doing to get the notch just right, but then Jason was on the opposite side and pushing down on the tree. There was some creaking, and then a loud crack and Jason stepped back and gleefully yelled “Timber!”

Bruce and the boys all worked together to get the tree onto their wooden stretcher, then Clark and Damian led the way as the others all pulled on the rope to drag the tree through the snow.

Alfred had blankets and cocoa ready for their return. They set the tree up in the lounge, leaving the boxes of decorations next to it. That would be for the evening after the Wayne Enterprises Christmas party, when Martha and William arrived.

Everyone gathered in the theatre room to watch Snow Dogs with their blankets and cocoa.

Clark was feeling sleepy, which seemed to happen a lot the further he got into his pregnancy. He would sometimes go through bouts of sudden energy, but then the crash got him and he’d have to lie down for a few hours.

“You alright?” Bruce asked him during the scene where Teddy pulled Demon’s tooth.

“Mm-hm.” Clark affirmed, pressing further into Bruce’s side. “Just tired.”

Bruce rubbed Clark’s arm and kissed his hair.

Clark tensed as his pup started moving, quite aggressively, causing his uterus to clench uncomfortably.

“Aww, come on, pup, settle down.” Clark whined quietly.

“Is it hurting?” Damian asked.

“Yeah. Pup doesn’t know better, but it hurts. Damn.” Clark reached into his hoodie pocket (he’d taken to wearing hoodies with big front pockets for convenience) and withdrew the chewable antacids he kept there. “Kicking my stomach again.” He took two matching colour tablets and popped them in his mouth to combat the heartburn which had started, chasing it with water from the sports bottle which he had with him at all times.

Bruce maneuvered down so that he could lay his head on Clark’s puppy-pocket.

“Shh…” He whispered soothingly. “Settle down, pup. Mommy’s not feeling good.”

He rubbed Clark’s belly and softly hummed a tuneless song. After a few minutes, the pup seemed to settle.

Clark felt his throat swell and was yelling at himself in his head not to cry as he felt himself overwhelmed with love for Bruce in that moment.

Like a lightswitch, however, he suddenly felt anger.

He should have been able to feel this years ago.

Lex should have been doing this with him.

Instead he’d stolen that from him, prevented him from getting pregnant, and turned his life into a living hell.

“Clark?” Bruce’s voice cut through the haze, clearly worried. He looked down and saw Damian
looking scared.

“I have to go.”

Clark got up and, as quickly as he was able, made his way to the elevator and went up to the second floor.

He went to his room, because he spent very little time in it lately, and he didn’t want to scent of whatever negative feelings he wanted to let out to be anywhere near where he slept with Bruce.

Clark laid on his side on the bed and let out a furious outburst of tears, biting into a fistful of sheet to silence the screams, pounding his fist on the mattress.

He wasn’t sure how long he lay there bawling, but suddenly Bruce was there, a hand on his shoulder. Clark let go of the sheet he was biting and nodded quickly at the question in the Alpha’s eyes.

Bruce laid next to him and held him close as he continued to cry. When he regained the ability to talk, he explained to Bruce what he’d been feeling and why; anger that he should have been able to have this years ago without the pain he’d gone through to get there, and that it had been stolen by someone who told him he loved him, who he’d been in love with.

“I can only give you the here and now.” Bruce told him. “I can’t fix what he did, but I’ll do everything I can to build happier memories for you.”

“That’s all I need.” Clark whimpered, his throat still tight.

***

Bruce worried if Clark was ready for the Christmas party given his mood swing from earlier, but Clark very rationally argued that whether he’d had a break-down that day or not would not affect the probability of having one later, as pregnancy hormones were a total bitch.

“Get me a chair near the sugar table and you’ll either have a satisfied mama, or I’ll start crying about how fat I’m getting. It’s very fifty-fifty.” Clark reasoned. Bruce couldn’t argue with that logic.

They arrived at Wayne Enterprises around three, and headed straight up to the main boardroom. It was just down the hall from Bruce’s office, and he’d had the sofa in there replace with a pull-out bed so that if Clark did need a place to relax, he’d comfortable.

There were a lot of people, much more than at the Thanksgiving party. Tables laden with food lined one wall and it was very informal in terms of serving and then either standing or sitting with one’s food.

Whitney and Chloe were both there, and Whitney and Bruce both introduced Clark to Steven Trevor and his mate, Diana Prince. Diana, tall, tan, with dark hair and a sturdy structure which quite clearly spelled ‘Alpha,’ was holding a puppy of several months. Steven, meanwhile, had dark blonde hair and, though shorter than Diana, had an impressive musculature for an Omega; he also bore the telltale bump of the early stages of pregnancy. They tried their best to indicate their four other pups, who were running around playing what seemed to be tag with several other pups, including the Tornado Twins and Damian.

Per Clark’s request, Floyd Lawton had been invited, and had brought his daughter Zoe along. Ten minutes after introducing them to Chloe, she and Floyd got into a very deep conversation and Clark nearly squeed as his mind imagined the two of them getting together.
Clark felt a momentary flash of panic as he made his way to the door of the boardroom to go pee for the third time since their arrival, as he caught scent of angry Alpha. Turning to look, he saw Jason speaking with Tatsu, who was trying to hide a bruise on her cheek. Frowning, Clark carefully maneuvered the press of people towards the teens.

“It’s okay, Jason--”

“It’s not okay, Tatsu! That bitch--!”

“Please keep your voice down.” Tatsu begged him. “I’ve already spoken with Mr. Dent and Commissioner Gordon. Waller’s already been arrested. She probably won’t stay locked up long, depending if Digger’s father helps her out or not, but the message is clear: a fight is coming.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Jason’s anger was quickly being replaced with worry.

“Because I knew you’d be mad and I thought it’d be easier if it was done in person.”

Tatsu ran her left hand over her right cheek from behind, sweeping her hair back and angling her neck to expose it to Jason; a sign of submission, from Omega to Alpha. An intimate one, at that.

“Let’s not fight, please?” she begged quietly.

Jason threw his arms around her and scented. She eagerly tightened the embrace.

“I missed you at school.” She whimpered.

“I missed you, too.” Jason replied, kissing her neck.

Clark took that as his cue to leave them at it, not to mention his bladder was becoming more insistent.

As Clark sat to do his business, he reflected on what he had seen transpire between Jason and Tatsu. Jason was still a hot-headed pup, clearly, but his anger was focused exactly where it should be: at the people who hurt the Omega he cared for.

It was heartwarming, really. Jason was a good pup, steadily becoming a full-grown Alpha, who had good priorities. And he clearly cared for Tatsu a great deal.

Clark cursed his hormones as he teared up, needing to spend a few minutes longer in the washroom as he waited for the waterworks to finish.

Bruce was waiting in the hall just outside the boardroom when Clark returned.

“Hey.” Bruce said, looking uncomfortable. “Um, I didn’t want to seem like a creep, so I didn’t go to the bathroom to check on you, but I was worried, even though I know there’s a million reasons you could have been taking your time, so that’s why I’m out here, instead, but-- dammit.” Bruce stopped his rant, blushing.

Clark smiled and stepped closer so he could lean against his chest and shut his eyes.

“Thank you for worrying.”

Bruce let his cheek rest on Clark’s head and put his arms around him.

“Have you had The Talk with Jason?” Clark asked.

Bruce frowned.
“Yeah?”

“Just checking. I saw him and Tatsu before going to the washroom and she bared her neck for him.”

“Ah.” Bruce said, understanding. “Yeah, he’s up-to-date on safe sex practises.”

Clark nuzzled further into Bruce’s chest.

“You’re a good dad.”

Bruce added some squeeze to his hug.

“I try.”

William, on his way to find the washroom, chose that moment to exit the boardroom, and cleared his throat loudly upon discovery of the couple. Bruce didn’t do anything, wanting to follow Clark’s lead.

Clark didn’t move from the embrace; he looked his grandfather right in the eye, smiled, and said “Hi, grandpa.”

William’s face turned an interesting shade of red and purple, but he simply cleared his throat again and replied “Hi, Clark. Wayne.” and continued on his way.

As soon as he was out of sight, Bruce let out a snort he’d been holding back.

“You enjoy being a little shit sometimes, don’t you?” he asked Clark.

“Grandpa makes it so easy.” Clark replied. “Dad did, too. Sometimes mom and I teamed up against him.”

Bruce chuckled as he pet Clark’s hair.

“The boys do it to me, sometimes. Now that they’ve got you, a seasoned vet in being a little shit, I’m in trouble.”

Clark felt Bruce tense as he finished his sentence, realising he probably overstepped his boundaries in saying anything which could be interpreted as his assuming Clark was already mother to his pups. But Clark felt wonderfully warm inside from the suggestion, and grinned as he pulled back, finally, needing to straighten his spine.

“I shall teach all the ways of the shit to the young padawans.” he teased. “You’ll never know what hit you.”

Bruce groaned even as he grinned back, shaking his head.

“Yep, I’m in trouble. Me and Alfred both.”

“Oh, I would never do anything to upset Alfred.” Clark grinned wider. “I need him on my side so I can learn embarrassing puppy stories about you.”

“Oh, no…” Bruce play-whined.

“Oh, yes…” Clark mocked in a similar tone.

The two laughed and Bruce let his head go forward to lean his forehead against Clark’s.
The words flitted through Bruce’s head, but stuck in his throat. He didn’t want to scare Clark or pressure him, so he settled for leaning in a bit closer and rubbing his nose against the Omega’s.

“Wayne, may I please speak with my grandson?”

William had returned, but looked like his trip to the bathroom had not been successful; he was still red in the face and his features were tense. Clark tried not to shrink from the scent of angry Alpha, but it was overwhelming the hall.

“Clark?” Bruce checked in with him, sensing how Clark was only just holding it together.

Clark steeled himself and gently pulled away from Bruce.

This is grandpa. He’s not going to hurt me. I’m not the one he’s angry at.

Lex shouldn’t have hurt you, either, but that didn’t stop him, did it?

Not the same thing.

Think of your pup.

Clark’s hands went to his belly.

He won’t do that.

“I’ll be in in a minute, Bruce.” Clark said stubbornly, sounding a lot braver than he felt.

Bruce placed a hand on his shoulder, squeezing gently for assurance before going back to the boardroom.

“You shouldn’t be letting him get so close to you.” William said the moment Bruce was out of sight.

“Kind of defeats the purpose, doesn’t it?” Clark said, feeling as though it was taking every ounce of strength he had to keep his voice from shaking. He was still shielding his belly.

“A support Alpha is supposed to provide scent and touch-comfort to help their charge heal from their trauma.” He declared.

“What I just saw was not either of those things.” William countered.

“That’s because we’ve moved forward.” Clark could feel his heart hammering as he struggled to sound as rational as he could. “He is still my support, but we’ve discussed attraction and decided to act on it insofar as does not breach my comfort zone. It’s not unheard of; it’s actually very common. My therapist is mated to the Alpha who supported her, for instance.”

“Just because it’s common doesn’t mean you have to jump in.” William scowled.

“You’re right.” Clark agreed. “That’s a terrible reason. The fact that Bruce has been doing everything he can to help me and makes me feel like a human being again and actually talks to me to check in to see how I’m doing and always gives me a choice in every situation, that’s why I want him.” Clark blurted in one breath, panting slightly when he finished.

William blinked; once, twice, his jaw slowly dropping open.
“You’re in love with him.”

Clark felt himself balancing on the edge of panic.

“We’re still feeling things out. We haven’t made any commitments.”

“Clark--”

“Grandpa, please, I can’t do this right now.” Clark squeezed his eyes shut and took a deep breath before opening his eyes again and continuing. “It takes all my energy just to be in that room and not flinch every time a strange Alpha comes within scenting distance or someone in white passes in my peripherals.”

William’s entire demeanor changed. It was like his anger disappeared, leaving him deflated.

“I… I didn’t think… I’m sorry.”

Clark felt guilt at his grandfather’s feeling of remorse, while simultaneously reasoning with himself that it was necessary because his grandfather needed to learn to think before he started trying to tell Clark how to live his life.

“Just… I know you didn’t mean anything by it, grandpa, but, please, and I said this at Thanksgiving: Lex ran my life. I was terrified to go for LASIK. He wore me down until I went anyway. It didn’t start with telling me I had to go and that I had no choice. It started with things like telling me he thought certain things would be better for me, and that I should trust him because he was my Alpha and he just wanted what was best for me. It started with coaxing until I just accepted everything he said because I didn’t know how to say no anymore. If you have concerns, lay them out. I’d rather know that people in my life are keeping an eye out for me. But don’t say ‘don’t do this, don’t do that.’ Leave me the room to make my own decisions.”

William nodded and sighed.

He looked so much the definition of sorry in that moment, that Clark leaned in and hugged him.

“I’m so sorry, Clark.”

“I get it, if that helps. I know you’re worried. But I need you to give me room for making my own choices.”

They held each other for another minute or two, until Clark flinched as his pup started to shift, his uterus clenching painfully.

“Clark? Are you alright?” William pulled back, holding his grandson by the shoulders.

“Mhm.” he nodded, breathing sharply through his nose. “I just need to sit down for a bit. Bruce has a couch in his office.” Clark indicated the correct door, and his grandfather helped him to it.

“Are you sure you’re alright?” William asked as he helped Clark to sit on the sofa.

“Yeah. This happens now and again when my pup moves. Sometimes it’s nothing, sometimes I get clenching. The midwife says it’s like practice contractions? I should only worry if it happens several times over the space of a few hours. This is my second one today, and the first one was a h so it’s nothing to get worked up about.”

Clark proceeded to slowly pivot from the hips, trying to find the angle which would ease the tension.
He let out a heavy sigh of relief as a diagonal angle not only seemed to relieve the pressure, but also made a satisfying pop in his spine.

“That was loud.” William stared. “Are you alright?”

“Oh, yeah.” Clark said lazily. “That was a good kind of crack. That’s the kind of crack that’s basically ‘stiffness-begone!'”

Bruce appeared in the doorway as Clark finished explaining to his grandfather.

“Are you alright, Clark?”

“Yeah, my pup just decided it wanted to train so I had to sit down.” Clark said, smiling almost instantly at Bruce’s arrival.

William clenched and unclenched his fist, then stood before he could change his mind.

“I’ll get back to Martha.” he said, making a hasty exit.

Bruce frowned at his retreat, then turned to Clark.

“We talked.” Clark said. “I think he’s going to try trusting me more.”

Bruce smiled softly, then went to sit next to Clark on the sofa. Clark immediately leaned against him, scenting. Bruce embraced him.

“Hmm.” Clark hummed amusedly, grinning against Bruce’s neck.

“What?” Bruce asked, curious.

“I think my pup likes having you around. It’s still moving, but it’s more rolling over than using my innards as punching bags.”

Bruce kissed Clark’s hair and used one hand to rub his puppy-pocket.

Clark looked up at him and batted his eyelashes pointedly, causing Bruce to snort before kissing him.

“You’re adorable.” he murmured against his lips a moment later.

“I thought I was a little shit?” Clark teased.

“You’re an adorable little shit.” Bruce grinned before kissing him again.

Chapter End Notes

Gal Gadot acknowledged her being totally fine with Wonder Woman being bisexual by stating that she would love for Halle Berry to be a love interest in Wonder Woman 2.
Chapter 28

Chapter Summary

One more hurdle at the Christmas party, and then it's on to the manor for tree-trimming and games.

Chapter Notes

I am SO sorry for the delay. I hope it was worth the wait, especially as I've uploaded the first chapter of another part in the series, as well.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

When did I first know?

Was it when you kissed me beneath the mistletoe?

Or when you held me, the fourth, fifth, and sixth times I cried?

Maybe I’ll never know for sure when.

All I know is, from that moment, I knew I could never leave.

— When did I first love you? by Clark Kent

Clark and Bruce returned to the boardroom after a time, once Clark felt like he had regained the energy necessary for being in a room full of people, the majority of them strangers.

Chloe and Floyd were sitting in a corner, now, still conversing. Clark smiled as he watched them laugh.

“Clark, honey?” Martha came up to him, taking his hand. “Are you alright?”

“Just tired, but I’m alright.” He promised with a smile, squeezing her hand back.

“Bruce!”

Clark and Martha looked to see an older Alpha walking up to Bruce, shaking his hand jovially. He had mostly grey hair, but still with some flecks of golden blonde.

“Will, Merry Christmas.” Bruce responded.

“Likewise. So, is this Mr. Luthor’s widow?” He turned his attention to Clark. For some reason he couldn’t identify, Clark was instantly uncomfortable.
“This is Clark Kent.” Bruce emphasised. “Clark, Mrs. Kent, this is William Earle. He arranges for the fundraising bashes and stock purchases from the more wealthy donors and partners.”

“I’m basically the one who shakes the golden cup in front of the upper crust.” Will said, chuckling at his own joke. Clark smiled, feeling a bit more at ease, but still… not quite right…

He’s like Lex’s father. Clark concluded.

There was something in the air that reminded him very much of Lionel Luthor. The jovial attitude which wasn’t quite sincere, as though the person he was talking to should feel honoured at being addressed by him. And the fact that he’d addressed him as Lex’s widow, instead of by his name, as though that was all he was…

“Well, he’s a nice boy, Lex, but having him as your mate is really out of the question.” Lionel had said, still with that false grin on his face, while Clark was sitting on Lionel’s left at the dining-room table, just across from Lex.

“And why is that?” Lex had asked.

“Well, he’s not really one of us. No offense, Clark.” he finally acknowledged Clark in the conversation. “But, really, you wouldn’t fit in with society very well at all.”

“It was good that Lex singled you out.” Earle continued. “An Omega from the country. After all, he could have had his pick of society’s pedigreed pups. Such a pity he couldn’t live to see his heir. I hadn’t seen any mention of the pregnancy in the papers?”

“I didn’t know until a few weeks after the accident.” Clark said, trying to keep his voice level. “After everything, I thought I’d wait until after the birth before making it public.”

“Well, if all goes well, you’ll have a strong Alpha pup who’ll take after its father.” Earle grinned. “Hopefully, when Powers finds out, he’ll be more amiable to giving you your inheritance. After all, must take care of the future of the Luthor line.”

Clark wanted to throw up.

“If you’ll excuse me, Mr. Earle.”

He walked around the older Alpha and left the boardroom, heading straight to the washroom.

He didn’t throw up, but he sat on a closed toilet lid, crying.

“Clark?”

I don’t wanna talk, mom. He thought inwardly, but couldn’t bring himself to speak.

“He’s not in my office.” Bruce’s voice.

Please just go. Let me be miserable for a while, and then I’ll be fine.

But the thought didn’t match what he actually wanted. He wanted to curl into bed with Bruce and just not move. But he felt weak for wanting it.

Can’t always depend on Bruce. Have to learn to get by on my own.

Footsteps, men’s shoes and women’s heels, made their way down the row of stalls. Tears continued to spill down his cheeks, but he didn’t make a sound.
They were checking each of the doors, giving them a light push.

*Have to be strong. Have to show I can get over this.*

*Bruce knows you can. He wants to help anyway.*

*I don’t want him to have to carry me all the time.*

*Would you carry him if he needed it?*

“Yes.” Clark whispered.

If Bruce needed it, he would carry him.

They reached his stall at the end, which didn’t budge since he had locked it.

“Clark?” Martha called out.

Clark started sobbing harder, unable to stop the sounds.

“Clark, we want to help you.” Bruce said. “But if you’d rather we leave you alone, we’ll go.”

Clark took some toilet paper and blew his nose until he felt he’d cleared out everything he could, cleaned his face with some more paper, then threw it in the toilet before unlocking the door and nearly falling into Bruce’s arms.

“It’s okay, Clark.” Bruce whispered, running his fingers through his hair.

*I love you.* Clark thought, but kept the words locked in his throat along with the painful lump caused by his crying.

“Would you like to lie down? We can pull out the couch and close the door. I also have one of your Christmas presents here I don’t mind giving you early that could help you rest.”

Clark smiled a little, still crying, and nodded.

Martha and Bruce walked him back down the hall and into Bruce’s office. Clark stepped forward, wanting to help set up the bed, but Bruce and Martha quickly stopped him. Bruce pulled out the bed from the sofa as promised; it already had sheets on, but Bruce also had a cozy throw blanket which he gave to Clark. Two pillows were inside the sofa cavity, and Martha placed those as well.

By the time they were done, Clark was all cried out, though still sniffling. He kicked off his black shoes next to the bed and laid down, curling on his side. Bruce laid the blanket on him, then knelt beside him and kissed his cheek, running his fingers through his hair, not caring that Martha was in the room.

“Here. Sorry it’s not wrapped, but I wanted to wait in case you needed it here.”

From the inside of his suit jacket, Bruce withdrew an iPod Nano, and handed it to Clark. Wound around it was a pair of headphones with the soft rubber buds that fit inside one’s ears like ear plugs.

“I asked Tim to pre-load it with a special selection I think you’ll appreciate.”

“Thank you.” Clark said softly.

He unwound the headphones and turned it on. Bruce didn’t wait for the loading to finish, just kissed...
his cheek again and stood.

Martha came up to him and kissed his cheek, too.

“You focus on feeling better, okay? Don’t worry about anything else.”

“Okay, mom.” Clark told her, holding her hand for a moment.

Bruce dimmed the lights and shut the door behind himself after having let Martha go ahead.

The iPod was rather user-friendly, and Clark was able to navigate to the playlists in no time.

He smiled as he browsed through the list and saw that every song was a David Bowie title.

Clark plugged in the headphones and started with "Space Oddity." The melody was soothing, and he felt lifted, almost drifting by the time the fourth song started. He moved his lips with the lyrics, much improved from his earlier mood. Bowie’s music always had this effect of making him feel like he was floating.

*But the film is a saddening bore*

*’Cause I wrote it ten times or more*

*It's about to be writ again*

*As I ask you to focus on…*

When Bruce came to check on him ten minutes later, Clark was dozing peacefully.

***

“Mrs. Kent, I need you to tell me, from a legal standpoint, what is it that I can and cannot say?”

Bruce was standing in the corner with Martha around the bend from the boardroom.

“That depends on what we’re talking about.” She said, arms crossed.

“I would like very much to tell William Earle off for how he disrespected Clark, but I need to know if there are conversations that might hinder yours and your father’s efforts at obtaining Clark’s inheritance.”

Martha sighed heavily.

“I can tell what you and Clark have come to mean to each other, but, publicly, it might be better if you weren’t too obvious with your affections. There’s a fine line between being there for your charge, and what society will interpret as Clark throwing himself at you because of your status. I hate it, but there it is.”

Bruce sighed as she spoke, combing his fingers through his hair in a tired gesture.

“And that conversation?” Martha continued. “Don’t have it. Maybe tell Earle something like, ‘Clark gets very emotional over mentions of Lex, please avoid doing that in the future.’ It sucks, I hate it, but that’s the world we’re in, as I’m sure you know.”

Bruce nodded, frustrated.
“Your Alpha instinct’s kicking in, isn’t it?” Martha asked.

Bruce nodded again. He didn’t dare say to what extent.

He wanted to make it clear to everyone on the board that Clark was his, and if any Alpha there even looked at him the wrong way, he’d shove their faces to the table until they got the message.

He wanted to go to Derek Powers and force him to kneel, showing his dominance over the other Alpha, making him regret having denied Clark what was legally his, what was really only a small penance for the hell he had been through.

Most of all, he wanted to hold Clark, to kiss him breathless, to whisper things to him until Clark would have no doubt whatsoever that Bruce would care for him and protect him and make him feel loved.

He couldn’t wait for when Clark’s pup would be born, because he half saw it as his, already. Another pup, which he hoped his boys would love, too. He knew Damian already did.

“I’d better get back in there.” Bruce said. “Thank you, for the advice.”

“I’ll bill you.” Martha winked.

***

Clark felt well-rested when Bruce came to wake him after the party was over. Cheerful, even, knowing he’d be spending the rest of the evening at the manor with just Bruce, the boys, Alfred, his mother, and his grandfather.

“Bruce?” Clark asked when they were on the highway more than halfway to the manor.

“Yeah?”

“Can we watch It’s A Wonderful Life?”

“You know, I’ve never seen that movie.” Bruce said. “Never could get past the title.”

“I think you’ll like it. The main character builds homes for people who wouldn’t be able to afford them, otherwise. I was thinking of that when you told me about your work with the Housing First organisation.”

Bruce smiled.

“Alright, then.”

Clark smiled back. Lex had hated that movie. He said it was too sappy. For that matter, he didn’t seem to like most Christmas movies. Bruce had already sat with him and the boys for the Rankin/Bass specials and other Christmas classics throughout the month. Films which Clark hadn’t seen in years. Sometimes the nostalgia made him cry; Bruce held him every time.

I love you.

The words floated through Clark’s mind like a kite in the wind, wanting so much to be let loose, to be said out loud; but he held them tight. He wasn’t ready. Bruce had been wonderful in everything, but so had Lex at the beginning. He didn’t think Bruce would go that route, but the pain at having been so betrayed once made him fear. Saying the words was too final, too definite, too constricting.
But some moments, like now, his heart still shouted it with every beat.

_I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you._

***

In the midst of the tree-trimming, they got momentarily sidetracked with pup-trimming.

That is, Damian soon found himself covered in shiny garlands and tinsel, the hook ornaments sticking perfectly to his sweater, one string ornament dangling from his left ear. Everyone was laughing, even Damian, though he was quite red in the face; Tim was filming the moment.

Clark rubbed noses with Damian, and then Jason dropped some tinsel onto Clark’s head. The laughter in the room was infectious and uplifting. From the cinnamon candles to the scents of everyone involved clearing having a good time, it was impossible for anyone to be feeling grouchy.

*Family.* Bruce thought to himself, taking a deep breath through his nose.

*Happy pups, happy mate.*

_Clark’s eyes are sparkling._ He observed, the blue practically glittering in the light from the fireplace and white Christmas lights on the ceiling.

William watched the scene from one of the armchairs.

*How could he have objected to this?*

He blew his nose again, feigning allergies, which was working only because he had managed to keep from crying.

His grandson looked so carefree, now. Like the weight he’d had on his shoulders since Lex’s death was just gone.

He looked like he belonged, here.

He remembered one time when Clark was about eight and he came over on one of those rare visits. His wife was still alive and was playing the piano, getting Clark to sing along. He doubted Clark had ever seen the movie *Fiddler On The Roof*, but as his wife played *Sunrise, Sunset*, Clark sang the lyrics in the book on the piano, and followed beautifully.

The lyrics flitted through his mind, now.

*Is this the little boy at play?*

*I don’t remember growing older*

*…*

*When did he get to be so tall?*

“Are you alright, dad?” Martha came to stand beside him.

“He really is happy, isn’t he, Martha?”

Martha looked back to the scene, where they were now stringing coloured lights around the tree.
“Yes.” Martha said, smiling. “Yes, he is.”

When all that remained was the star, Jason climbed the stepladder about midway, and Bruce handed Damian to him so that he could hold him up to place the golden light-up ornament at the top.

Standing together hand-in-hand with Bruce on his right and his mother on his left, taking in the lit tree, Clark felt an awestruck sort of peace.

Alfred emerged from the kitchen at that moment with cocoa for all, topped with whipped cream and sprinkled with cinnamon.

Clark tried not to giggle as he thought of one of Alfred’s presents which the boys and Bruce had promised to help him with. The other, so that Alfred would have something to unwrap, was a tie pin and cufflink set he’d purchased from the art gallery; they were made with rescued ming dynasty pottery pieces from the ocean depths, or so Chris had assured during their last visit.

Clark was surprised when he and Bruce walked through the gallery doors to see that Christina had traded her librarian look (long skirt and sweater), for a button-down top, slacks, and a tie. She had also had cropped her roundish mop of hair, now combed to right, the left side buzzed extremely short. It was quite boyish, really.

“Hi, Mr. Wayne! Mr. Kent!” She had been weaving something Clark recognised as floss generally used for friendship bracelets, but set it aside to go greet them.

“Hi… Chris?” Bruce had noticed that her name tag had been altered.

“Yeah.” she said shyly with a slight giggle. “I, um, had a revelation, recently.”

“Oh?” Clark asked.

“Yeah… thing is, I had joined the Mormon church a few years ago, so I’d been going along with what I knew they found acceptable. But, the thing is, before that, I knew I was bisexual, and I felt more comfortable wearing men’s clothes most of the time. The Mormon church, though they do a lot of good things and it was definitely good for where I was in my life at the time, they’re not accepting of LGBT. I stopped going to church a few months ago, and then I slowly started revisiting old aspects of my life, like being bi, and wearing men’s clothes. And, in so doing, I realised I’m genderfluid, which was something I didn’t realise existed back then.”

“I’ve never heard of that.” Clark said, confused.

“Basically, I don’t identify as male, female, or non-binary, which are all static genders. In my case, I still use she/her pronouns, but I’ve always felt uncomfortable calling myself a woman. I just didn’t understand why until recently.”

Clark felt something resonate at that description. When he was a pup, calling himself a boy was no problem, because that was how it worked: boy Omegas had penises, girl Omegas didn’t. As an adult, though, the word ‘man’ felt… alien. Like it didn’t match. And he had liked wearing makeup and more brightly-coloured clothing when he was a teen… This deserved more thought, but he had so much on his mind, lately…

“Look at what we just got in!” Christina-- Chris, made her way to the jewelry cases, and Clark and Bruce followed.
“They’re made from pieces of Ming dynasty pottery.” She proudly indicated the display. Each piece had a piece of white pottery with what looked like faded blue ink, some of them clearly Chinese characters.

“They look kind of washed-out.” Clark observed.

“That’s because they’ve been fished out from the ocean.” She explained. “Back in the day, when pieces of the pottery would break, the rest of the item was broken down and used as ballast in ships. When it arrived at destination, the pieces were thrown overboard. They’re not worth as much as, say, an intact vase, but I love the history behind it.”

Clark smiled.

“I can think of someone else who enjoys the history behind items.”

“Oh?” Bruce asked.

Clark nodded.

“I’ll take… this tie pin, and these cufflinks, please.”

Bruce smacked his forehead.

“For Alfred, of course. Why didn’t I think of that?”

Chris giggled as she took the pieces and brought them to the desk.

“Because you’ve known him for years,” Clark explained. “Whereas I’ve only recently learned these things. They’re fresher in my mind.”

“I’ll include a card from the crafter.” Chris said as she placed the items in a small box. “It explains the history of the pieces.”

“Thanks.” Clark smiled.

“I can wrap it for you, too, if you want. There was a guy in the other night, he wanted me to wrap the mug set he bought, but we don’t have wrapping paper for that. So he bought a roll of this locally-made wrapping paper, and said we could keep it for the next guy.” Chris had picked up the roll of off-white paper with tiny red and green cardinals patterned on the paper.

“If you don’t mind--”

“Not at all!” she grinned, and seemed to be genuinely excited at the prospect. “I can get it wrapped while you look around.” She removed two rolls of thin ribbon, one white, the other blue, and placed them on the desk.

When they had returned from looking around, Chris had wrapped the tiny box beautifully, with a fluffy bow of white and blue ribbon sitting on top. That box Clark saw Damian place under the tree along with the others the boys were moving from their pile in the corner.

“You alright?” Bruce asked him, for what felt like the twentieth time that day, placing an arm around his shoulders. Clark leaned into him before answering.

“I’m alright. Just wandering in my thoughts.”
Bruce kissed his hair.

“I hope sometime you’ll share the stories of your travels.”

Clark smiled.

“Eventually.”

He turned his head to face Bruce, and felt his heart swell when he saw the way Bruce regarded him. It was a warm, lazy look. The kind of look that said ‘I want to take you to bed and just look at you until we fall asleep.’

Clark had once described to Lana that Lex looked at him ‘like he’s the spoon, and I’m the dish of ice-cream.’ Which wasn’t a bad look to have, but he couldn’t think of one instance that Lex didn’t seem to have sexual intent behind every look, every touch, every kiss.

Bruce had desires, he knew, but the only time he let them out to the surface was when Clark initiated the intimacy.

Clark didn’t feel pursued by Bruce; he felt treasured.

And, damn his hormones, if that wasn’t feeling like a turn-on right that second.

“You need a minute?” Bruce whispered, smelling his arousal.

It was a valid question… except that Clark wasn’t sure if it would work. So far, he’d only been able to get off if Bruce helped him with some build-up; and he didn’t want to ask him for that now. Not when his mother and grandfather might be able to pick up on what was going on. Sure, they knew he and Bruce were working stuff out, but if they both left the room now and he came back smelling… he knew his grandfather was still adjusting to him and Bruce being a thing at all, never mind any type of sexual intimacy. That was something he didn’t want out there just yet.

“Just change the subject, propose a game, I don’t know.” Clark whispered back. “I’m not sure if I can get off without your help, yet,” Clark turned red in the face at his own bluntness. “And I’d rather not give any reason for grandpa to go back on his promise of trying to accept that you and I have moved somewhat past a support relationship. If we both leave the room and then come back smelling like that, he’d probably blow a fuse.”

“Okay.” He kissed Clark’s hair again, before turning to address the others. “Should we play a game?”

Clark sipped his cocoa as the others enthusiastically replied in the affirmative.

“Oh! Oh-oh!” Damian started bouncing up and down. “We learned a new game at school yesterday! It’s good for a group of people!”

“Oh, Damian.” Bruce said. “How about you explain it to us and we’ll decide if we’ll play it?”

“Yay!” Damian cheered.

“Okay, so, we’re all gonna need chairs to sit in a circle. One person is blindfolded, and they need a stick. And Ms. Dahl had us use a pillow to poke so that we didn’t hurt anybody.”

As he spoke, Damian took a throw pillow to demonstrate.

“So, you turn in a circle, stop, and then walk forward until you hit a person’s chair, and then poke
the pillow with the stick and say ‘grunt, piggy, grunt.’” He jabbed the pillow twice. “And the person has to make a grunting noise, and then the one with the blindfold has to guess who it is. If they get it right, then the new person is it.”

“That sounds like it would turn into a game of ‘try not to laugh’ real quick.” Dick said, grinning. “I’m game.”

“Oh, and we need a clothespin so that we can’t smell the people.” Damian added.

“I shall fetch a wooden spoon in lieu of the stick and a clothespin.” Alfred said before leaving the room.

“Jason, Dick, help me move the armchairs closer to that sofa.” Bruce asked. “And we’ll move the other sofa in, too, to help close the circle. That should be enough room for everyone.”

The configuration ended up being with one sofa facing the other, one armchair at either end. Three people per sofa, one in each chair, technically meant only eight seats, but, as there would be one person standing throughout the game, it worked out.

Clark sat on a sofa with his mother and grandfather, Martha in the middle. Bruce sat on the other sofa with Damian and Tim, while Dick sat on one armchair and Jason insisted he was trying to do the Christmasy thing by refusing to sit in the last chair, wanting Alfred to take it instead; the Beta eventually relented and sat down.

William and Alfred opted out of the first round, preferring to watch instead, so it was Martha who lost the ‘not it’ round; Jason took her seat in the meantime.

As Dick had predicted, by the time she had failed to guess the third ‘pig,’ everyone was trying really hard not to giggle. Martha managed to get Tim as a result.

“Grunt, piggy, grunt.” Tim said to his fifth pig, which was Jason. Jason gave an impressive grunting snort, and Tim declared it to be Bruce.

“Wrong!” Damian said cheerfully.

Tim spun around once more, walked up to Damian, who giggled too hard and gave himself away.

Damian found Bruce on his second try, and then Clark was done for. The image of Bruce with the blindfold and clothespin was just so comical, he had to excuse himself in a hurry because he was in very great danger of wetting his pants. Just as he exited the room, however, he heard Bruce correctly guess at Dick in no time.

As Clark finished up at the bathroom, he discovered he had wet his pants slightly, though it was with slick from his earlier turn-on. He mused briefly on memories of when he had gotten his first toy; any time he got slick, he’d find an excuse to go hide in his room and use it.

Clark resisted the urge to do anything now, even though he really did want to; he didn’t want to go back to the others with that scent around him. Instead, he finished cleaning himself and, after spraying some Febreeze in the air, purposely went to stand where the mist would fall, hoping to mask his scent; the cinnamon-apple made him sneeze. Then, he washed his hands and returned to the others, trying to think of the most innocuous things he could to distract himself from his arousal.

An hour later, everyone was pretty much laughed-out and tired from the day, so it was agreed to all go to bed to be ready for Christmas Eve. Most of it was going to involve chopping vegetables and other preparations to make Christmas dinner easier to get underway on Sunday.
What Alfred didn’t know, was that Jason was going to disable his alarm clock and take his phone so that he could sleep in while the boys, Bruce, and Clark got a head-start.

Clark promised Damian he could come back to the bedroom the next night before giving him a hug and a kiss as he saw him to his room, then went to Bruce’s and shut the door behind him.

Chapter End Notes

Ooh-hoo! Some steaminess to come! Just remember that Clark still has some healing to do, but it will be a big step in the right direction.
Chapter 29

Chapter Summary

Clark needs to test his boundaries. Maybe they're not as rigid as he first thought?

Chapter Notes

So, since this chapter came together very suddenly, and the last two chapters were late, how about an early posting?

About this chapter: you know how it is when a character just takes over, and there's nothing you can do as a writer but go along for the ride?

I was gonna just write some heavy making out, and then Clark would need a break, and it would move into the rest of Christmas-y stuff at the manor, BUT NO! Clark said he wanted to keep going! I am SO proud of him! :')

This is a full chapter of emotion and smut!

Enjoy!

P.S.: Video Games by Lana Del Rey is basically a slow, sexy, geek song. Definitely good mood music.

It's you, it's you, it's all for you

Everything I do

I tell you all the time

Heaven is a place on earth with you

Tell me all the things you wanna do

I heard that you like the bad girls

Honey, is that true?

It's better than I ever even knew

They say that the world was built for two

Only worth living if somebody is loving you

Baby, now you do

— Video Games by Lana Del Rey
Clark wasn’t sure how much instinct he was letting run his decisions, but he sure did feel that sense of forbidden, like when he and Lana had been together as teenagers. It was a thrilling feeling which made his heart pound.

Bruce, standing in front of the bed, looked up at the sound of the door clicking shut, then stood very still as he took in Clark’s mixed expression of nerves and anticipation.

Clark swallowed, then walked forward.

“I’d like to try something.” he said, aware of his heart beating with the force of a war drum.

“Alright.” Bruce said quietly, not wanting to spook him.

“But first, I need to ask, because you ask me all the time but I never ask you: is there anything you don’t want me to do?” Clark felt like he was tripping over his tongue in an effort to sound coherent.

Bruce smiled softly.

“At this point, I think the only thing I’d be worried about is you pushing yourself too hard. You’re regaining your autonomy over your desires, and I feel honoured to be the one helping you with that. I think that, as long as we establish that either can say ‘stop’ at any time, I’ll be alright. But, more pressing, is there anything you don’t want me to do?”

Clark swallowed again. He had almost lost his nerve when he’d asked his question, but Bruce’s words gave him new courage.

“I’m still not ready for…” he shut his eyes. “Penetration.” He swallowed and opened his eyes again. “But, I’d like… to get used to you naked. And, you seeing me naked, without being in the bathtub.”

Bruce nodded.

“Alright.”

Communication was something that had been sorely lacking between himself and Lex, even before everything had gone downhill. Even between him and Lana, they tended to follow the movie formula: start kissing, remove clothing, fuck. Talking always seemed like such a mood killer.

But here, now, discussing things with Bruce, it wasn’t a moodkiller. In fact, it was making him less nervous, more sure of himself, as he got to articulate what he wanted, what he didn’t want.

Clark took another step forward, and reached out with his right hand. Bruce took it in his left, lacing their fingers together, but stayed where he was, waiting for Clark to close the distance.

Clark hesitated for only a moment, then crossed the final foot and a half of space, and initiated the kiss.

Bruce didn’t try to take control of the kiss, merely follow Clark’s lead, gently encouraging him by running his right hand through his hair.

Clark hesitantly sucked at Bruce’s lower lip, gently grazing it with his upper teeth. He was rewarded with hearing Bruce’s breath hitch, and a wave of Alpha arousal flooded his nostrils. He felt himself hit the brink of panic, but took hold of the front of Bruce’s shirt with his left hand while squeezing Bruce’s with his right, determined not to let his fear get the better of him. He knew he could stop at any time and Bruce would let him; he needed to see how far he could get.
Clark broke the kiss and hooked his index finger inside the collar of Bruce’s shirt.

“Shirts off?” he asked.

“Sure.” Bruce agreed.

They worked together, alternating between each other’s buttons and ties, until both were undone, then each slid the shirts off their shoulders.

Clark still had his compression bra on, and hesitated only a moment before pulling it over and off.

His breasts still weren’t all that big; Omega males never developed very much, only enough for milk production during and after pregnancy. But they did have a nice roundness to them, and the nipples perked right up after the bra was gone.

Before he could change his mind, Clark reached for both of Bruce’s hands and placed them on his breasts, holding them there.

Bruce squeezed gently, then turned his hands to cup them better, stroking the nipples with his thumbs, causing Clark to shiver pleasantly.

“Keep going?” Bruce checked.

“Yes.” Clark said breathlessly.

Bruce leaned in for the kiss this time, kissing Clark’s forehead, first, before capturing his lips. This kiss became more heated, but still slow, careful, exploring. Bruce licked at Clark’s lips, and Clark let him in, grazing the Alpha’s tongue with his teeth. All the while, Bruce gently kneaded Clark’s breasts.

Clark felt that his underwear was definitely done for this time. When they came up for air, both panting slightly, Clark looked down to the bulge in Bruce’s pants, then back up to his eyes as he trailed his hands down Bruce’s sides, hooking his thumbs into the waistband when he got there.

“Off?” Bruce asked.

Clark nodded.

“Talk to me, Clark.” Bruce instructed, his tone serious. “I want to make sure you’re alright.”

Clark was about to ‘yes,’ but, having been made to think about it, realised he wasn’t there, yet. His nod had been an automatic reaction to the direction they seemed to be going, but, upon reflection, he realised he recognised where his mind had almost gone; it was the far-away place he tended to drift to when Lex approached him, where everything was fuzzy and if he tried to see clearly, it hurt.

He was grateful Bruce had stopped him.

“Maybe not yet.” Clark said.

“Okay.” Bruce said, simple as that. “Do you want to sit down? Or lie down?”

Clark took a few breaths before answering.

“Sit down, please.”

They sat together on the edge of the bed, and Clark leaned against Bruce, who held him, right hand
holding his left, left arm around him, alternating rubbing his arm and petting his hair.

Clark scented Bruce for a while, and he gradually relaxed.

“Are you alright?” Bruce asked after some time.

Clark nodded.

“Thanks for calling it.”

“Tired?”

Clark smiled as he pulled back to face Bruce and shook his head.

“No.”

Bruce smiled back.

“What would you like to do?”

“Lie down, please. On our sides.”

Bruce scooted up the bed and Clark moved with him, with some difficulty due to his belly, but he managed.

They lay facing each other, and Bruce squeezed Clark’s hand before kissing his fingers.

Clark reached forward with his other hand and cupped Bruce’s cheek, stroking with his thumb, feeling the day’s growth of stubble. Bruce leaned into the touch, smiling lazily.

“Can I touch your belly?” Bruce asked.

Clark smiled.

“Yes.”

Bruce rubbed in alternatingly large and small circles, and Clark felt his pup shift as though reacting to the attention.

His arousal had faded to a low simmer when Bruce had stopped him from going too far too soon, but it began picking up speed again.

Bruce seemed to pick up on it, because he asked,

“Can I kiss you?”

“Yes.” Clark whimpered, feeling just a little desperation. Bruce didn’t keep him waiting.

The kiss felt like they were melding together, breathing sharply through their noses. Clark put his arm around Bruce’s shoulders, trying to get closer, though it required some angling around his belly.

Bruce broke the kiss, but stayed close enough that their breaths mingled, hot and humid, between them.

“How are you doing, Clark?” he asked, voice low and husky.

Clark took a moment to reflect, wanting to give the most truthful answer possible.
“Good. I feel good.”

Bruce smiled and rubbed his nose to Clark’s.

“You’ll let me know if you want me to leave so you can take care of business down there.”

Clark shook his head.

“I don’t want you to go.” he said. “But, the idea of jerking off in front of you feels weird.”

Bruce bit his bottom lip, looking pensive for a few seconds.

“Did you want some help?” he asked finally.

Clark hesitated.

Lex would make sure he was hard and wet before taking him, would roughly jerk him off to make sure he came. Always making sure Clark got off, because if he could get him off, then he could claim Clark enjoyed it, even if the act felt hollow and gutting.

“Gently?” Clark finally said.

Bruce squeezed his hand and kissed his cheek.

“Definitely. And if you want me to stop, you speak right up, okay?”

Clark felt better just for that.

“Thank you.”

Bruce wasn’t kidding when he said he’d be gentle. He started by kissing Clark, slow and deep, running his fingers through his hair, lightly scraping the scalp with his nails. Bruce’s left hand and Clark’s right were still entwined.

He kissed Clark’s forehead, his temples, his eyelids, his cheeks. He worked his way all over and down his throat, adding some sucking as he went, sometimes little licks, leaving dampness in his wake.

Clark felt like he was gradually starting to drift, but it wasn’t like his hiding place with Lex. Everything was still sharp enough that he felt every kiss, every spot of saliva, and the heat that radiated from Bruce’s very being. The drift was along the flow of pleasure he felt, ebbing to the beat of his rapid pulse.

Like with everything else, Bruce made him feel special, precious, cared for.

He felt like Bruce was worshipping him with his mouth. And it was so different from anything Lex had done, it didn’t even enter into his head to compare them.

Clark whimpered, tightening his hold on Bruce’s hand, when the Alpha took one nipple into his mouth and sucked on it, teasing with teeth and tongue.

Bruce pulled back just enough to speak.

“Too much?”

Clark shook his head, struck speechless for a few seconds before answering.
“It’s good.” he said, breathless. “Really good.”

Bruce moved upwards to look Clark in the eye, studying him for a minute.

“You’re sure?”

For an answer, Clark kissed him, sucking on his bottom lip without hesitation.

Bruce stayed put, kissing him back, then returned to suck on the other breast.

Clark let out a whine which surprised even him as he used his free hand to clutch at Bruce’s hair.

“Still good?” Bruce asked him.

“Really good.” Clark replied, almost urgently. The slick had completely wet the space between his buttocks and was trailing down under the curve of one cheek, his underwear sticking awkwardly.

Bruce paused long enough to get Clark’s permission to open his pants, which Clark gave without hesitating, and then Bruce was untying the drawstring of the maternity pouch and pulling them down to just below the swell of his belly. Bruce then continued his trail down Clark’s body, covering his puppy-pocket in kisses, nipping lightly at his popped-out belly-button.

A thought broke through the haze.

“Bruce, what about you?” Clark asked.

Bruce moved back up to be level with Clark.

“Don’t worry about me, Clark. I can take of it after. I just want you to feel good, okay?”

Clark didn’t want Bruce to stop, but he couldn’t let it go.

“But--”

Bruce kissed him.

“Let’s get you looked after, first.” Bruce told him. “After, if you’re up for it, you can help me out, too. But nothing beyond what you feel comfortable with, okay?”

Clark kissed him back, sudden and desperate. When he withdrew, tears had begun streaming down his cheeks.

“This isn’t a dream, right?” he asked, his voice overcome with emotion.

Bruce pressed his forehead to his, stroking his hair.

“If it is, then we’re both dreaming, together.”

“If we are, I don’t want to wake up.” Clark whimpered.

“Clark--” Bruce began.

“Don’t stop, please.” Clark sobbed. He felt like he was on the edge of either falling into the abyss or launching into space, and the fear of falling was palpable. “Please, I’m okay, really.”

To prove it, Clark began kissing Bruce desperately, a mess of teeth and tongue.
“Okay, Clark.” Bruce said when they paused for air. He kissed him once more, reassuring him.

“Any other clothing you want moved?”

Clark’s breathing was shaky as he reflected.

“You can… take your pants off.” he said, then moved to remove his own, hesitating only a moment before shucking his boxers off along with them.

Bruce waited a moment before taking off his pants, keeping his gaze locked with Clark’s, taking Clark’s hand when he was done.

“Alright?” he asked.

Clark nodded, then bit his bottom lip before asking, hesitating in his words,

“C-can I… touch you?”

Bruce smiled.

“Of course, Clark.”

Bruce laid stretched out on his side, making sure Clark had good access.

Clark knew Bruce kept himself in good shape, had seen his muscles before, but there was something different about seeing his broad chest and shoulders and sculpted abs laid out for him that felt altogether different.

He started by running his hand from sternum to just below the navel and back again, then leaned in to start kissing Bruce’s throat and working his way down.

Clark rubbed his face along the expanse of muscle that was Bruce’s torso as he planted kisses, sniffing as he went, intoxicated on the scent of Alpha arousal and sweat and that special musk that was Bruce.

*Strong Alpha. Protection. Mate.*

Clark didn’t realise he was making noise until the abs he was pressing his face against started quivering with Bruce’s chuckles as he said,

“Wow, Clark. If I didn’t know better, I’d think you were in heat with those sounds.”

Clark flushed red as he pulled back, eyes downcast.

“Sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry.” Bruce sat up and kissed his cheek. “I like it.” he growled lightly, the sound going straight to Clark’s cock and pulsing entrance as some more slick gushed out and onto the spot of bed he sat on.

They kissed some more, each nipping at the other, gradually falling back to their sides, petting one another’s sides, necks, and hair.

“How are you doing, Clark?” Bruce asked him.

Clark smiled.
“I don’t think I’ve ever spent so much time on foreplay before.” he replied. “I like it, though.”

Bruce hmmed before kissing Clark again.

“I’d like to get you off, if you’re up for it.” Bruce said.

Clark frowned.

“It feels weird.” Clark said. “I mean, I appreciate that you want to, it’s just that I’m used to if one partner is getting off, both get to.”

“Half the fun for me,” Bruce explained. “Is knowing I’ve brought pleasure to my partner. If you’re there, Clark, let me take care of you.”

Clark nodded.

Bruce guided Clark to position himself so that his hips would be raised with a couple of pillows supporting his back, then kissed his way down, a little faster than he had earlier.

“Can I touch you, Clark?” he asked, holding his hand just above Clark’s cock.

“Yes.” Clark said, the blood rushing so fast he could hear it in his ears. “Just, gently, please.” he added, recalling the quick, brutal pace Lex would jerk him to get him off as fast as possible.

Bruce followed instruction, carefully cradling Clark’s member in his right hand. Clark felt a lightning spark travel from the touch to the base of his spine, causing more slick to ooze out of his entrance. His pup was moving, perhaps disturbed by the rapid beating of his heart.

Bruce moved unhurried, slowly stroking over Clark’s cock, moving the foreskin down to the base, then up to the top where he would rub his palm over the head, smearing precome, then moving downward again.

Clark’s breath was coming in little pants. He tried to watch at first, but his belly was blocking his view, so he settled for watching Bruce’s face; the Alpha looked back at him, studying his face, making sure he was alright.

Clark unconsciously clenched and unclenched his passage, a motion which usually occurred when he was turned on enough; a natural bodily demand to be filled, though he knew he wasn’t ready.

“Can I suck you, Clark?”

Clark blinked several times.

“I… but-- Alphas--”

“Can do whatever they want to please their partners if their partners consent.” Bruce said. “I want to please you, Clark, but only with your consent.”

Clark nodded rapidly before saying,

“Yes, please.”

Bruce had only done this a couple of times before, as his partners were usually female Omegas, but he had developed a pretty good technique, mostly learning from his own preferences of how he liked to be sucked.
He focused on the head at first, sucking with as much pressure as he dared, using his hand to stroke the rest of Clark’s shaft, swirling his tongue around. He used the tip of his tongue to apply pressure to the sensitive nerve endings on the underside of the glans, the slit, and then pulled back and blew softly where he had moistened the tip. The result was Clark bucking slightly, gasping audibly.

“Alright, Clark?” Bruce asked, never once pausing in his stroking.

“Oh, yeah!” Clark got out, gripping the sheets with both hands.

Bruce grinned before descending again, taking more length into his mouth, bobbing his head, gradually working deeper. As he worked, he would occasionally pull back to focus on the glans again. Clark was soon writhing on the bed, whining loudly.

Bruce pulled back again, Clark whimpering at the loss of Bruce’s hot mouth on his cock, and rubbed one hand on Clark’s belly while the other continued stroking the Omega’s member.

“What do you say to some prostate stimulation?” Bruce offered.

“Mm-hmm!” Clark quickly let out, biting his bottom lip before blurtng out: “Yes, please!”

Bruce returned to sucking Clark’s cock, but used his right hand to begin rubbing gentle circles outside of Clark’s exposed hole with one finger.

Clark writhed further, whining, and Bruce pulled back long enough to look at his entrance for a minute, his left hand still stroking Clark’s member, an immense satisfaction running through him as he saw Clark’s wet hole flutter open-shut, open-shut.

Bruce proceeded to lick at Clark’s entrance, and Clark’s noises reached a new pitch.

Bruce licked, nipped, and tongue-fucked Clark’s hole, all the while never breaking pace with stroking his cock.

“Oh, God, Bruce!” Clark cried out, legs tensing, toes curling.

Bruce pushed one finger inside, the passage slick and welcoming, aiming straight for his goal, feeling triumphant when he felt the small lump and Clark cried out again.

The Alpha took… his mate’s cock into his mouth again, sucking with new purpose as he continuously stroked at the magic spot inside his lover.

Clark had taken hold of both of his breasts and was kneading them, occasionally squeezing lightly, sometimes pinching his nipples.

Bruce gradually added a second finger, all the while mindful of Clark’s reactions.

It was when he added a third that Clark’s noises became more desperate, and Bruce thought this is it. Sure enough, just a few more seconds of sucking and prostate-rubbing later, and Clark was coming into his mouth as a wave of slick coated his fingers.

He sucked until Clark had no more to give, then withdrew, wiping his fingers on the sheets and coming to lie level with Clark.

Clark’s eyes were shut tight, and his mouth hung open as he continued to make unintelligible sounds, still riding the high of his orgasm.

Bruce came closer to him, very much aware of his own waiting member in his boxer briefs, but
wanting to help Clark come down, first. He took him into his arms and gently rubbed through his
hair, kissing his forehead.

After a while, Clark pulled back, looking at Bruce, still sporting a blissful, fucked-out expression.

“Welcome back.” Bruce told him, smiling.

Clark couldn’t speak, instead swallowing what little saliva remained in his dry mouth, before
pressing his head to Bruce’s shoulder.

“What about you?” Clark whispered after a while.

“How about, I give you a little show?” Bruce offered. “You can just lie back and I’ll do all the
work.”

Clark tried to argue, but Bruce wouldn’t let him.

“Clark, you’re clearly exhausted. Ask yourself honestly, do you have any energy to do anything? I
don’t mind, really.”

Clark concluded that Bruce was right.

“It’s just so opposite to what I’m used to.” he explained. “It feels like I’m being lazy.”

“You’re not lazy, Clark. I’m pampering you. And if there’s one Alpha stereotype I enjoy, it’s being
able to pamper my Omega. Can I take these off?” he asked, indicating his boxer-briefs.

“Yes.” Clark said, feeling his eyes go wide.

Bruce took off his underwear and threw them over the side of the bed, to the same general area the
rest of their clothes had gone, then sat cross-legged facing Clark.

He sat still for a moment, letting Clark get a good look at him, then leaned back slightly, taking the
pillows he’d used to support Clark’s hips earlier to support his back, now.

“You were worried about receiving all the pleasure while giving none, Clark,” Bruce spoke huskily.
“But look at what you’ve done.” Bruce took hold of his cock, fisting it slowly before using his
thumb and forefinger to gather some of the precome and holding it up, parting them to show the
stringy stretch. “This is how good it felt to please you.”

Clark watched, mesmerized, as Bruce returned his hand to take hold of his member again, moving
the precome around to ease his grip as he stroked himself, never once breaking gaze with him. Clark
tried to remember if Lex had the same girth; he was pretty sure the answer was no.

“You felt so good coming in my mouth, Clark. Your hole pulsing around my fingers, so soft and hot
and wet. And seeing you touch your breasts, Clark… you look so beautiful.”

Despite the earth-shattering orgasm he’d just had, at Bruce’s words Clark could feel his hole pulsing
again. His cock wasn’t ready to get up, yet, but it was trying.

Inspired by Bruce’s words, Clark used his left hand to take hold of his left breast again, and began
rolling it around, thumb and forefinger lightly pinching his nipple.

“Oh, Clark…” Bruce breathed as he watched, still stroking himself. “So beautiful.”

Clark’s cock gave a valiant little twitch. Feeling further motivated, Clark used his right arm to reach
down and rub over his puppy-pocket while he continued to play with his breast, playing on the common knowledge that there were few things more attractive to an Alpha than a fertile Omega, and pregnancy was a very obvious sign of it.

“Alpha?” he said coyly, smiling through batting eyelashes, surprising himself at his use of presentation titles.

“Oh, fuck.” Bruce groaned, picking up speed.

Clark grinned, feeling empowered watching Bruce’s reactions to his movements, knowing with greater certainty than before that Bruce wouldn’t touch him unless invited to.

Clark felt energised, suddenly, keyed-up, as though his earlier orgasm had somehow cleansed him of things that had been weighing him down.

“Am I a good Omega?” he asked.

“Yes, Clark.” Bruce gasped out. “So good.”

Clark reached out slowly with his right hand, stopping halfway between himself and Bruce.

“Can I touch, Alpha?”

“Fuck, yes.” Bruce grunted.

Clark cupped Bruce’s testicles in his hand, rolling them around as Bruce’s breathing grew ever heavier and he seemed to groan with the effort.

Clark’s cock was standing at full attention, now.

“Can I touch myself, Alpha?”

“Always, Clark.” Bruce moaned. “You do what feels good to you.”

Continuing to massage Bruce’s balls with his right, Clark took himself in his left and began stroking, slowly at first, but eventually matching Bruce’s pace.

Clark used one finger from his right hand to touch at the place where Bruce’s knot would form, feeling a thrill at feeling Bruce jolt, then asked,

“Can I help you, Alpha?”

“Fuck, yes! Oh, I’m so close, Clark!”

Bruce was stroking himself above the knot, so Clark had plenty of room to grip exactly on it, feeling the strong pulsing, squeezing and releasing, feeling the swell starting to form. He picked up speed on his own stroking, wanting to come with Bruce.

“Fuck, I’m gonna come, Clark!” Bruce groaned.

At once thrilled and scared of his own boldness, Clark whispered,

“Will you come on me, Alpha? Come on my tits, Alpha?”

Bruce’s eyes nearly bulged out of his skull as he quickly adjusted himself and took aim, grunting loudly as he came spurting thick, white cords of semen right onto Clark’s breasts.
Clark’s right hand was still around Bruce’s knot, and he continued to squeeze and release even after it grew to full hardness, helping to milk Bruce’s spunk on him. Meanwhile, he doubled his efforts with his left hand and eventually he was moaning out his own orgasm, spurting onto the bed.

Bruce sat back after a bit, and they both stayed where they were, panting, waiting to recover, Clark’s right hand now laying loosely on the bed in front of Bruce, his left just alongside his belly.

While not as earth-shattering as the first orgasm, Clark still felt a sort of change come over him with this second. The fact that he’d been able to engage in dirty talk with Bruce felt so good. Lex had used a sort of dirty talk with him, but it had all been about establishing his dominance; the only time Clark was allowed to speak was to answer questions, and he knew these questions only had one right answer.

But with Bruce, just now, it was cooperative, equal, each playing with the other, and such a rush.

“Are you alright?” Bruce asked him after he’d got his breath back.

Clark laughed suddenly.

“Awesome.” he said, still grinning.

Bruce grinned back.

“Yeah?” he asked.

“Yeah.” Clark said. “I feel like… I can’t even describe it. Just… Fuck.”

“Again?” Bruce teased.

“No.” Clark laughed. “Just, like, really amazing. Like, you asking permission, and the tone you used when I tried out the dirty talk, where it wasn’t like you had control over me, but just both of us sharing pleasure, that was perfect.”

Bruce nodded thoughtfully.

“Good. That lets me know how to do things if you want to try this again.”

Clark grinned.

“I hope we will.”

Bruce grinned back.

“Did you want to shower?” he asked. “Or should I just get a towel?”

Clark smiled crookedly as he passed a finger through Bruce’s spunk on his chest, swirling some around.

“Clark, come on, my knot hasn’t even gone down, yet.” Bruce groaned.

“Down, boy.” Clark teased. “Maybe just a towel. I was thinking of showering in the morning so that I wake up more easily before we have to go to the kitchen.”

“Towel it is.”

Bruce took only a moment to get two towels from the bathroom, both damp with very warm water,
one of which he used to first clean off Clark’s chest, crotch, thighs, and between his buttocks (this last made Clark giggle). Then, he used the other towel to clean off some of the bigger spots from the bed, before grabbing them and the clothes and throwing them in the hamper.

“Pajamas?” Bruce offered.

Clark shook his head as he stretched, and then curled up comfortably.

“Get over here, you.”

“Oh, giving orders, now, are we?” Bruce used a tone of mock-insult as he climbed into bed. “Bossy Omega.” He pecked Clark on the mouth, a teasing smile on his lips.

Clark grinned, curling up to Bruce as soon as the Alpha was situated. Bruce afterward moved the blankets to cover them both and wrapped Clark up in his arms.

“Thank you.” Clark said sleepily.

Bruce nosed at Clark’s hair before planting a kiss there.

“You're very welcome, Clark.”

Some time passed in silence, and just as Clark was beginning to drift off, he felt Bruce kiss his cheek and whisper,

“Merry Christmas.”

Clark smiled lazily, opening his eyes just enough to get his aim right, kissing Bruce on the lips.

“Merry Christmas, Bruce.”
Chapter 30

Chapter Summary

Some Christmas fluff, but also signs of drama to come.

Chapter Notes

I am SO sorry this chapter is late! Tuesday night, a tree broke nearby and the tip landed on a line, cutting our power, so I wasn't able to work on it, and work was too busy to work on it there, either. Last night, the power was back, but I had lost the groove I'd had the night before, so I wasn't able to finish it until just now.

Thank you to everyone who's been sticking with me and your kind words. Comments fuel my writing!

He would be sixteen
The son she never knew
It hurt so much to give him up
But what else could she do?
— He would be sixteen by Michelle Wright

Jason woke with a start at the unfamiliar sound, panicking for almost a whole minute before remembering that it was Alfred’s phone alarm.

He groaned heavily as he forced himself out of bed to go where he had left it on his closet shelf to turn it off. Knowing himself too well, he knew that without Alfred physically waking him there was no way he’d get out of bed so early unless the source of the shrill buzzing was out of his reach.

Yawning wide and loudly, Jason went to Damian’s room to wake him up (Tim was deemed Dick’s responsibility).

He felt momentarily bad for disturbing the pup, who looked so adorable with one arm around his Bat-bear, the other with his thumb in his mouth.

“Come on, baby-bat. Time to get up.” He shook him gently.

Damian whined loudly and rolled away from him, curling himself completely around his Bat-bear.

“Not gonna ask you twice, Dami. Come on.”
Jason threw the covers off and hauled Damian out of bed, fighting to get him to let go of Bat-bear, shushing him as he whined.

“Don’t wanna wake up Alfred, do we? The whole point is to let him sleep while we go prep stuff for him.”

Damian’s brain started to catch up with him and he stopped fighting Jason, instead helping him get his pajamas off before hauling the pup to their shared ensuite so that they could take a quick shower before heading downstairs.

Damian tried to get away with just a quick scrub on obvious spots like his arms and chest, so Jason had to remind him to go for stinkier areas like his crotch, underarms, and bum.

“Come on, pup. You’re old enough to know better by now.” Jason told him. “You’re gonna get things growing under there.”

“Yeah, right.” Damian complained.

“I’m serious.” Jason told him. “Alfred and Bruce figured I was old enough to wash myself at your age, but I tried to take shortcuts like that, and I got this big rash under my balls. Pups at school teased me saying I had crabs.”

“You can’t get crabs under your balls.” Damian said as he took way too much shower gel to lather up his bum.

“Not like the seafood. There’s this kind of bug like lice, but instead of your head it lives in the hair in your junk.”

“I don’t have hair there.”

“Not yet, but it doesn’t mean you can’t get a rash if you don’t wash. Gotta get rid of the bacteria.”

Damian humphed, but nonetheless lathered up his crotch.

Jason had already finished washing himself, so he took the showerhead off the wall and started rinsing Damian down.

The two made their way down the hall in fresh pajamas, seeing through Tim’s open door that Dick was in the middle of pulling Tim out to the bathroom by an ankle, the younger teen complaining in a loud manner, yet still remaining quiet.

Jason went to knock on Bruce’s door, but stopped short as a strange smell hit him.

He leaned in, sniffing, then dropped to the floor and sniffed some more.

He sat back on his ankles in momentary shock, then grinned.

“What’s wrong, Jason?” Damian whispered.

“Nothin’.” Jason quickly stood and brought Damian to the stairs, meaning to get started on the potatoes.

“Jason, what was that funny smell? It was almost like when you or father rut, or Dick heats, but not exactly.”

“It wasn’t rut or heat, Dami. Trust me, everything’s okay.”
“But—”

“Okay.” Jason stopped now that they were at the bottom of the stairs, then knelt to Damian’s level. “That smell basically means dad and Clark had some fun last night.”

Damian gasped.

“They’re mates!?” he said, excitedly.

“I don’t know if they went that far, but it’s a step in the right direction.” Jason grinned.

Damian looked down and shuffled his feet a bit.

“Would you want Clark to be our mom?” Damian asked.

Jason’s smile fell a bit.

“Yeah, I do. We shouldn’t wait for it to happen, though, okay, Dami?” Jason pulled him into a hug. “We’ll hope that it does, but don’t go around thinking it definitely will. Lots of stuff can happen between now and when Clark has his pup.”

“I want a little brother or sister.” Damian said.

“I know.” Jason told him. He looked up, having seen movement in his peripheral, and saw that it was Dick coming down the stairs.

“Come on.” He stood, taking Damian’s hand. “We’ve got work to do.”

***

Immediately upon waking, Bruce stripped the bed, as they were anticipating that Damian would be joining them that night.

Later in the shower, however, they took the time to slowly make out, bringing one another to completion with their hands.

Clark worried slightly that, now that he had achieved intimacy with Bruce, he might be craving it a lot more often, especially with his hormones messing around with his emotions. Not that Bruce seemed to mind, and Clark certainly enjoyed this new feeling of being treasured while in the throes of passion, but he was concerned that a strong arousal might kick in during inappropriate moments, like when he’d be handing out toys to families at the clinic’s turkey drive. That sudden scent while in the midst of people, a percentage of whom had most certainly undergone sexual abuse… Clark didn’t want to think of the implications.

Upon voicing these concerns to Bruce, however, the Alpha laid a sweet kiss on his forehead as he ran his fingers through his damp hair.

“Just duck to the bathroom. And remember, this is the Omega clinic. Most of them are scared by Alpha arousal, not Omega. You’ll be fine. Besides, as someone who’s slept around a lot, I can tell you that even your aroused scent is a lot sweeter due to your pregnancy, which is bound to make a difference. Think of it as, when you’re not pregnant you’d smell kind of like a bakery, but because you are pregnant, it’s like I have the freshly-baked cake right under my nose.” Bruce closed his eyes for a moment, a small, leisurely smile on his face. “I wonder how you’d smell in heat?”

The moment the words were out of his mouth, his eyes shot wide open.
“Not that I presume--”

Clark cut him off with a small kiss.

“I don’t assume you presume. I call that flirting.”

Bruce relaxed into a smile, then pressed his forehead to Clark’s.

***

The boys entered the kitchen, followed by Dick, who was clearly in that stage of waking up where it was best not to engage conversation. Jason guessed that was probably why he’d chosen to wake Tim in the manner that he had.

Dick’s first move was to make a pot of coffee, but also made a cup of cocoa for Damian so he wouldn’t be left out. Jason took out the cereal they’d bought and hidden for the occasion and some bowls.

Damian giggled.

“Alfred would be so mad if he saw us eating Count Chocula!”

“Yeah, so better enjoy it Baby-bat.” Dick mumbled as he took the milk from the refrigerator.

Tim joined them in time, and had a quiet argument with Dick and Jason over whether or not he could have coffee, which was settled when Bruce walked through the door with Clark.

“No coffee, Tim.”

“Ugh!”

“I can’t remember the last time I had sugary cereal.” Clark eagerly took the Captain Crunch with Crunchberries.

Jason was trying to fight down a grin as Bruce handed Clark a cup of cocoa and the two shared a loving look.

Tim wasn’t so considerate.

“I knew I smelled something this morning.” he grinned.

Clark turned bright red and hastily swallowed some cocoa.

“I should point out,” Bruce said, narrowing his eyes at Tim. “That I never say anything in regards to whether or not any of you were having fun on Pornhub the night before. Trust me, Tim, you’re not that sneaky.”

Tim swallowed and started swirling his cereal around.

“I thought you’d be telling us if two mated.” he mumbled.

“As that is a change that would affect all of you, yes, we would. But we haven’t.” Bruce said, both trying to impress upon Tim the value of privacy, but conscious that Clark was growing more uncomfortable. Fortunately, Dick came to the rescue.

“Two adults engaging in intimate activities is something they should be allowed to do without
anybody having to point it out, because it’s a private expression of trust and caring for them and them alone to enjoy. Now, either drop it or Damian gets to eat your Count Chocula and you’re getting sugarless Cornflakes.”

Clark burst out laughing suddenly, which was mostly on par with Dick’s goal: bring up Cornflakes in regards to sex to lighten the mood.

*Mission accomplished,* he thought as he and Bruce also chuckled, though Tim, Damian, and Jason looked confused.

“I’ll send you guys the video, later.” Dick said.

***

William Clark was not a violent man. He often prided himself with not giving in to those bouts of anger which he had observed in various cases of domestic violence which he had dealt with over the years.

However, when he was walking down the hall to breakfast that morning, he picked up on a very particular smell; before he realised what he was doing, he had thrown open the door to the bedroom from which the offensive scent had originated and began looking about frantically.

“Dad! What are you doing?” Martha whispered furiously, coming into the room wearing a red silk robe over her pajamas, ballet-style slippers on her feet.

“Don’t you smell it, Martha?” William growled, not bothering to keep his voice down. “He must have changed the sheets, but you can still smell it.”

“Dad, calm down.” she held up her hands, pleading.

“I will not calm down, knowing that my grandson was--”

“You don’t know that it wasn’t consensual, dad. Before you go accusing Mr. Wayne of anything, you need to know the facts.”

“After what he went through, Martha!? How could it have been consensual!?”

“Mr. Wayne has been very good to him so far. Think about it, after what Clark went through, if this was consensual, and I’ve got no reason to believe it wasn’t, if you go storming after Mr. Wayne about this and Clark is in the room, what is that going to do to him? If he finally got to a point where he wanted to be able to explore his sexuality in a safe manner with someone he cares about and you go yelling at that someone, think of how harmful that will be. For years, not being allowed to decide over what happens to his body, and then he finally does, and you come yelling about it like he did something wrong, even if your anger is directed at Mr. Wayne, dad…” she stopped, took a few calming breaths, then swallowed and continued. “You know something of a sexual nature happened here. You can’t know for sure it was non-consensual. Let’s go down to breakfast, and observe how Clark is, okay? If something happened last night that hurt him, we’ll know. If, as I believe, it was consensual, then that means that Clark is *healing.* Some rape victims go for *years* without being able to be comfortably intimate with anyone. If Clark consented to being intimate last night, then this is a good thing. Bringing attention to it, especially in a negative way like accusing Mr. Wayne, it would crush him.”

William recognised that his daughter was right, and tried to calm himself, but he couldn’t seem to quiet the seething anger coming off him like heat.
“How about I go get breakfast and bring it to you in the lounge, dad? Clark said he and the others would be working on stuff in the kitchen for most of the morning.”

William sighed and nodded.

“Come on, dad.” Martha led him from the room, closing the door behind them.

They made their way straight to the lounge, where Martha placed one of the larger end tables at just the right spot between two armchairs, turning them to be facing the table.

“You make yourself comfortable, dad. I’ll be back.”

Martha entered the kitchen, smiling immediately at the scene of Clark and Bruce and the boys all busy at chopping vegetables, grating cheese, and crumbling toast.

“All busy bees, I see?”

Clark turned to smile back at her.

“Morning, mom.”

“Morning sweetheart.” she kissed his hair. He smelled positively blissful just beneath the fresh shower scent, causing her to smile. “Your grandfather’s feeling a little grumpy this morning, so I’m taking him breakfast in the lounge.” she explained as she went to make a fresh pot of coffee.

“Did he not sleep okay?” Clark asked, concerned.

“He’s just had a lot on his mind, lately, and I think this is the first time he’s been able to relax since Thanksgiving.”

“We just had cereal,” Bruce said. “But I can show you where anything is, if you need it.”

Martha shook her head.

“I’ll figure it out, but thank you.”

In the time it took Martha to put together a spread of scrambled eggs, bacon, and toast with jam, Clark, Bruce, and the boys had finished prepping everything and had them put away in containers in the fridge for the next day; the crumbled toast got put in a large Ziploc placed on top of the fridge, so it wouldn’t get moist.

Bruce checked his watch.

“I’ll go check on Alfred. Then whoever wants to come can get ready to go into town. We’ll have lunch at Denny’s before going to the clinic.”

“Clinic?” Martha asked. “Today?”

“Oh, yeah, I forgot to tell you.” Clark said. “They’re having their annual turkey drive. Well, there’s more than just turkeys given out: toys, jackets, blankets, and a big box of food is given to everyone who comes through, so that the people who can’t afford it can have something for Christmas. Bruce and the boys volunteer every year, and I wanted to give it a go, too.”

Martha looked thoughtful.

“Maybe grandpa and I will come along, too. I’ll see how he’s feeling after breakfast.”
“How about I help you bring this stuff to him, mom?” Clark stood.

Martha hesitated for a moment before nodding.

“Good idea.”

Clark carried one tray with a china coffee pot and matching cups and saucers, while Martha carried a tray with two plates of food and assorted cutlery.

“Knock knock, grandpa.” Clark said as they entered the lounge.

“Good morning, Clark.” his grandfather smiled at him.

“Mom got you some good stuff for breakfast.”

“Did you eat, yet, Clark?” William checked.

“Yeah, me, Bruce, and the boys just had some cereal.” he said as he and Martha set the trays down. “We were busy trying to get all of Alfred’s prep work done so that he could relax, today. We’ll be going to the clinic for the turkey drive, later, eating lunch somewhere along the way, and picking up supper on the way, back. Haven’t decided what that is, yet, though. Did you have any preference?”

“Clark.”

William took Clark’s wrist, looking at him carefully.

“Are you happy?”

Clark’s face broke into a smile immediately.

“Yeah, grandpa. I am.”

William stood and hugged his grandson.

“Then I’ll try to be happy, too. But don’t expect me not to worry, alright?”

Clark blanched.

“Do I smell?”

“No, but I caught something coming from Wayne’s room this morning.” He pulled away. “Like I said, if you’re happy, I’ll let you have that. But I don’t think I’ll ever stop worrying about you.”

Clark looked sheepish.

“Thanks.”

There was a sudden commotion in the hall, and then they heard,

“Master Wayne, all good intentions aside, if I find that rubbish you call cereal, it’s going in the bin!”

Clark threw his head back and laughed.

***

Bruce was helping with the heavier things, like helping families to pack boxes in their cars, and unloading new arrivals from trucks. Clark was with Tim and Damian distributing toys to the pups.
Several of them would marvel at Clark’s belly.

“Yeah, you used to be that tiny!” one mother explained to his pup while she passed her hands over the puppy-pocket.

The tiny pup giggled happily when Clark’s pup moved.

*Can’t wait to meet you,* he thought.

“Kara!” Damian called out.

“Hey, Damian!”

Clark looked up to see a tall, blonde Alpha woman making her way towards them, a staff badge clipped to her belt loop.

Mid-stride, she paused, locking her eyes on Clark. Her mouth opened as she studied him, unblinking.

Clark frowned.

“Who is she, Tim?”

“Kara Zorel. She works with the pups.”

As though waking from a trance, Kara blinked several times, closed her mouth, and continued her way towards them.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “Um, I don’t usually ask this by way of greeting, but, were you adopted?”

Clark shook his head.

“I am sorry,” Kara repeated, proceeding to speak very quickly. “It’s just that, you look so much like my uncle, and his wife was forced to give up their pup when she was a teenager, and they’ve been looking all over, but haven’t been able to find him, and when I saw you, it just…” she sighed and shook her head. “Never mind. Kara Zorel.” She held her hand out to shake, which Clark took.

“Clark Kent. Bruce Wayne is my support Alpha.”

“Nice to meet you.” Kara smiled warmly. “And who’s this?” She indicated his belly.

“Just ‘pup’ until the last ultrasound.” Clark said. “I’m thinking after my mother if it’s a girl, though.” He had already decided on Conner for a boy, but hadn’t told anyone. It was like once the decision was made, it felt like he needed to keep it to himself.

Kara smiled and bent towards his belly.

“How far along?”

“I’m due in March.”

“Well, someone looks like they’re growing real good.” she grinned, eyeing his belly before looking back to him. “Congratulations.”

Clark grinned back. He decided he liked Kara.

“Thank you.”
“He lets me feel when the puppy’s kicking.” Damian said proudly.

“That must be fun.” Kara said before straightening up. “Well, I better move on. Got lots of toys and clothes to distribute. Good meeting you.”

“Likewise.” Clark said. Kara gave a small wave and left.

***

Kara Zorel was often told by her sister, Alex, that she was psychic. She would get these nagging feelings, and every time she pursued them, they always turned out to be right. This was solidified the day their parents died on 9/11. She’d begged them not to go to New York, and Alex had made fun of her for being silly. Never again did she tease her for her feelings.

The problem with pursuing this feeling, however, was that it involved breaking the law.

Kara often got access into what were supposed to be sealed or confidential files, but that was when helping a parent track down a pup, or vice-versa. That meant she had permission.

In this case, because the adoption had been handled by her aunt’s parents while she was underage, only they or Clark would be allowed to okay looking at the files. Some asshole of a judge way back when had made things so airtight that no matter how much Lara and Jorden fought, no one would let them know the details of where their own flesh and blood son had been sent. And after Lara turned around and married Jorden, her parents had broken off all contact, so they would be no help.

Clark said he wasn’t adopted, which meant that if Kara was right, his adoptive parents hadn’t told him. She didn’t want to probe further without proof, because she didn’t want to cause any extra problems for him. She didn’t know his case, but having a support Alpha already spelled a lot.

This just left one recourse, and she hated it, but she had to be sure.

Kara’s passcard let her into the psychiatric team’s office, and she let the door close softly behind her without turning on the lights, using her phone to light her way instead. Harley was one of three psychiatrists employed by the clinic full-time, and although it could have just been a coincidence since support Alphas were chosen based on scent-compatibility, Harley and Bruce were friends, and it just felt right.

Harley could seem scatter-brained and disorganised if you met her outside of the clinic, but her files were very well-kept. Kara had seen them more than once, though it was usually with Harley’s supervision.

The H-L drawer beckoned her. She went through the Ks carefully, one at a time, until she found a typed label: Kent-Luthor, Clark.

Kara sat on the floor under the desk, balancing the longer part of her phone on the slide-out keyboard base, the flashlight part sticking out so it would shine below. She kept her ears perked in case she needed to turn it off in a hurry.

A few minutes into reading, Kara reached up onto the desk and, after a few seconds of groping around sightlessly, found the tissue box and began blowing her nose and trying to stem the flow of tears.

Lex Luthor was lucky he was dead. She wanted to break his neck.

Too quick, she corrected. Quick-stab, prison-riot style. Let him bleed out slowly.
Kara felt her heart pause for a couple of beats as she went over his personal info.

**Patient’s Name: Clark Kaleb Kent-Luthor**

“Oh, God.” she sobbed.

Lara had told her how she had insisted at the hospital with anyone who would listen that she wanted her son to be named Kaleb. She knew her Bible well; Kaleb had been a representative of the Tribe of Judah, his name meaning ‘dog,’ to signify his loyalty. Lara had named him that in hopes that it would lead him home, like a lost puppy.

This still wasn’t proof, but Kara felt hope.

She used her phone to take pictures of this and other relevant pieces of information, including his family’s names so that she could track down where they were from, later.

There was still no mention of adoption.

But Kara was far from done.

Shortly before the turkey-drive was over, Kara found Clark again, and took a picture of him with Damian and Tim, promising to e-mail it Bruce.

What she didn’t tell them was that she would also be sending it to her aunt and uncle.

***

To: ZorelJ&L@gmail.com
Cc: Alex_Sawyer52@gmail.com
Subject: DON’T GET TOO EXCITED!

Attached: 12242016_01.jpg

I’m sure it’s him, but I can’t put you in touch with him, yet. I still have some things to clear up to be certain

beyond a shadow of a doubt. If it is him, he doesn’t know he’s adopted, and he’s currently in the care of a support Alpha.

I wasn’t supposed to look at his file.

Here’s his full name, but I’m using symbols because it’s a high-profile case that might attract attention:

©ŁαπᵵΚ V½£θ KΞΠż-]uᵀbOπ

Please, be careful what questions you ask me! I have no solid evidence, yet, only my gut and this.
Love, Kara

To: PowerGirlKara@yahoo.com

Subject: Re:DON”T GET TOO EXCITED!

Come on, sis! How are we NOT supposed to get excited over this! Bad subject!

What’s he like? He looks preggers. Are those his pups? What happened?

He TOTALLY looks like uncle Jorden!

To: Alex_Sawyer52@gmail.com

Subject: Re:Re:DON”T GET TOO EXCITED!

I can’t discuss it, Alex! All I can tell you is what I already said: he’s an Omega in the care of a support Alpha.

Yes, he is pregnant. No, the others aren’t his: they belong to his support Alpha. No more questions! At least not online!

I’ll see you tomorrow for Christmas dinner, right?

Are you bringing Maggie?

To: PowerGirlKara@yahoo.com

Subject: Re:Re:Re:DON”T GET TOO EXCITED!

Yep, we’ll both be there. D33TS, please!

To: Alex_Sawyer52@gmail.com

Subject: Re:Re:Re:Re:DON”T GET TOO EXCITED!

I’ll only be telling the story once, so if you want to hear it, you’ll have to wait until uncle Jorden and aunt Lara show up.
And even then there are things I’d rather not say until I have more proof, because it’s not my story to tell, it’s his.

See you tomorrow!

***

“How were things with the turkey-drive, Clark?” William asked.

“A lot of pups liked touching my belly.” Clark chuckled.

They were eating Pizza Hut stuffed-crust all-meats pizza that had been picked up on their way back from the clinic.

“I got to meet the woman in charge of the… pup department, I guess they’d call it. She arranges for fostering and adoption, anyway. Even asked me if I was adopted!” Clark laughed. “Apparently, I look a lot like her uncle, who has a pup out there he can’t find. Kinda sad, huh?”

Martha started coughing violently, having choked on a piece of pizza crust.

“Mom!” Clark quickly stood, but William, who was sitting beside Martha, was able to help her knock the food out of her throat with a couple of hard knocks to her back. He afterward handed her her glass of water.

“I’m sorry.” she gasped, voice hoarse. “I inhaled at the wrong moment.” she gave a little laugh and Clark sat down, relieved.

“You’re sure you’re alright, Mrs. Kent?” Bruce asked.

“I’m fine. I think I’ll excuse myself just for a moment, though. I’ve gotten to that stage where coughing means the bladder wants a go.”

“I’ll walk with you, Martha. Just in case you have another fit on the way.”

“Thanks, dad.” Martha laughed again, still breathing a bit funny.

Just outside the bathroom, however, William stopped her.

“Martha, why haven’t you told him?”

Martha started crying, doing her best to stay quiet.

“I always meant to.” she whispered. “But I always thought Jonathan and I would be doing it together, and then he died, and now, with everything Clark’s been through…” she whined as she fought to keep a sob down, holding her breath until it passed. “This just isn’t the right time, dad.”

William sighed.

“I understand that. But he’s going to have to know eventually. This might be a stretch, but what if the woman at the clinic was right? It’d be better coming from you than anyone else, Martha.”

Martha nodded, breathing through her nose as she fought down another sob.

“Not yet, please, dad?”

Williams hugged his daughter.
“Come on. We better get you cleaned up.”

By the time they returned to the dining room, there was no sign, visible or scented, of Martha’s distress. After eating, everyone, including Alfred, gathered to watch *It’s A Wonderful Life* in the theatre room.

Damian, Tim, and Jason joined Clark and Bruce in the giant bed (Dick was at Barbara’s apartment), all with the matching flannel pyjamas with reindeer (red for the boys, blue for the adults), and stayed up until just after midnight, where they wished each other Merry Christmas before falling asleep.

A few doors down the hall, Martha was sobbing into her pillow.
Chapter 31

Chapter Summary

Presents and more presents!

Chapter Notes

I apologise for being so late in uploads. However, as tomorrow would normally be the next update date and I missed two from before, I figured a few hours early would be a good idea.

The good news is, I have the next chapter already complete, and a good head-start on the one following, so things should flow more smoothly for the next few uploads.

This is a time-skip chapter, so we go from Christmas to the puppy party in short order. Good news with that, is that stuff you’ve all been waiting for will be happening in the next two chapters.

The song lyrics I’ve picked actually have little to do with this chapter, apart from one little scene involving Floyd’s daughter, which I explain in the endnotes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

We all can feel happy. We all can feel mad.

We all can feel good. We all can feel bad.

We all want to laugh and we all want to play.

We all are amazing, each in our own way

— The Amazing Song by Chrissy Ferraro

Clark and Bruce woke early the next morning to Damian’s and Tim’s insistent tugs at their pajamas while Jason just sat cross-legged on a spot of the bed, laughing at his younger brothers’ enthusiasm.

“Presents! Presents! Presents!” the pups chanted.

Clark and Bruce both groaned but couldn’t help smiling as they each took their time to stretch, yawn, and rub their eyes.

“Alright, pup.” Clark hugged Damian to him, kissing his hair. “We’re up.”

Tim gave a shriek and giggled wildly as Bruce pinned him and began tickling his sides mercilessly.
“You wanna mess with papa bear?” Bruce teased, grinning.

“I’m sorry!” Tim gasped, wheezing as he laughed. “I’m sorry, Bruce!”

Bruce stopped his onslaught and pulled Tim into a crushing hug, kissing his temple.

“Merry Christmas, Tim.”

“Merry Christmas, Bruce.” Tim replied, hugging back, grinning.

“Dick just texted.” Jason said, looking at his phone. “He and Barbara are about a half-hour away.”

“We better get going, then.” Bruce said as they climbed out of bed.

“I’ll go check on mom and grandpa.” Clark said.

“Can I come?” Damian asked.

“Sure.” Clark smiled at him, throwing an arm around the pup’s shoulders.

“I’ll see if Alfred’s up.” Bruce said.

William’s room was just past Damian’s room, and Martha’s across and down. Clark rapped his knuckles on the dark wood panelling.

“Grandpa? You up?”

He didn’t hear a response, so he quietly opened the door.

“Grandpa?”

The bed was empty, though it had clearly been slept in.

Clark frowned, then turned when he heard his name being called softly.

“Hey, grandpa.” Clark said as he saw William closing Martha’s door behind him.

“Your mother is feeling a bit unwell this morning.” William explained as he came up to him, placing a hand on his shoulder. “I think we should let her rest.”

Clark smelled a faint trace of the salt of tears.

“I’ll just go see her for a minute.” Clark said. “Could you take Damian downstairs, grandpa?”

William sighed, but nodded.

“Just so you know, Clark, this is the kind of thing that she can’t be pressed into. She’ll tell you when she’s ready.”

“Tell me what?” Clark felt a surge of worry. “Is she sick?”

“No.” William assured him. “But please, don’t press. She needs to get there, okay? And it won’t do you any good to worry, especially with how close you’re getting. It’s nothing to worry about, anyway, not really. It’s just…” he sighed. “Please, trust me, it’s nothing you need to worry about. She just needs time.”

Clark took a shaky breath, then nodded.
“I’ll just go in for a minute.”

William nodded and extended his hand to Damian, who took it mutely, and the two walked away.

Clark knocked gently on Martha’s door.

“Mom? Can I come in?”

Instead of an answer, Clark heard the bedsprings shift and then the door opened in front of him. He didn’t have time to react before his mother was hugging him and sadness filled his nostrils, nearly pulling him over the edge.

“Mom?” Clark asked, a lump forming in his throat.

“Oh, Clark, I’m sorry!” Martha sobbed pulling back.

“Mom, what’s wrong? Please tell me.”

“Nothing’s wrong, Clark.” Martha shook her head. “Something’s just caught up with me, is all. I promise, I’ll explain everything, but not today. Okay?” she tried to smile at him, taking his face in her hands. “It’s Christmas. I just need a few minutes and I’ll be right down. Please, enjoy today. It’s not something bad, it’s just complicated, and I promise I will explain, but not today. Okay, sweetie?” she kissed his cheek. “Please, honey. Just let it be Christmas.”

Clark took a deep breath, swallowed, and nodded.

“Okay. But don’t let it be too long, mom. You say it’s not bad, but whatever it is is hurting you. Don’t let that stay longer than it has to.”

“I promise you, Clark.” she sniffed. “Go on, now. I’ll be there, soon.” She gave him another smile.

Clark kissed her cheek and hugged her once more before turning away.

***

Everyone waited before opening their presents, as Dick said he was only ten minutes out. When he arrived, he and Barbara were hand in hand, wearing the biggest grins anyone had ever seen.

“Come on, let’s see it!” Tim shouted.

Dick turned bright red and held up his left hand, showing off the silver band with a row of light blue topaz stones in the form of a two-sided triangle.

Clark couldn’t help but squeal and went up to him to admire the ring, Damian, Jason, and Tim right on his heels, Bruce not far behind.

“Congratulations!” Clark declared before pulling Dick into a hug, then backing off, hurrying to find a box of tissues as the emotion overcame him.

Bruce hugged Dick, next, holding on for quite a while. He didn’t start crying, but his emotion was very clear on his face.

Jason went up to Barbara, and crossed his arms, narrowing his eyes at her, but his expression was one of amusement.

“Just so you know, if you break his heart, I’m coming to kick your ass.”
Barbara laughed in indignation, crossing her arms in turn.

“I’ll consider myself warned, little man.”

Jason stuck his tongue out at her, then opened his arms for a hug, which Barbara granted.

Damian wouldn’t let them hold back from the presents any longer, so the group returned to the tree. Tim and Damian distributed the presents quickly, so everyone else just had to sit in the armchairs and sofas which had been brought closer to make a semi-circle around the tree.

Martha joined them just before the unwrapping started, no trace of her earlier woes on her face at all. Clark felt a pang of concern, but her demeanor towards him as she sat beside him on the sofa clearly said she was not going to discuss it, so he allowed for ignorance of the situation.

His mother had gotten him some more of his father’s things, including a pocket-watch having belonged to Hiram, and a surprisingly soft puppy blanket, made of a deep blue wool and lined with red cotton, also very soft to the touch.

“I realise that’s usually more of a puppy party gift, but, as it’s an heirloom…”

“It’s beautiful, ma.” Clark hugged her.

“It’s what we brought you home in.” Martha said, smiling, though she looked like she was going to cry again. “I figured it’s about time you have it.”

From William, a jewelry set from his great-grandmother, who had been a male Omega.

Each piece had sapphires and diamonds set in gold; a choker, bracelet, and ear cuffs. It had been the style for male Omegas to have ear cuffs whereas females had ear bobs (studs were considered unisex), but, these days, it was less likely to be found a male Omega wearing jewelry at all unless he was in costume or a high society function.

“These were supposed to be a wedding gift, but they were sent back.” William explained.

Clark was both happy to have the pieces, but felt a flash of anger at learning that Lex had sent back the gift. How many other gifts had Lex returned to their senders?

“Thanks, grandpa.” Clark hugged him.

“I’ve a bunch of other pieces for you to go through, sometime. But I thought these suited you for your eyes.”

Clark smiled.

Bruce had gotten him a book on writing science fiction and fantasy, as well as a beautiful leather-bound journal and pen made to look like a quill. Clark inhaled the smell of the leather and got up to hug Bruce.

“Thank you.” he whispered.

“You’re very welcome. Anytime.” Bruce hugged him back.

The younger boys had teamed up and gotten him hardcover copies of authors he’d said he enjoyed reading, or stories he had meant to get to and hadn’t, yet. He now had the complete fiction of H. P. Lovecraft (from Tim), Sherlock Holmes (from Dick), a boxed set of Harry Potter plus Hogwarts Library set (from Damian, he had yet to read The Deathly Hallows), and The Dark Tower (from
Clark chuckled as he regarded the pile of books.

“This is going to be quite the mountain to tackle.” he said, grinning.

“Jason, mind helping me bring out Dick’s present?” Bruce asked, standing.

Jason scrambled to his feet from where he was sitting admiring his colouring pencils and followed Bruce to the ballroom door.

Tim held the door open as they returned to the lounge, each holding the end handle of an antique wood chest, which they placed in front of where Dick was sitting with Barbara.

Dick placed his hand in front of his mouth, his eyes wide.

“Everyone pitched in to pick things for you, including Clark.” Bruce said, his voice thick as he tried to hold back his emotions.

Dick opened the chest and carefully sifted through the contents, revealing linens, towels, dishes, a coffee maker, a slow cooker, and a blender, as well as a few more personal items such as books and other gifts.

Barbara put her arms around Dick’s shoulders as he started sobbing, overwhelmed. Clark handed him the box of tissues.

That evening, Bruce watched the video on the memory card Tim had given him on his laptop. When Clark asked him what was wrong after he started crying, Bruce just answered by hugging him tight.

The next morning, he gave each of his boys a tight hug, too.

***

The rest of the holidays went by in a happy haze. After ringing in the New Year, life seemed to slow to a halt, which some days Clark found good because the holidays had left him exhausted. Near the end of January, however, he started to go a little stir-crazy. He attributed this to being in the last trimester, but also remembering what it was like to always be stuck at home from his old life. Bruce would have gladly taken him to town to help him with this, but January and February seemed to throw all the winter storms at once, making the country roads leading to the manor too treacherous to navigate most of the time. This included the court date against Harkness being pushed back to April.

On one of the milder days in early February, however, Bruce surprised him by bringing him into the garage and showing him a brand-new sturdy pick-up with chains on the wheels and a pointer plow on the front.

“I’m not sure how the weather on Valentine’s Day is going to be, so this will be an all-day outing, if you’re up for it.” Bruce explained as he held the passenger door open.

Clark snickered.

“That is the worst way I’ve ever been asked on a date.”

Bruce blushed.

“Um… I--”
Clark laughed harder and walked past him to climb into the truck.

Bruce stood frozen for a few seconds, blinking, then shut Clark’s door before going to climb in on his side.

They went to see a matinee showing of The Space Between Us, and Bruce held Clark for all the tear-jerking scenes, shedding a few, himself.

Clark braved the food court for the first time, though they went to eat their food in a corner of the Starbucks adjacent to the Barnes & Noble where it was quieter.

While trekking through Target, Clark discovered two-bite brownies of the salted caramel variety, and Bruce happily bought him the shelf’s supply, as well as several tubs of cappuccino frozen yogurt.

Before returning home, Clark insisted they stop by the art gallery, where he gifted Chris with two boxes of brownies. She thanked him in her bubbly fashion, plus a free bar of homemade coconut scented soap.

***

After arriving back at the manor and having put the treats away (the frozen yogurt in the deep freeze, the brownies where the boys wouldn’t find them), Clark was pleasantly tired and went to take a nap on the sofa while Bruce got some work done on the computer. The boys were all home for the day, and Alfred was supervising them to make sure that homework got done before any Super Smash Bros. was to be had.

Unfortunately, the quiet didn’t last long, as Bruce stood quick to attention at the scent of scared Omega and turned to see Clark was clearly not sleeping well.

Bruce was at his side instantly, carefully holding him where he could scent, also mindful of not letting him fall off the sofa. Clark had been having fewer nightmares, but, sometimes they popped up, and there was nothing for it but to hold him until he felt better. Sometimes he could be soothed without waking, other times not. This one felt more serious, so after a minute of Clark still smelling scared, when the whimpers began, Bruce gently tried to wake him with soft words and firmer touches.

Clark woke with a gasp, then clutched to Bruce and scented. He didn’t cry, this time, but Bruce could sense when Clark switched from fear to frustration.

“This isn’t ever going to go away, is it?” he asked, voice still a bit shaky.

“Maybe not.” Bruce said. “But you’re alive, and the worst of it is over. What’s left now is just in your head, it’s not happening anymore. And you have people who want to help you to feel safe again whenever you need it.”

Clark nuzzled more into Bruce’s throat, and Bruce hugged him more firmly in response.

For the rest of the time until dinner, Clark sat in an armchair with an ottoman under his feet and laptop in his lap, pulled up close to Bruce’s desk.

***

Clark’s ultrasound managed to get squeezed in the last week of February between storms and snow-cleanups.
“I’m not seeing anything that looks even vaguely like a vagina on here, do you, mom?” Megan turned to Doctor Jones.

“I don’t believe so.” he confirmed with a smile, examining the, slightly warped, 3D image. “Congratulations, Clark. It’s a boy.”

Clark started crying right there on the exam table. Bruce squeezed his hand and kissed his forehead. He could only nod when Megan asked him if he wanted the video e-mailed to him.

“Conner.” Clark said when he’d finally gotten his breath back.

Bruce smiled and kissed his hand.

“Conner Kent?” he verified.

“Hell, yes.” Clark confirmed. “As soon as mom and grandpa have that stupid legal shit figured out, I am dropping that damn hyphen.”

Bruce hummed, proud of him, and kissed his hand again.

“So, the sixth of March, as we agreed?” Megan verified as the date she would come stay with them to help Clark through this last stretch of his pregnancy.

“We should be able to finally have the new tub installed and ready.” Bruce said. “It’s been difficult getting an installation team up the road with the weather we’ve been having.”

“Great!” She grinned. “Make sure you keep everyone out of the house while they’re working on it, to avoid inhaling the plaster dust.” Megan cautioned. “Here’s some more cream, and, who gets the bad news? I’m afraid 3D imaging ain’t cheap.”

She held up an invoice which Bruce took without complaint.

***

Once they had the date for the tub installation set (Alfred offered to stay to show the workmen where to go and keep an eye on the situation), Bruce reminded Clark that they’d yet to throw him a puppy party.

“We could have it at the clinic.” Bruce offered. “It’s a safe space, and you should be able to invite whoever you want.”

Clark looked uncomfortable.

“I don’t want people to feel like they need to get me stuff.”

“How about this: put ‘no gifts required’ on the invites? It can be like a congratulatory party.”

Clark smiled. “Okay.”

***

What Bruce hadn’t told Clark, was that people were very likely to get him gifts anyway.

Sure enough, when Bruce led him into the room, there was a small mountain of presents all wrapped up in bright, colourful designs, varying in size and shape.
Clark tried not to cry as Bruce and Damian brought him to an armchair borrowed from one of the nursing rooms and people cheered and clapped for him.

Floyd walked up to him with Zoe. Clark hadn’t got the chance to see much of her at Christmas, as she’d been shy and hid behind her father. Now, however, Floyd put a gift in her hands, and gestured towards Clark.

“This is my friend we met at Christmas, remember? He’s gonna have a puppy.”

“Puppy!” she squealed, excited.

“Puppy’s in his tummy, right now, getting ready to meet the world.”

“Puppy! Puppy! Puppy!” she repeated, bouncing up and down, arms flapping, shaking the gift around.

“Whoa, now, calm down, honey. Use your words.” Floyd soothed, stroking her arms.

Clark grinned at her enthusiasm, but something seemed a bit off. Zoe was nearly twelve, he had understood, but her behavior was closer to someone much younger.

“Has Zoe seen Julia on Sesame Street, yet?” Damian asked.

“She has.” Floyd smiled at him. “She likes Julia a lot.”

“Who’s Julia?” Clark asked.

“Julia is Elmo’s new friend on Sesame Street.” Damian explained. “She’s four and has autism. Just like Zoe.”

Oh.

“Our teacher’s been showing us the videos from YouTube because we’re getting a new classmate in March who has it, too.”

“Julia’s brain works different, just like mine!” Zoe declared happily, oscillating from foot to foot, her father holding her arms so she didn’t fall over or accidentally hit Clark with the present.

“Zoe’s vocabulary has gotten better the past few years,” Floyd said, beaming over his daughter. “She used to only repeat stuff or say very few words at once. Still does, sometimes, if she’s excited.”

“Can I give Clark his present, now?” Zoe looked up at her father.

“Yeah, go ahead, darlin’.”

Zoe bounced some more as she handed the gift to Clark.

Inside was like a book, but each page was a different type of fabric or other material.

“It’s a touching book!” Zoe squealed, bouncing some more. “So puppy can pick what he likes touch!”

Clark grinned.

“Thank you, Zoe.”
“Hug?” she asked.

“Zo-e…” Floyd gently chided.

Oops. Can I have a hug?” Zoe corrected herself.

Clark grinned wider.

“I love hugs.” He said, and leaned forward in his chair. Floyd directed Zoe to ease onto Clark’s side instead of the front so that she wouldn’t press on his belly.

“You smell very sweet.” she said.

Clark hmmed.

“Omegas smell sweeter when they’re gonna have a puppy.” Floyd explained to Zoe.

Zoe seemed to be distracted by the smell, so Floyd had to gently guide her away so that Clark could start going through the rest of the presents.

The presents ranged from nice-to-have toys and clothing to essentials like Costco-sized boxes of diapers and wet wipes.

Everyone had brought finger foods, and Bruce made sure Clark didn’t have to get up once.

“You’ve made so much progress, Clark.” Harley said, bringing up her chair to sit beside him.

Clark smiled.

“I’ve had a good support system.”

Harley looked from Clark to Bruce and back again.

“I think we’ll be having a necessary conversation for our next session.” she said, knowingly. “It’s not fun, but, once it’s out of the way, it’ll be better.”

Clark turned red.

“Aren’t I a little old for The Talk?” he teased. “I am having a puppy.”

Harley giggled.

“You’d be surprised. There was an Omega who didn’t understand why he hadn’t gotten pregnant in the two years since his first puppy, and hadn’t factored in the fact that his Alpha had been away on military duty for eighteen months. It didn’t occur to him that if he’s not having sex, puppies aren’t gonna happen.”

Clark groaned.

“This is why we need sex ed in schools.” he said through a mouthful of cake. “Jason was telling me what he learned in school versus the classes the clinic puts on that he attended, and, of course, the materials Bruce made available for him. It’s a travesty. It’s like they don’t get that teens are gonna do it no matter what, so they don’t teach them how to avoid getting pregnant.”

“Don’t forget STIs.” Harley sighed. “I saw this movie recently, The Normal Heart, all about the AIDS outbreak in the eighties. I caution you now: full box of tissues if you watch it. People still
don’t get the importance of condoms, and the HIV infection rate is higher than it was in the eighties. Young people don’t get it. They think ‘oh, we have treatments, now.’ But not everyone can get treatments, and even if you can, you still have a disease that could have been prevented if only they had used a condom!”

“I’ll have to put that on my list of movies to watch after the post-partum is over. I’m trying to stick with happy stuff from now until further notice.”

“Probably a good idea.” Harley agreed, right before snatching a cookie off of Clark’s plate.

“Hey!” he protested. Harley stuck out her tongue at him.

“Harley girl…” Pam crooned as she came to stand behind Harley, placing both hands on her cheeks, gently guiding her to look up. “It’s never a good idea to take someone else’s food, but I’m quite sure that taking a pregnant Omega’s food is exceptionally bad.”

“Sowwy, Pammy.” Harley play-pouted.

Clark had never seen this side of Harley before. It was an interesting dynamic she and Pam had.

“I saw that.” Bruce came to stand beside Clark and placed two cookies of the variety Harley had taken into his plate.

“Oops.” Harley said.

“I think you should apologise to Clark, shouldn’t you?” Pam added.

“Sorry, Clark.” Harley said, though it looked like she was trying not to smirk as she bit into the stolen cookie.

Very interesting dynamic.

“Apology accepted.” Clark said, smiling.

As the party began to wind down, everyone full and happy, Clark did something which he didn’t think he would have been capable of even a month ago. He asked Bruce to call for everyone’s attention, and stood to address them.

“I’d just like to thank you all for everything you brought, be it gifts or food, and thank you to everyone I’ve met since I started coming to the clinic. You’ve all helped me in some way, even if it was just a kind word in passing. Trust me when I say that every kind word helps.” Damn it, don’t cry, he thought as a swelling began in his throat. “Thank you to my friends from before who were nothing but understanding even after I hadn’t spoken to them in years.” The strain of talking around the lump was starting to be audible. “Thank you to my family, my mom and grandpa, who have been doing so much for me.” A sob escaped before continuing. “And Bruce,” he turned his head to look at the Alpha. “Thank you for opening your home to me, and being just so patient through everything.” Bruce smiled at him and Clark returned it as he turned to address the room again. “Of course life would be better if no one ever needed this kind of help, but, since this is a world which has demons as well as angels,” Clark sobbed again, suddenly remembering that damn painting which Lex had moved into their penthouse from his father’s mansion. God, how he hated that painting. He held his breath for a moment, then took a deep, shaky breath before continuing. “I hope that one day I’ll be able to make a difference in someone else’s life, as you have all done for me. To show someone that even though they have walked through hell, it doesn’t mean the angels aren’t waiting on the other side.” His voice quivered more and more as he continued to speak, but he was determined to finish. “Or, for that matter, that there aren’t angels who are ready to walk through hell
with them, if it means bringing them safely out of it.” Another sob, the tears running down his face in earnest. “Thank you.”

It may have been Floyd who said “Here, here!” and then everyone applauded as Clark nearly collapsed back into the recliner and Bruce was immediately there with tissue and his ever-steady self, holding his hand and waiting patiently so that Clark could scent him once he got the moisture out of his nose.

“That was beautiful.” Chloe told him, rubbing tears from her own eyes as she came up to him, kissing the top of his head. “I’ve missed your speeches, you know. You used to give doozies.” she said, smiling at him.

Clark gave a small laugh through his crying. He was glad she liked it, because he really had no idea what he was doing while he was doing it. His writing worked the same way. He was always critical of it until someone else came along and told him they liked it.

“Thanks, Chloe. How are things at the Planet?”

“They’re pretty good. I came out on top of the other newbies at the end of the three-month trial, so that’s something. Lois even got me to help make room in her office so that I can share with her instead of being in the bullpen.” She giggled.

“And, um, how’s…” Clark made a head gesture towards where Floyd was supervising Zoe playing with the other pups.

Chloe blushed, but smiled.

“Um… It’s still early, but…” she took a deep breath. “I think it’ll work out.”

Oliver, Diana, and Floyd helped Bruce get the items into the car while Clark was tied up talking to a few of the lingering guests.

“He’s happy.” Diana pointed out. “You’ve been very good for him, Bruce.”

Bruce smiled.

“He’s amazing, Diana.”

She smiled back at him.

“You care for him a great deal. Does he feel the same?”

Bruce shrugged slightly.

“I know he has feelings for me, he said so himself. I just don’t know if it’s the kind that will last, or if it’s only because he’s finally allowed to ask for what he wants after so long of being in someone’s control. All I know is, as long as I can make him smile, that’s all I want.”

Diana pulled him into a hug.

“I do not wish to give you false hope, my friend. But I don’t think you need to worry overly much.”

Bruce squeezed back.

“I hope you’re right. But that’s not why I took him in.”
“I know, my friend. But that is what makes it all the more beautiful.”

Diana pulled back.

“Take care, Bruce.”

“You, too, Diana.”

***

Bruce was feeling waves of bliss coming off of Clark on the way back to the manor.

Clark was sitting with both arms around his belly, as though trying to hug Conner. Dick was driving the boys.

“As an extension of your puppy party,” Bruce said. “Alfred’s making apple pie for dessert.”

Clark’s blissful smile widened.

“Can’t wait.”

“For the pie or the birth?”

Clark’s smile dropped a bit.

“I’m excited for my son to be in my arms. Not so much the actual expulsion from the womb.”

“I’ll be with you every step of the way.” Bruce promised. “You know those stories of Omegas breaking their Alpha’s hand during labor? If you need to do that, do it.”

“Please bring me a stress ball, first. I don’t want to break your hand.” Clark pouted slightly.

“What I mean is, whatever you need, I’m there.”

Clark smiled at him, but, inwardly, he felt a pang of sadness which had been weighing on him throughout the party, fluctuating in intensity.

I can’t ask him. Can’t can’t can’t can’t can’t can’t can’t can’t can’t can’t--

“Clark, are you alright?”

Clark realised that Bruce had pulled over, but hadn’t been aware of the actual action, only now seeing that they weren’t moving. Bruce had undone his seatbelt and was holding his face in one hand, thumb stroking his cheek.

Clark swallowed and leaned into Bruce’s hand, his good mood dissipating almost instantly. It didn’t take much these days, almost like right after Lex’s death. It was the hormones, he knew, but it was also fear; fear of the unknown, fear of what might happen after Conner was born, fear of his own feelings, because he knew he probably felt too much; fear of Bruce’s feelings, because he didn’t know how far they ran.

“I don’t know.” Clark said, as the tears began. “I’m scared. I’m scared of giving birth, I’m afraid of what’s going to happen after, I-I-I--”

Bruce held him as best he could, leaning over the gear shift as Clark broke down.
“I know I can’t promise the birth is going to be easy.” Bruce told him. “I think that’s an oxymoron waiting to happen. All I can promise is that after, as long as you’ll let me, I’ll help you. Whether that’s with you still in the manor or not, you get to decide that when you’re ready.”

Clark sobbed harder and clutched to Bruce.

Chapter End Notes

I've been following Sesame Street's Julia with great interest. I have A.D.D., and for some A.D.D. persons, myself included, this has similarities to high-functioning autism, such as problems with missing social cues, and my "odd" behavior led to being bullied often in school from Kindergarten on through middle school. For high school, my family had moved, so I got to start with people who didn't know my previous awkwardness, and by then I had learned enough to navigate more successfully so as to avoid a majority of bullies, though, of course, there's always going to be someone who decides they don't like you and will hurt you for the offense of your existence.

My brother, however, has aspergers, which is on the autism spectrum. Again, high-functioning, but he still has his issues with social cues, can't stand loud noises, stressful situations literally make him freeze up, and if there's too much noise (a room full of people talking), it can be overwhelming for him. When we moved, he started second grade. Like me, a lot of people didn't understand him and gave him a hard time. He, too, is really happy to see Sesame Street add Julia to their character roster, in hopes that it will help children in their interactions with ASD persons.

Here's a playlist I made of my favourite of the videos they have as part of their See Amazing movement, promoting Autism awareness and acceptance.

Sesame Street and Autism

Not everyone has been so welcoming to Julia, unfortunately, crying loudly that her presence is a conspiracy by Big Pharma to push vaccinations. *sighs* people sure suck, don't they?

Your presence excepted, of course, dear readers. I am always happy to read your comments, they really make my day.

Until April 5th!
Chapter 32

Chapter Summary

Clark and Bruce talk... among other things ^_^;;

Chapter Notes

Aren’t y'all spoiled? I'm a day early. I just really wanted to tease y'all 'cause something big will be happening next chapter, so... enjoy!

‘Cause I ain’t afraid to say those three words to ya
But I’mma say those three words to ya
Because I know you’re all I need
And I just wanna be there
And it ain’t no guarantee
We will make it if I say those three words to ya
But I’mma say those three words to ya
— Three Words by Marcus Canty

Having Megan stay in the manor proved to be both exhausting and a blessing.

Clark found his every moment of the day filled with breathing practises, upper body exercises, and practising positions in the new tub so that he would know how to move.

Plus side, he was feeling less anxious about the birthing, as well as not having much time to dwell on panic-inducing subjects such as wondering if Bruce cared for him as much as he did.

Negative side, he found himself exhausted at bedtime, and whatever feelings his mind hadn’t been able to focus on during the day came blasting forth all of a sudden, keeping him awake.

Sometimes this meant crying, but Bruce would hold him. Other times it just meant lying awake, staring at the clock, his mind buzzing with too many thoughts to even think about sleep.

On one of these nights, Clark decided to try going to the bathroom and jerk off, to see if it would help him sleep. And it did work, partially. However, the next time he was about to climb into bed and could already feel his mind buzzing, he had one, clear thought above the rest, and that was that
there was a gorgeous Alpha only a few feet away, also getting ready for bed.

Trouble was, even when he knew he wanted to do something, even though they had been intimate several times already, he still felt weird asking Bruce about it.

“Bruce?” Clark ventured.

“Need a hand?” Bruce said, smiling, waving his right hand.

“Uh, yeah. How--?”

“You have a particular tone when you want to ask me about being intimate. The tone plus the scent of your arousal are dead giveaways.”

Clark sighed with relief.

“You don’t have to worry about asking me.” Bruce said as he slid into the bed next to him in just his boxers. “The worst that might happen is I say no.”

“Thanks.” Clark said as he leaned in for a kiss.

Bruce had quickly figured out the best way to work Clark up was to focus on upper body for a decent amount of time before moving south. He figured this was because Lex always aimed for how to get Clark prepped as quick as possible, only using him as a warm place for his knot.

Bruce would gladly spend hours bringing Clark pleasure if he asked it of him. They still hadn’t tried penetration, but Bruce was fine with that, too. There was nothing more arousing than watching Clark’s face contort with pleasure as he kissed, nipped, and suckled at his breasts. Tied for that first place were the sounds Clark would make; the whimpers, the panting, the whines.

Oh, the whines… watching him squirm as the high noises came from his throat.

And, of course, there was the smell.

It was sweet and enticing and called to him as Bruce licked and sucked at Clark’s scent glands, trying to get more of it.

“Bruce…” Clark let out, grabbing at the Alpha’s hair.

“Time to move down?”

Clark hesitated.

“Clark?” Bruce held his face and stroked softly. “Do you need to stop?”

Clark shook his head slightly.

“No, it’s just…” he sighed.

“Take your time.”

Bruce laid next to him, patiently stroking his face and gifting him with light kisses.

Clark whimpered, then looked Bruce in the eye.

“I wish I could go down on you, but I’m scared.”
Bruce pulled Clark in, kissing his cheek and temple.

“Then don’t. If you’re not comfortable, then don’t do it.”

“It’s just that… I used to love the idea of doing that for my partner, and now we’re here, and you’ve done it for me more than once and I can’t--”

Bruce cut him off with a kiss.

“If you want to, you’ll get there. If right now, you’re scared, then you shouldn’t force yourself. Just give yourself time.”

Clark nodded and turned to kiss Bruce’s palm.

“I’m sorry.”

Bruce kissed him, slowly, trying somehow to communicate how he felt without words.

“You don’t have anything to be sorry about, Clark.” He said when he pulled back for breath. “Remember: if you’re not having fun, I’m not having fun. I just want you to feel good.”

Somehow having said the magic words, Bruce suddenly found himself being pulled closer to Clark, the Omega kissing him back with great enthusiasm.

“Too bad,” Clark said, speaking between kisses. “My belly’s in the way… I think frottage… would be a good trick to try.”

Bruce hummed happily at the suggestion.

“What about intercrural? I should be able to reach around okay.”

Clark thought for a moment. Lex had never taken him sideways before…

“I think that might work… Just, um, it’s the being behind me thing that worries me a bit. But as long as we can maneuver so that I can scent you, it might work.”

Bruce nodded.

“We’ll take it slow. Any time you feel uncomfortable, just say so.”

Clark responded by smiling before kissing Bruce again, sucking and nipping lightly at his bottom lip.

Bruce eventually moved his attention downward, covering Clark’s neck in kisses and nips and sucks, feeling especially accomplished whenever he got a sound out of him for running his teeth on his scent gland just the right way.

After some time making out, Clark turned over onto his left side and managed to let himself just feel the moment. Bruce’s scent was all over the bed, anyway, so that helped.

Bruce also paid lots of attention to Clark’s neck, breasts, and sides, which was something Lex never did. The only time he did anything to Clark’s neck during sex was to worry at the bond-mark as a reminder of ownership.

Bruce was currently propping himself up to reach over as Clark turned his head back for kisses, sometimes pausing to let the Omega scent him. As he ran his touches down to rub over his belly, Clark reached for his hand and they laced fingers.
“Do it now.” Clark panted, looking a little punch-drunk.

“Is it okay if I use some of your slick?” Bruce verified. “I have some lube, if not, but I thought I could just rub between your cheeks for a bit to make sure the way is wet enough.”

Clark nodded then kissed him.

“Okay, do that.”

Bruce gently lifted one of Clark’s butt cheeks, ever mindful of even the slightest reaction that might appear that the mood was changing, but even as he slotted his cock in the cleft and let the cheek fall to close the gap, Clark’s reactions were only that of pleasure.

“Ooh.” he shuddered, eyes rolling back before closing them.

“Good?” Bruce asked.

“Mm-hmm.” Clark affirmed. “Maybe you could just stay there, do you think that would work?”

Bruce hummed thoughtfully as he did a few slow, controlled thrusts along Clark’s cleft, which had the Omega writhing and squeezing his buttocks, adding to Bruce’s pleasure.

“I’d just be worried,” Bruce said, grunting with the effort to get words out. “About accidentally penetrating you when I pick up speed. Maybe just move here for a bit before I go to your thighs?”

Clark nodded.

Bruce continued to move up and down through Clark’s cleft, plenty of slick build-up from Clark’s arousal easing his way. He increased his speed slightly, but was ever mindful of his aim, not wanting to penetrate Clark as the Omega still wasn’t ready.

He noticed after a while that Clark had started touching himself in time to Bruce’s movement.

“Want a hand?” Bruce asked, kissing his shoulder.

“Not now.” Clark said, nearly breathless. “Just keep doing what you’re doing.”

“Okay.” Bruce agreed. “Lift your leg?”

Clark readily lifted his right thigh so that Bruce could slot himself between, then let his leg close back. With every thrust, Bruce was hitting the back of his balls, and Clark found himself enjoying the sensation very much, each exhale a little moan.

Bruce seemed determined to do something with his hands, so he alternated between petting Clark’s hair, stroking his cheek, playing with his breasts, and rubbing over his swollen belly.

“Clark, you’re so beautiful.” Bruce crooned. “Seeing you like this, knowing you feel good… I would do this for you every day if you asked.”

Clark felt his throat swell, because he had been thinking along those lines.

What if he could do this with Bruce every day? What if he stayed?

“Bruce-- Alpha--” Clark began to whine, getting closer to his climax. He took Bruce’s hand and held it with him on his cock as he picked up speed, nevertheless keeping a gentle hold, not wanting to squeeze too hard lest it feel like Lex’s rough grip.
“Are you close, Clark?” Bruce breathed harshly into his ear.

“God, yes, so close, Bruce!”

“Then don’t fight it, Clark. Take what’s yours.”

Bruce maneuvered his head and Clark’s to kiss him just as the Omega spurted over their joined fingers, swallowing his cry of pleasure. A few thrusts later and Bruce was spurtng on Clark, and Clark moaned again at the feel of the hot seed on him, the feel of the swollen knot between his thighs.

Bruce was attentive to kissing Clark’s face, whispering reassurances to him, stroking his hair with his clean hand until Clark regained his speech.

“I love you.”

Bruce froze. It had been a whisper, almost inaudible, that he wasn’t sure he hadn’t imagined it until Clark seized up suddenly, a sob wrenching from his throat.

“I’m sorry!” he cried. “Oh, God, I’m so--” he sobbed harder, unable to continue.

Bruce shushed him gently, continuing to pet him.

“Clark, it’s okay, really.” Bruce was thinking it was a hell of a whole lot more than okay, he was ready to tell Clark how he felt, but he knew he needed to wait.

“I’m going to go get some towels, I’ll be right back. It’s okay.” He kissed his cheek and handed him a box of tissues from the nightstand, then kissed his cheek once more before darting to the bathroom.

Bruce felt like singing. He wanted to shout. He wanted to go running through the halls and cry for joy. He wanted to wake the boys and tell them the news.

But it wasn’t news, yet. More to the point, it wasn’t his to tell. He needed to make sure that Clark was alright, and discuss if this was really what he wanted. Only if he was sure and when he was ready would they tell the boys.

He felt like he was struggling with a kite in the wind, wanting to fly higher and higher, not knowing where the wind might take him.

*Clark. Have to think about Clark.*

Bruce let the hot water run, first cleaning himself with a facecloth, then took a couple of towels, wetting them and then squeezing thoroughly before returning to the bedroom.

Clark was still curled on his side, his arms around his belly, now, still crying, but more quietly.

Bruce gently cleaned him, using one hand to stroke his face, trying to soothe him.

After throwing the towels in the hamper, Bruce climbed in on the side of the bed so that he’d be facing Clark and pulled the blankets over them.

“How you do completely honest: did you mean what you said, or was it just being caught up in the moment? Don’t be afraid of what I might say, just give me an honest answer.”

Clark whimpered.
“I didn’t mean to say it.”

Bruce stroked his cheek.

“But is it true?”

Clark curled more, hiding his face from Bruce.

“Yes.” he whispered. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to.”

Bruce gently urged Clark to look at him. He started by wiping the tears from his cheeks, then took some tissue and dabbed at his nose before leaning in and placing a gentle kiss on his mouth.

“I love you, too, Clark.” he whispered against his lips, then watched as Clark’s eyes widened.

“I didn’t say anything because you needed to feel free, to be able to make your choices and be you. I didn’t want you to feel like you had to stay. But if you want to stay, I’ll be happy to have you.”

Bruce suddenly had an armful of Omega, Clark clinging to him and sobbing again.

“Say it again.” Clark begged.

Bruce smiled and kissed his hair.

“I love you.”

Clark let out a huge sob and pulled back, kissing Bruce.

“I love you.” he returned.

Bruce held tight to him until his sobbing abated, then just lay with him for a while, each exchanging soft kisses to lips, cheeks, and hands, then slowly made his way downward, encircling Clark around his middle, laying sweet kisses on his puppy-pocket.

“And if you’ll let me, I would love to be father to your pup.”

Clark took hold of Bruce’s hand and kissed it several times.

“Yes, please.” he whispered.

Bruce was brimming with excitement.

*The time is now,* he thought.

“Can I show you something?” he whispered to Clark.

“Yes.” Clark said happily.

Bruce slid from the bed, holding Clark’s hand to guide him along.

They went to the wall opposite the bathroom, and Bruce showed him something he’d never noticed before; there was a doorknob in the wall, but no obvious door. Bruce turned the knob, the door opening outward, and led Clark inside.

Bruce flicked a light inside the wall, and Clark nearly burst into tears all over again.

It was a nursery, fully furnished with a crib, dresser, cushioned rocking chair and changing table, all
made of the same dark wood. A single, large window with a built-in bench, also cushioned, was in
the middle of one wall. There was a light scent of fresh paint, and Clark thought he recognised
Jason’s work in the images on the walls; cute little aliens of various colours with assortments of one
or two or three eyes, some with tentacles, some with funny suction-looking noses. They flew in
flying saucers with glass dome covers, amid colourful planets, comets, meteors, stars and suns, the
space behind them a meld of blue and purple, both in extremely dark shades.

“You seem to like sci-fi a lot, so we thought this would be appropriate.” Bruce explained. “Tim got
the gears working from scratch,” he indicated the mobile hanging above the crib. “He managed to
find a music box kit online, then just built the mobile around it.”

The mobile was a depiction of the solar system, including Halley’s Comet. Clark wound the knob,
and The Doctor’s Theme from what he was certain was David Tennant’s era began to play, slow
and soothing, as the planets, moons and comet spun around the sun.

“I was going to wait a few days more, explain that it was here for as long as you needed it, but, in
light of our post-coital confessions…” Bruce trailed off, then Clark turned and threw his arms around
him, crying again, though silently.

“Thank you.”

Bruce held him tight, one hand in his hair, the other around his shoulders, and kissed his temple
sweetly.

“Anytime.” Bruce promised. “Anything you need. Anything you want. I want you to be happy,
Clark.”

“I am happy.” Clark told him, pulling back just enough to look him in the eye. “I didn’t think I could
ever… have this. After what happened, I just thought one day I’d be one of those single moms,
maybe date sometimes, but not…” he took a shuddering breath. “But you’re just so damn perfect.
How on earth did I go from hell to you?”

Bruce caressed one side of his face.

“I’m not perfect. But if I make you happy, then I think you’re entitled to that after what you’ve been
through.”

They kissed once more, then returned to the bedroom, cuddling under the blankets.

“When do we tell the boys?” Clark asked.

“Whenever you’re ready.” Bruce told him.

Clark smiled.

“Hopefully before Conner is born.” he said. “It’d be good if they see him as their brother arriving.”

Bruce chuckled.

“I think Damian already does.”

Clark giggled.

“He does, doesn’t he?”

Bruce kissed Clark’s hair.
“I think he pegged you from the moment you met.” Bruce said.

“Pups can be something.” Clark said.

Bruce smiled and rubbed over Clark’s puppy-pocket.

“Yes, they can.”

They kissed once more, then gradually drifted off to sleep.

***

The next morning, Clark and Bruce put on their pajamas and dressing-gowns, not saying anything, but sharing loving glances, sometimes meeting for light kisses, then made their way to the elevator hand in hand.

Megan usually slept in a bit later than the others did, waking an hour after the boys had left for school, so Clark and Bruce would have a chance to talk to the boys and Alfred before she would wake. Upon reflection, however, they agreed that perhaps they should talk over when they thought the right moment for mating would be before mentioning anything to the boys.

“We can discuss things today while Damian and Tim are at school, maybe ask Megan to give you some time off from your workouts if we need it.” Bruce suggested.

Clark agreed and hugged Bruce before they entered the kitchen.

The breakfast buzz was routine to Clark, now. At some point it had become soothing instead of stressful.

*It’s family time.* Clark thought.

After the youngest boys were off for school (Jason for the library to meet with Mr. Crane to do a test, Dick still sleeping), Clark and Bruce sat in the lounge to take advantage of the time before Megan would wake to talk things over.

They agreed that, being this close to the due date, they might as well wait until after before mating.

“I’m thinking, maybe if we can work up to where I’m comfortable with penetration,” Clark said. “Then we can try at my next heat. It’s going to be at least a year, and that’s the surest way for the mating to take, right?”

“That sounds fine by me.” Bruce said. “It’ll give us the time we need to adjust with Conner, too. That’s going to be a whole learning curve in itself. Damian was on to solid foods before he arrived, so this will be new for both of us. And if you decide you want to do it sooner, I can just go off my suppressants and we do it with my rut, instead. Whatever works for you.”

Clark nodded. A year seemed like a safe distance, but he liked knowing there was a closer option if he wanted it.

“It’s so weird.” Clark said. “I always feel like discussing these things is going to feel awkward, but it really just helps me relax, knowing that we’ve talked things out and have a plan ready.”

Bruce kissed his hand where their fingers joined.

“It takes out the unknown factor.”
Clark smiled.

“Speaking of fully discussing things,” Bruce continued. “Pups, yay or nay?”

Clark snorted.

“Five isn’t enough for you?”

Bruce smiled.

“I like a good-sized pack.” he teased, then his expression turned serious. “But, in all honesty, I was thinking you might want one or two more that you get to carry, seeing as how that option was taken from you before.”

Clark thought for a bit.

“That does sound nice, and there are a lot of things I like about being pregnant. My skin is probably the clearest it’s been in, like, ever. But maybe let’s see how I feel after Conner, first.”

Bruce kissed his hair.

“That’s fair.”

“Okay!” Megan entered the lounge holding two large exercise balls. “Who’s ready for some stretches?”

Clark and Bruce chuckled at her enthusiasm, then got up and followed her to the workout room, where Bruce activated the mechanism in the clock to let them through.

Clark sat on one ball while Megan sat on the other and lifted his arms above his head as she indicated, clasping his hands together.

“Okay! One, and breathe, two, and breathe…” They moved from side to side at a moderate pace.

Clark felt himself drifting to the beat of the now-familiar workout, body working on autopilot.

***

Later that evening, as they sat down to dinner, Clark and Bruce met each other’s gaze, and each gave an imperceptible nod.

Bruce cleared his throat.

“Boys, if I could have your attention. You, too, Alfred.” The Beta stood at attention next to the counter as the boys turned to look at Bruce.

Bruce took a deep breath, looked at Clark, and then the two joined hands at the corner of the table.

“Clark has decided to stay.”

The boys waited, sensing there was more to follow.

“We’re not mating, yet, since Conner is going to be born, soon. But he is going to be part of the family, now.”

“I think he’s already been part of the family.” Tim piped up.
Clark grinned, feeling warm and cold at the same time, his insides heated but a cool tingle running along his fingers.

“Can we call you mother?” Damian asked.

Clark nearly sobbed.

“Yes, Damian. You can call me mother. Or mom, or whatever.”

Damian rushed from his seat around the table to hug Clark.

“I love you, mother.”

Clark sniffed, his throat swelling as he returned the hug.

“I love you, too, Damian.”

“Though I believe this was already understood,” Alfred came to stand beside Clark and did a smart bow. “At your service, sir.”

Clark chuckled.

“Thank you, Alfred.”

Jason got up next, and came to hug Clark, too.

“Love you, mom.”

Silent tears started down Clark’s cheeks as he hugged the teen back.

Tim came to hug Clark, too, but politely explained why he wasn’t comfortable calling him mother, which Clark knew not to take personally as he didn’t call Bruce father, either.

Dick hugged Clark from where he sat beside him, offering similar explanations, including that it felt a bit strange to switch at his age, especially since the two weren’t even a decade apart. Clark understood that.

The family resumed their dinner (Megan had taken hers to her room while she went over some labour positioning she was going to have Clark try the next day).

It was peaceful.

***

“Are you sure?” Clark asked.

Megan smiled as she put away the stethoscope.

“His heartbeat still sounds plenty strong. Overdue is not at all unusual, especially for first pregnancies. He’ll know when he’s ready to come out.”

Conner was due on the sixteenth. It was now the nineteenth and Clark hadn’t felt anything beyond the usual squeezes that happened with his son’s movements, though the mucus plug had come out as he was getting ready for bed, which is what had prompted this check-up.

Bruce squeezed his hand and rubbed his belly.
“If nothing happens in the next few days,” Megan assured. “We’ll go to the clinic and check things with the ultrasound before inducing. But, really, it’ll probably start anytime, now that your plug is out.”

Clark sighed as Damian came from Clark’s other side to rest his head on his puppy-pocket.

“You better come out soon, little brother. Mother’s getting worried. It’s not nice to worry him like that.”

Clark felt like he would never get used to that. Every time Damian called him mother, he thought he would burst from happiness.

“I may not be the oldest,” Damian continued. “But I am older than you, and that means you should listen to me.”

Clark and Bruce chuckled as Damian continued to talk to Conner through Clark’s belly.

***

MARCH 21st, 1:12 A.M.

“Bruce.”

“Mm.”

“Bruce, get up.”

“Mmph.”

Clark hit him with a pillow.

“Ow.”

“Bruce, it’s time.” Clark was sounding strained.

“Time for what?” Bruce groaned.

“Time for-- oh, shit.”

A strange smell, something like a mix of Omega slick, the metallic tang of blood, and Bruce wasn’t sure what else, hit his nostrils. He sniffed worriedly.

“That’s my water.” Clark said.
Chapter 33

Chapter Summary

The big day has arrived, and what a big day it is; labour is a long process, folks.

Chapter Notes

Sorry about the delay in having this posted. It's longer than my usual ten-page count, though, so hopefully that makes up for it. Birthing is a hard thing to write, especially if, like me, you want to be as close as possible to reality, even though it is an AU. I looked up home birthing videos and methods, and even had my bestie who's an RN go over my first draft and give me her thoughts. Hopefully I've followed her counsels properly. Turns out having the birth at the manor would normally be a bad idea as it is more than fifteen minutes away from the nearest hospital, but, as I'd been building it up for several chapters, I came up with a solution.

I don't know why I worried

Why I thought I’d messed this up

I could tell he loved you when he saw you

My darling little pup

— Your daddy loves you by Clark Kent

Bruce reached for the lamp, shutting his eyes from the sudden flood of light.

Clark had pulled back the blankets from himself in a hurry, though Bruce didn’t see anything from where he sat.

“It’s just a small bit, but, I’m pretty sure it’s my water.”

Bruce had to combat panic and fatigue to pull himself together as he hurriedly switched from his pajama pants to a pair of swimming shorts for when they’d be in the tub, later. Clark was already trying to focus on his breathing, wincing and needing to stop as a contraction moved through him.

Bruce brought him to the bathroom and got him to sit down on the birthing stool Megan had brought as one of the many aides in the labor process; Clark was already naked, figuring it was useless wearing anything at this point.

“I’m going to go get Megan, Clark.” he said, when the contraction had passed. “I’ll be right back.” He kissed him, then left.
Clark tried not to cry at the immediate feel of abandonment.

“He’ll be right back, he’ll be right back.” he whispered to himself, hands on his belly as he tried to stay focused on the breathing exercises Megan had taught him.

“Figures you’d want to come in the middle of the night, Conner.” Clark chided. “I’m gonna be catching you coming home late from parties, I can see it, now.”

Another contraction ripped through him and he squeezed his fists.

“Fuck.” he said.

“Hope you don’t plan on kissing your puppy with that mouth.” Megan said as she entered the room wearing a one-piece swimsuit, immediately going to Clark with the stethoscope.

“I’m totally kidding, by the way.” Megan assured him. “Swear, yell, cry, however loud you need to, you go right ahead.”

“Not gonna be a problem, I think.” Clark strained, his breathing heavier, but still succeeding in keeping it steady.

After confirming the baby’s heartbeat, Megan put the stethoscope aside.

“I need to see how dilated you are. It’s not gonna be fun, but it’s gotta be done.”

Clark groaned as Bruce helped him stand and lean against him with his knees slightly bent to give Megan access.

“Okay,” Megan said as Clark heard her putting on latex gloves. “You’re gonna feel my fingers, now, nothing scary.”

Clark grimaced as he felt Megan reaching up his passage. It opened quite easily to her hand, and within no time she was brushing against the opening to his cervix, and it felt like she inserted a finger there, too.

Damn, this was uncomfortable.

“Okay.” Megan said as she withdrew her hand. “You’re not even halfway, yet, but the fact that your water already broke will probably speed things along. Just keep in mind that all a broken sac means for certain is that you’ll birth within twenty-four hours, and the rest of your water is going to be coming in trickles for most of it, so don’t try moving too fast or you’re liable to slip on the tile.”

“Oh, yay.” Clark said, sarcastic.

“Okay!” Megan clapped her hands together. “Let’s do something to take the strain off. I want you to hold the edge of the birthing stool, and Bruce, help lower him into a squat, legs spread open.”

Bruce got behind Clark and guided him down, hands under his armpits in case he needed the support. Clark moved forward and back, his knees splayed open, working his pelvis, sometimes losing track of his breathing, but it wasn’t long before he got it back again.

Clark inhaled sharply as he felt some more liquid trickle out.

“What just happened?” he asked, panicked.

“It’s nothing.” Megan told him, examining the small puddle beneath him. “Your water just isn’t all
“Out, is all. I’d be worried if it all came out at once, actually; means the puppy’s not sitting right. It’s not like in the movies.”

“I… I think I feel him. Like, really feel him.” Clark marveled. For the first time it was like he could fully feel the shape of a small person inside him.

Megan smiled.

“He’s probably really low, now. Sit back on the stool for a minute?”

Bruce helped Clark up onto the stool and Megan felt around his belly.

“Yep, positioning feels about right. Would you like Bruce to feel?”

Clark grinned up at Bruce.

“If he wants.”

Bruce eagerly reached down to where Megan was indicating.

“Right about there, that’s his head.”

Bruce was speechless for a minute.

“Oh, Clark.” he finally managed to get out.

Clark put a hand on his and smiled at him.

After a bit, Bruce helped Clark into the squatting position again, and Clark continued to gradually sway his hips around, holding onto Bruce for balance.

“That’s good, Clark.” Megan praised. “How’s your back?”


“Bruce, how about you try those massages we practised?”

Bruce helped Clark to lean against the wall and stood behind him, then proceeded to rub along his lower back, applying a firm, steady pressure with his whole hand, but without pressing in too deep.

“How’s that, Clark?”

“Better.” Clark sighed, as some of the stress had eased.

“Bruce, try the hip squeeze we talked about.”

Bruce curved his hands around the edges of the hips and squeezed just hard enough that Clark gave a further sigh of relief.

“That’s good.” Megan told them after Bruce had been massaging Clark for a while. “I want you to be able to work out your spine a bit more, though, so, Bruce, you can help get him onto his hands and knees.”

Bruce helped guide him onto the floor and adopt the position Megan directed. Megan brought two folded towels, one for under Clark’s knees and the other for his palms.

Clark sighed as he arched his spine, folding his pelvis and neck forward, the position taking pressure
off his back. He changed the direction of the arch, back and forth, keeping himself moving as Megan had had him practise.

“Would you like me to keep rubbing your back?” Bruce offered.

“Yes, please.” Clark grunted.

Bruce got into position behind Clark and began rubbing down his lower back, applying a firm, steady pressure. Clark sighed again, this time with a loud groan, as it helped to ease his discomfort.

“Now, Clark, remember that you have to stay moving.” Megan told him after he couldn’t support himself on his hands and knees anymore. “I would suggest moving on to swaying squats, now.”

Bruce helped Clark to stand, then stood with him as support as Clark swayed his pelvis around before lowering into a squat, this time with Bruce standing so that he could stretch his arms upward, holding onto Bruce’s arms, adding a stretch to his back. He bent his neck forward, curling slightly, helping to ease his back. As another contraction passed, Clark gripped Bruce harder, but kept his curled position, forcing himself to keep breathing.

“What’s that noise?” Clark asked, hearing something which almost sounded like a spring door-stop being played with on high speed.

“Probably the helicopter.” Bruce said, casually.

“Helicopter?” Clark questioned.

“You didn’t tell him?” Megan chastised.

Bruce shrugged, though he did look genuinely sorry.

“I didn’t want to add undue stress.”

Megan rolled her eyes.

“Alphas, I swear.” she sighed. “The helicopter is just in case, Clark. Should something go wrong, we can have you at the hospital in twenty minutes, and it’s fully equipped with everything I need to keep you and Conner stabilised until we get there.”

“I’m torn between being happy I didn’t worry about it before, but wishing I could have had time to adjust to the idea before now.” Clark tensed as another contraction worked through him and Megan guided his breathing.

“Then again,” Clark said as it ended. “Maybe I’ll be too busy for the next several hours to think about it properly. Guess you’re off the hook for now.”

Bruce kissed his hair. “I’ll make it up to you.”

Clark glowered at him.

“Fuck you.” he said, but it was held no malice, and Bruce smirked.

As they had practiced, Clark tried walking around the room from time to time, alternating with sitting on an exercise ball while squatting; that was his favourite, as it was comfortable and allowed him to sway his pelvis around, and Megan also placed a cloth damp with very warm water on the ball to soothe his perineum, saying it would help loosen him more.
Clark’s contractions gradually increased in intensity and frequency, earning a colourful array of swearing.

“Clark? How are you doing?” Megan tried after a particularly strong one came and went, leaving him panting.

“Fucking awful!” he whined with a small sob.

“It’s not too late for an epidural, you know. You can give birth in the bed, instead.”

Clark shook his head insistently.

“No no no no no! In the tub!”

“Okay. Let’s have another look to see how dilated you are.”

Clark sobbed as Bruce helped to hold him up while Megan checked for the dilation.

“A little over halfway. You can take a break, if you want. There’s no use you being exhausted. You could lie down for a bit.”

“Yes, please!” Clark exclaimed.

“Alright, then. Let’s get you into bed for a bit.”

Bruce helped Clark walk back to the bedroom and into bed.

“Here,” Megan held out a cloth, freshly dampened using hot water from the sink. “Hold this on his perineum. Clark, as you breathe, try to focus on loosening your pelvis. Imagine your uterus expanding on the exhales, keeping yourself relaxed.”

Clark nodded, already working on keeping himself relaxed as instructed.

Megan looked at the alarm clock.

“Well, you’ve been at this for three hours. How do you feel?”

“Like I did a round of cardio.”

Megan smiled.

“Bruce, would Alfred be awake around now?”

Bruce checked the clock himself.

“I think so.”

“We’ll need to change the sheets and clean up the mess before he can settle in after the birth. At least one of us will need to be with him during that time.”

Bruce seemed torn.

“I’d rather stay with Clark, but—”

“You’re afraid Alfred will be insulted if you’re not the one to tell him I’m in labour?” Clar finished.

“Yeah.” Bruce admitted.
“Interesting.” Megan said. “Allow me to propose an alternative scenario: what would Alfred think about you leaving Clark alone?”

Bruce and Clark locked eyes.

“You can go get him.” Clark concluded, addressing Megan, who grinned.

“That’s what I thought.”

***

Megan found Alfred in the midst of preparing breakfast in the kitchen.

“He’s resting for now, but this is likely to take all day.”

“I’ll help in whatever capacity I can.” Alfred promised.

When the boys woke up and saw that neither Clark nor Bruce were at breakfast, they were immediately suspicious.

Alfred told them they were to go about business as usual and get ready for the day. However, it wasn’t long before they figured it out.

“But Jason and Dick are both gonna get to see him, why can’t we stay home, just this once!?” Tim whined.

“Please please please please please, Alfred?” Damian begged.

Alfred meant to stand firm in his decision to send the younger ones to school. However, when he checked the weather report, another snow day had graced them with its presence, even though the weather from the window looked perfectly fair.

Upon telling the boys, they took this news extremely well.

“You are not to go in that room until invited.” Alfred told them sternly after shushing their cheers. “Master Clark still has a long way to go and he does not need any of you disturbing him.”

“We’ll be good!” Damian promised.

After breakfast, the boys decided to unleash their energy from their pent-up excitement on Dick, and proceeded to wake him.

“Wakey-wakey, Dick.” Jason said, pinching his nose. Damian and Tim giggled.

Dick began to snort awkwardly at having his breathing obstructed, and began to shake his head around, but Jason wouldn’t let go. Dick finally started breathing heavily through his mouth and opened his eyes.

“What the fuck, Jason?” Dick said, slapping his hand away and then sneezing loudly.

Damian gasped loudly, grinning.

“Uh-oh! Big brother said a bad word in front of baby-bat!” Jason teased.

“Rise and shine, Dick! It’s a beautiful day!” Tim declared as he pulled back the drapes, basking the dark room in sunlight.
“Ah! Fuck you guys!” Dick shouted as he shielded himself from the sudden brightness of the rising sun reflecting on the white landscape.

Damian gave a squealing giggle and covered his mouth.

“Aw, man.” Jason shook his head and tsked. “That’s two counts of swearing in front of our innocent little pup.” Jason put his arms around Damian’s shoulders. “Whatever would father say, huh, Dami?”

“I hope he doesn’t use that language around the puppy.” Tim said, crossing his arms and adopting a similar look of mock-disapproval. “Imagine what his first word might be?”

“Only a few minutes old and he might hear something so naughty…” Jason continued in his condescending tone. “Maybe it’d be best if we leave Dick to his sleep after all.”

Dick blinked several times.

“Wait, it happened?”

The boys burst into laughter.

“Not quite.” Jason said. “But in a few hours we’ll be meeting our new little brother.”

Dick got up suddenly, revealing that he had slept in the buff, and dashed for the bathroom, shutting the door behind him. Jason had quickly put a hand in front of his eyes, and another in front of Damian’s.

“Oh, I’m all for freedom of Omegas to be able to wear what they want without having to suffer catcalls or worse,” Jason called out. “But my big brother’s junk is not something I needed to see this early in the morning without any warning.”

“Your fault!” Dick called back. “You violated the peace of my inner sanctum, I am not responsible for what you may see or hear!”

“Okay, let’s go chill in my room until Dick’s done getting ready.” Jason urged Damian and Tim to follow.

“I can’t open my eyes.” Tim said, still covering his face. “I’ve been scarred for life.”

“Okay, laying it on thick, there, Tim.” Jason pulled him by one elbow.

***

The boys tried to peek when Alfred brought some light snacks in for Clark and Bruce, but he very firmly shut the door in their faces.

“Might as well get comfy, boys.” Megan said as she returned from having herself some breakfast, holding a coffee pot and cups on a tray for herself and Bruce. “This is going to take a long time. I’d suggest a few movies, or a TV season. If you have the extended edition of The Lord of the Rings, that would be a good choice.”

Jason opened the door to the room for her.

“How long are we talking?” he asked.

“Could be as late as midnight. Some labours last days. His water is already broken, though, so it’s not likely to be longer than tonight.”
“Thanks for being here, Dr. Morse.”

“No problem, boys.” she smiled as she let the door close behind her.

Jason sighed.

“Midnight?” Tim groaned.

“Maybe earlier, maybe later.” Dick said. “Come on, let’s go watch something, maybe play some games.”

“What if it happens while we’re downstairs?” Damian argued.

“Even if it does, we probably won’t get to see him for a while after.” Jason reasoned. “Mom’s gonna need to rest. Come on, let’s grab laptops in case we do gaming later, then head downstairs.”

“I wanna watch Logan’s Run.” Tim said.

Jason and Dick exchanged a look.

“Would that be inappropriate for Damian?” Jason questioned.

“I don’t know…” Dick said thoughtfully. “I mean, it doesn’t have swearing, it doesn’t have any sex per se… it’s mostly that one scene in the love shop, but they do leave before anything can really happen.”

“It’s mostly a nudity thing,” Jason said. “But Bruce’s rule is usually if the rating is based on nudity and there’s no other objectionable subject matter, than he’s fine with Damian watching, because he doesn’t want him to think nudity is shameful.”

“Are there some scenes he would find scary?” Dick asked.

Jason looked pondered for a moment.

“After watching Who Framed Roger Rabbit and Witches, not to mention Return To Oz, I don’t think there’s anything worse than that, and we’ll be right there.”

“So, is that yes or no?” Tim asked, having taken the opportunity to gather all three laptops with Damian’s help.

Dick and Jason both shrugged.

“It’s not like he’s watching it by himself.” Jason shrugged.

“And Bruce is gonna be tied up for a while helping Clark, so we can always have a discussion between the four of us after.” Dick agreed.

“That’s a yes.” Tim said. “Now, can y’all grab your laptops and let’s go?”

Jason and Dick took their laptops from and the boys all began to make their way downstairs.

“So I’m gonna be watching a naughty movie?” Damian asked.

“Not ‘naughty,’” Dick was quick to say. “Just kind of grown-up. And we’ll be there if you have questions.”
“Cool!” Damian grinned.

Dick was beginning to wonder if he was going to regret his decision to okay Tim’s viewing choice.

***

Clark found he was getting used to the contractions, now; even some of the larger ones. It was as though he just hadn’t expected how they would feel, which made it more difficult in the beginning. Now that they’d been going on for several hours, he was getting used to gritting through it.

“Thanks, Alfred.” Clark said, his gratitude clear in his tone as Alfred passed him another cup of red raspberry leaf tea.

“Not at all, sir.” Alfred said with a smile, finding it difficult to keep his own excitement from sight, knowing that a new Wayne heir (in spirit if not yet in name) was on his way, to be born in the very room Bruce had been born in; or, next to it, considering that Clark was going to be in the bathtub for the main event.

Bruce had Clark’s feet in his lap and was being very thorough with his ministrations.

“I wanna feel bad for having you both waiting on me, but it’s hard to feel bad when the attention feels so good.” Clark said, sipping his tea and letting out another little moan of relief as Bruce worked the tension from his feet.

“Don’t you dare feel bad.” Bruce told him with a smile. “I’m happy to help.”

Clark smiled back, then gave a little ‘ooph’ as another contraction worked through.

“Clark, hold still for a minute, please?” Megan said as she approached with her stethoscope.

Clark did as he was told and shifted the sheet he’d used to cover himself for when Alfred was in the room, exposing his belly for Megan.

Megan was able to track Conner’s heartbeat relatively quickly now that she’d been checking regularly every half-hour.

“He’s doing awesome.” Megan smiled. “Wanna hear?” she offered Clark the ear pieces, holding the cone in place.

Clark put down the tea on the bed next to him and placed the ear pieces to listen, smiling when he heard it.

“Can’t wait to hold you, Conner.” Clark said, putting his arms around his belly.

Bruce smiled at him, feeling not for the first time like his emotions were swelling powerfully within his chest.

Clark smirked at him.

“You’re doing it again.”

“Doing what?” Bruce asked, straightening up.

“Fuzzy-happy-Alpha eyes. You wanna hear his heartbeat?”

Bruce gladly crawled over and Megan shifted so that Bruce could listen while she held the
stethoscope in place.

Bruce closed his eyes as he listened to the tiny thumping, then looked up to meet Clark’s gaze, smiling warmly at him.

“I shall return.” Alfred whispered to Megan. “I’m going to bring things out for the helicopter pilot.”

Megan nodded.

Bruce and Clark seemed too wrapped up in whatever silent message was passing between them to notice.

***

Damian seemed to grow jittery as afternoon turned to evening. Jason hadn’t spent enough time with Clark to bond with him as Damian had, but he suspected that there must have been a development in the labour to explain his brother’s behavior.

“Dick, see if you can keep baby bat calm; I’m going to see if there’s any news.” Jason said as he rose to leave the room.

“No, wait! I wanna go, too!” Damian bolted ahead before any of his brothers could react.

“Damian!” Jason called, taking off after him.

“Tim, stay put.” Dick warned, earning a complaining whine from the younger Omega.

Jason caught up with Damian partway up the stairs.

“Come on, we’ll go together to find Alfred and ask calmly.” Jason emphasised as he held Damian’s hand.

They climbed the rest of the stairs at a more leisurely pace, and were just three feet away from the master bedroom when Alfred emerged from the linen closet down the hall, his arms full of towels.

“Back to where you came. I’ll fetch you when it’s over.” he looked to be rather in a hurry.

“We just wanted to know how he’s doing?” Jason asked as he held the door open for Alfred, mindful to keep hold of Damian’s hand.

“Home stretch, I should think. The contractions are very close. Now, shoo! There’s material for sandwiches in the fridge, if you’re hungry.”

Jason grinned as Alfred quickly entered the bedroom, and let the door shut behind him.

“Come on, baby bat. Let’s update the others and go eat.”

“Do you think we’ll get to see him before bedtime?” Damian whined.

“Puppies don’t arrive on schedule. Maybe we’ll be lucky and dad’ll let you and Tim stay home from school, tomorrow.”

Damian pouted.

“But that’s only a maybe.” he whined.
Jason picked him up and kissed his cheek, carrying him to the elevator to help cheer him.

“T’d say you’ve got some strong chances.”

***

When Alfred had gone (after setting the large tub to fill, per Megan’s instructions), Megan checked for Clark’s dilation for the fifth time in the last hour.

“Holy shit, you popped right open. We need to get him in the water, now.”

Bruce and Megan both helped Clark over to the bathroom and all three washed in the shower, first, using hospital soaps Megan had brought. Clark had two more contractions while showering (they were getting stronger every time), but Bruce held on tight to make sure he didn’t lose his footing. They used a trail of towels to make sure they didn’t touch the floor after having washed to get to the bathtub.

Megan got in the tub, first, guiding Clark as Bruce helped him lower onto the ledge which formed the bench in the tub.

“Ooh… that warm water feels good…” Clark moaned.

Megan giggled.

“That’s good, Clark. Now, you’re going to need to push with the contractions, okay?”

“Oh, fuck. Oh, fuck oh fuck oh fuck.” Clark cried, scared.

“It’s okay, Clark, your body opened right up, you can do this.”

Clark was full on crying, now, but still trying to keep his breathing steady.

Bruce held him close and kissed his hair, holding him in front so that Megan could stand behind to have better access to his passage.

“You’re going to be alright, Clark.” he promised. “Conner’s almost here.”

Bruce felt so useless, seeing Clark in pain like this. But what could he do? It was too late for any kind of drugs or an epidural.

Clark squeezed Bruce’s arm and nodded, eyes shut tight from pain.

“Just don’t let go.”

Bruce tightened his embrace and kissed Clark’s hair again.

“Never.”

Clark sobbed then yelled as a contraction spiked and he pushed as hard as he could.

“Oh, God, I felt him move!” Clark shouted, both still terrified but with a kind of relief that he could tell progress had been made.

“That’s good!

“OH! FUCK!” Clark shouted through another contraction and pushed, gasping as he felt more
“Holy shit! Is he close!? Please tell me he’s close!” Clark said.

“Hang on.” she gently felt inside. “Your cervix is stretching, he’s nearly here. I’m feeling his head, now.”

Clark gave a sobbing laugh, leaning his head against Bruce’s chest.

Another contraction, and Clark nearly screamed as he pushed, not even thinking to feel sorry for Bruce’s ears.

“You’re close, Clark. Remember to breathe, take your time.”

Clark didn’t see how he could do anything else. He was leaning heavily in Bruce’s arms, but Bruce just went with it, gladly supporting him, sometimes kissing his hair for encouragement.

“I love you.” Bruce whispered to him.

Clark smiled through his sobbing and kissed the nearest part of Bruce he could reach, which was his bicep.

“I love you, too.” he told him.

Another contraction and Clark pushed, and oh, he was sure that was a lot of movement at once.

“You’re crowning, Clark.” Megan told him. “One or two more oughta do it.”

Clark felt like everything else shut out after that. There was just his son, and he was about to bring him into the world.


“He’s out!” Megan announced.

Clark made a deep, relieved moan as he just clutched at Bruce, exhausted and sobbing.

Megan held Conner still in the water, instructing Bruce to rub Clark’s abdomen to help pass the afterbirth, giving her some slack with the umbilical cord. When she was finally able to lift Conner enough from the water so that they could keep his head above it, she got Bruce to help Clark sit on the ledge (which he did so gingerly as his passage was still ultra-sensitive). She then carefully handed Conner to Clark, gently easing the fluid away from his tiny body with a soft cloth.

Conner hadn’t cried right away, the water having eased his arrival into the world, but he quickly became aware of his change in situation and began to bawl, his cry not as piercing as it would be for an older puppy, sounding more like a bleating lamb. Megan cleaned his mouth and nose using a tube with a gentle suction piece like a turkey baster.

Clark sobbed with joy and relief as he looked down at his son.

Squashy-faced, bawling, tiny fists clenched and shaking. In essence, alive and perfect.

“Oh, Conner.” he sobbed. Clark kissed his head, leaning close to scent him.

Megan used clamp scissors to first cut the blood flow from the umbilical cord to Conner, then held a sort of plastic clothespin at the ready.
“Would you like Bruce to cut the cord?” Megan asked Clark, holding up the scissors, which had a blunt, circular end.

Clark looked to Bruce, who had been good at keeping quiet but still had tears shining on his cheeks.

“What do you say, dad?” Clark asked him through a watery smile.

Bruce kissed him and then took the scissors from Megan, cutting where she indicated, between the two clamps. Megan then tied off the cord, using the clothespin to keep it sealed.

“After this, you’ll have to make sure when bathing him not to get that part wet until the rest of the cord dries off.” Megan directed.

Clark nodded, still looking down at his puppy.

Clark was surprised he wasn’t more concerned over being in a tub with various fluids which had been expelled from his body, but, as he sat there holding his tiny pup, none of it seemed to matter.

“I’ll leave you three a minute, but we’ll have to get him cleaned and bundled very soon.”

Megan climbed out of the tub, placing the waste into a biohazard bag and then heading for the shower.

“Hey, Conner. I’m your mama.” Conner was rustling around, his eyes shut, making tiny whimpers. “And this is your dad, okay? Well, there’s probably a shit ton of legal stuff to get through before that’s official, but, in the way that matters most, he’s your dad.”

Bruce gave a small laugh, still looking as overwhelmed as Clark felt.

“Go ahead, Bruce, I can tell you’re just dying to touch him.” Clark urged.

Bruce made a small sob and reached out to pet the top of Conner’s tiny head, the whole of which fit easily into the Alpha’s palm.

“He’s so beautiful, Clark.” Bruce declared before kissing Conner’s forehead.

After a few minutes, Megan returned to help get Conner dried and bundled. She informed them that Conner officially came into the world at seventeen hours thirty-seven minutes, which meant the whole process had taken roughly sixteen hours from the time his water broke.

“I know it felt long for you, Clark, but some labours can last days.”

Clark felt grateful his hadn’t.

Bruce and Clark got cleaned off and dried, opting for another shower, then Bruce got Clark one of the bladder-control underwear they had bought for the post-partum (Megan warned him that some fluids might leak from his passage for a while), and helped get him into some pajamas with a button-shirt so that he could start feeding Conner as soon as he needed it. For now, however, Conner seemed mostly interested in sleeping.

After putting a diaper on him, Clark and Bruce wrapped him in his blanket in the style which Megan had made them bother practise, basically make sure that Conner would be snug and not be able to scratch himself, either.

Bruce brought out the bassinet they’d received from Diana and Steve, and placed it right next to the bed so that Clark could be near Conner.
“Thank you.” Clark told him in a tearful whisper.

“For what?”

“For everything. I love you.”

Bruce climbed into bed next to him, holding him from behind so that they could both face the bassinet.

“I love you, too.” he said, kissing the back of Clark’s neck. “Both of you.”

They drifted off that way. After Megan finished putting her things away, she ran into Alfred in the hall. She informed him of the situation so that he would know to let the couple sleep, which he was sure to pass on to the boys. He did, however, steal into the room for a few minutes to look over the new bundle.

And if he shed a few joyful tears over Conner’s arrival, well, that was his secret to keep.

***

“When Master Wayne and Master Clark choose to invite you in, you will go in quietly and keep in mind that Conner is a newborn and therefore very delicate.” Alfred told the boys, who had just finished their supper.

“I handle puppies at the clinic all the time, Alfred.” Jason assured him. “Sometimes they get newborns who need emergency handling, and I’ve done that, too.”

“If I can solder wires without frying the hard drive, I can hold a newborn puppy.”

Alfred gave them a stern look which spoke that his instructions were nonetheless to be heeded.

***

The boys were so excited to meet Conner that they ended up camping outside the master bedroom with the game Elder Sign, pretending that the reason for their whispering was so as not to tip off any cultists as to their whereabouts.

They had just wrapped up their third game when they heard noises from within. While the older ones all froze, Damian quickly stood and gave a soft knock on the door.

The talking from within stopped, and all was silent, until suddenly the door opened, and there stood Bruce in his pajamas, looking down on them all.

“Do you have any idea what time it is?” he had a serious look on his face, though he was actually biting his cheek to keep from laughing at the sight.

Tim checked his phone.

“Midnight-thirty?” he said, sheepishly.

“We wanted to meet Conner.” Damian whined.

A smile broke through Bruce’s features and he urged them inside, game and all.

The boys quickly gathered their things and put them just inside the door before going up to the bed where Clark sat up, his pajama shirt open, with several pillows behind his back for support, and a
maternity pillow around his middle to brace his arms. He held Conner to one breast, the pup suckling peacefully, unaware or uncaring of the visitors.

Damian stepped forward, first, and nuzzled close to Conner’s neck for scenting, but without disturbing him from his liquid meal.

“I’ve never smelled new puppy before.” Damian said. “He smells really nice.”

Clark smiled.

“Yeah, he does.” Then he gestured with his head for Damian to get on the bed so that he could cuddle up to his side.

Jason and Tim went up next, peering at Conner. Dick hung back, wanting to let his younger brothers get their fill, first.

“I didn’t realise he’d be so small.” Tim said. “Your belly had gotten huge.”

“There still has to be room for my organs.” Clark pointed out. “And he still has to fit in the birth canal.”

“Right.” Tim realised.

Jason made a gleeful sound.

“His face is all squishy.”

“It’ll round out eventually.”

Megan had appeared in the doorway, smiling at the scene.

“Sorry to interrupt, but, I need to take his vitals again.” she explained as she made her way to the bed.

“Again?” Clark asked, confused.

“Yeah, you two were sleeping; I even managed to check your pulse. Gave him a vitamin shot, too. Like a champ, though he did fuss, he didn’t cry. Model patient. I’ll come back later, though; I don’t want to interrupt his din-din. You should know, though, that when I checked, his heart was strong and his breathing clear. We’ll need to take him to the clinic for blood tests and a more in-depth check-up than what I can do for him here, but he seems to be healthy.”

“He’s perfect.” Clark said, looking down at him. Conner opened his eyes a small fraction, still suckling quietly. He seemed to contemplate Clark for a very brief moment before closing his eyes again, then let go of Clark’s nipple and tried to move away from it. Clark took the hint and reached for the receiving blanket he already had next him on the bed. About to throw it over his shoulder, however, he paused, then turned to Bruce with a small smile.

“You want to try?” Clark said.

Bruce was next to the bed in no time as he took the receiving blanket and placed over his shoulder, then very carefully took Conner into his hands as Clark handed him over, supporting his head as he held him to his shoulder and proceeded to try to burp him.

“You can hit a bit harder than that.” Megan said, walking up to him and using the heel of her palm to demonstrate a firm whack right between Conner’s shoulder blades, which caused him to burp almost
instantly.

“I can wait for him to settle down. Wouldn’t want him puking from too much jostling. However, as adorable as this family scene is, Clark, I need to check on you, as well. Make you’re not hemorrhaging, see that everything looks alright, et cetera.”

“What does… hemerjing mean?” Damian asked.

“It means she needs to look at certain places that I think mom would rather not be showing off to us, especially in the manner of how Megan is gonna be looking at it.” Jason explained as Dick was already pushing Tim out the door.

“It shouldn’t be long, sweetheart.” Clark promised, kissing Damian’s hair. “Just wait outside the door.”

Damian hugged Clark before leaving the bed, and made to follow his brothers out.

He was only a few feet from the bed, however, when he stopped suddenly.

“Father!?” he said, panicked.

Bruce went straight to him. His pants were almost soaked as well as the carpet beneath his feet where the urine had traveled down his pant legs.

“I- I didn’t mean to!” Damian sobbed.

“What happened?” Clark asked, worried.

“Nothing major.” Bruce promised. “I think having a little brother is making Damian a little territorial, is all.”

Damian stood, tears streaming down his cheeks and hiccupping, embarrassed. Bruce had been able to train him off peeing for territory before starting school. The idea that he could just lose it like that did not sit well with him.

“I’ll get him cleaned up.” Jason promised, going to Bruce’s ensuite for a few towels, putting one on the floor for that mess, wrapping another around Damian’s hips before picking him up.

“Hang on, Jason.” Clark called, motioning him to bring Damian to him.

Jason held on to Damian as Clark took the pup’s hand and kissed it.

“It’s okay, Damian. Accidents happen. No one’s mad, okay?”

Damian nodded and squeezed Clark’s hand, then Jason brought him from the room, intending on getting him into some fresh pajamas after he was cleaned up.

“Well, that was something.” Bruce said as he used the towel Jason had let to pick up at the mess on the carpet. “If I needed any more proof he’s going to present as an Alpha, I think that was it.”

Clark laughed softly, nodding.

“Do you think we should get him some GoodNites before we let him into the bed for a while?”

“Definitely.” Bruce agreed. “We don’t know how long this might last.”
Clark sighed.

“Alright, Clark.” Megan said, rubber gloves ready. “Let’s get this out of the way.”

Clark groaned and began shucking off his own diaper and pajama pants.
Chapter 34

Chapter Summary

Post-partum is a bitch, and she's got Clark whipped.

Chapter Notes

Steven Universe is awesome.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Take a moment, remind yourself to
Take a moment to find yourself,
Take a moment and ask yourself
If this is how we fall apart

— Here Comes A Thought by Rebecca Sugar

***

“Clark, it’s okay, I’m right here.”

Bruce was rubbing Clark’s back as the Omega was whimpering loudly, repeating ‘no’ over and over, whatever images his mind was conjuring in his sleep terrorising him in the one place he should be able to have peace. The one place Bruce couldn’t protect him.

But he would pull him from it when necessary.

With a sudden jolt, the shaking stopped, replaced by a fine tremor as Clark now lay awake, breathing heavily before giving way to sobbing.

“Is he okay?” Clark asked through a whimper.

“He’s just fine.” Bruce assured him, knowing Clark was talking about Conner. “I got up to use the bathroom earlier and checked him in case his diaper needed changing; it did, by the way. But he was asleep before I brought him back to his bassinet, so you didn’t disturb him.”

“I’m sorry I’m such a wreck.” he said mournfully.

“Clark.” Bruce said softly as he pulled him into an embrace, Clark’s back to his chest. “Even without what you’ve been through, the post-partum is known to be rough. But I’m here for you.” he kissed the back of his neck. “You don’t have to worry about doing this alone.”

Clark held onto Bruce’s arms around him and let out a whimper.
“I love you, Clark.” Bruce whispered, his lips brushing Clark’s neck. He knew that’s what Clark needed to hear and, sure enough, there was a sudden release, the tautness of Clark’s form in his arms settling. He felt Clark kiss his knuckles, and knew that the worst of it was now over, for tonight.

“I love you, too.” Clark whispered, though Bruce could hear, given their proximity.

***

To Damian’s credit, he did try hard not to mark his territory, often seen running from the room as quick as he could to make it to the bathroom, first. Sometimes he made it, sometimes not. But some sort of long outdated instinct dictated that he make certain that anyone around know that Conner was his little brother.

Bruce made sure he wore a GoodNite every time before they let him hold Conner.

They were in the living room one day after Damian got home from school and he sat in the loveseat as Bruce carefully set Conner down in his arms.

“It’s okay, Damian.” Bruce told him after he inevitably wet himself. “That’s what the shorts are for. You can change after.”

“Why is it so hard?” Damian asked. “I can’t remember having an accident before.”

“Instinct can be hard to ignore, especially when you’re little.” Bruce explained. “It just takes time. Your body will eventually get the hint.”

Damian looked to Clark, sitting next to him, who was currently using a pump to fill a bottle. They hadn’t quite gotten Conner on a regular feeding schedule yet, as he seemed to be more interested in sleeping most of the time, so in-between feedings, Clark used the pump.

“He sure does sleep a lot.” Damian said.

“Imagine being in the most comfortable place in the world for your whole existence,” Clark said with a smile. “It’s dark, it’s warm, and there are certain sounds you hear regularly. Then, you get squeezed through a small tunnel and out to where it’s much colder, bigger, and louder than what you’re used to.”

Damian’s response was to kiss Conner’s forehead, causing the pup to squirm slightly at the disturbance, but keep his eyes shut while his lips began to pucker of their own accord.

“Does he dream?” Damian asked.

“Probably.” Bruce said.

“I think he’s dreaming of feeding.” Damian said. “The way his mouth is moving.”

Clark gave a small, sighing laugh.

“Probably. There’s not much he knows about right now besides eating. For a puppy, that’s probably an awesome dream.”

“Do I get a turn?” Jason asked, sitting backwards on the chair by Bruce’s desk.

“You held him plenty earlier.” Clark said.

“Yeah, but he’s only gonna be this big for a few minutes.” Jason said, holding his hands at a short
distance from each other. “They grow fast at this age.” Jason pouted for emphasis.

Bruce and Clark laughed.

“Jason can take him.” Damian said after a bit.

“I was just kidding around, baby-bat.” Jason assured him. “You can hold him longer.”

“It’s okay.” Damian said. “He may be small but it hurts to keep my arms like this too long and I’m scared to move him.”

“You’re sure?” Bruce asked. Damian nodded, then kissed Conner’s forehead once more before Jason walked over to pick him up.

“Fingers under his head.” Bruce cautioned him.

“I know, dad. Been doing this all week. I’ve probably held more newborns than you have.” Jason said as he confidently lifted Conner, supporting his head with no trouble as he transferred him to lean against his shoulder near his scent gland, pressing his cheek against the top of his head. Damian took the occasion to go change.

“Puppies smell so nice.” Jason said as he sat down in the nearest armchair, shutting his eyes blissfully as he rubbed Conner’s back. “You’re just so happily oblivious to the world, aren’t ya, little guy?”

“Bruce, I think I’m done with this one.” Clark said.

Bruce held the bottle as Clark coordinated removing the pump from his breast and catching any stray drops from the pump with a cloth he had at the ready.

“Ow.”

“You okay?” Bruce said as he stroked his temple.

“Yeah, it just pinches.”

“Oh, somebody’s awake!” Jason squealed proudly as Conner’s face scrunched up and he began shifting inside his blanket.

As Damian returned to the room, he walked right up to the armchair and smiled as he saw Conner wriggling about.

“Hmph!” Conner let out an impressively large grunt.

“Are you cookin’ somethin’ up in your diapee?” Jason teased. Conner replied with another grunt.

Jason felt a small vibration at Conner’s bum.

“Pretty sure that was a toot.” Jason chuckled.

“I guess I’ll need to go change him.” Clark said, closing his shirt as he stood; Bruce closed the bottle and closed up the pump.

“I can do it.” Jason offered.

“How about we both go up?” Clark said. “I need to work out a crick in my knees from sitting still while I was pumping.”
“I’ll put the bottle in the fridge.” Bruce said.

“Thanks.” Clark said, smiling as Bruce kissed his temple.

As Clark and Jason got into the elevator, Clark motioned for Jason to hand him Conner, which Jason did, frowning slightly.

“You look tired.” Jason pointed out. “Has he been keeping you up?”

“No.” Clark shook his head, scenting Conner. “Nightmares. It’s probably the bad timing of having postpartum mixed with whatever label applies to my situation.”

Clark smiled slightly.

“I never imagined I’d be able to talk about it like that.”

“Like what?” Jason asked.

“Just… plainly stating what’s going on and being able to analyse it objectively. It’s like, when I’m not in the middle of a breakdown, I’m able to see it as, ‘this is a thing that happens, but all I can do is plow through it.’ Make sense?”

Jason nodded, then the elevator reached the next floor and stopped. Jason led the way out and down the hall.

“That’s the only way I could get over what happened with the Seeder and the Incubator.” he said. “It still hurt like hell even after PPS took me outta there, still does, sometimes, but the way I survive is during the break in the clouds I tell myself I couldn’t do anything to stop it, and all I can do now is keep going. It helps when the number of people who care about me keeps increasing, and I care about them.”

Clark smiled.

“You’re a good pup, Jason.”

Jason smiled back at Clark, who then extended his right arm for a hug, still holding Conner to his shoulder with his left. Jason gladly hugged him back.

“You’re a good mom.” Jason told him, his throat slightly swelled up. Clark tightened his hold.

Conner proceeded to bawl as his tolerance for the mess in his diaper reached its limit.

***

Martha had the good sense to let Clark have a few days to bond with Conner before visiting with William. Clark knew she would probably end up hoarding her grandson, and sure enough, as soon as she was able to get a hold of him, there was no getting him out of her arms.

She changed his diaper three times, fed him twice, and even soothed him to sleep when he got fussy.

“Martha, will you please allow an old man the rare opportunity of holding his great-grandpup?” William finally said, no longer content with simply sitting beside them.

“Just a minute, dad.” she said.

“Mom, you’ve been holding him for five hours.” Clark said, amused.
“Don’t exaggerate--”

“You arrived around three this afternoon, it’s now past eight. I had to pump twice because you insisted on feeding him.”

“I, uh…” Martha turned red. “I hadn’t even thought about that, since I always bottle-fed you.” Conner started to fuss.

“Point is, it’s grandpa’s turn.” Clark checked his phone. “After I feed him.”

Leaving no room for argument, Clark walked over, reclaimed his son, and Bruce helped him settle with the maternity pillow so he could nurse Conner.

“There is something we should probably discuss, Clark.” William leaned forward, supporting his chin on his clasped hands, elbows on his thighs.

“What is it?”

“Word of your pregnancy has reached ears on the board of directors at LexCorp. They’re going to try the infidelity angle next. We’ll have to have Conner tested.”

Clark sighed heavily and rolled his eyes as he tried to get Conner to latch on properly.

“Set the appointment, I’ll cooperate. Don’t want the scumbags to have any ammo, right?”

He sighed with relief as Conner finally latched and began to nurse.

“I can set the appointment with Meghan or John.” Bruce offered.

“You can’t.” Martha said. “We’ll have to go through a lab that doesn’t have any prior connection to Clark or yourself, but, likewise, we’ll insist on a place that doesn’t have any connection to LexCorp or its subsidies.”

Bruce laid a hand on Clark’s shoulder, squeezing gently.

“Whatever.” Clark said. “The fact that they’re even trying this shows they’re running out of wind.”

“Big time.” Martha said. “We almost had them, actually. The last meeting was supposed to be to agree on the size of the inheritance, followed by one where you would be signing documents. Instead, they countered with the issue of questionable paternity.”

“As much as I would like to state otherwise, there has only been one Alpha who had the necessary access within the required timeframe to create this loveable bundle.” he rubbed one of Conner’s cheeks with his thumb. “Fortunately, he doesn’t get to have any influence in your growing-up.” Clark said softly, entirely focused on Conner, feeling his throat tighten as he reminded himself that any further intimacy would no longer be forced upon him.

“Clark?”

Clark turned his head as Bruce, who had knelt beside him, stroked his temple and cheek with his knuckles.

“I’m fine,” Clark said, leaning into the touch. “Just tired.”

Bruce opened his hand to cup Clark’s cheek.
“Did you want to turn in early? After you’re done nursing, I mean. I could bring Conner up to his crib, later.”

Clark turned his head to kiss Bruce’s palm.

“Thank you.”

The conversation switched to light banter (Damian had proudly shown off his macaroni art of his family, which included Clark holding Conner, represented by a piece of rigatoni), and Clark supervised William burping Conner before excusing himself.

When Bruce retired that night, after placing Conner in his crib, he checked on Clark before changing into his pajamas. He was fast asleep, but the pillow beneath Clark’s cheek was slightly damp, Bruce suspected from fresh tears.

He sighed.

“Clark,” he whispered. “Please talk to me. You’re not supposed to be doing this alone.”

He shook his head and continued his ablutions.

***

“You’re looking very well, Clark.”

Clark was grinning as he sat in Harley’s therapy room, Conner sleeping peacefully in his arms.

“I feel great.” Clark told her. He always felt at his best when he got to go out. The manor was still feeling too stuffy from being closed up all winter.

“Nothing bothering you, lately?”

Clark’s smile fell.

“Nightmares, but… I mean, there’s not much to be done about those, is there?”

“You can talk about them. Getting another person’s perspective can help.”

Clark shrugged.

“I know what they mean, I just wish they would stop. Bruce has gotten pretty good at picking up when I’m having one, so he can usually wake me before I wake Conner, but I hate knowing I’ve disturbed his sleep, too.”

“Do you mind talking about what happens in the dreams?”

Clark visibly shuddered.

“I don’t want to.” he held Conner closer.

Harley nodded.

“Okay, then. About Bruce helping you; it’s become more, hasn’t it?”

Clark blushed.

“We’ve come to an understanding.” he had a shy smile hinting at the corner of his lips.
Harley raised an eyebrow.

“Clark, as I mentioned before, this talk isn’t going to be fun, but, it’s a question of legality. You were placed in his care. If you two are transcending that, then we need to be sure you’re not being taken advantage—”

“I’m not.” Clark blurted out. “He never approaches me, first. He always waits for me to ask.”

“I’m sure no harm has been done, Clark,” Harley assured him. “But I’m not the one who needs to be convinced. This is the way it has to be for everyone, or else it would be too easy for the wrong sort to take advantage.”

Clark sighed heavily, turning his gaze to study his son’s chubby features.

*I can do this. I’ve been through hell already, I’ve managed to birth my pup, I can do this.*

“Where do we start?” Clark asked.

“I have the set questions, here.” Harley said, opening her bag and withdrawing a sheet of paper. “I can go over them with you, but both you and Bruce will have to be seen by a party of three higher-ups.”

Clark sighed heavily, holding Conner closer.

“Would you rather wait?” Harley offered. “I can see this has stressed you. We can discuss it another time, after you’ve had the chance to process it. But I will have to get the ball rolling within the next thirty days.”

Clark nodded, feeling a complete shift in his mood, which he was more or less used to these days, but he still hated it. He had arrived feeling perfectly happy and relaxed, and now he wanted to curl up in bed, preferably with Bruce to hold him and Conner and Damian nestled between them.

“Okay. I’ll mark you down for next Friday at the usual time, and I’ll send Bruce an e-mail so he’ll be ready. You can go.”

Clark quickly got out of the armchair and headed straight for the door.

“And Clark?”

Clark halted with his hand on the knob and looked back to where Harley was sitting.

“I’m happy for you.” she said. Her sincerity made Clark relax somewhat.

“Thanks, Harley.” he bid her, then left.

***

“I know they’re just making sure I’m alright,” Clark said in the car after he had explained to Bruce about the impending investigation. “Heck, I wish someone would have taken a closer look at my marriage with Lex. But aren’t all the checks and classes you go to precisely to make sure you wouldn’t take advantage of me?”

“It still happens, Clark.” Bruce told him. “For all of the background checks, psych evals, the works; there are still some support Alphas who end up taking advantage of the ones under their protection. Mind you, they went into it knowing they would have the opportunity; I’ve yet to hear one try to play the ‘I didn’t know it would be this hard’ excuse. Some manage to play the system, trick just the
right people, and then they have someone at their mercy. It’s rare, but it still happens.”

Clark rubbed his face with both hands, frustrated. He knew it was for the best, he just dreaded the idea that he might have to tell someone intimate details.

“Mother, Conner’s got the hiccups.” Damian piped up from the back, where he had been trying to feed Conner, who was strapped in his carrier.

“Just put the bottle aside for now and rub his chest. If the hiccups stop, try giving him his bottle again.”

Clark used the rearview mirror to observe the two, a bittersweet pain in his heart.

What if someone thought Bruce had taken advantage of him? What if he was forced to leave? Leave Bruce, Damian, Tim, Jason?

What if Powers tried to have Conner taken from him? He knew the thought was outlandish, but it didn’t make it go away. His imagination often ran away from him, lately. He could easily see Powers coming after him and taking Conner away with the excuse that he had to be properly raised to run LexCorp.

Stupid, no, not gonna happen. Stop being stupid, he berated himself.

“Clark?”

He looked to Bruce, who was still keeping his eyes on the road, but had a crease of worry to his brow.

“I’m fine.” Clark said, and sat back in his seat, switching his gaze to his side window.

***

That evening, Bruce suggested they take a bath together, so he could pamper him a bit.

“You’re worrying a lot over this, and it’s just going to add to your stress when your mother and grandfather come over tomorrow.”

Clark knew he was right, and normally would have eagerly jumped at the chance for some pampering, but he had been trying to avoid Bruce seeing him completely naked, lately. His stomach had shrunk considerably since giving birth, making any exterior sign he had been pregnant nearly non-existent; most Omegas might think that was great, but there was a lot of loose skin left behind, forming wrinkles like on one of those long, skinny balloons days after the party, and he hated the sight of it. In an involuntary gesture, he crossed his arms in front of his abdomen.

“I’ll just make sure Conner’s settled with Jason, first.”

Bruce frowned.

“Clark, if you’d rather not—”

“I do!” he exclaimed, then cleared his throat. “I do, and I’m happy you suggested it. I just, um…”

“Clark,” Bruce said seriously. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing’s wrong.” Clark shook his head.
“Clark, I can’t help if you’re not going to tell me when something’s bothering you--”

“Nothing’s bothering me, damn it!” Clark shouted.

Bruce clenched and unclenched his fists, then sighed heavily through his nose.

“Fine.”

He left the room.

Clark ran his fingers through his hair, stopping mid-way and gripping tightly as he began to whimper, pacing back and forth, not wanting to cry, but unable to stop the tears. He was angry at himself for shouting at Bruce, angry at himself for crying over it. He started sobbing harder, suddenly, as a thought came to mind: he had yelled at an Alpha. His Alpha.

*I’ve yelled at my Alpha what the fuck have I done--*

The thought consumed him as he curled into a ball on the floor.

***

Jason was making his way down the hall towards the master bedroom, as it was time for Conner’s feeding and he figured this close to bedtime Clark would want to take care of that himself. He paused before knocking, listening in, just in case his parents were busy, and felt a flash of cold dread when he realised he was hearing Clark sobbing.

Damian stepped off the elevator and paused when he saw Jason in the hall. Jason motioned for him to stay where he was and to be quiet, then adjusted Conner in his arms and made his way to him.

“Father went to the cave.” Damian whispered, looking fearfull. “He looked mad.”

Jason sighed.

“I think they had a disagreement. It happens, sometimes, between people who love each other.” he assured Damian, even though he didn’t like it himself. “Like when we get on each other’s nerves, or with Tim or Dick. I need to get Conner fed, but I don’t think mom’s in a good place, right now, so do want to come with me to the kitchen? You can hold him while I heat the bottle, and then feed him while I check on mom, okay?”

Damian nodded, and they both got in the elevator to go down to the ground floor. Normally, Bruce and Alfred preferred they use the stairs unless carrying something heavy or awkward to hold, so that was a rule Damian had broken a moment ago, but Conner was considered precious enough cargo that no one walked on the stairs with him.

“Can I go see mother, later?”

“Let’s wait and see.” Jason said. “If dad goes back to him before I’m done in the kitchen, then we’ll just wait until one of them comes to get Conner. If he doesn’t, then come up after first burping. He probably needs hugs. Hey, puppy,” Jason addressed Conner, who had begun suckling the available area of Jason’s shoulder in front of his face. “My shoulder is not going to give you milk, you’re just getting my shirt wet.”

Damian giggled.

They were only halfway to the kitchen when Conner finally understood that no milk was
forthcoming, and began to cry.

“Hey, hey, hey!” Jason soothed, gently bouncing him and speaking in a cutesy voice. “It’s okay! We gonna get ya somethin’ ta eat! Yes, we are!”

Once they were in the kitchen, Damian sat on a chair and Jason handed him Conner while he went to grab a milk bottle from the fridge and a small pot from the cupboard, the latter of which he filled with water and then placed on the stove to begin heating.

Damian tried speaking soothingly to Conner about his day at school while rubbing his back, but his focus was divided because he was trying really hard not to pee. He wasn’t wearing a GoodNite, and he didn’t want to have to clean the mess that would be left on the kitchen chair if he failed to hold it.

Damian had begun planting little kisses on Conner’s cheek and ear, out of things to say (though Conner’s crying had lessened some to fussing), when Jason tested the milk for the third time and declared it the right temperature.

“You ready to feed him?” Jason offered.

“I need to pee, first.” Damian whined.

“Oh, we’ll be in the lounge.”

Jason quickly took Conner, positioning him in the crook of his arm, as Damian bolted for the nearest toilet. Jason held the bottle to Conner, pressing the rubber nipple to his lips. Conner eagerly took it into his mouth and began to suckle, making a sort of satisfied sound between a sigh and a whimper.

Jason sighed himself, glad to have made Conner happy, at least. He made his way to the lounge and sat himself in an armchair after having kicked an ottoman into place, leaning back with another sigh.

He hoped it wasn’t serious, but he had witnessed too many liquor-induced shouting matches between the Seeder and the Incubator to not feel worry. He wished the others were home, too, as the situation made him yearn to have as many loved ones nearby as possible, but Dick had taken Tim downtown for Pokémon hunting, and Alfred was running errands.

It’s fine, it’s all gonna be fine. Everyone has bad days, and today was a bad one for them. It’ll pass.

He looked to Conner, still happily suckling at the bottle, eyes shut and making contented sighs and tiny grunts as his mouth worked, at peace and oblivious to the situation. Jason hadn’t noticed he’d started crying until a tear fell to his hand.

Tatsu had gotten him to watch Steven Universe recently, which he’d ended up loving. The soothing melody and lyrics of the song *Here Comes A Thought* flitted through his head and he hummed it, trying to will down the tightness in his throat. He kissed Conner’s temple and continued to hum.

***

Bruce opted for push-ups and weights instead of the punching bag this time. He wasn’t angry, but he knew if he’d stayed any longer he would have said something he’d regret. Clark was on edge, and it made him on edge, but he knew that there was no reason to turn that into a shouting match, so he’d left, hoping to talk with Clark once they’d both been able to calm down.

Learning to walk away had been a difficult lesson for him to learn. He had had many arguments with Alfred as a teen from which he’d only turned away after he’d shouted himself hoarse. The first time
he’d lost his patience with Dick, when he’d still been unused to being a parent, he’d hated himself as he saw the pup tremble. He’d barely raised his voice, but the authority of Alpha was quite clearly enough. He’d resolved from that point on to learn to control his anger better. He hadn’t thought he’d needed it, before, having never been the sort to be physically violent. Unless someone else raised their fists first, of course; he was good at settling those disputes. It was uncanny how much Jason was like him in that respect.

After he’d worked himself to the point where he was too exhausted to feel anything beyond a sort of numbness, he used a fresh towel to wipe off the sweat and left the cave.

After locking the clock back into place, Bruce noticed that the house seemed a little too quiet. He’d passed Damian on his way down, and he knew Jason was watching Conner, but he thought he should be hearing something.

Bruce made his way back up the stairs and stopped to listen outside the bedroom.

Whimpers.

Oh, shit.

Bruce gently opened the door just a crack and saw Clark sitting up on the bed holding Conner, Jason and Damian curled up on either side. Clark’s face was red and tear-streaked.

And didn’t he feel like a piece of shit, now? What had gone through Clark’s mind when he’d left?

Doesn’t matter, he told himself. What mattered was reminding Clark that, no matter what, he loved him.

He quietly let himself in and shut the door. Clark looked up, fearful, but Jason and Damian immediately set to work calming him; Damian scenting, Jason stroking his arm and whispering that it would be okay.

Bruce sat himself on the bed right near Clark’s feet. Clark wasn’t looking at him.

“Even people who care for each other very much will have days where they can’t agree. I’ve had to learn to walk away before saying something I might regret, but I can’t promise I’ll always know how to head it off. But can we agree that what’s said in anger, while it will sometimes mean apologising, isn’t to be taken at face value?”

“... shouted.” Clark said very quietly. Bruce could tell he had missed some.

“Sorry?”

Clark cleared his throat.

“I shouted at you. I shouldn’t have done that.”

Bruce nodded.

“True, but like I said, we can’t always control each ourselves when we’re upset.”

“Shouldn’t shout at Alpha.” Clark mumbled.

Bruce’s heart sank. It sounded like Clark had regressed some, like that thing which Mrs. Kent had described as his Stepford Omega state.
“Jason,” he said gently. “Maybe you’d better take Conner to his crib and you and Damian get ready for bed, okay?”

Clark took a quick, shallow breath and held Conner closer to him, but the scent of depressed Omega had increased to include fear and Conner, able to tell his mother was upset, began to cry.

“Clark? It’s okay, he just needs to be laid down for the night, okay?” Bruce spoke gently, slowly laying one hand on Clark’s knee.

Clark rocked slowly in place, shaking his head.

Bruce felt like he should have seen this coming. The nightmares had been getting steadily more frequent, and some days Clark seemed almost too cheerful, like he was trying to make up for the night.

Clearly, the postpartum was hitting him hard. Having come on the heels of his situation with Lex, Bruce wasn’t really surprised.

“Jason, take Damian to get ready for bed.” Bruce said.

“Come on, Dami.” Jason urged him, and they left.

Bruce drew himself up the bed and sat beside Clark, slowly lifting his hand to stroke his cheek.

“Clark, do you remember what you told me, once? About how when you were with Lex, you were Omega, and he was Alpha, and it was like that was your whole existence?”

Clark nodded mutely. Conner was still crying.

“Just now, you used the words ‘shouldn’t shout at Alpha.’ I am your Alpha, but I’m also Bruce, just like you’re my Omega, but you’re also Clark. If you’re feeling upset, you have every right to talk about it. Remember?”

*Lex would keep Clark from seeing his mother, he remembered.*

“Your mother is coming to visit tomorrow, remember? You can talk with her, if you’d like. We can even call her right now, if you need to.”

The dam burst, and Clark proceeded to cry, properly cry.

Bruce brought him into his arms, mindful of Conner between them.

Chapter End Notes

I would like to apologise for my long absence, and give a big thank you to everyone who’s been asking after my well-being and showing their continued support for this story. I took a long fall into the dumps and had to work long and hard to climb out again. As a result, my mood has seeped quite a bit into this chapter, but the next one, which is only two pages away from being done, starts to look a little brighter. The next one will be setting in motion three massive things which have yet to be resolved, namely Clark's inheritance, adoption, and Jason's court date. After those things have been looked after and Bruce and Clark officially mate, that will be it for this story. There will
probably be a few time-stamped things in the future, and I also have to finish the
ColdFlash one I'm working on, as well as start posting the Diana/Steve one I started. I
also have a Graves/Newt/Credence A/B/O in the works which will be unconnected to
this world, and be more smut-oriented.
Chapter 35

Chapter Summary

Clark and Bruce spend some time making up... and out...

Chapter Notes

So, I know that, generally speaking, following childbirth one's libido takes a plummet because a) body needs a break, and b) gotta make sure your energy is focused on feeding current young before making new ones. The way I see things, Clark is craving the intimacy that comes with the act, after so long of having the act forced upon him with no true intimacy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

But it's not, but it's not, but it's not, but it's not, but it's not

It's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay

You've got nothing, got nothing, got nothing, got nothing to fear

I'm here, I'm here, I'm here

— Here Comes A Thought, by Rebecca Sugar

“I thought I was getting better.”

After Bruce had helped calm Clark enough that they were able to focus on getting Conner to go to sleep, they placed him in his crib and then Bruce drew a bath for the two of them. They didn’t fill it as much as they had the night Conner was born; just the right depth that they could sit on the bottom next to the bench. Bruce was holding Clark to his chest, running his fingers through his hair with a tender touch.

“Healing from any kind of trauma can be a long process. On top of it all, you just delivered a pup into the world; your hormones are gonna be playing see-saw with your emotions for a while.”

“I know. I still hate it.”

“You should talk to Harley. She could prescribe you some anti-depressants. Tim needed them for a while following his parents’ accident.”

“I don’t know if I can breastfeed if I take those, though.”
“Then we’ll switch to formula. I know mother’s milk is the healthiest, but he’ll still be fine taking formula. Depending on what Harley says, we won’t know how you’ll be if you don’t take the antidepressants.”

Clark was silent. He knew Bruce was right, but even though he knew a few others at the clinic who took anti-depressants, he hated the idea.

His adversity to medication was in no small way related to the fact that he had been, forcibly and against his knowledge, administered birth control for years. According to Harley, at the rate Lex had been getting refills, he must have been injecting Clark every day. As most injectors were much stronger than your general oral contraceptive, they were usually recommended once a week, at most. This would have made the conditions for his declining mental state even worse, as the medication played with his hormones harder than any Omega should ever go through. It turned out the most recent refill Lex got shared the same lot number as a batch which was later recalled as it was found to have been ineffective. The timing with Clark’s heat were the conditions which led to Conner.

Bruce cupped his left cheek, the one not pressed against his chest, and stroked with his thumb, trying to keep Clark soothed.

Clark had gotten into the tub while Bruce was relieving himself, so he hadn’t yet seen the loose skin. He did now, though, as he happened to look down.

Smiling, he reached down beneath the water and gently poked at it. Clark froze.

“He stretched you out like a balloon, didn’t he?”

Clark brushed his hand away.

“Does it hurt?” Bruce asked, concerned.

“No, it’s just-- I don’t like it.” Clark said, uncomfortable.

Bruce felt the puzzle pieces click.

“Is this why you got defensive when I suggested the bath earlier?” he asked.

Clark nodded solemnly.

Inspired, Bruce kissed Clark suddenly, passionately. Before Clark could catch up, Bruce drew back and quickly drew a deep breath, then slid beneath the water and pressed his mouth to Clark’s belly, nuzzling against it. He couldn’t really kiss him without drawing water into his mouth, but did the best he could.

Clark felt stunned. He felt giddy. He felt loved. He felt aroused.

Bruce sat back up, wiping the water from his face and taking in air. Clark waited until it seemed he had his breath back, then took his face in his hands and proceeded to kiss him with the same passion Bruce had used to knock him off his guard a moment ago.

It was one of the noticeable differences between Bruce and Lex that Bruce never went for the obvious spots. He took his time, and he made sure everything was paid attention to.

As he and Clark kissed, he ran his fingers through Clark’s damp hair, massaging gently as he made his way down his neck, then began kissing along his jaw, moving his mouth gradually towards the place near the juncture of shoulder and neck. Clark shivered with pleasure and anticipation as Bruce
gently sucked a bit of loose skin in between his teeth, just enough to feel them. This was where, one
day, he would place the mating mark.

“Bruce?” Clark whispered, his arms around Bruce’s shoulders, grasping gently at his hair.

“Yes, Clark?” Bruce responded huskily as he thoroughly tongued his way upward to behind Clark’s
ear.

“Can you try using your fingers, again?”

They had been avoiding any type of play with Clark’s entrance since Conner was born, mainly
because postpartum seemed to involve a lot of gunk being expelled; however, Clark had noticed a
significant decrease in the past couple of days, and figured if there was an incident, they were already
in the tub.

“Sure. just let me know if you need to stop, okay?”

Clark nodded.

Bruce took his time, kissing and mouthing along Clark’s collarbone, grasping and massaging the
flesh on his back as Clark held himself in place with his hands behind Bruce’s neck. Bruce moved
downward, taking a pert nipple into his mouth and sucking, Clark’s whimpered moans echoing off
the tile.

Bruce let out a small, pleased growl as his tasted the first sweet drops of Clark’s breast milk. Clark
had been somewhat weirded out when Bruce had first asked him about trying it, but agreed and that
night had ended up being a fun experience for both of them, Bruce enjoying the subtle nutty flavour
of Clark’s milk. He hadn’t been able to try it, since; he now knew that was due to Clark being self-
conscious, which he wished he’d picked up on before, among other reasons that he really enjoyed
having this taste of Clark’s fecundity. It struck something base and animalistic in him that Clark was
a glowing show of motherhood, both physically and in watching how he interacted with Conner and
the other boys.

Bruce switched breasts, wanting to give them equal attention, and then urged Clark to sit up on the
tub bench.

“Doing alright up there?” he checked.

Clark hummed and looked down at Bruce with a smile.

“You take good care of me.”

Bruce stood and kissed Clark, slowly, gently licking his way into his mouth, sucking on his tongue.
Clark whimpered, breathing heavily through his nose as he rubbed all over Bruce’s chest, pressing
the heel of his palm into his pectorals, grasping his way lower down towards his abdomen.

Struck by a thought, Clark wrapped his legs around Bruce’s waist, drawing himself to him.

Without his puppy-pocket in the way, they slotted together perfectly, and Clark shuddered happily
when he felt his member make contact with Bruce’s.

Bruce broke the kiss with a gasp at the touch, and looked into Clark’s eyes.

“That’s new.” he grinned.
“Had all this room, figured I’d take advantage.” Clark grinned back.

Bruce kissed him again, caressing his face with both hands, and gently rutted against Clark, their cocks rubbing together.

When they broke for air, Bruce looked into Clark’s eyes again.

“Fingers, you said?”

Clark nodded.

“Please.”

Bruce knelt down in front of the bench, between Clark’s legs, who adjusted himself to be leaning back so that Bruce had full access.

Bruce started with mouthing and licking at Clark’s cock, sucking first one testicle and then the other into his mouth, then brought his thumb up to press at his perineum, causing Clark to jolt with the sudden flash of pleasure.

“Okay!” Clark exclaimed, slightly higher-pitched than usual. “That’s a thing!”

“Good or bad?” Bruce checked.

“Very good.” Clark said, swallowing.

Bruce chuckled and rubbed at it some more, enjoying the sight of Clark struggling to have something to grip as he writhed around on the bench.

“Bruce?” Clark asked after a bit.

“Yeah?”

“Can we do this where we’re both in the water? I’m getting kind of cold.”

“Oh, shit, yeah, sorry.” Bruce backed away and Clark slid back down. Sitting back, the water came up to his neck. Bruce entered his space and they kissed as Bruce slid his hand back down, gently rubbing circles on Clark’s abdomen.

Clark broke the kiss.

“Can I jerk you while you finger me?”

Bruce smirked.

“I think I can accommodate that request.”

Clark smirked back and flicked some water in Bruce’s face.

Bruce snorted and leaned for another kiss, causing Clark to giggle as he tickled his sides.

“I gotta say.” Bruce continued as he switched to a more loving touch, leaning his forehead against Clark’s. “I like that thing you do where you squeeze where my knot pops.”

Clark bit his lip, blushing.

“I read about it in a Roswell fanfic, once… like, years ago. Wasn’t sure how you’d react, but you
seemed to like it, so… I kept going.”

Bruce chuckled.

“So, you would read stories about aliens getting it on with humans?”

“Don’t judge me.” Clark stuck out his tongue. “Is it any worse than the trope I’m currently living?”

“What trope?”

“Bad past, taken in by a rich Alpha. It’s a Harlequin Romance, Bruce.”

Bruce shook his head.

“Geez, shows I never read romance novels. I didn’t realise that was a thing.”

Clark traced a finger down from Bruce’s lips to his chest, then rubbed one nipple firmly with his thumb, smiling for a moment when Bruce shivered, the smile dropping quickly as a thought struck him.

“There’s gonna be people who think that’s why we’re together, isn’t there? Social-climbing farm boy.”

Bruce held him close.

“They can kiss my ass.” Bruce said before kissing his neck, then pulled back and regarded him with a playful expression. “But if they aim for yours, I’ll go angry Alpha on them.”

“But they can still kiss yours?” Clark asked.

“No, but I look forward to watching your righteous Omega fury when they try. Because this ass,” Bruce took one of Clark’s hands and guided it to his buttock. “Is yours.”

Clark grinned and squeezed Bruce’s buttock, and Bruce grinned back at him.

They returned to kissing, hungrily, sucking at lips, tracing jawlines, nipping at necks.

Clark locked his legs around Bruce’s waist again, and they rutted against one another as Bruce grasped at the flesh of Clark’s back, gradually bringing one hand down and grasping Clark’s ass. In response, Clark squeezed at Bruce’s shoulders, gasping slightly. He was still antsy when he knew Bruce was going to finger him, even though he always ended up liking it. The anticipation was what worried him, because of Lex. Except that where Lex would’ve just shoved on in, Bruce took his time, and Clark forgot all worries from the first touch of Bruce’s gentle finger rubbing along his crack.

Bruce was beginning to suspect that, the more he and Clark fooled around, the more the Omega’s instincts were starting to take over. While he gently rubbed along the place between his buttocks, Clark was worrying the side of his neck with his teeth, which was usually sign of pre-heat bonding.

Bruce loved it.

Clark held tighter as Bruce breached his opening with one finger, carefully working his way in. Clark’s slick was mixing with the water of the tub, but Bruce could still feel the difference as he probed deeper, not to mention that his hole opened up easily beneath his touch; he added a second finger.
“Bruce…” Clark whispered huskily.

Bruce kissed his neck as he continued to pump his fingers in an out.

“Yes, Clark?”

“When we try the rest of the way, can I be on top? At least to start?”

Bruce curled his fingers, enjoying feeling Clark writhe in his arms as the touch rubbed his prostate.

“As long as the position is humanly possible, I’ll be happy to try anything with you.” Bruce promised.

“So no alien sex?” Clark teased.

Bruce hummed, kissing his way back to look at Clark’s face, all the while mindful to keep his fingers moving.

“If the aliens have a square jaw, dark hair…” he paused and grinned. “And those sparkling blue eyes, I might be persuaded.”

Clark grinned back and began to move his hips with Bruce’s fingers as they kissed again.

Clark moved his right hand down Bruce’s torso, snaking his way towards his crotch, then looked at him, asking permission with his eyes. Bruce responded by tilting his hips upward slightly, and Clark took hold.

Clark enjoyed the weight of Bruce’s cock in his hand, and again the girth of it sent a thrill through him, wondering how it would be when at last he and Bruce went all the way. He had wondered for a bit if everything would still work alright after having pushed Conner out, but, after a week, it felt like everything had more or less gone back to the way it was. It still worried him, if he might have a dissociation moment, but Bruce telling him they could try different positions assuaged his fears. Lex always took him from behind, whether it was standing or basic Alpha-Omega style, so seeing Bruce’s face would already be a big help in keeping him grounded.

Clark’s brain started to go fuzzy as Bruce worked three fingers inside him, crooking against his prostate, feeling like pleasant electric shocks were travelling from that spot right to his cock. Clark was moaning with each breath and his eyes fluttered shut, unable to focus. He had to tell himself a few times to add some variety in how he handled Bruce’s member. Thumbing at the nerves on the underside near the head and working up to the slit, sometimes squeezing at the area for the knot like he knew Bruce liked.

As Clark felt he was close, he managed to bring himself close enough that he held his and Bruce’s erections together and pumped. As he came, his cry a piercing echo off the bathroom tiles, he felt Bruce withdraw his fingers and joined with his hand to work himself off. Bruce’s grunting moan of release sounded right next to his ear and it worked itself into the wave of contentment he felt as Bruce wrapped him in both arms and they sat together in the water until lethargy demanded they make their way to the warm blankets of the bed, where they lay entwined until sleep came.

***

Clark hesitated before knocking on Dick’s bedroom door a few days later, holding Conner to him.

“Come in!”
Clark opened the door and poked his head in.

“Hey!” Dick greeted him from his desk. “Sorry for not getting up, it gets hard to find my place, otherwise.”

He was working on painting a model of a sixties motorcycle, and Clark looked around to find he had posters of all sorts of motorcycles all around his room.

“Should I come back?”

“Nah! You can sit on the bed. What’s up?”

“Well, I need some advice, Omega to Omega.” Clark sat on the bed, switching Conner from one shoulder to the other.

“If it’s bedroom advice, I’ll do what I can, but I do not need to hear about what you and Bruce get up to, no matter how happy I am for you.”

Clark chuckled.

“No, I get that. That is kind of the advice I need, though.”

“O-kay?” Dick switched brushes for some detailing.

“Well, I used to read fanfics of my favourite shows and stuff when I was a teenager. I thought if I went back to that, it might help certain things seem less scary?” Clark smiled as Conner made a gurgling noise.

“Like, things you think Bruce wants you to do, or that you would like to do?”

“Well, I know he would never try to make me do things I don’t want, but, there are some things I know I used to think about when I was a teen. You know, we all have our fantasies.”

“Life would be boring without them.” Dick flashed him a quick grin.

“But, there are some of these things Lex made me do, so now I have that memory associated with it. And now, like, I’m with Bruce, and it’s like I want to take it back? To be able to do those things I used to want with someone I know I would actually enjoy it with? Does that make sense?”

Dick put his brushes in a can of water and turned his chair to face Clark.

“Bruce doesn’t know this, unless Alfred told him but also recommended not talking to me about it, wouldn’t put it past him, but Barbara wasn’t my first. I was with a male Alpha before, and I wasn’t ready, but he made it seem like if we did it it would make our relationship better. I was fifteen. I regretted it right away. Barbara knew from the moment we met, and she never asked for sex. She waited until I was ready. But I wasn’t sure if I ever would be. One day, I told her as such, and she said that wasn’t why she was with me. The day before prom, I went out and bought some condoms. Prom night, nothing happened, but I felt like something had changed because I had taken that step to be prepared. I had made that decision, no one else. Eventually, we did it, and it was beautiful. There was no pressure, and Babs made sure I felt like I could tap out if I needed to.”

Clark nodded, looking to Conner as his pup started smacking his face, probably wanting attention.

“Bruce doesn’t pressure me, either.” he said as he nuzzled Conner’s face.

“But you feel like you need to reclaim parts of yourself.”
Clark looked back at Dick.

“Yeah.”

“And you think reading fanfics will help?”

“Well, fanfics can be smutty, but also romantic. Just as an example, blowjobs in porn look painful.”

Dick winced.

“Yeah, they do. Okay, one sec.”

He wiped his hands a towel and turned to his already open laptop, then opened a new tab on the browser.

“This is the website I go to for my Stucky porn.” Dick explained, showing him a site with a red logo. “You can search by fandom,” he clicked on one. “Then click here to add in keywords and other search criteria, like which characters will be paired together, what rating you want; since you’re looking for dirty stuff, explicit. There are other categories, like some people like Beta/Beta action, I like Alpha/Alpha, but, of course, there’s regular Alpha/Omega, and on top of that you can choose whether they’ll be male/male, male/female, or female/female. And, this here is really important, you probably want to choose a story that doesn’t have any archive warnings. That should avoid any rapey stories.”

“Seriously?” Clark asked, disgusted.

“Well, that has its own subset of categories. Like, maybe magic made them do it, but then that releases all the feelings they were denying. Just to be safe, if it has non-con warnings, just avoid it for now. Some of them can tug at the heartstrings and be beautiful, but it’s a minefield for victims to cross.”

Dick spent at least half an hour explaining to Clark how to navigate the website, offering tips from his own reading experience, and then Clark thanked him and went to find his laptop to do some… research.

***

Bruce had gone to the Wayne Enterprises main building for a budget meeting, so after feeding Conner, Clark laid his son in his crib and set to work.

Roswell didn’t seem to have enough of a lasting popularity to offer much variety in the types of stories he wanted, so he tried some of the newer things he had been introduced to by Tim and Jason.

Stargate, likewise, didn’t have enough of what he wanted, though there was still a small selection of Todd/John Sheppard stories he enjoyed and bookmarked. Too many people seemed to think that the air-force colonel was well-paired with Rodney, which Clark just found ridiculous.

Holmes and Watson yielded a good number of stories, but it was difficult finding things that were still rooted in the original stories instead of the new BBC show. As much as he enjoyed the show, there were ticks of that Holmes’ personality that made it difficult to imagine him in a sexual situation. What was that term he’d learned? Asexual. Yes, BBC Holmes was most likely that.

Some things like Supernatural had a huge selection due to their more current fan-base, though Clark was hesitant over the incestual fics that fandom yielded.
All the same, he found some well-written tales. After reading several, he verified that Conner was still asleep, sent Dick a text that he was going to take a shower and if he could please check Conner once in a while, then took a change of clothes with him into the bathroom.

***

Hair still damp, Clark was feeling rather well after having spent a decent chunk of time with his right hand, and then finished showering and getting dressed again just in time for his mother and grandfather’s arrival.

“There he is!” Martha squealed as she came into the lounge, William on her heels, holding her hands out for Conner, who Clark passed over with an amused smile.

“Goodness, you’re getting to be a big boy! Yes, you are!” Martha said in a high voice as she rocked Conner while standing.

“It’s only been two weeks, ma.”

“Yes, but babies grow fast.” she said, still grinning down at Conner, whose pursed lips and light frown suggested he wasn’t sure about this loud woman who was making babble noises at him.

“How have you been feeling, sweetie?” she turned to look at Clark, still bouncing Conner slightly.

“Physically, fine. I had a bit of a disagreement with Bruce yesterday, though.”

“What happened?” William asked, concerned, as he sat beside Clark on the sofa.

“It was nothing.” Clark assured him. And he went on to explain how he was on edge from picturing all sorts of worst-case scenarios of the powers that be not letting Bruce and him be together, and when Bruce suggested a bath he was concerned about Bruce seeing his tummy wrinkles, leading to his outburst when Bruce tried to ask him what was wrong.

“And then he left the room so it wouldn’t turn into an argument, but then I had this episode, and, long story short, we’re going to talk to Harley to see if I might need anti-depressants.”

“Perfectly normal, sweetie.” Martha assured him. “I had to take some after your father died. With everything you’ve been through, I’m not surprised.”

“You’re going to be alright, Clark.” William put his arm around his shoulders and Clark leaned against his grandfather.

“We have some news for you, too.” Martha said. “Since the blood test has proven Lex is Conner’s father, most of the LexCorp board members are urging that you receive some money. Powers doesn’t have enough support to refuse you anymore.”

“Seeder.” Clark said.

“Sorry?”

“It’s something Jason says to refer to his birth parents. They were abusive drunks, so he refers to them as the Seeder and the Incubator. He calls Bruce dad. He’s started calling me mom.” Clark blushed as he spoke that last bit, then took a deep breath.

“Point is, if Lex had had his way, Conner wouldn’t even exist. We’ll use the terminology insofar as we need to for legal reasons, but never beyond that do I ever want him to be attributed a title he
doesn’t deserve.”

William nodded and tightened his hold around Clark’s shoulders.

“Well said.”

Clark looked up as Martha ran a hand through his hair like when he was small.

“My little boy.” she said, her eyes watering.

Clark smiled shyly back.

***

That night, as Clark and Bruce got into bed, Clark snuggled close and scented Bruce’s throat.

“Twice in one week?” Bruce asked, grinning as he ran his fingers through Clark’s hair, using his other hand to trace along his jaw. “Someone’s happy.”

“I wanna be able to blow you one day.” Clark stated bluntly, though he could feel his cheeks colour in light of the declaration. “I think I’ve come up with a way to work up to it.”

Bruce nodded.

“Alright. What did you have in mind?”

Clark took a deep breath, trying to remember what he’d briefly practised in his head earlier.

“We could do other things, like we already do, either rubbing together, or you fingering me, and I could try sucking on one or two of your fingers at a time while we do that. And, if I think I can when we’re done,” his voice got quiet and shaky and he found it difficult to keep eye contact. “I could try tasting your come.”

Bruce resisted the urge to pin Clark after hearing him talk, instead kissing his forehead.

“Alright, how do you want to start?”

Clark took a deep breath.

“Um, just kissing for now, and maybe I’ll try getting on you in a bit?”

“No problem.” Bruce agreed, and, still laying on their sides, they began to slowly kiss, gradually increasing in need as they let the sensations take over and ran hands over one another’s bodies.

Bruce had gotten fairly good at telling when Clark was ready for extra things during foreplay, but always asked first. Sometimes, Clark eagerly agreed, other times, it was like thinking about it made him need to slow down, like he had gotten too swept up to realise how close to the edge they had traversed until Bruce talked to him.

“Can I touch you?” Bruce asked as he brought his hand to Clark’s hip but no further.

“Mm-hmm.” Clark said, licking and sucking at Bruce’s neck. “Can I touch you?” he asked.

“Mm, yes.” Bruce lightly growled.

They grasped each other’s lengths and began to stroke each other, Bruce remembering to start out
gentle, knowing that too much too soon would be a quick turn-off for his Omega, Clark using more
pressure and paying a lot of attention to the place where the knot would form, as he knew Bruce
liked.

After a bit, Clark hooked one leg around Bruce’s hips, looking him right in the eye, and Bruce
nodded, holding on as he helped to keep him in place while he rolled over, Clark now on top, their
lengths pressed together.

“What next?” Bruce asked.

“Um, your hand?” Clark asked, nervous.

Bruce offered him his left hand, the one that hadn’t been rubbing Clark’s penis, and Clark began by
scenting it, smelling lightly like the fruity soap they had in the ensuite, nuzzling it, then placed a kiss
in the centre of the palm. As though suddenly remembering he had two things to do, he started
rolling his hips, humping his cock against Bruce’s, and then took one finger into his mouth.

Bruce finger tasted clean, and quickly slicked up from his saliva, the very act of having something in
his mouth causing him to salivate. He side-glanced Bruce, who was watching with rapt attention.
Clark pulled his finger from his mouth, then leaned in to kiss Bruce, nipping lightly at his tongue.

“Was that okay?” Clark asked. Bruce smiled.

“That was much more than okay.” he told him, causing Clark to smile back. Feeling a bit of a sprain
from keeping his head up, Clark, lowered his head to lay on Bruce’s shoulder, then brought his hand
back and this time took two fingers into his mouth.

There was something almost soothing of having Bruce’s fingers in his mouth as they rocked their
hips together, Bruce’s other arm around his shoulders. All the same, he could feel the pleasure
building as they rocked, and began to moan softly, feeling the vibrations working around Bruce’s
fingers.

“Mm, that feels good.” Bruce praised.

It was perhaps the quietest lead up to a climax Clark has ever experienced, the seconds before it
happened feeling like he wanted to forever stay in that moment, and then he hit the edge, and he was
flying, gently increasing the suction on Bruce’s fingers, a series of chopped, whining moans as he
sputtered between them. Bruce carefully rolled him onto his side, then brought himself to completion
with their hands entwined, a soft growl as he did so.

Clark let go of Bruce’s finger, a thread of saliva hanging briefly between them and his mouth, then
lifted his hand, the one which had been around Bruce’s cock, in front of his face.

Spurts of thick, white come had mainly gathered above his wrist, and he sniffed carefully at it, then
looked at Bruce.

“You don’t have to if you’re not ready.” Bruce assured him.

Clark blinked, then took Bruce’s hand and placed it on his left breast. He looked back to his arm, and
licked at the spunk.

It was salty, strange, but not unpleasant. He had worried about the taste reminding him of the times
Lex had knotted his mouth, but the situation was different enough that it didn’t happen. Bruce hadn’t
gagged him with his cock, forcing him to take it deep in his throat like porn videos attempted to make
look desirable. They had worked their way there slowly, and, as always, Bruce had allowed him to
get there on his own terms.

“Not bad.” Clark said, immediately blushing.

Bruce snorted.

“I’ll get a towel for the rest.” he smiled at Clark before leaving the bed.

After they were clean and cuddled up for sleep, Bruce kissed Clark’s hair before whispering,

“I love you.”

“I love you.” Clark returned, nuzzling into Bruce’s neck.

“Think Jason will be alright for tomorrow?” Clark asked after a bit.

“I think he’ll do fine.” Bruce said. “It the other side I’m worried about. The good guys can do the best job possible in a courtroom, but if the defense does, too, it can still convince a judge and jury the wrong way.”

Clark sighed.

“We’ll be there for him. For all of them.” Clark said.

“All their families will be there to show their support.” Bruce agreed. “Even though I really preferred keeping the boys at public school, myself and the other families have agreed that if this case doesn’t go our way, they’re all getting transferred to private. We’ve even arranged to make sure the poorer families of those involved will have scholarships to the private institution.”

Clark nodded.

“Here’s hoping the good guys win.”

Chapter End Notes

So, yeah... next chapter, the trial begins. I'm hoping the layout won't be too boring. The next chapter is nearly complete, but I know I'm going to have to go over it to add behaviours, like people's expressions, movements, reactions, etc., to make it seem more like real, because right now it's reading like a transcript. Heck, just to keep things interesting, maybe I'll keep it to one or two witnesses per chapter, and let you guys tell me who you want next. Jonathan Crane, Social Studies teacher, was witness number one, and has completed his testimony. I'll probably keep Jason and Tatsu, as well as Digger and Waller, for last. Here's the list of remaining witnesses:

June Moone, history teacher

Detective Arnold Flass and Lieutenant Max Eckhardt, bent cops who have pleaded guilty since Commissioner Gordon became personally involved in the case

Garfield Logan, witness

Bart Allen, victim
Roy Harper, victim

Victor Stone, witness

The next few chapters might be difficult to work out, because I need to make sure everything matches and such, so the schedule might be messed up, but I'll do my best. Also, Animaritime (local con) is coming up, and I've been subject to the curse of the cosplayer, which is to say I've been procrastinating doing anything until the past three months, which is cutting way too close. I'll post a link to pics on the chapter that goes up around the right time.

See you soon, darlings! <3
Chapter 36

Chapter Summary

Session one of the state versus George Harkness Jr., and the state versus Amanda Blake Waller.

Chapter Notes

I apologise at the tardy posting, but I was having trouble with a) trying to figure out what was the best note to end it on, and b) trying to put in little bits to make it not sound too much like a transcript. I'll probably still have to go over it to add more descriptions of tone of voice, movements, etc., but wanted y'all to have this.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The courtroom’s dark panelling held no promise of justice, even though that was its whole purpose. Clark’s gaze flitted over the gathered people (there were quite a few beyond the victims and their families), to a projector sitting on Harvey’s table at the front, dark for the moment, but aimed at a projector screen angled so that the judge (not yet arrive) and jury (already seated) would both be able to see it clearly.

Conner snoozed peacefully in his arms. He had fed him in the car before he, Jason and Bruce had gone inside, and the white noise of the crowd babbling was enough for Conner to be out like a light in no time.

“Do you want to hold him?” Clark offered Tatsu, who was clearly a bundle of nerves. “He’s sleeping, so it will probably help relax you.” he explained.

Tatsu nodded shakily, her leg still bouncing in place where she was sitting on the court bench.

Clark handed Conner to Jason over Damian, who was sitting between them, and Jason passed the puppy to Tatsu.

Tatsu held Conner to her shoulder, pressing her cheek against his head, and focused on her breathing. The smell of young pup was relaxing, Conner content as he continued to sleep in her arms. If she wasn’t still nervous about the proceedings, Tatsu felt she would have been tempted to nod off, herself. On her other side, her mother sat, and he looked approving of his daughter holding Conner. He placed an arm around her to offer further comfort, and she leaned in to his side.

Clark wanted to lean against Bruce, but he knew that here, at least until things were settled on the side of getting his inheritance, it would be best not to. Even though the paternity test had come back positive, Martha had warned them to be careful. Clark settled for moving his right hand next to Bruce’s thigh, and Bruce took the hint, lowering his left hand to take Clark’s.

“All rise for Her Honour, Judge Van Dorn.”
Clark and Bruce quickly let go of their hands as they rose with everyone in the room. A dark-skinned woman with wavy brown hair entered the room wearing black judge’s robes. She was on the short side, but her presence was very much Alpha in nature.

“Be seated.” she said as she sat down without looking at anyone. With a whack of her gavel, which made Clark jolt slightly in spite of himself, she declared court to be in session.

“This April third, two-thousand and seventeen,” Judge Van Dorn declared. “We are gathered to hear the cases of the state versus George Harkness Jr., and the state versus Amanda Blake Waller. District Attorney Harvey Dent will make his opening statement, followed by defense attorney Val Ricorso’s counter argument.”

Harvey stood, walking to the front where he could move from facing the jury, the judge, and the room at large.

“Your honour, ladies and gentlemen of the jury; I have evidence and testimonies collected going back nearly a year, that Omega students at Gotham Public High School have not only been victimised, sexually assaulted, but that school authorities have done little to nothing to stop it. One student, Alpha Jason Todd, here present, has repeatedly come to the defense of his classmates, and each time it escalated into fisticuffs, Jason alone was punished for violating the school rules regarding violence on the property. George Harkness Jr., the offender, was never punished by the school. He has kept his position on the football team, has never once been suspended. The latest event, Jason was suspended. Now, I’m not saying Jason shouldn’t be reprimanded for having fought on school property, but where is the punishment for what was no less than sexual assault against no fewer than five Omegas, three of which are in this room, and the other two have requested, out of fear of facing their attacker in close quarters, to submit their written testimonies, which will be read at the appropriate time. Not only has there been no punishment for Harkness, but Principal Waller herself threatened one of the victims to keep silent, and even struck her. We also have three teachers here present who are willing to testify against Waller’s practise of keeping her own staff from speaking by threatening their jobs if they dared to speak out regarding the sexual assault on school property by students. What you will hear today, is no less than a cover-up of student endangerment. Too long, teenaged persons are allowed to get away with assault of all types because society has a mentality that because they are under-age, it must mean they don’t know better.”

Harvey looked to the jury, then to the room, gesturing with his hands and frowning like it was the dumbest thing he’d ever heard. As he began again, he lifted his finger, gesturing as he spoke.

“I challenge that today. Harkness knows better, but has continued because he knew he could, because he knew he would face no punishment, thanks to corrupt school authorities. Please keep in mind, that the difference between sixteen and eighteen is two years, and that knowing that sexual assault is wrong isn’t something that magically occurs when you turn eighteen. It begins at home, by proper upbringing and being taught to respect all persons,” his gaze paused over Harkness Sr. “And it continues at school when authorities show the proper punishment for such acts.” This time he paused as he looked at Waller.

“At the least, a person should understand that ‘no’ means no. ‘No’ is one of the first things we teach our pups: don’t do this, don’t do that. So why would it be so difficult to understand when a person says ‘no, stop, don’t touch me’ that it still applies? That is what I intend to illustrate today. That it does still apply, and that the authorities in our lives should be enforcing that, not encouraging the opposite, and not turning a blind eye. Thank you.” He returned to his table at the front.

Clark resisted the urge to clap.
“He’s good.”

“The best.” Bruce agreed, proud of his friend.

Val Ricorso, tanned with short hair slicked back, showing off a widow’s peak, stood and took the front spot.

“Your honour, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, what we have here is a complete misunderstanding of the situation blown entirely out of proportion by some overly-excited teens and some vindictive school staff. I’m not saying young George Harkness didn’t cross the line a few times. But, like his alleged victims, the world of sex is rather new. Flirting can be difficult to navigate when you’re a teen. So they didn’t like that he approached them, but rushing to call it sexual assault is overly-dramatic and only a danger to this young man’s future. As for Amanda Waller’s actions, she only means to protect all of her students without bias. If there was any real danger for the Omegas, of course she would have acted. She has security on the grounds for the purpose of ensuring everyone’s safety. I think we’ll find today that this whole situation could have been settled out of court and will be a waste of everyone’s time. But, by all means, I invite my colleague to try and validate this whole farce. Thank you for your time.”

Clark felt indignation on the behalf of Harvey and every one of Harkness’ victims, plus a special spot for Jason.

“Mr. Dent, you may begin.” Judge Van Dorn said.

Harvey stood.

“I would first like to call upon Jonathan Crane, History teacher at Gotham High.”

Jonathan Crane made his way to the front, where the bailiff held out a Bible for him to place his hand on.

“Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?”

“I do.”

“You may be seated.”

Mr. Crane, dark-haired, pale skin, and angular features, with rectangular glasses and almost feminine lips, looked almost nervous as he briefly looked to where Waller was sitting, then at his feet.

“Mr. Crane,” Harvey began. “How long have you been a teacher?”

“Almost twenty years.”

“Not always at Gotham High?”

“No, sir, I used to teach at GU.”

“Tell me, what was the University’s policy on sexual assault?”

“Zero tolerance. It’s actually one of the best in the country. Every year there were always about a dozen or so expulsions from assailants. Verbal harassment would get you a warning, hands-on would get you suspended and, if necessary, your schedule changed to make sure you were as far away from the victim as possible. A second complaint for hands-on and you were out.”

“Is the victim’s word all that’s needed?”
“Witnesses are preferable, but, depending on the situation, not necessary.”

“So the University takes the safety and well-being of its students very seriously?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How is Gotham High?”

“On the books, they say they don’t tolerate harassment.”

“And in reality?”

“I’ve had multiple students crying in my office this year, and the numbers are greater than the testimonies you’ve gathered. At the university, they provide a psych course for the teachers where they train you to keep an eye out for those that might be hurting, know what to say to get them to open up, tell you what’s wrong. I reported each case to Principal Waller.”

“Which method of communication did you employ?”

“At first, I brought it up during staff meetings, but, after the third occurrence, I started submitting them by e-mail.”

“I would like to show exhibit A to the court and jury, these are screen-capped print-outs of the e-mail conversations between Mr. Crane and Ms. Waller.”

Harvey passed copies to the jury and the judge.

“Pay attention to page six, where Waller says, and I quote, ‘tell them whatever makes them feel better, but leave Harkness be. We have an image to maintain, and any action taken against him could severely tarnish that. This includes how people would see you, Crane.’”

“So, Mr. Crane,” Harvey continued. “Would you say that Waller’s priorities were not where they should be regarding the well-being of the students?”

“No objection! That is a leading statement.”

“Sustained.” Van Dorn agreed.

“Apologies, your honour.” Harvey said. “Mr. Crane, would you say that Waller appropriately dealt with the situation?”

“Not at all.” Crane replied.

“And what were your following moves in regard to the situation?”

“I told the affected students they could talk to me, and asked if they would mind if I recorded their conversations so that I could use it for legal action.”

“Exhibit B, your honour, ladies and gentlemen of the jury: voice recordings from those students who agreed to this recording.”

Harvey’s assistant clicked on her laptop, and the sound came through clearly through the speakers they had hooked up to it.

[unknown, shaky female voice] “I told him to let go, and pushed at him, but he wouldn’t stop.”
[Jonathan Crane] “And what happened then?”

[ufv] “I tried scratching him... I saw it on an episode of Star Trek, so I just dug my nails in his arm.” [a sob, the next part is broken with whimpers] “But then he used his Voice! And I couldn’t fight him anymore!”

[JC] “When did it stop?”

[ufv] “I... I heard yelling... And then Wayne’s kid had Digger against the lockers.”

Harvey signalled to his assistant and she stopped the recording.

“So,” Harvey held up a hand, pausing as though coming to conclusions for the first time, even though Clark knew this was all thought out long ahead of time. “On top of refusing to listen when the student asked him to stop, we have testimony that Harkness, Digger being his nickname, you understand, used his Voice against his victim.” He stroked his chin thoughtfully, and Clark smirked at the sarcasm Harvey displayed in the action. “There are very clear laws about this, I believe, counselor?” he turned to the defense, who said nothing, but wrote something on his notepad.

“Mr. Crane,” Harvey turned back to Jonathan. “About how many of the students you talked to who were victimised reported having Voice used on them by Harkness?”

“All of them.”

“And was this included in your e-mails?”

“During one exchange I pointed out to Principal Waller that allowing this to continue, given the laws surrounding Voice use, it would be potentially worse than any image issue should she do nothing instead of work to stop it.”

“Ladies and gentlemen, page seventeen, please.”

There was the sound of shuffling paper as Harvey waited.

“It reads, and I quote, ‘you say things will look bad if the school gets pulled into a criminal investigation, but how bad will it look when it does and the cops see you did nothing when a teenaged Alpha was using his Voice on school grounds?’ To which Waller replied, ‘How bad will all this look from the unemployment office?’” He turned on his heel to look at Waller, frowning, and again Clark read the sarcasm. “That sure does sound like a threat, to me. Mr. Crane,” he turned back to Jonathan. “What happened on December sixteenth, twenty-sixteen, when you arrived at the school to start your day?”

“Principal Waller asked me to go to her office. She said I was suspended from my job until mid-January.”

“Ladies and gentlemen, final page, please.”

Another shuffling of papers.

“‘An investigation has begun. I will be cooperating fully with the police. You should, too. It will look better for that image you’re trying to maintain.’ This e-mail received no reply, but the next day Mr. Crane received suspension from his post, according to the note, included in the Xerox, for ‘repeatedly defying superiors.’ No further questions, your honour.”

Harvey sat.
“Counselor, would you like to cross-examine?” the judge asked.

“I would, your honour.”

Ricorso stood and approached the witness stand.

“So, Mr. Crane, you used to teach Gotham U?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And how does one go from being a university professor to a high school teacher?”

“Having observed first-hand the behaviours of some students at the university level, I thought I could make more of an impact if I taught at a younger age. The Suffragette and later Omegist movement is a big part of my History class.”

“You mentioned that you encouraged your students to speak to you whenever possible. Just how social do you get with your students?”

“Since I have been tutoring Mr. Todd to keep him up to speed with his classes, on occasion we have gone for coffee or lunch as part of our sessions.”

“What about Omega students?”

“Miss Yamashiro would join us during her suspension.”

“But you were never alone with her?”

“No.”

“What about other Omegas?”

“Objection!” Harvey called, standing. “If Mr. Ricorso has an accusation to make about my client, I would like him to get to the point.”

“Sustained.” Van Dorn agreed. “Get to the point, Mr. Ricorso.”

“Very well. Since we’re talking about sexual assault, your honour,” Ricorso picked up a file from his table. “I have information here that Mr. Crane once held a doctorate, that he was in fact a professor of psychology. He lost his license and was dismissed from his former position for fraternising with an Omega student.”

Clark felt his heart sink and looked towards Crane on the stand; he looked crestfallen and had shut his eyes tightly for a moment, looking like he was trying not to hyperventilate.

“This is true, isn’t it, Mr. Crane?” Ricorso continued. “You talk about being against sexual assault, and yet you violated teacher-student policy, in fact, from what I’ve understood, she was also your patient? Or is it no longer an issue once they’re eighteen?”

“Objection!” Harvey called. “Mr. Ricorso is leaving out vital information.”

“Overruled, Mr. Crane has yet to answer the question.”

“Thank you, your honour. Mr. Crane, did you or did you not have sexual relations with an Omega who was your student and your patient?”
“I did.” Crane replied in a shaky voice.

“Your honour, I think Mr. Crane should be treated as an unreliable witness given his criminal history.”

“Objection, your honour! Mr. Crane was never charged with a crime.” Harvey protested.

“Sustained, but make it quick, Dent.” Van Dorn pointed with her gavel.

“Thank you, your honour.” Harvey looked relieved as he stood to address the jury. “Yes, Mr. Crane did go over the line with a student and patient. However, after an investigation, it was found to have been consensual, and the two are now mates with three pups. He lost his license to practise and his teaching position, because it was a violation of his profession, but no crime was found to have taken place and he was given a sterling letter of recommendation to ensure future teaching posts by the dean of the department. I move that he is still a worthy witness and that his testimony is still valid. In fact, his courage to speak on this matter should be taken into account, as it was known that his past might come to light in this courtroom. But he spoke up anyway, because he knew what was at stake was more important: that under-age students were in need of help.”

Van Dorn exhaled loudly through her nose.

“I will recommend that his testimony be considered, but no further questioning is to be allowed. Mr. Crane, leave the stand.”

Crane left quickly and Clark watched him as he returned to his seat, where his mate, a pretty blonde woman with round glasses, was waiting. She put an arm around him and they scented one another; Clark could see the tenderness between them, and didn’t doubt that they loved each other.

“Mr. Dent, would you please call your next witness?” Van Dorn asked.

“Yes, your honour.” Harvey nodded, seeming not to have been set back by this revelation.

“Miss June Moone, History teacher at Gotham High.”

Clark turned and saw a slight woman with brown hair drawn into a tight bun and wearing black plastic-framed glasses, looking almost like a lawyer herself with her grey skirt suit and black heels. She walked with an air of confidence as she approached the bailiff and spoke the oath over the Bible, then sat on the witness stand.

“Miss Moone, what can you tell me about the events of December nineteenth, twenty-sixteen, just after lunch break?”

“Tatsu Yamashiro came to my classroom to inform me she was suspended. I’m her homeroom teacher, so it made sense that I would be the one she told.”

“How would you describe her state when she came to you?”

“She was upset, began crying almost immediately. I also noticed a fresh bruise on her cheek, just along her jaw.”

“In which way would you presume she had come by this bruise?”

“I had my suspicions, but nothing definite.”

“And what was your suspicion?”
“That is was Principal Waller who hit her.”

There was a wave of shocked murmurs which ran through the room.

“To show this is not an idle accusation,” Harvey said, acting as though this was perfectly normal. “Would you please tell the court what brought you to this conclusion?”

“I was on hall-monitor duty during the lunch hour, and saw Tatsu go to the washroom. Waller followed shortly afterward. When they both exited, I was standing outside my classroom, keeping an eye out for stragglers to the afternoon class, and saw them walking down the hall. The left side of Tatsu’s face was clearly visible, and I saw nothing there at the time.”

“But it was there when she returned to tell you she had been suspended?”

“Yes.”

“What happened after?”

“I asked her if she had called her parents, which she had, and after leaving one of the more advanced students in charge of directing the class, I went outside to wait with her until her mother arrived.”

“What was your general opinion of Amanda Waller before this incident?”

“She had favourites.” June said. “She seemed to give preferential treatment to students whose families have money, with a few exceptions.”

“Which exceptions?”

“Jason Todd and Roy Harper.”

“What do you think might be the reasons for these exceptions?”

“Their families don’t make the right kinds of donations. One family, for example, paid to give the athletics department all-new equipment and renovate the field, but Queen and Wayne haven’t given beyond the annual appeal at Christmas.”

“And which family was it which gave such generous gifts to the school?”

“Harkness.”

“Objection!” Ricorso stood. “There is no evidence to believe that these donations have ever stirred up any kind of preference.”

Van Dorn looked thoughtful for a moment before speaking.

“Overruled. Mr. Dent has not made any accusation, nor led the witness, she has only answered questions. You’ll get your turn to question her.”

“He can have it.” Harvey said. “I’m done.”

Ricorso made his way to the front quickly, before Harvey had made his way back to his seat.

“Miss Moone, given Jason’s history of school fights, are sure it’s favouritism which is at work here?”

“I’m certain of it.”
“And why is that?”

“My husband used to teach P.E. at the middle school level. George Jr. got into plenty of fights, then, and the appropriate punishments were dealt out. I know for a fact he was kicked out of one of the private schools at first. He has only been at Gotham High for two years. Even though almost every teacher knows about the sexual assaults, he has not received so much as a detention session. One of those victims has been Roy Harper, who has not received any help from the school following either of the two incidents.”

“You say that the teachers are well-aware of the incidents, but George Jr. hasn’t received so much as a detention. Surely that’s something the teachers set, so why all this blame at Amanda’s feet?”

“I am one of several teachers who has attempted to set a detention, but been overruled by Principal Waller.”

“Let’s go back to the incident the day Yamashiro was suspended. How can you be certain it was Amanda?” he frowned, but with a sort of amusement in his expression.

“I only have suspicions, but you must admit the timing is convenient.”

Ricorso shook his head, almost smirking. “Stop reading so many detective novels, miss Moone. No further questions, your honour.”

“The witness may return to her seat.”

Harvey stood and addressed the room.

“Rather than call upon Tatsu to testify for the incident which led to the bruise miss Moone spoke of, I invite the court to listen to the following.” he signalled to his assistant, who clicked a file on the laptop.

[Waller] “Sit.”

[A muffled thump]

[W] “I thought you should know that because of your boyfriend’s exploits, Mr. Harkness is having to miss some school, and team practises. Are you proud of that fact?”

[Tatsu, her voice somewhat louder, possibly due to mic proximity] “I’m sorry it came to violence. But I’m proud that Jason was willing to stand up for Roy.”

[W] “Mr. Harper hit Mr. Harkness first, if I recall.”

[T] “After Digger tried to go after Bart.”

[W] “And how do you know Digger would have harmed Mr. Allen?”

[T] “Because he’d done it before. Just like he’s done to me, and Roy before, and I’m certain there are others, but they’re too scared to come forward.”

[W] “Just because you can’t stand some Alpha getting a little too friendly--”

[T] “He had used his Voice and his hand was in my underwear!”

[W, yelling back] “You think Todd has the right to take the law into his own hands!?”
[T, shouting louder now] “Well maybe if you had taken action against Digger when you should have he wouldn’t need to! If you would have suspended him, called the police for sexual assault, maybe Digger would have learned that doing what he’s been doing is a crime! Instead you’ve taught him that you’re willing to let it slide just because his father gives the school money! So he keeps doing it, because he knows he’ll get away with it! Because of money!”

[A sound like a combination between a slap and a thud cuts off Tatsu’s shouts]

[W] “Don’t talk about things you don’t understand. You have no idea what it takes just to keep this school running. Pack your bag and go home, Yamashiro. You’re suspended until the end of January.”

Harvey signalled to his assistant and she stopped the audio, then addressed the court again. It felt like the room was holding its breath in wake of what it had just heard.

“According to the timeline established, as the audio file automatically has the date and time created embedded into the file, not even five minutes later Tatsu placed a call to her family’s tea shop. Lights, please, bailiff.”

The lights within the courtroom dimmed, and Harvey removed the cap from the light of the projector. His assistant clicked the video file.

“A warrant issued that same day allowed the police to seize the CCTV footage from the school.” Harvey explained. “There was nothing inside Waller’s office, but we have established the timing from the moment Waller brought Tatsu from the bathroom, into her office, and then Tatsu’s speedy exit.”

The footage played, no sound, sped-up as the room observed Tatsu following Waller to her office, then cutting to Tatsu running from it, cutting as she made it to her locker. She packed things, then made a phone call as she made her way to the classroom where she met with June Moone.

“Pause there, please.” Harvey asked.

The footage froze, and Harvey walked up to the screen.

“Notice the time here in the bottom right of the screen.” he pointed to it. “Thirteen-ten. Now, we look at the time stamp on the audio file.”

The footage disappeared as his assistant sent the reader to the bottom and the desktop of the laptop was revealed. She pulled up a folder, and indicated an audio file, then zoomed in to make it easier for the room to see.

“Thirteen-oh-three. So, if she didn’t have the bruise before going to Waller’s office, but she had it coming out, what happened? Show us the bruise, please.” he told his assistant. She pulled up the photograph. The purple mark on Tatsu's jaw made Clark's gut lurch.

“Would she have fallen? While inside Waller’s office? Rather convenient if you ask me.”

“Objection!” Ricorso said as he stood and approached the bench. “We don’t know what happened inside her office. That sound could have been anything.”

“Overruled.” Van Dorn said.

“As you said,” Harvey said to Ricorso. “It could have been anything. And while I agree this is not absolute proof, you have to admit things are looking bad for your client.”
Ricorso gritted his teeth.

“Request for a lunch break, your honour? It is nearly noon, and I would like to speak with my clients.”

“Granted. The court is declared adjourned for one hour.” she banged her gavel and stood to leave.

"All rise." the bailiff called, and everyone stood as judge Van Dorn left. "Court is dismissed until one o'clock."

A whispering began over the room, gradually turning into a louder babble of various conversations as everyone filed out.

Chapter End Notes

I took the incident of Crane being involved with one of his students from a short story in the book "Mad Love and other stories" by the creative minds behind the animated series, Paul Dini and Bruce Timm.

The name of the story is Study Hall. Jonathan Crane had been realising that one day, he's probably going to be too old to keep doing his supervillain thing, and really wanted to go back to teaching. So he escaped Arkham, forged some papers, and took up a position teaching American Literature at a small college. There, he became friends with Molly Randall, easily the best student in the class. One night, she comes to his office, crying. We don't know the full details, only that the student she was out on a date with, Bromley, had hit her. He might have gone further, or attempted to, but the comic is written for the same age audience as the cartoon. So, later that night, Crane abducts Bromley and puts on the guise of Scarecrow again, determined to make Bromley fear, just as he had made Molly fear. When he discovers that which causes Bromley to be truly afraid, he is stopped from delivering the final blow with his scythe by Batman, who had this to say for closing thoughts:

"I suppose Crane was trying to help Molly in the only ways he knew how, with fear, intimidation, and force. All in all, not that different from Bromley's methods; except Crane has always had the decency to wear his mask on the outside."
Chapter 37

Chapter Summary

Some aftermath talking, some sweaty fun, and... aw, shit. Drama.

Chapter Notes

Sorry about the delay! Again! I haven't had as much opportunity to write as before. For one thing, just finished rushing through finishing costumes for Animaritime (I'll post pics later, Photobucket decided it won't allow third-party hosting unless I pay for an upgrade, so I'm looking for another place to put my photos), and I've been working extra-hard to get my apartment contents downsized in hopes that my brother and I will be able to go look for our own place in about a year.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“When you follow two separate chains of thought, Watson, you will find some point of intersection which should approximate to the truth.” – Sherlock Holmes in The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax

“Well,” Clark sighed. “That’s a start.”

Bruce squeezed his hand, nodding.

They were sitting in a small meeting room with Jason, along with Tatsu, Bart, Roy, Garfield, Victor, and each had at least one family member with them. Bruce was holding Conner, bouncing him slightly in one arm as he was getting somewhat restless.

Tatsu was leaning against Jason. Clark could see there was some contention regarding this between her parents, as her mother had a hand on his husband’s arm, and who kept staring at them.

Harvey came in with his assistant, followed by a Pizza Hut delivery… person, Clark decided, as their features were closer to the masculine side, but they were wearing light make-up and gold dangly earrings. He’d done some research since Chris had explained Genderfluidity to him, and he’d been trying to teach himself not to assume gender too often, especially in cases such as these.

A thought came to him, one which he’d been considering, but kept pushing away; seeing this person in front of him, however, he turned to Bruce and asked:

“Bruce, is it okay if, now that it’ll be easier to find things that fit me, we can try looking for some brighter-coloured things?”

“Sure, Clark.” Bruce agreed. “What were you thinking?”
He indicated Conner’s baby blanket, his old one which Martha had given him at Christmas.

“Like this blue. I think I’d like a suit this colour, for formal occasions. Maybe a red tie to go with it?”

Bruce smiled at him.

“It’ll really make your eyes pop. I’ll be happy to see you in it.”

Clark smiled as he felt his cheeks burn.

Bruce paid the delivery person, who seemed quite happy for the large tip, and then everyone began distributing paper plates and passing pizza boxes around for everyone to grab a slice of their preferred ingredient arrangement.

“Well,” Harvey began. “Bad news is, we probably haven’t completely sunk Waller. However, once the board of education gets wind of what was said in the courtroom, she will no doubt lose her position. And it’ll only get worse once the victim testimonies begin. There is also a slight chance she’ll come through for us over the next few days.”

“For us?” Jason exclaimed, highly doubtful.

“Once she sees she has nothing to lose,” Harvey explained. “She might speak out against Harkness Sr., admit to bribery. I noticed that the large donations we mentioned were timed with Digger’s enrollment at the school, not long after his expulsion from the private one. This will depend on one major factor: if Harkness Sr. tells Ricorso to drop her as a client. If that happens, she’ll want protection, and confessing to her misdeeds while simultaneously exposing the severity of Digger’s, will help lessen her punishment.”

“Would he take a chance like that?” Clark asked.

“Val will definitely recommend against it. But will Harkness listen to him? I don’t know. Val’s been in this game a long time and knows how to play it, but he’s still being paid by Harkness, and so ultimately it’s not his decision.”

“He seems like a creep.” Garfield said.

“He tends to defend unsavory characters because he knows he makes more money that way.” Harvey explained. “But he’s not without standards. He uses some of the money towards some good causes, like the soup kitchen and the Alpha shelter on 9th. At the end of the day, his goal is to make sure that the guilty are punished for the right reasons. He’s not the bad guy. Can’t say the same for every defense lawyer I’ve gone up against, but I’ve got no beef with Val.”

“How long do you think the proceeding is going to take?” Bruce asked.

“It could be over today, or tomorrow, or it could take up to a week or a month.”

“A month!?” Bart exclaimed, while Len moved quickly to soothe him.

“My job is to make sure justice is served, and as swiftly as possible.” Harvey explained. “But sometimes, it takes time to get there. I don’t know everything Ricorso is going to do to defend Waller and Digger, not to mention that we have to make sure the jury are fully convinced that this was a crime of sexual assault, and shouldn’t just be swept under the rug due to Digger’s age. He needs to be held accountable for his actions to hopefully make him see the seriousness of what he’s done, not to mention we might be able to set a precedent so that these cases are treated more seriously in the future.”
The door opened again, admitting Barry holding the hands of the Tornado Twins. Clark noticed that he was looking slightly rounder in the face than he had been before Christmas, and wondered if Barry had succeeded in convincing his mate in making another pup.

“Daycare let out early?” Len asked as he pulled up another chair for his mate.

Barry frowned, shaking his head as he sat.

“Don and Dawn are no longer allowed in the Natural History Museum until at least the age of twelve, when they can be made to understand that not everything is to be touched.”

Len’s expression turned serious as he stared down the twins, who both avoided their father’s gaze, preferring to stare at their shoes. Don glanced at the pizza, then back at his father, his eyes wide and sorrowful.

“We’re not going to starve you.” Len said as he took a couple of extra plates and set a piece in each. “But we will be having a long talk when we get home.”

Don and his sister chewed slowly, clearly dreading the talk their father promised.

Barry was about to reach for his own piece, but Len got there before him, pushing a plate containing three pieces of meat lovers’ towards his mate. Barry gave him a soft smile and batted his eyelashes, causing Len to lean in for a kiss, placing his hand on Barry’s stomach.

Clark smiled, feeling the love from where he sat, and imagined for a minute being pregnant again, this time with Bruce’s pup. Bruce being there from the beginning, Clark coming out of a heat, sated and cared for, the two of them knowing that a pup had started.

Clark had read that one’s mate could generally sense the difference in their Omega’s scent once a pregnancy began, but Lex must have been unaware as he did nothing. Perhaps he’d assumed that so long as he continued to use the birth control, even if a pregnancy began it would soon be ended. He hadn’t tried fucking Clark for a week following his last heat, but this was normal as he usually had his bleeding following his heat. Clark wondered why he hadn’t noticed not bleeding before. Then again, there was a lot about his marriage that was fuzzy to him, most likely due to his mental state at the time. The days all blended together, and then just two weeks after his heat Lex had died, and there was no time to notice things like a late bleeding. And then he’d found out he was pregnant, and hadn’t that been a wonder?

“Clark?” Bruce placed a gentle hand on his.

Clark smiled at him, wanting to capture this moment of Bruce holding Conner.

“I’ll tell you later.” he told him, a dreamy smile still on his face.

“Tell me what?” Bruce asked, curious.

“La-ter.” Clark insisted. Later I’ll tell you I want to carry your pup.

Bruce smiled back, frowning slightly.

***

Commissioner Gordon went up to Harvey as they sat in the courtroom, waiting for Van Dorn to arrive to continue the proceedings, and Clark saw him whisper something to the District Attorney.
The bailiff called for them to stand as Van Dorn entered the room again, seating only when she had done so.

Once he was allowed to do so, Harvey stood and announced to the court:

“Amanda Waller has forfeited her defense and pleaded guilty to endangerment of minors and one count of abuse to a student. She is also willing to testify against George Harkness Jr. However, no formal deal has been made, therefore I ask your honour if we may adjourn until tomorrow, given this development.”

There was a sudden rise of discussion from the room, and Van Dorn banged her gavel to call everyone to order.

“Permission granted.” Van Dorn said. “Court is adjourned until tomorrow, ten a.m.” she banged her gavel to close, and turned to leave.

Harvey whispered to his assistant, then turned to lean towards Bruce from the front.

“Get the others, meet me in the boardroom we ate lunch in.”

Bruce nodded and he and Jason proceeded to gather the other victims and their families.

As they settled in the boardroom, dampness in his shirt made Clark realise Conner’s fussiness was that he was behind in feeding him. He hadn’t yet fed in front of anyone not family, but he thought back to what Bruce had said around Thanksgiving and, face burning, tried to make it look like the most casual thing in the world as he tried to open his shirt one-handed, holding Conner in his other arm. Bruce caught it in the corner of his eye, however, and turned to help Clark get Conner situated. Having Bruce help him made him feel less like he was standing out, and he relaxed as Conner attached almost instantly and began to nurse.

Bruce leaned in, kissed Conner’s head, and whispered,

“Save some for daddy.”

Even though he knew no one else had likely heard it, Clark burst into giggles which he was trying very hard to get a lid on, made worse when Bruce looked him in the eye and winked.

“What’s funny?” Dawn asked, which further drove Clark into laughter, disturbing Conner from his nursing slightly, but he was able to latch on again. Barry caught Clark’s eye and Clark shook his head, hoping to communicate the inappropriateness of what was causing him to laugh. Barry caught on and snickered.

“Sometimes, sweetie, grown-ups tell each other jokes which are not appropriate for pup ears.”

“But the puppy heard it!” Don complained.

“But the puppy doesn’t understand language yet and isn’t likely to remember it in ten seconds.” Len explained snarkily as he brought his face so close to his son’s that the pup burst into hysterical giggles, leading to further laughs from the rest of the room.

When Harvey entered the room, everyone stopped to look, waiting. He remained standing but approached the table, looking to everyone as he spoke.

“It is very possible that Waller is going to walk.”
The outrage stemmed mainly from the pups, but Snart lashed out, too.

“That bitch isn’t fit to take care of a plant, and she’s gonna get to keep being around our pups!?”

“She will **not** be keeping her job.” Harvey said, loudly enough to be sure he’d be heard. When the room settled he continued in a regular tone. “It’s just very probable she’ll be avoiding jail time. She will be at least on parole, and will never be allowed in situations with vulnerable persons again, whether it be pups or the elderly. But, this is in exchange for a full confession of her involvement, and what she knows of Digger’s behaviour. This will make getting a guilty verdict easier.”

“Be sure to be back tomorrow. This is where it’s gonna get rough.”

Everyone slowly began leaving the room, though Clark and Bruce hung back while waiting for Conner to finish feeding.

***

As Clark stood with Jason and Conner while waiting for Bruce to bring the car around, Crane and his mate walked past him on their way down the stairs.

“Mr. Crane!” Clark called out, and they stopped, looking back.

“I just wanted to thank you for helping Jason to stay on top of his studies, and for putting yourself out there, today. That can’t have been easy.”

“I suspected it would happen,” he said, a bit sorrowful. “But some things are more important.”

“You were very brave.” his mate told him, holding his face in her palms.

Again, Clark could tell there was so much love between them. He began to walk away, feeling like he was intruding, but suddenly Jason was there.

“I should probably introduce you, properly. Mr. Crane and his mate, Molly. Mr. Crane, Clark Kent is my new mom.”

Clark felt a brimming of pride at being introduced as Jason’s mother.

“Molly Crane, Mr. Kent. It’s nice to meet you.” she smiled as she reached out for a handshake.

“Jonathan,” Crane said to Clark, shaking his hand as well. “But most call me Jon. Aside from you, mister.” he teased, his last comment aimed at Jason.

“Sir, yes, sir! Mister Crane, sir!” Jason saluted him and Crane chuckled.

“I’d like to say I’d be coming to watch the rest,” Crane continued. “But as they don’t need me as a witness anymore, Molly and I will have to get back to our respective jobs.”

“Speaking of which,” Molly added. “We need to go pick up the pups. They finish early on Wednesdays.”

“Parenting calls.” Crane said with a smile, nodding to the bundle that was Conner in Clark’s arms.

Clark and Jason bid them goodbye, just as Bruce pulled up in front of the steps. Jason and Clark began walking towards the car, Bruce stepping out to open the side door where he had already strapped in Conner’s carrier, when a familiar voice called out, making Clark’s heart begin to hammer.
“Mr. Wayne! Any comments about how today’s events have been carried out?”

Leslie Willis, sporting a new frosty-blue dye job was running towards them, other paparazzi quick on her heels.

Bruce locked eyes with Jason, who then took care of situating Conner in his carrier while Bruce quickly urged Clark to the passenger door before putting himself between Leslie and his family.

“The nature of this proceeding means there is a publication ban on anything which could identify the minors involved, including my name.” Bruce said, a dangerous edge to his voice. “No further comment.”

As the others caught up and began snapping pictures, some getting around Bruce to get closer to the car, Jason threw his blazer over Clark’s head, using Conner’s receiving blanket to completely cover the carrier.

“Keep yourself covered.” Jason said, ducking low behind the seats so that his face wouldn’t be seen. “They’re not allowed to use anything they get of me in connection to the case, but it’s always best that they not get anything when they swarm us like this, because we don’t know what their angle is. They could publish a photo of you or Conner with a totally unrelated headline.”

Clark sighed heavily as he held the blazer in place in such a way that it would thoroughly cover his head and shoulders, but with a space so that he wouldn’t feel smothered. He could smell Jason’s preferred antiperspirant, but also Tatsu’s cherry blossom-scented oil that she used in lieu of perfume. It was less heavy on the senses than perfume, since it wasn’t alcohol-based, but Clark noted that there was a lot of it, with some pheromones mixed in, the likes of which made Clark suspect Tatsu was close to heat.

Bruce got in the driver’s seat and quickly started the car, but had to wait for police to clear a path for him to pull away.

“Coast is clear.” he said after a while of driving, the tension in his voice putting Clark on edge even though he knew it wasn’t directed at him; he handed Jason back his blazer without saying a word, while Jason said a quiet thanks.

***

Bruce was instantly busy upon their return to the manor, making phone calls which Clark caught on were related to making sure that any pictures caught of him, Conner, or Jason would be blocked from public viewing. A half-hour later, Bruce retreated to the cave, and Clark didn’t disturb him. Jason helped him set up a blanket with some toys on the floor of the lounge and they set Conner there. He wasn’t quite able to lift his head, yet, but he would lie on his back and sort of wiggle around, reaching for toys that were dangled over him. Sometimes he would roll onto his stomach and sort of shift his way to another part of the blanket.

“Is Tatsu going to be able to deal with the rest of the court proceedings?” Clark asked suddenly.

Jason swallowed.

“She says she is, and I think that she normally would be fine, but…” he trailed off.

“She’s close to her heat and sometimes it can be triggered early if under stress.” Clark filled in.

Jason sighed.
“Yeah.”

There was an awkward silence that followed, and then Jason blurted out,

“She wants to talk to you about something and I invited her over for dinner but I haven’t told dad, yet.”

Clark put his face in his hand and exhaled loudly.

“What time would she be coming over?”

“Six.” Jason said flatly.

Clark checked his phone. It was already after four-thirty.

“Let Alfred know. I’ll see about talking to Bruce after.”

“I’m sorry.” Jason said.

“We’ll work it out. Go talk to Alfred, then come watch Conner.”

Jason stood and left.

“Pups don’t always think before they speak, huh?” Clark said as he rubbed a hand on Conner’s belly. Conner turned his gaze towards Clark and let out a small sort of coo.

When Jason came back, Clark kissed Conner’s head before standing to make his way to the grandfather clock in the hall.

Clark fumbled a bit with the switch, but eventually got it open and walked in.

He had never watched Bruce use the equipment, before, but now he watched, enraptured, as Bruce was doing chin-ups with a heavy weight hanging below him, attached around his waist by a thick metal chain. He wasn’t wearing a shirt, and the sweat glistened on his beefy chest.

Any trepidation Clark had had going in was instantly erased, replaced by arousal.

He swallowed, hard.

After a few seconds, Bruce, let go of the bar, swinging forward a bit so he could land on his feet ahead of the weight, which hit the floor loudly.

He stood panting for a bit, then looked up and noticed Clark. More importantly, he noticed how Clark was looking at him, and he sniffed carefully, making sure he wasn’t being obvious, but feeling a flush of Alpha pride when he picked up on the pheromones, almost instantly dissolving his anger.

Bruce unhooked the chain, letting it clatter to the floor, then walked over to Clark.

“Enjoy the view?” Bruce said, teasing.

Clark leaned into his space and scented him, the salty sweat enticing him. Lex had always insisted on being freshly showered before and after, and while Clark did prefer a certain level of cleanliness, as well, there was something to be said for fresh sweat.

Bruce put his arms around him and held him close, and Clark pressed into it, the very idea of getting Bruce’s scent all over him hitting some sort of primal desire.
“You want my scent on you?” Bruce said in a low voice. “Make sure everyone who comes close knows you’re mine?”

Clark let out a whining moan and threw his arms around Bruce’s neck, pulling, and Bruce helped him to get up with his legs around his waist.

With Bruce supporting him in a wrist-lock beneath his bum, Clark was able to lean down to kiss him, only briefly locking on the lips, planting other kisses all over Bruce’s face.

Still holding Clark, Bruce sat onto one of the benches, so that Clark could be in his lap.

Clark began grinding his hips downward, enjoying this position quite a bit, as it gave him more control over the direction, feeling triumphant when Bruce let out a moan at the contact.

“Big, strong Alpha needs to relax, I think.” Clark said, his heart thundering in his chest as he surprised even himself with his playfulness.

Bruce pulled back to look Clark in the eye.

“And what does my sweet Omega have in mind?” he said with a bit of a growl in his tone, but something about his gaze looked serious. Clark could read there,

This is up to you. I’m not going to make you do anything.

Clark felt his heart swell, feeling secure, safe. Bruce was still looking out for him, making sure he wasn’t pressured, that he could dictate how far they went.

Clark was feeling very bold in that moment, but the cave wasn’t the place for it.

“I have a few things in mind,” Clark said, tracing a finger under Bruce’s chin and down his neck to his chest. “Not the best timing, though. How about,” he ground his hips down again. “A little fencing, and we’ll see how things work out tonight?” he looked Bruce in the face as he said this.

Bruce nodded and pressed his face to Clark’s chest, breathing deeply.

Clark slid off Bruce’s lap just long enough for the two of them to shed their pants and then he was climbing on again, and the two found a way to both be holding onto both their cocks as they stroked one another to completion, swallowing one another’s cries with their mouths.

As they basked in the afterglow, Clark leaning on Bruce’s shoulders, he said,

“Jason invited Tatsu for dinner.”

Bruce frowned for a moment, then burst out laughing, which got Clark laughing, though he wasn’t sure what was so funny.

When Bruce was able to talk again, still shaking with laughter, he locked eyes with Clark.

“Is this how it’s gonna be? Mama breaks unexpected news to dad by getting him off, first?”

Clark snorted.

“That wasn’t planned. You just looked too good showing off your big, Alpha muscles I couldn’t resist.” Clark finished by flicking at Bruce’s nose.

“Oh-ho-ho!” Bruce said, pretending to look scandalised, then looked downward between them,
running his finger through some moisture on his chest, then looked to Clark’s breasts.

“You leaked.”

“Must be close to feeding time.” Clark said. “But I’ve heard sex can cause leaking, too. I read a list of Omegas relating their funny breast milk stories, and one said that after sex he would always have a damp spot on either side of him.”

Bruce snorted, then leaned in to lick a fat, wet stripe first on one breast, making Clark giggle, then the other, before planting a kiss dead-center between the both of them.

“You’re so beautiful.” he mumbled against Clark’s chest.

Clark felt a warmth spreading through him, like the afterglow increasing in intensity, making him lethargic, but happy. He kissed the top of Bruce’s head, running his fingers through his hair.

“So are you, my handsome Alpha.”

They stayed like that a little longer, then gathered their clothes and snuck upstairs for a quick shower, finishing just in time for Tatsu’s arrival and Alfred’s announcement that dinner was ready. Clark fed Conner at the table, using the maternity pillow to keep him supported so that he could take bites of his own food. Bruce helped if Conner started wiggling too much.

***

After dinner, Clark and Tatsu went to sit in the wicker chairs outside.

“Jason said you wanted to talk with me?” Clark prompted.

Tatsu didn’t answer right away, watching as the stars slowly began to appear in the darkening sky.

“Jason and I have been discussing having sex.” she blurted out.

Clark felt as though he should be acting shocked, but couldn’t. He and Lana had been perhaps too young when they’d been together, two years younger than Jason and Tatsu, but he’d never really regretted it, though he knew many classmates who wish they’d have waited.

“Do you think you’re ready?” he verified.

“I think so, but…” she sighed. “What we discussed, specifically, was that when my heat hits…” she paused again. “We’ve been looking up techniques he can use to trick my body into thinking we’ve mated, without actually bonding. There are ways of working at the gland just right, without breaking the skin, it releases all the endorphins the body needs and helps to end the heat faster.”

A regular heat could last up to a week, but pregnancy would cut it short, and a mating, while not ending the heat exactly, did lessen the symptoms, making the Omega more lucid for the end of it.

“You’re worried you’ll go into heat before the trial is over.”

“My dad isn’t happy about it, but he respects my reasons, and he conceded that it’s the twenty-first century.” she snorted. “He practically threw a bag full of condoms at me before we left the house.” she giggled. “I don’t know how many he thinks we’d go through over the course of one heat, but I think he’s got me set for the next year.” What she didn’t mention, was that she had already been on the pill for a few months, courtesy of her rather forward-thinking grandmother.

Clark chuckled.
“So, you wanted my opinion?”

“Yes, but, not on that, exactly.”

“Okay.” Clark waited.

“I’m scared Digger’s lawyer will use it against me. Not the heat, though he’ll probably use that, too. I’m scared if he knows Jason and I had sex that he’ll somehow use that against me. Like I’m an attention-seeking Omega who can’t keep her legs together.” Tatsu’s voice shook as she neared the end.

Clark reached over and took her hand.

“If he does, I’m pretty sure Harvey will find a way to turn it around. No one should ever be shamed for having sex, whether they have a little or a lot. It’s their business and no one else’s, but no matter whether it’s a little or a lot, they always have the right to say no. That’s what this trial is about. You didn’t want it, and Digger tried to make you do it anyway. And that’s where there was a crime.”

Tatsu sighed, squeezing Clark’s hand.

“Thank you.”

“No problem.” Clark smiled at her, and they both fell silent for a moment.

“Um, Tatsu?”

“Yeah?”

“I’m glad to help you, but, why me?”

“I needed the advice of an adult Omega who wasn’t raised in Japanese traditions.”

“Ok.”

***

“Any higher, Zoe?” Chloe asked giving the swing a push.

“No!” Zoe said cheerfully.

Floyd had needed to take an unexpected night shift and, seeing as Chloe and Zoe had hit it off rather spectacularly, it had saved him the panic of finding a sitter Zoe would feel safe with.

The two were enjoying some fresh air after their pizza, and intended on watching some cartoons before bed.

Chloe gave another push, then halted when she realised that Zoe’s happy squeals had changed to fearful.

“Zoe?” Chloe stopped the swing and came to squat in front of her. “What’s wrong, honey?” she asked, keeping her voice neutral.


“Who smells scary, puppy?” Chloe asked her, still trying to sound neutral, not wanting a worried tone to add to Zoe’s anxiety.
Zoe turned to her left, then flung herself onto Chloe.

“Him.” she whimpered into Chloe’s neck.

Chloe turned as she wrapped her arms around Zoe, and felt a sort of quiet anger rise in her, but did her best to keep it quashed for fear a change in scent would scare Zoe away.

“Evening, miss Sullivan.” A silver-haired, angular-featured man in a much too expensive suit walked towards them.

Chloe said nothing as she stood, keeping a firm hold on Zoe.

“How can I be of service, mister Powers?”

“Better you tell Clark to drop it. He’s lucky he got to live the high life as long as he did, and it looks like Wayne has fallen for his simple tricks, so he should count his lucky stars he’s got someone to look after him and his bastard and leave it at that.”

“Clark hasn’t done anything wrong.”

“Marriage under false pretenses. I know among your class it doesn’t seem to hold much, but further up it does matter. I’m quite certain Lex didn’t know Clark was adopted. If he had, he might’ve thought twice before trying to pass his genes along.”

Chloe felt her heart stutter.

“Clark did nothing against the law.” Chloe reaffirmed.
“If he doesn’t drop it, I will be leaking this information to the press. I’ve had some very interested offers for interviews regarding this affair, and I’ve kept my peace so far. Have a good evening, miss Sullivan.”

He turned and left. Chloe waited until he was out of sight, and then walked back to Floyd’s apartment. Zoe was still crying, though not loudly, and it took some time to calm her. At the end of it, she was too tired to watch cartoons, so the two brushed their teeth and changed into their pajamas before snuggling into the pull-out couch to sleep.

Zoe had begun softly snoring while Chloe continued to mull over Powers’ words in her mind.

Her first thought was that Powers was lying. If Clark was adopted, he would have told her, told Lana, told Pete. It was one of those things they, among them, would have shared.

_But Powers must have some sort of proof, or he wouldn’t have bothered._ Chloe thought.

“What do you know?” another voice in her head, which sounded suspiciously like Lois’, asked her. “If you list the things you know for certain, and then list the things you’re not sure about, the puzzle pieces will reveal themselves.”

Chloe knew that Martha had had several miscarriages before Clark.

She knew that Martha had red hair while Jonathan was fair-haired, but Clark had dark hair.

And, again, powers would not be making accusations unless he had _proof._

Another voice, this time Basil Rathbone, flitted through her head.

“When you had eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.”

Chloe sighed heavily.

_Clark doesn’t know._ She concluded.

This left her with another problem. Powers had warned her to tell Clark and only Clark, but this was with the assumption that Clark had knowingly kept the information from Lex. Since Clark didn’t know, it wasn’t her place to tell him. But if she went to Martha…

Chloe sighed again.

“This is going to be a three-latte problem.” she muttered, before rolling over and going to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

I was NOT thinking of Clark's suit in the animated series when I wrote this chapter. I remembered it after I wrote that part. I just figured Clark would want brighter colours ^_^

So... recent discovery about myself, I'm on the Ace spectrum. I had been seeing someone, not as a romantic date thing, exactly, but the idea was that she would help me figure out my kinks and limits thereof. I felt very safe around her, had no trouble
hugging (I love hugs ^_^), but kissing... was an issue. And from there, when we had talked about taking it to the next level (having a play session), I panicked. Although a different type of relationship, it's not the first time this has happened. I've never enjoyed kissing, and as soon as it looked like things were going to get too physically intimate, I panic. I can share all sorts of personal info with my friends, so I know it's not a fear of intimacy; though I did consider it might be that, I dismissed it because people who fear intimacy tend to put on a certain face for certain people, and that's never been me.

And that's where I started to wonder if I might be Ace in some way. So, I Googled: Asexuals who masturbate. Turns out, not that uncommon. However, those that do often get off to... non-human things. Not bestiality, but, as an example, there was a woman they mentioned who gets off to mythical fairies. When I read that, I was like "Huh... I like aliens and tentacles..."

So, I talked to some Ace friends, and we found this term:

"Akoisexual (also called akoinesimal and lithsexual) refers to a person who experiences sexual attraction, but has their feelings fade if reciprocated. Akoisexual can also be defined as someone who doesn't care or want their feelings reciprocated. Lithsexual isn't commonly used due to concerns of appropriation of lesbian culture."

So... I still get crushes, I still fantasize, I use toys, but as soon as someone gets too close, I can't go through with it. Hugs are great, as are cuddles. But beyond that... :/"
Chapter 38

Chapter Summary

Chloe makes good on her decision, and the trial advances. Also, ex troubles?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

This monument to justice,
One meant to bring comfort to the wronged,
And fear to the wrongdoers,
But all I feel within its halls,
Is cold indifference to all.

— How Blind is Lady Justice? By Clark Kent

Chloe was dragging her feet as she walked up the shallow steps of the luxurious office building which contained William Clark’s Law Practice. Her fourth latte in hand, she stirred a biscotti in it, occasionally taking bites as the hard pastry softened from the drink.

Chloe read through the directory to find the correct floor (seventeen), then went into an elevator along several people all wearing expensive business attire. Someone else had already pushed the button for seventeen, so she just made her way into a corner and tried to keep to herself.

Trump seemed to be a popular topic, most of the gathered people complaining about his latest stunt, which was the bathroom issue.

“A stupid sign isn’t going to stop an Alpha intent on rape.” one man in a grey suit complained. “It already happens. Changing the law so that children who identify as one presentation instead of the one they actually are to be allowed in the bathroom they feel more comfortable in isn’t going to make a damn difference.” The others gathered agreed with this sentiment, and Chloe felt happier to hear it.

“My dumb-ass neighbour used to think Trump hung the moon.” another one said. “She’s a shut-in who had a stroke and relies on assistance programs. When Trump said he was cutting Meals On Wheels, she just about had another stroke!”

“That’s what you get for voting for a man who never worked a day in his life.” a woman shook her head. Chloe decided to chime in.

“Did you know his dad paid to keep him from being drafted, too?” she tried not to feel too intimidated as they all turned to look at her, her brightly-coloured top, jeans, and ‘hippy’ jewelry a stark contrast to their more conservative office attire.
“Seriously?” one of the men said, and Chloe spotted a yellow ribbon pin on his lapel, causing her to feel a flash of triumph.

“Yep. He had been designated 1A by two different doctors, so his dad paid a third to issue him a 4F card.”

“That fucker!” the man with the pin said, and the rest of those gathered in the elevator looked similarly angered.

They continued their trash-talk for the rest of the ride, people leaving one by one, until it was just Chloe for three floors until she finally reached seventeen.

Her latte now finished, she dumped it in a trash receptacle in the hall before walking through the doors of William’s Law office.

A brunette Beta with a sharp skirt suit and too much makeup (the kind assholes on dating apps called false advertising) was speaking on the phone through a headset, rapidly switching between calls, transferring quicker than Chloe could keep track. Not wanting to interrupt her, Chloe wrote ‘Chloe Sullivan for Martha Kent’ on a piece of paper and held it where the brunette could see it. Seemingly without pause, the brunette glanced at the paper, transferred the person she was speaking to, then said:

“Mrs. Kent, Chloe Sullivan is here to see you.” A brief pause, and she turned to Chloe. “Third door on the right, her name’s on it.”

Chloe thanked her, then made her way down the hall. Martha was waiting with the door open and went to embrace her.

“How nice to come see me!” Martha beamed as she guided Chloe to sit in her office, and the blonde’s heart sank.

“I’m afraid it’s not a social visit, Mrs. Kent.” Chloe said, unsure if the jitters were from the lattes or the message she had to bear.

Martha sat, a sudden air of no-nonsense professionalism, as she laid her linked hands on her desk.

“Alright, what seems to be the problem?”

“Derek Powers came to talk to me last night, while I was in the park with Floyd’s daughter.” she paused, and took a deep breath. “Mrs. Kent, he knows Clark is adopted, and threatened to tell the press unless Clark walks away without the money.” Briefly ignoring Martha’s shocked expression, she blurted out: “I know Clark doesn’t know, because he never told me, but Powers doesn’t know that; his exact words were ‘marriage under false pretenses.’ Mrs. Kent, I think it’s about time you tell Clark, before he hears it from anyone else.”

The tears didn’t stay put very long, almost immediately rolling down Martha’s cheeks. She pushed a button on her phone.

“Dad?”

“Yes?”

“You better come in here.”

In less than a minute, Chloe heard the door open and close and William Clark was walking around
the desk to his daughter.

“What’s happened?”

Martha was having difficulty speaking, so Chloe told the whole story from the beginning, with everything Powers had said.

Chloe tried not to shrink against the smell of angry Alpha that was now permeating the room. She watched as William's face turned an alarming shade of red.

“How could he have found out?” Martha said shakily, trying desperately to stem the flow of tears.

“I'll find out how,” William vowed. “If it’s the last thing I do. It was a closed adoption, which means the records are sealed.”

“I told his therapist.” Martha said. “I can’t believe she’d tell anyone, but she’s the only other person who would know.”

“You better call her as soon as you’re able.” William said. “I don’t believe we’ve ever exchanged more than a handful of words, so it would be better coming from you. I have another idea I’d like to pursue.” he turned to Chloe.

“Miss Sullivan, I have an old friend I’d like to introduce you to.”

***

Chloe wrinkled her nose as she followed William Clark into the dive bar. There were only a handful of patrons, looking very much the stereotypes of white redneck Alphas, even for Chloe having grown up in Smallville. Dear God, was that one wearing spurs on her cowgirl boots? Yes, yes she was.

Chloe’s discomfort level shot up as she realised that some of the patrons had begun eyeing her. Spur-girl didn’t even try to be subtle as she licked her lips at Chloe, urging the Omega to shift closer to William.

William sat at one of the stools at the corner nearest the door and urged Chloe to do the same. The bartender came over, a red-head clearly younger than Chloe.

“The usual?”

“I’m here on business, Jimmy. How’s school going?”

“If I don’t screw things up on the finals, I’ll be able to start interning at the Planet this summer.”

William nodded his approval.

“Good job. Is Perry in?”

“Yeah, I’ll get ’im. Sure I can’t get you two something, first?”

William turned to Chloe.

“My treat.”

Chloe shrugged.
“Shirley Temple?”

Jimmy clicked his tongue and winked.

“Gotta appreciate the classics.”

In no time, he had the grenadine and Sprite mixed. He hesitated, then turned to squint at Chloe.

“You don’t look like the maraschino-cherry type.”

Chloe grinned and tilted her head at him.

“You know your craft.”

“Drinks and photography.” he placed a lemon wedge on the edge of the glass, then placed the drink in front of her. “I also like blondes.” he winked again.

“Careful.” Chloe said as she lifted the glass. “My boyfriend’s ex-military.” she took a sip.

Jimmy winced.

“Just my luck.”

“Jimmy.” William cautioned.

“Right, I’m going.”

Chloe managed to hold her snicker until Jimmy had gone to the back room.

“He’s an excellent photographer.” William explained. “He’s been working to put himself through school, much to his mother’s disappointment.”

Chloe frowned.

“Photography’s a great career.” she said, confused. “Even without a steady position like at The Daily Planet, one can submit photos to all sorts of publications and churn out a decent living.”

William leaned in.

“He’s pansexual,” he whispered. “but his flirtation was partially cover: he’s an Omega. He uses scent-blockers to avoid harassment at the bar. His mother has had to raise him on her own all his life. She was determined that he not have to work a day in his life. She’d saved to get him into a prep school, he earned himself a scholarship at a prestigious university, and he was supposed to take all the right homemaking classes to make himself the perfect target for a rich Alpha looking for a cute mate.”

Chloe’s stomach turned with the knowledge of how that had turned out for Clark.

“Perry helped him when she refused to give him the money she’d saved that was supposed to be to help him at university. The scholarship was enough for one year’s tuition, with the opportunity to renew if he kept his grades up. He needed food, lodging, but his mother would only give it if he agreed to take the courses she wanted. She saw it as keeping him from having to work his fingers to the bone as she had. She doesn’t understand that privilege doesn’t buy you freedom. Someday, if he’s up to it, I hope to ask Clark to tell her his story. Help heal the breach between her and Jimmy.”

“She must be one of those people who watches Real Housewives and thinks it’s the most glamorous
thing in the world.”

“I don’t know where she gets her notions, but they’re definitely unhealthy. I’m guessing she wanted that life, and when she couldn’t get it, she tried to push for Jimmy to have it, to be able to live vicariously through him, I guess. Maybe she wants him to be able to support her, who knows?”

Jimmy returned from the back at that moment, followed by an older man. Jimmy went to cleaning glasses, while the older man came up to William and Chloe.

“How’s the bar?” the older man winked.

“For a bartender, you have a dry sense of humour.” William replied.

Chloe cringed at the two of them as they chuckled.

“Chloe, this is Perry White, former journalist--”

“Former!” he scoffed. “I still report, I just do it on the line, now!”

“On line!” Jimmy corrected.

“Perry, this is Chloe Sullivan. She has an internship at the Planet.”

“Aw, yeah!” Perry said. “I read your column! You’re smart!” he pointed at her. “If Tess knows what’s good for her, she’ll keep you around.”

Chloe blushed.

“Thank you!”

Perry clicked his tongue.

“Anytime. So, what’s going on?”

William leaned in, and Perry followed suite.

“Derek Powers. He’s somehow found out about my grandson’s adoption. Something my grandson doesn’t know. He’s threatening to make it public. Those files were supposed to be very sealed. I need you to find out how he found out.”

Perry nodded.

“I’ll need whatever information you can give me about where he came from, the date of the adoption, anything. I’ll be able to track from there.”

“We don’t actually know where he’s from, originally. It was a closed adoption. We just know his birth mother had wanted his name to be Kaleb, with a ‘K.’ It was in a note in his blankets. Martha kept it as his middle name. Anything else you need is right here.”

William pulled out a piece of paper from his coat pocket, folded many times, and handed it to Perry.

Just as Perry took the paper, William grasped his wrist.

“Martha kept the secret from him for too long. She will be telling him soon, now, but it has to come from her.”
“I’ll keep everything under wraps.” Perry promised.

***

Bruce had paid for one of the party rooms at a local restaurant so that the victims and witnesses with their families could all have breakfast together for the duration of the trial. The Tornado Twins were being uncharacteristically quiet as they were nearly half-asleep at their places. Len and Barry each had to actually lift the spoons of scrambled egg to the twins’ mouths and tell them to open up to get them to eat.

“Mommy’s not eating.” Dawn complained, trying to curl into her father’s lap, preferring to snuggle than to eat.

“Mommy’s not feeling well, princess. He’ll probably eat later when he feels better.” Len explained.

“I don’t feel well.” she whined.

“Oh?” Len put aside the spoon. “What’s wrong?”

“I wanna sleep.” she burrowed more into her father’s side.

Len wrapped her in a hug.

“I know. But you can sleep when auntie Iris gets you guys back to the apartment. We just want to make sure you had some breakfast, first. Then, you’ll get to spend the day with Iris and she might even take you to the water park.”

“Why can’t you take us to the water park?” Don complained, eyeing his mother reproachfully.

“Because I still have to work,” Barry explained patiently. “And daddy’s gotta stay with Bart.”

“Why can’t we stay with Bart?” Don whined, trying to evade the spoonful of egg.

“Because Bart and daddy are going to be in court, and that’s no place for pups. Come on, just one more bite?”

Don took the eggs into his mouth, but had a very sour look on his face. Len, meanwhile, had managed to get Dawn to take a mouthful of orange juice, and was now offering her a piece of crisped bacon.

“When can we go to court?” Dawn before opening her mouth.

“Hopefully, never.” Len told her, before kissing the top of her head. “Bart’s going because someone did something very bad to him, so he has to tell a judge all about it. We don’t want anyone to do anything bad to you, and we hope you never do anything bad to anyone, either.”

Barry froze suddenly and put his hand to his mouth.

“Barry?” Len looked at him, concerned.

“I got him, mom.” Bart took hold of Don and transferred him to his lap. Barry got up and bolted for the bathroom.

Clark sighed and looked down at Conner, who was nursing contentedly.

“Glad you didn’t put me through too much of that.”
Bruce smiled at him and patted his thigh as he checked through his messages. Clark noticed him go very still.

“Bruce?”

“I need to make a phone call. Be right back.” he left for a corner of the room out of earshot, a grave look on his face.

Clark felt his heart sink. Whatever it was, it was clearly bad. Bruce was on the phone about five minutes, and then he walked up to Len and whispered in his ear, showing him something on his phone. Len’s face went from shock to anger in rapid succession. He covered his daughter’s ears and whispered back to Bruce, who nodded before saying something else, then returned to his seat.

“Bruce, what’s wrong?” Clark asked.

“It’s not my place to tell, but it will probably come out during today’s session.”

***

“Tell me, Mr. Allen,” Ricorso began. “How old were you when Mr. Snart became part of your family?”

Bart frowned, confused by the question.

“Objection, your honor!” Harvey countered. “What does this have to do with the matter at hand?”

“Mr. Ricorso?” Van Dorn asked.

“Merely painting a picture, your honor.” Ricorso replied. “Establishing Mr. Allen’s character.”

Clark could swear he felt actual heat of rage coming off of Len, who was sitting behind him.

“Overruled, but you better make this good.”

“Thank you.” he smiled, then turned back to Bart, who sighed.

“He and my mom married when I was five. I got to carry the ring and collar.”

“And, before this, was your birth father ever present?”

“No.” Bart was looking angry.

“Why is that?”

“Because he was a son of a bitch rapist who put my mom through hell and should’ve been castrated with a rusty knife.”

There were gasps from some people in the courtroom. Van Dorn banged her gavel.

“Mr. Allen, I must ask you to refrain from foul language, or else I’ll have to hold you in contempt.” she said this seriously, yet with a look that said she sympathised.

“Mr. Allen, you don’t like Alphas much, do you?” Ricorso said, crossing his arms.

“I like the ones that aren’t buttocks of donkey.”

The court laughed, and Van Dorn pounded her gavel.
“You watch yourself, mister.” again, serious, but her eyes held laughter.

“Alright, Mr. Allen, how would you describe your ideal Alpha?”

“One that keep their hands to themselves unless clearly invited, and respect that the words ‘no,’ ‘cut it out,’ ‘back off,’ and ‘get off me,’ aren’t suggestions, but actual instructions.”

“And you claim that Mr. Harkness didn’t listen to any of these instructions?”

“I was shouting loud enough for people from the other end of the field to come running.”

“And this was before you broke his nose?”

“Of course.”

“And what happened after?”

Bart swallowed.

“He used his Voice, again. Told me to stop moving. I felt him touching me through my shorts but couldn’t do anything to stop him until Jason pulled him off me.”

“About those shorts, Mr. Allen. Are these it?” Ricorso pulled a pair of shorts from his table and held them up. They were spandex with the black-and-gold colours of the school and would definitely cut above the knee.

“Yes, I was wearing a pair similar to those when it happened.”

“And you don’t think they’re a little too… alluring?”

Bart’s eyes narrowed.

“It’s the track uniform for school. They’re based on the ones Usain Bolt wore at the Olympics. In fact, they’re Olympic-standard. How about I ask you a question?” Bart didn’t hesitate, wanting to make sure everything he had to say was heard.

“If short clothes are to blame, why did Omegas get raped in the 1800s? You know how many layers people wore back then? But it still happened! Rape has nothing to do with clothes, and everything to do with the rapist. Digger’s not a little pup, he’s seventeen! At that age, people are asked to make career decisions! But you’re trying to make it look like he’s a five-year old who can’t keep his hands off something shiny!”

Van Dorn pounded her gavel.

“Mr. Allen, I need to ask you to calm down.”

“I’m done!”

Bart bolted from the witness stand and made a run down the aisle, but his father caught him and pulled him to sit next to him on his bench.

Harvey stood and went to the judge.

“You honor, if I may, Mr. Allen is clearly upset as this is a hard thing for him to have to discuss. If you could show leniency and let him have a break?”
“I’ll allow it this time, but you better make your clients aware that this type of behavior is not permitted in a courtroom. One more outburst from Mr. Allen and he’ll be detained.”

“Thank you, your honor.”

“Mr. Ricorso, could you please call another witness?”

“Very well, Roy Harper, please take the stand.”

Roy stood and made his way to the front, placed his hand on the Bible, swore his oath, and sat down.

“Mr. Harper, you and Mr. Allen are close, are you not?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How would you describe your friendship?”

Roy swallowed.

“We’re together, sir.”

“By together, you mean..?”

“Boyfriends, sir.”

“And is your preference for other Omegas the reason you and Mr. Harkness had issues not once, but twice?”

“My preference has nothing to do with it.” Roy sneered at him. “I know other Omegas who like Alphas, but still don’t enjoy it when an Alpha touches them without their permission.”

“And you didn’t offer any sort of indication that you wanted Mr. Harkness’ attention?”

“Just the week before he made a pass at me and I told him to leave me alone.”

“What did he say, that you didn’t like?”

“If I say exactly what he told me, word for word, keeping in mind that I’m quoting,” he turned to look at Van Dorn. “Can we skip giving me a strike?”

“Substitute expletives with the first letter of that word.” Van Dorn allowed.

“This was right after my team had just finished practice. As I walked by to the changing rooms, he walked past me in the other direction and said ‘with moves like that, I’d offer you a ride any time.’ I replied with ‘better look for a different jockey.’”

“Sounds like he was complimenting you on your athletic skills.”

“Do I really have to explain the sexual connotation of ‘taking a ride!’?”

“Are you sure you weren’t just reading too much into it?”

“Even if I were in that case, that doesn’t excuse him pinning me to the wall and grinding against me the following week.”

“Grinding? Is that really an accurate description?” Ricorso questioned. “Too much into your personal
space, perhaps, but are you sure you’re not exaggerating?”

“No, I mean grinding. I even bruised.”

“Can you show us these bruises?”

Roy turned to Harvey, who asked for the lighting to be dimmed as his assistant activated the projector. The photographs showed bruising on his jaw and the back of his head, partially hidden by his hair.

“Let it be known to the court,” Harvey announced. “That these bruises are from Mr. Harper’s head being shoved with immense force against the concrete wall. You can even make out a light separation where the indentation between two bricks exist.”

Ricorso switched to ask about the latest incident, the one in which Jason had been suspended. No, Roy had to explain, he had not attacked Digger, he was blocking him from going after Bart, and it was then that Digger had used his Voice and pinned Roy to the ground. He then recounted with a shaky voice the vice grip around his genitals, and how he’d felt like he was drowning until his father had helped to bring him out of it. They had pictures of those bruises, too, not to mention the video footage showing very clearly how Tatsu and Jason had tried to talk Digger into leaving and his comments which covered lewdness, racism, and homophobia.

When the lights came up this time, Ricorso asked for a half-hour break to confer with his client, and Harvey took the time to do the same with his.

“Phase two should start, now.” Harvey explained.

“Phase two?” Tatsu asked.

“Now, we put Waller on the stand.” Harvey explained. “I’m going to have to go see her to refresh everything, but, in essence, she is to confess to everything, and explain how she’s truly sorry for her part in it, and how there’s no doubt in her mind that Digger is as horrible as we say. Somewhere along there, Val’s gonna try to play the ‘innocent pup’ card.”

“Innocent?” Len growled.

“At this point, and even worse once Waller gives her statement, there will be no doubt that he definitely did terrible things. Ricorso will have to get him to plead guilty in order to get a lesser charge, and then he’ll start the argument that Digger doesn’t have a good role model in his life, his father too busy to teach him the way.”

“Affluenza?” Jason countered, remembering a case he’d read about concerning a drunk driver a few years ago. “Because I’ve been raised by Bruce since I was eight and I managed to know better.”

“And I’ll be using you as an example.” Harvey promised. “Hell, both Bruce and Oliver did a lot of dumb stuff back in the day, and I was even in on some of it, but you can look through all three of our juvie records and not find a single sexual assault case, because we all know better. Some people use their status to be an asshole, and it’s up to us to prove that that’s no excuse.”

Clark was starting to feel too warm. There were too many people, he wanted to curl up somewhere and just make it be quiet. The words he’d been hearing started to echo.

Lex was rich, and look what he’d done.

“Clark?”
Bruce’s voice in the fog, a lifeline to hold onto.

Bruce was rich, and he’d done nothing but help.

“I don’t think I can go in, again.” Clark muttered. “I’m sorry, Jason.”

“It’s okay.” Jason told him. “I know you’ll be rooting for me no matter what.”

Bruce held Clark to him, mindful of Conner on Clark’s shoulder. He began to stir, picking up on Clark’s distress, and made distressed sounds himself. Bruce gently transferred him to his own shoulder, rubbing his back to soothe him, while keeping an arm around Clark’s shoulders to keep him near, kissing his hair.

“Tatsu,” Harvey said. “I just need a quick word with you before I go see Waller, if you could come with me in the hall?”

Tatsu nodded and her grandmother followed.

Bruce whispered to Clark.

“I can wait with you for Alfred to arrive? He should be nearby.”

“Okay.” Clark whispered.

Bruce handed Conner back to Clark and made the call. Alfred hadn’t started his errands, yet, so he offered for Clark to accompany him so that he could pick out stuff he wanted.

Before getting Clark into the car, Bruce helped settle Conner into his carrier and then held Clark close.

“You’ll be okay?” he whispered.

“I’ll be fine.” Clark assured him. “I just need air.”

Bruce kissed him and held his face for a moment after, their foreheads together.

“Call me if you need anything.”

“I will.” Clark promised.

After Bruce finally pulled away, Jason gave him a hug.

“Good luck.” Clark wished him.

“You, too.”

***

Clark’s spirits were definitely lifted by the time he and Alfred were finished at the store. Something about the banality of walking around a grocery store was inexplicably soothing in its normalcy, and Alfred seemed to have insight into everything he saw Clark stare at for more than two seconds.

“This one may be the more expensive product, but its much too heavy.” he said regarding a frozen dessert. “This brand is much lighter and less likely to weigh you down afterwards.

“Dragon fruit is interesting enough to look at, but all it is a rather plain sweetness with the
consistency of kiwi.

“Lichi is delicious, but very messy to eat, unless you’re willing to shell a lot of them at once to put into a bowl before going to sit down. Unfortunately, it loses something when canned.”

Clark hummed.

“I think I’ll try it.” he said, adding the netted bag to the cart. It seemed to be a favourite on The Last Airbender cartoon, at any rate.

They were just finishing up at the checkouts when a redhead woman Clark had never seen before got in his face and yelled

“Golddigger!”

Clark barely had time to get over the shock of this unwarranted attack when she reached for the sling holding Conner to his body and proceeded to yank.

Clark reacted instinctively, shielding Conner with both arms while turning sharply in an attempt to break her grip, the jolting disturbing Conner who proceeded to bawl loudly.

“That will be quite enough out of you, miss Vreeland.” Alfred was there in a heartbeat, grabbing the woman by her wrists and shoving her away.

“How dare you, Alfred!” she shouted.

“I was about to ask you the same thing. Do you honestly think you would endear yourself to Master Bruce in any way by attacking not only Master Kent, but his infant son?”

Alfred never once raised his voice, but Clark had never heard such fury in his tone.

“Mr. Pennyworth,” the nearest clerk asked. “Should I call the police?”

Alfred hitched an eyebrow.

“She would certainly deserve the humiliation.”

The woman’s eyes widened, and she turned and ran straight out of the store.

Alfred turned to the clerk and Clark heard something about security footage before Alfred handed him what he recognised as one of commissioner Gordon’s cards.

Alfred approached Clark and gently laid a hand on his shoulder.

“Come, Master Kent. Let’s get into the car.”

Clark followed silently while Alfred used one hand to push the cart. Conner was still howling.

Once they got to the car, Alfred had Clark sit in the back and coaxed him to lay Conner on the seat so that they could work together to look him over for bruising. He seemed to be unhurt, just shaken. Alfred helped bundle him back up and Clark sat with him, trying to soothe him while Alfred loaded the groceries into the trunk.

“Who was that, Alfred?” Clark asked after Alfred had situated himself in the driver’s seat.

“Veronica Vreeland. I believe the term is ex-fuckbuddy. Before he met Selina Kyle, Bruce could
always count upon her for a warm bed. I daresay she assumed they would eventually marry. After
miss Kyle, however, he became more selective about what he was looking for in a mate. I suppose
she thought he would eventually come back to her. I’ve learned to screen her calls at the mansion.
This was a new low, for her. Bruce has already made it quite clear that she is to keep away from him,
his properties, and his family. She must not have counted you in that definition, and thought she
could get away with it since he wasn’t present. Master Bruce will make sure she doesn’t get away
with it, mark my words. He cares about you and your son too much to let this go.”

Clark was still a little in shock, but he trusted what Alfred told him.

They waited until Conner calmed, still hiccupping but no longer bawling, before Clark put him
back in his carrier, but continued to pet his head to keep him calm as Alfred started the car and left
the parking lot.

***

Chapter End Notes

Sorry I was gone so long, my lovelies! It's been really hard for me to get this chapter
together.

I think I've narrowed down my biggest problem when it comes to completing the court
case...
I can't act like an asshole. For me, once evidence and facts have been put in front of me,
I don't question it. But it's the defense's job to help prove that there is no doubt as to his
client's guilt. I.e.: he has to find reason for doubt. This means asking probing and
uncomfortable questions to the witnesses, especially victims, which makes him sound
like an asshole.

See, writing a villain is one thing, but in the case of a defense attorney, it's not that he's
really a bad guy, it's just his job to be like "Are you sure that's how it happened? Are
you certain it wasn't something more like __?" and that's what's so hard.
I read the letter written by Brock Turner's victim and a lady who wrote something
regarding the Ghomeshi case where she understands why the victims didn't go to the
police right away. She described it as "when you go to the police, it's not for you, it's for
society." Because the defense lawyer makes you have to relive everything in
excruciating detail and tries to bring your credibility into question.

Luckily, a friend offered a way around it... It will also help the passage of time go faster:
I just put in replies and reactions. Here's what she gave as an example:

instead of "Were you actually wearing this? did this even happen??" you write "he's
tearing into me, making me relive the situation all over again. I feel naked on this stand
and all I want is for this ordeal to be over with. What was I wearing?? what does that
have to do with anything?? What do you mean is that how it happened? yes of course it
is, I swore an oath to tell the truth."

This, plus moving Clark to be away from the courtroom will hopefully speed things
along, and then we can get back to some sweet lovin'.

In case you missed it, I also posted another chapter in Barry and Len's story. I have
another one already ready to follow, but I'm gonna wait a week before putting it up.
Hopefully, it won't be as long between chapters on this one, anymore. See you, soon!
When Alfred and Clark arrived back at the mansion, Clark helped Alfred put away the groceries and then went upstairs to feed Conner, wanting to take a nap, afterward.

After laying Conner on the bed, he emptied out his pockets to change into a pair of sleeping pants, and found his phone had died. Sighing, he plugged it next to the bed, setting it on the nightstand, then finished changing before settling in with the maternity pillow and carefully picking up Conner and trying to get him to latch on.

Conner decided he wanted to be fussy and Clark had to switch him from one nipple to the other a few times before he gave in and began to nurse, much to Clark’s relief.

“Not the best of days, was it, puppy?”

Conner made a high sort of sigh through his nose, accompanied by sort of throaty whine.

“Is that puppy-speak for ‘not now, mommy, I’m busy?’”

A light snort followed, almost like a snore.

“I’ll take that as a yes.” Clark said, smiling as he began to stroke Conner’s head.

When Conner finished feeding, Clark was feeling lethargic, lulled by the peacefulness of having his pup near him, serene and safe. He burped him, then laid him gently in the centre of the large bed, and went to fetch the crib so that he could have him nearby. The crib had wheels which could be locked, so it was quick work to move it from the nursery to the bedroom.

Conner seemed content to sleep where he was, but Clark didn’t want to risk it, so he carefully picked him up and placed him in the crib. Conner only fussed for a moment, then laid down to sleep.
Just in case Bruce had wanted to check on him, Clark turned his phone back on, and, almost instantly after going through the welcome screen, his phone started making a cacophony of alert sounds.

He dismissed the social media ones for the moment, but found there was a missed call from both Bruce and his mother, as well as two voicemail messages.

“Hi, Clark.” Bruce voice said quietly. He had probably made the call just outside the courtroom. “Just checking to make sure you’re alright. Alfred told me what happened with Veronica. I’m sorry this had to happen before I had a chance to warn you about her. I didn’t think she’d stoop to this. We’ll talk about it more when I get home. Text me if you need anything, okay? I’ll see you, later.”

Clark smiled, feeling assured that Bruce would take care of it. His mother’s message started right after.

“Clark, your grandfather and I need to talk with you. It’s very important. Is there a night we could meet for dinner? Please call me as soon as you can.”

Clark was struck by his mother’s serious tone, and a slight quiver to her voice. He dialled back immediately.

“Clark?” his mother answered on the first ring.

“Hi, mom.” Clark said, trying to sound casual about it. “What’s going on? Your message sounded urgent.”

He heard his mother take a deep breath.

“It is, but it’s not the kind of thing to talk about over the phone. I was hoping you could come to Metropolis, but we can go see you, if that’d be better.”

Clark thought for just a moment.

“Well, the way things have been going with Jason and the others in court, I feel like I’d be better off not listening to it, so if you guys could pick me up from the courthouse tomorrow morning, a day in Metropolis would probably be fine.”

“Alright, I’ll be there to get you before ten. We could get together in one of the consulting-rooms at the office and order in.”

“That sounds good.” Clark told her. “I’ll let Bruce know when he gets back.”

“Alright. See you tomorrow, sweetie. I love you.”

“Love you, too, mom.” Clark said, and then ended the call.

***

The final two hours of the court day were spent by both sides questioning Waller, who surprised the teens and their parents by just how forthcoming she was with her answers.

Yes, she did turn a blind eye to sexual harassment in her school because of the money, but she also regretted doing so. She admitted to having struck Tatsu, but regretted this, as well. If she hadn’t let it all go to her head, she says she would have come forward much sooner with police intervention.
There was no doubt in her mind that Digger was a danger to have around Omegas and should be met with the proper punishment to avoid such behavior in the future.

Jason was fuming. He knew she was still going to be punished, but he still felt like it was too late. How many people had been hurt by Digger, who could’ve been spared what they went through, if she would’ve just done her damn job?

Jason looked up when he heard his name.

“Mr. Todd still violated school policy,” Waller was saying. “But, if I had to do it over, I wouldn’t have expelled him, and Mr. Harkness would’ve received punishment, also. The first occurrence probably wouldn’t have prompted me to call the police, but the second one would have.”

Ricorso requested a moment to speak with his client. Jason jumped when the furious whispering included Harkness Sr. pounding his fist on the table, but, after a while, Ricorso stood up and went to Van Dorn.

After a moment, Van Dorn nodded and banged her gavel.

“George Harkness Junior has changed his plea to guilty. A new hearing shall be scheduled to determine his punishment, during which final testimonies from witnesses will be heard. You will be contacted when a date has been determined.” She pounded her gavel again, and the bailiff stepped forward.

“All rise.”

The judge left, then the jury filed out, and then everyone else began to trickle out of the courtroom, but Jason noticed that Digger got escorted by the bailiff. He somehow felt like it was premature to celebrate this.

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Alright.” Harvey said once everyone was settled in the meeting room. “This is gonna be the hard part. We have to make sure Digger is properly punished. He’s seventeen, but these are actions for which even adults aren’t always properly punished. We need to make an example, and set a precedent. The good part is, most of you will no longer need to step onto the witness stand.” Tatsu and some of the others relaxed, relieved.

“It will be enough for you to record your testimonies to what he did to you, and I’ll play them when I deem appropriate. Jason, however,” he placed a hand on his shoulder. “Will probably still be called on. Ricorso is probably going to use your fights as a way of saying ‘hasn’t he been punished enough?’ and ask for the judge to be lenient. This is where I’ll need you to be strong. Clear-headed.”

Jason nodded.

“I’ll do my best.”

Tatsu, sitting next to him, hugged him and kissed his cheek.

“You can do it.”

***

When Bruce came back with Jason, he found Clark helping Damian put together a Sesame Street puzzle on the lounge floor while Conner wriggled on a blanket next to them.
Damian looked up at them and grinned.

“Conner can turn himself over!”

Clark chuckled as Damian gently rolled Conner onto his back and then watched with amazement while Conner gurgled and grunted as he turned himself to be back on his belly, then wriggled forward a bit towards the brightly-coloured puzzle.

Bruce and Jason beamed as they sat down on the floor with the others, Bruce petting Conner’s head.

“He’s getting quite a growth, isn’t he?” Bruce said, feeling the soft, dark down which covered Conner’s head.

“Mom said I was the same way.” Clark replied, heart melting at watching Bruce interact with Conner. “Speaking of mom, she wants me to join her and grandpa in Metropolis, tomorrow.” Clark added. “She said she can pick me up at the courthouse, so I can still join you guys for breakfast. I’ll take Conner with me, and we can make arrangements to meet back up after.”

Bruce nodded.

“Sure thing. I’ll wait with you until she arrives, if you like.”

“Thanks.” Clark smiled.

***

“You okay, Clark?” Bruce asked him as they settled Conner in his crib that night.

“I dunno.” Clark pet Conner’s head for a bit. “Ever since I spoke to mom, it’s like I have this bad feeling.” Clark shivered.

“Need help taking your mind off it?” Bruce caressed his shoulder, but Clark shrugged his hand off.

“Sorry. Don’t feel like it.” his heart hammered as he said it, some lingering fear of what might happen if he refused his Alpha.

“Doesn’t need to be like that.” Bruce said calmly. “We could watch something on YouTube, read some more of those funny customer stories you found, whatever you like.”

Clark relaxed, berating himself a bit for expecting that Bruce might get mad at him for refusing sex.

“YouTube sounds good.” Clark agreed. “I’d like to see what Nostalgia Critic’s been up to.”

“Okay.” Bruce kissed his temple before leading the way to the bedroom, where they snuggled in with his laptop.

Clark found himself absolutely loving the speech about Alphists at the end of the Mad Max: Fury Road review, and sent it along to Tatsu and Harley.

***

William ended up being the one who picked up Clark at the courthouse, explaining that Martha had a last-minute interview with a client, but would be available in time for lunch.

Clark was still a bit sleepy from the early wake-up, and dozed the whole way to Metropolis.
When he settled in for lunch with his mother and grandfather, Conner next to him in his carrier, Clark could feel the tension in the room. His mother started by talking about how they were very close to closing the case regarding his inheritance, watching to make sure Clark ate his lunch. Clark was reminded about the time his parents had to tell him his dog had been run over by a car. She’d sat him down with milk and cookies and waited until he’d enjoyed the whole thing before telling him the bad news.

When he was done, he could practically see the steam coming from his mother’s ears.

“Mom, what’s wrong?”

Martha shut her eyes and took a deep breath while William took her hand to reassure her.

When she looked back at Clark, her whole being was trembling.

“Clark, your father and I had always meant to tell you together, but it didn’t work out that way.” she took another deep breath. “You’re adopted.”

Clark felt absolutely nothing for a moment, and then cold filled his extremities.

He opened his mouth, then closed his mouth. He couldn’t speak, didn’t know how to anymore, didn’t know what to say if he could.

It took him a moment to realise that Martha had moved closer to him and taken his hand.

Her eyes were full of tears and her voice thick with sobs she was fighting to keep back.

“Sweetie, I am so sorry I didn’t tell you, before. But remember that you are still my beautiful puppy and I love you so, so much.”

The room suddenly rushed back into focus, and he was taking in everything at once:

His son gurgling,

The air conditioner whirring,

His mother’s choppy breathing.

His mother. She hadn’t birthed him, but she had raised him. Just like Bruce had raised Dick, Jason, and Tim. Would help him raise Conner.

He still felt some anger, it was impossible not to, knowing that this had been kept from him for so long, but he was determined to work through that.

He gently pulled his hand from his mother’s hold and crossed his arms, not meeting her eyes.

“What made you finally decide to tell me?” he said flatly.

Martha pushed her chair back a bit, saddened, though not surprised, at Clark’s anger, silent tears streaming down her cheeks. She looked to her father, unable to speak.

“Derek Powers somehow found out.” William explained. “We don’t know how. But he approached your friend Chloe, wanting her to tell you to drop the inheritance case or else he would counter, claiming that you had Lex marry you under false pretenses. Chloe came to us to explain what happened. We’ve already got everything ready to show why this cannot legally keep you from your inheritance, but Martha understood that you’d rather hear it from her than anyone else, and that the
moment we go back to Powers over this, you’d find out, anyway.”

Clark sighed heavily.

“I think I’d like to go back to Gotham, now. I need to think.”

Martha nodded.

“Of course.”

***

The car ride back was tense, the silence only broken by the radio, which Clark didn’t really pay attention to. Martha didn’t try to talk to him, wanting him to make the first step.

Alfred met them at a convenience store near the bridge to take Clark and Conner back to the manor. Before getting into the car, Martha reached out to him, but stopped, not wanting to upset him if he didn’t want her to touch him.

“Remember, Clark: I love you. I’ve loved you since you were this big,” she indicated with her hands. “And they put you in my arms at the agency,” she sobbed. “And your father loved you, too. He was always so proud of you.”

She turned away and got back into her car, quickly pulling out and going back towards the bridge.

Alfred had Conner settled into the back seat and held the door for Clark to slide in next to him, closing the door behind him before going to the driver’s seat.

“Is there anyplace you’d like to go before home, sir?” Alfred asked him.

“No,” Clark said, mutely.

“Very good, sir.”

***

Alfred met Bruce at the door when he and Jason arrived and quickly whispered that he should go check on Clark upstairs, explaining that Martha had had to tell him some upsetting news, but without specifying what. Bruce ran up the stairs as quickly as he could, sometimes two at a time, and went into the room without knocking.

Clark was curled on his side, back to the door. Bruce could see his arm moving, slightly, and heard a slight gurgle; he realised Conner must be there, too.

Bruce closed the bedroom door and then walked around to the other side of the bed. Clark looked like he’d been crying, his eyes red again. He hadn’t looked this bad since the early days of his recovery.

“Alfred said you’d heard some bad news, today.” Bruce said quietly, kneeling on the floor next to the bed, reaching out to stroke Conner’s cheek.

“I guess it’s not technically bad.” Clark said, his voice flat. “I just wish they would’ve told me sooner.”

“Told you what?” Bruce asked.
Clark took a shuddering breath.

“I’m adopted.”

Bruce was shocked for a moment, then took a deep breath of his own.

“Do you want to talk about it?”

“Not particularly.”

“Will you talk about it with Harley, tomorrow?”

“Mom will have probably warned her, so if I don’t bring it up, she’ll—” Clark stopped, struck by a thought, eyes wide.

“Clark?”

“Kara.” Clark breathed. “In the pup department. She said I looked like her uncle, had asked me if I was adopted. What if she is my cousin?”

Bruce thought for a moment.

“It’s very possible. Do you want to call her, later? I could probably get her number from Jason.”

Clark mulled this over.

“Ok.” he said, though his heart was pounding from the thought.

Conner was on his side facing Clark, but now he rolled onto his back and looked at Bruce, eyes darting around.

“Hey, puppy.” Bruce called softly and poked at his right hand, the tiny fingers immediately grasping his larger one. “Have you been good for mommy?”

Conner let out a gurgle and smiled his toothless smile.

“Yeah?” Bruce smiled at him. “Helping him feel better?”

Conner gurgled again and kicked his legs back and forth, his smile widening.

“That’s my good boy.” Bruce kissed his tiny fist.

Clark felt his heart squeeze with guilt. Bruce had been welcoming of Conner from the moment he and Clark had begun to reach an understanding; the fact that he’d been sired by someone else had never been an issue.

And he’d gone and pushed his mother away.

“I have to call mom, first.” Clark said. “I wasn’t very nice to her, earlier. I have to let her know I’m not mad at her.”

“Do you want to do that now?”

Clark nodded.

“I really shouldn’t leave it too long.”
“Do you want me to stay or go?”

“Stay, please.”

Bruce stood and scooped up Conner, then waited while Clark sat up so that he could sit beside him, cradling Conner to his chest while Clark took the cordless on the nightstand and dialed.

The phone rang for a long time, and Clark feared it was going to go to voicemail, but then it finally was answered.

“Hello?” His grandfather’s voice.

“Hi, grandpa.” Clark said, his voice small. “Is mom there?”

On the other end of the line, unseen by Clark, William gave a small smile.

“She’s here. I’ll pass you to her.”

“Um, one second. I just wanted to say, I love you, grandpa. I know we didn’t get to spend enough time together when I was growing up. I’m really grateful for everything you’ve done for me.”

Clark heard William swallow.

“I love you, too, my boy.” There was a pause. “Here’s your mother.”

“Clark?”

“Mom, I’m sorry.” Clark blurted. “I’m not mad at you, I just… I’m just frustrated, but it’s not your fault. I just need to process this, is all. I love you.” his voice cracked at the last part.

His heart felt squeezed again when he heard his mother sob.

“I love you, too, Clark. And I understand. Thank you.”

“No, mom. Thank you. ” Clark told her, earnestly, trying to keep his voice level, his throat hurting with the lump he was forcing down. “I know I don’t say it enough. But really, thank you. I couldn’t have asked for better parents.”

She sobbed again.

“I love you, puppy.” she whimpered.

“I love you, too, momma.” he said, the tears streaming in earnest, now. “I’ll call you on Saturday.”

“Okay, sweetie.”

Clark disconnected the call. Bruce carefully laid Conner behind them on the bed, then took Clark in his arms while he cried.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry if this chapter is a little shorter than usual, but the next step is Clark and Bruce being interviewed by bigwigs to make sure Clark's okay with Bruce, and, of course,
talking to Kara. I figured this would be a good place to stop for now and save the rest for the next chapter.

Just a reminder that your comments help keep me going! I eat them like Pac-Man: Wokkawokkawokka...
Chapter 40

Chapter Summary

The court case against Digger Harkness finally draws to a close. Now, there are only a few things left to solve...

Chapter Notes

If you back to chapter 26, you may realise who the raspy-voiced person is.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

-Life is like a river
At times steady and gentle,
At others, rapid, rocky,
Our survival is not determined
By our skill alone,
But by our fellow travellers,
Who reach out to us, and us to them, in turn

— Survival by Clark Kent

Clark could feel his heart pounding as he waited in the clinic’s courtyard. He’d just finished feeding Conner, now sleeping against his chest in his carry sling, and was waiting for Kara to meet him in the gazebo. It was early in the day, so there were less people about, as residents of the clinic were attending classes or therapy sessions, for the most part. There was a group in a flat, grassy corner engaging in yoga, which Clark found interesting, but not sure if it was really for him.

He looked up at the sound of a soft knock on the side of one of the entrances, and there was Kara, looking at him with a tentative smile.

“Can I come in?”

Clark nodded, offering a small smile in return.

Kara walked up and sat beside him.

“I was just thinking it’s funny that you don’t need glasses.” Kara said. “Most of us do, including uncle Jorden and aunt Lara.” she indicated her own.
“Lex made me get LASIK.”

Kara sighed at the word ‘made.’

“I’ve got some pictures, if you wanted to look?”

“Yeah.”

Kara accessed the gallery on her phone and handed it to him.

“That’s uncle Jorden and aunt Lara at their wedding.” she slid to the next one. “And this is me and Alex with them at Christmas. They’ve been raising us since Alex was fourteen and I was twelve. Our parents died at Ground Zero.”

Clark could see the resemblance right away. It made his heart hurt.

“I haven’t told them, yet, aside from my suspicions at Christmas.” Kara said, starting to sound a little emotional. “I told them I wanted to wait until I had something concrete. We could go see if we’re cousins right now before I say anything. They’d be willing to do the test here; they do familial tests all the time for custody cases. It only takes a couple of days to process, usually. Depending on who’s working the lab right now, I could ask them to put a rush on it; we’d find out tomorrow.”

Clark swallowed, his throat tight.

“Yeah, let’s do that.” he handed her phone back and walked with her back to the building.

The nurse who drew the blood knew what he was doing; Clark barely felt a pinch as the needle pierced his skin, and then the vial was pushed onto the other end and filled up in no time.

Kara had gone first and was now smiling over Conner, wiggling her fingers at him, earning some amused coos. There was no one else in the room, so the nurse let them be.

“Would you like to hold him?” Clark offered.

Kara grinned.

“I would love to!”

Clark eased Conner out of the sling, and held him out to Kara, who swept him up with practised ease, proceeding to gently bounce him while keeping his head supported.

“Look at you!” Kara beamed at Conner in a high, happy voice. “You look just like your mummy! Yes, you do!”

Conner did a sort of laughing grunting, chewing on one fist, then reached out and yanked Kara’s glasses off her face.

“Oops! Sorry, puppy.” Kara quickly switched him to resting in the crook of one elbow so she could use one hand to take her glasses back. “You’re a little young for those. I know they look like fun, though.” she giggled at him as she booped his nose.

“You’re so good at handling him.” Clark marveled.

“Lots of practise.” Kara smiled at him. “Like, ridiculous amounts of practise. I’ve been working in the pup department here since I got out of high school. It was only part-time while I took my Tender-Age Education course at the community college, and then I was offered the job of heading the
“department.”

“Big job.” Clark commented.

“Well, I delegate with some people, but it’s better organised, now. They didn’t really have people who worked in just that department before. It was co-run by the psychology crew with lots of volunteers, and at that point all they really did was work with the pups themselves. I was the one who initiated the measures of working with the mothers who wanted to give them up for adoption to make a smoother transition, after finding out what happened to my aunt.” Kara explained.

“There are moms, especially teens, who get pregnant for a variety of reasons that want nothing to do with their pups, which is understandable. But making the break isn’t as clean as they think it is. They need counseling to help them through this period of their life, because even when you tell yourself you’re doing the best thing for your pup by giving it up, there’s always going to be doubts, something telling you that you’re being selfish, or all the what ifs about their future. By reaching out to them and giving them the help they need, they’re able to move on more easily. They see the measures we take to ensuring the pups get good homes, and it gives them better closure.”

Clark’s throat swelled.

“What about in cases like your aunt? Where the mother’s parents are pushing for it do be done with as quickly and quietly as possible?”

“Technically illegal.” Kara smiled bitterly. “While I was in college I looked up laws regarding pups and their parents, and it turns out that, unless the mother is under the age of consent or the grandparents can prove that the mother is not of sound mind, then the mother is supposed to have final say in regards to what happens to their pup. Aunt Lara and uncle Jorden didn’t know about it back when they got married and started their search, and even if they did, they would’ve had to take her parents to court and prove that her rights had been violated. But they didn’t know, and her parents had made it that it was a closed adoption, which is supposed to mean that she doesn’t look for you and you don’t look for her, but that only has basis if she had agreed to it, and she didn’t. Her parents made the choice for her, despite the fact that she was of the age to consent and of sound mind. They found a judge who would take their side, and got it sealed without any chance of her being able to do anything, short of, again, taking them to court. For a young couple just starting out, that would’ve been almost impossible. One of her aunts is a lawyer and she was on the grandparents’ side the whole way.”

Clark sighed heavily.

“If this blood test pans out,” he said, stroking Conner’s head. “I almost feel like figuring out the perfect ‘fuck you’ to deliver.”

Kara hummed.

“Just telling them that Lara managed to find her son in spite of their best efforts would be a good middle-fingered salute. Bonus points if we get to see the look on their faces.”

“Don’t get me wrong,” Clark said. “I love my parents. The ones that raised me, I mean. But hearing what happened to your aunt just really makes me wanna go spit in her parents’ faces.”

“That’s why I moved here.” Kara said. “Aunt Lara and uncle Jorden moved out to National city to get away from Lara’s parents and to be closer to my parents, Jorden’s brother Jeremiah being my dad, and his wife Eliza being my mom.” she explained. “But I always hoped that if I found my cousin, that I’d get to go rub it in her parents’ faces.”
Clark grinned.

“Can I go with you? If it does come up positive, I mean.”

Kara grinned back.

“Definitely.”

Kara’s phone sounded an alert, and Clark took Conner back so she could focus her attention on it. She checked the message, then sighed heavily.

“Looks like I’ll be going to court this afternoon.” she put her phone away.

“For Jason?” he asked.

“Yep. You got a ride?” she offered.

“Alfred will be coming to get me, later.” Clark replied. “I still have an appointment with Harley this afternoon.”

Kara nodded.

“Okay. I’ll let you know how things turn out.”

***

“Your honour,” Ricorso began his opening remarks. “I would like to prove to the court, today, that young Mr. Harkness deserves leniency. He’s still in high school, he doesn’t know the world. What he did was wrong, no one is contesting that. But how many in this room can say they didn’t make bad decisions when they were teenagers? Even Mr. Wayne has a rap sheet, yet look at all the good work he’s done for this city.”

Bruce looked to Jason, their eyes locking, then reached out for one another’s hand on the bench; a reassurance and comfort.

“Objection!” Harvey countered. “Mr. Wayne has never been accused of sexual misconduct, unless you count not calling his hookups the next day.”

The courtroom laughed, and Van Dorn banged her gavel.

“Sustained.”

“If I may, your honour,” Ricorso continued. “Mr. Wayne has been arrested many times in his youth. His team of lawyers managed to get him off many charges. Why can’t we use those as precedent to find leniency for young Harkness?”

“Objection!”

“Sustained, Dent. Please elaborate.”

“We’re not talking about draping the White House in toilet paper or urinating in a public fountain.” Dent explained. “We’re talking about deliberately forcing someone into something they did not consent to. One of these methods being Voice, which there are very clear laws about. The only time Voice may be used is in self-defense or defense of others. The law is very clear that if an Alpha is old enough to consent to sexual relations, they are old enough to be held accountable for misuse of their Voice.”
“The law is also clear on public urination.” Ricorso pointed out.

“Maybe Wayne should’ve been held more accountable.” Dent said. “But we’re not talking about Bruce Wayne. We are talking about someone who, on multiple occasions and with multiple people, made a high school, a building where education is meant to take place, feel like a dangerous place to be. School, where we bring our pups because we trust that they will be safe there, became a place of uncertainty, where young people worried about wandering the halls, because they didn’t know if they could do so without becoming a target for someone who got off on making himself feel superior to them because he believes that other presentations are inferior. I would ask the jury to consider: if you knew that someone like Digger Harkness was in the same building as your pups, would feel that they were safe?”

Jason looked towards the jury. Some of them remained stoic, but others reacted to this question; they looked pained, concerned.

“And what of Mr. Harkness’ safety?” Ricorso countered. “He had to miss several days of school, team practises, as well as an important game while recovering from injuries imposed on him by Jason Todd!”

“Your honour,” Dent argued. “I think you will find in each case that a fight broke out that Mr. Todd was only acting on behalf of Harkness’ victims. We have already heard Mr. Allen talk about Todd’s intervention, and saw the video where Harkness was the clear instigator after Todd and Yamashiro attempted to talk him down. I think it’s quite clear that if Harkness hadn’t been going after the Omegas in the first place the fights would not have broken out.”

“That is pure conjecture, your honour.” Ricorso countered. “Todd came from a broken home with an alcoholic mother and an abusive father. We have seen time and again how people from abusive homes become violent in turn.”

“Your honour,” Dent cut in. “That is conjecture. And I have a witness to prove it.”

“Then kindly summon your witness and would both of you stop squabbling.” Van Dorn banged her gavel.

Dent turned back to face the room and straightened his jacket.

“Miss Zorel, if you’d please step forward?”

Kara stood from near the back of the room, having arrived later than most of the others, and went up to the bailiff to swear her oath before taking the stand.

“Miss Zorel, you’re in charge of the pup department at the Omega clinic on Sudbury avenue, correct?”

“That is correct.” she nodded.

“And how long have you been working there?”

“I moved to Gotham after graduating high school, and started working in the department part-time while attending college. Upon completion of my degree in Tender-Age Education, I was offered the position of heading the pup department, as they didn’t have anyone whose sole focus was that department alone. In total, I’d say about eight years.”

“What kind of temperament would you say is required for working or even volunteering in that department?”
“As pups are more sensitive to changes in scent based on emotion, and especially as a lot of the ones we take care of are removed from abusive situations, one has to have the ability to keep calm in most situations. The pups are scared, often wary of trusting strangers.”

“And how long has Jason been volunteering in that department?”

“Three years, this summer.”

“Have you ever felt like he wasn’t a good fit to be in that position? Working with vulnerable persons?”

“Never. Jason has shown himself to be an excellent fit with the pups.”

“Did knowledge of his past given you pause before taking him on as a volunteer?”

“No. In fact, I found out about his past through the interview from a very important question during his interview.”

“And this question was?”

“I asked him why he wanted to work with the pups. This is something I usually ask the younger volunteers because I want them to think about why they would be there, given that it is an enormous responsibility. His response was that, for a time, he thought he would be forever stuck in his situation with his birth parents. When he was finally removed from that situation, the first people who made him feel safe were volunteers at the shelter he was brought to. He wanted to return the favor by doing the same for other young ones. He has shown himself exemplary in doing so, and the pups love him.”

Harvey turned to address the courtroom.

“Does this sound like a needlessly violent person? I don’t think so. Thank you, Ms. Zorel, no further questions.” he sat down.

“Mr. Ricorso, do you have any questions you would like to ask?” Van Dorn prompted.

Ricorso stood.

“Yes, thank you. Ms. Zorel, when you heard that Mr. Todd had been getting into fights at school, what was your reaction?”

“I was shocked. As I said before, Jason has always shown excellent temperament for dealing with scared and abused pups, so I was confused by what I was hearing.”

“And now?”

“From what I’ve come to understand of the situation, by Jason himself and from Miss Yamashiro, Jason would try to protect the victim, first, and then things would escalate when Mr. Harkness resisted. It sounds as though Mr. Harkness didn’t leave much room for negotiation.”

“Have you ever witnessed something like this when you were in school?”

“Actually, yes, I have. Except that I had the support of my sister and one or two other Alphas who would stand with us. As they say, there is safety in numbers. When we encountered an Omega being harassed, the group of us was sufficient in deterring the harasser from taking things further.”

“Did things ever get physical?”
“On occasion, the harasser had to be physically separated from their victim, but, once we stood our ground, it was over.”

“So—”

“Look.” Kara interrupted, slamming her hands on the rail. “I’ve seen the video which was submitted for evidence. Any sane person would be able to see from that video that Digger was looking for a fight. Jason, backed up by his friends, tried to turn him away. Stop trying to make this about Jason, and just admit that your client is a horndog who, once he couldn’t get what he wanted out of the Omegas, turned to violence to blow off steam, to establish territory. It’s textbook Alpha behaviour which parents usually train their pups out of along with piss-marking.”

“Is that your professional opinion?” Ricorso asked.

“Absolutely.” Kara challenged, narrowing her eyes.

Ricorso smirked.

“No further questions, your honour.”

“Ms. Zorel, you may step down.”

Kara exhaled loudly and left the stand.

“Your honour,” Ricorso spoke up. “I would like some time to discuss things with my client.”

“Time accorded, court will reconvene in one hour.” she banged her gavel and left.

***

Harley was starting to look a little more filled out, and Clark thought she smelled sweeter than usual, but didn’t press.

“I’ve managed to convince the higher-up who will be speaking with you and Bruce to wait until the trial is over, so that Bruce doesn’t need to be away from Jason.”

Clark nodded.

“Thank you.”

“How have you been holding up with things?”

Clark sighed.

“I couldn’t stay in the courtroom. It was getting to be too much.” he frowned. “It’s weird, because I hear worse things coming from the people at the support group. I think it might be because there’s someone trying to actively counter what they’re saying? It’s as bad as the YouTube comment section.”

“Encountered that, have you?” Harley smiled.

Clark groaned.

“I’ve learned to stop looking. It’s terrible.”

Harley laughed.
“How have your dreams been?”

“Better. I think things have just been too busy for them. They happen so rarely, now. And when it looks like one might be happening, it’s like I start to wake up, and then I can make it stop.”

“That’s excellent, Clark!” Harley praised. “I’m happy for you.”

“Thanks.”

Clark’s phone beeped softly.

“I gotta feed him.” he explained as he shut off the alarm.

“Of course.” Harley waited for him to get Conner situated before continuing.

“Was there anything new you wanted to discuss?” she prompted.

*Here we go. Clark thought.*

“Mom told me I’m adopted.” Clark said, any sense of good mood disappearing.

Harley nodded.

“That must have been difficult, finding out after all this time.”

“I just felt so… out of place. I was even mad at her, at first. I apologised, after, because I know she never meant to hurt me, but everything still feels so… weird.”

“You’re questioning what you perceive as your identity.”

“Exactly.” Clark said. “Luckily, Bruce has been great for that. We haven’t told the boys, yet, especially with everything Jason has to sit through right now, but he’s been so patient.”

Harley smiled.

“I’m happy for you. You’ve got a good support system.”

Clark smiled and sighed.

“I’m trying to see if I can track down my birth parents.”

“Are you sure you want to do that just yet?” Harley asked. “It’s still new.”

“Yeah, but I happen to have a great lead, so I thought I’d pursue it.”

“Already?” Harley asked, surprised.

“Kara. When we met at Christmas, she said I looked a lot like her uncle, and even asked me if I was adopted. I’d said ‘no’ at the time, but now, well…”

Harley nodded her understanding.

“We went to get our blood tested, an hour before my appointment. We talked for a bit before, too. She showed me pictures of her uncle and her cousins. It’s… I can see myself in them.”

Harley nodded.
“How does that make you feel?”

“I love my parents,” Clark said. “But, if the Zorels are my birth parents… they didn’t want to give me up. Lara’s parents made her for the sake of their precious reputations.”

Harley bit her lip, sympathetic.

“You wonder what life would have been if they hadn’t.”

“I did a little, at first.” Clark said, sniffing. “I definitely could’ve gone without ten years of hell. But, I have Conner,” he whimpered, looking down at his nursing son. “And I have Bruce, and Damian, and the others.” he sobbed. “And I do love my parents. I love them so much.”

Harley brought him the tissue box and put the throw on his shoulders, then rubbed his arms for a moment.

Clark was finding it awkward to blow his nose using only one hand, but he had to keep Conner latched on. Conner had started whimpering, no doubt distressed by his mother crying, but continued to nurse stubbornly.

Harley noticed this, and moved to kneel in front of Clark so that she could pet Conner’s head, trying to help calm him.

“I want you to keep in mind, Clark,” Harley said after he calmed a bit. “That so long as you find healthy ways of expressing them, that your feelings are perfectly valid. You might feel guilty for things like wondering what your life might’ve been like had it gone the other way, but it’s perfectly natural to think about those things.”

Clark nodded, sniffing, as he dabbed at his nose with tissue.

“How could someone do that?” Clark asked. “To their own daughter?”

Harley sighed.

“Unfortunately, some people care more for their own well-being than anyone else’s, even their own blood.”

Clark looked at Conner, still nursing, and stroked his cheek with his thumb.

“That’s stupid.”

Harley smiled sadly.

“Yeah, it is.”

****

Jason held tightly to Tatsu’s hand. Harvey was about to play the audio recordings of her and the others recounting events. Some were from unnamed sources, people too scared to face Digger in the courtroom.

“I would like to warn before we begin that these accounts are disturbing.” Harvey prefaced, standing in front of the room. Then, his assistant pressed play.

“Take your time.” Harvey’s voice. “Just say things exactly as they happened.”
“I was trying out a yoga tree pose.” Bart’s voice, trembling. “To help with my balance. I tend to lean too left, so I thought it might help. I was under the bleachers, because I couldn’t think of any other spot that would be quiet enough. Then Digger showed up with a couple of his friends. He told them to go, and then walked up to me, calling me a tease because of my shorts. I bent to grab my gym bag; I was gonna go to the changing room and then go home.”

A pause, shaking breath, then a sob.

“He used his Voice to t-- tell... he s-- said 'on... your knees... bitch.”

There was crying for several seconds.

“I couldn’t... make him s-- ssstop... he put his hand in my pants, and he-- he--” Another sob. “Oh, God! He grabbed my junk and made me get hard! I didn’t want it! I tried to fight it! But it was like he was in my head and I couldn’t fucking move!” Bart was panicking.

Jason gave Tatsu’s hand a squeeze as she quietly excused herself. He understood. She couldn’t stay and listen.

He forced himself to stay, however. He owed it to her, to the others. All the ones Digger had made afraid.

The story concluded with how Bart had managed to break out of it enough to scream, and then thrust the heel of his palm into Digger’s nose. Then Digger used his Voice a second time, but Jason had arrived before Digger could do anything further.

The stories continued for almost an hour. There were some Jason didn’t recognise, hadn’t been there for. Some managed to fight him off, others had been given sufficient interruption that Digger left them without finishing whatever he had planned.

One had not been so lucky.

Jason felt sick to his stomach as a hoarse female voice recounted how she’d been left with a torn throat after Digger had forced his way in.

The audio was stopped, and Jason saw the serious look on Harvey’s face.

Harvey had just played his ace card.

“That last testimony was from a young girl who was attacked shortly after Mr. Todd’s expulsion from the school.” Harvey explained, sombre. “She did not want to be in the same room as her attacker. But she did have the presence of mind to go to the hospital after the attack, and submitted herself to examination. To date, we’ve only heard of unwanted fondling and near-misses, which might have left a few of you thinking that it’s not as bad as I’ve been trying to paint it. But here’s what happens when they can’t get away and no one’s there to help:

Extensive damage to the soft tissues of the throat which required surgery, including esophageal rupture.

Damage to her vocal chords, permanently affecting her voice.

All of these damages were exacerbated by the fact that the violence with which she was violated made her throw up after a time.”

Van Dorn had finally declared that enough was enough, as Ricorso had begun going in circles with
the same arguments. Ricorso and Dent were about to make their closing remarks so that the jury could make their decision.

Harvey was going over things with his assistant, while Ricorso was talking with both Harkness Alphas, neither of which looked happy.

Finally, Ricorso stood, and walked to face the jury.

“Ladies and gentlemen of the jury,” He began. “My client may not have had the best guidance in his life. His father works hard to keep his family in the life they are accustomed to living. He hasn’t had the best impression of Omegas, either. His mother left when he was small, as did his father’s next mate. The law may dictate that eighteen is an adult, and it’s true that seventeen isn’t far from it. But just because the number is there doesn’t mean he’s reached the state of adulthood. He’s still learning. A lot of people, when they graduate from high school, are still learning and make stupid mistakes. He’s been shown, now, that what he did was wrong, and knows he must face punishment. I urge you to be lenient. Let him have the minimum sentence, so that he can start to put the pieces back together as quickly as possible. Let him have the ability to go forward with his lesson learned and still able to put it to good use. Thank you.”

Jason was grateful Tatsu had left the room; he knew he must be giving off strong waves of frustration and nerves.

Now Harvey stood and went to face the jury.

“Honoured members of the jury, I agree with some of the things said by Mr. Harkness’ defense. He had bad role models. But that does not excuse the fundamental part of this whole story. In every single instance, the Omega Harkness went after gave their clear refusal, and was ignored. Pups are taught ‘no’ from a very young age. This is fundamental to their upbringing. No matter what, this would have been clearly understood, and George Harkness Jr. ignored it. Ignored the word ‘no’ and all its synonyms, because he thought himself above his fellow students. He needs more than a slap on the wrist, he needs to be shown that his presentation and his financial status do not place him above others. Keep in mind the testimonies you have heard from the victims: the fear in their voices. The fact that a supposed safe place in their young lives was turned into a hall of nightmares. Thank you.”

Van Dorn called for adjournment while the jury deliberated, and the banging of the gavel was nothing compared to the pounding of Jason’s blood rushing in his ears.

***

Bruce held Jason’s hand as they waited for the call to go back in. Tatsu was in her father’s lap while her mother held her hand in both of his.

Bart had arrived with Len, and the Queens were due any minute. Everyone wanted be there for the verdict.

Jason even looked up with surprise when Clark, Damian, and Alfred came in, followed shortly by Dick and Barbara.

Clark came to sit on Jason’s other side, with Damian crawling into Bruce’s lap.

“How are you feeling?” Clark asked Jason.

Jason thought for a moment.

“Exhausted.”
Clark bit the inside of his lip, then loosened Conner’s carrier sling and held the sleeping bundle out to Jason, who eagerly reached out to hold the pup to him, cradling Conner to him.

Clark smiled and leaned over to kiss Jason’s hair, then looked up to meet Bruce’s fond gaze; Damian in his lap, holding a fistful of Bruce’s shirt. It was a nice little bubble of family, just the five of them. Unfortunately, the summons to return to the courtroom changed the mood completely.

“Members of the jury,” Judge Van Dorn addressed. “Have you reached a verdict?”

One woman stood, a piece of paper in her hand.

“Yes, your honour, we have.”

The bailiff retrieved the paper and brought it to the judge, who proceeded to read it out.

“On ten counts of sexual assault, including five counts of illegal Voice usage, we find the defendant guilty. It is our view, given the circumstances, that the defendant be put into a juvenile detention centre for two years. It is also our belief that, upon his release, he should be placed in a halfway house on five years’ probation, which must include supervised community service working with Alphas in transit, that he may witness first-hand the long-term effects abuse has on victims, without placing him in a position where he may use his Voice against those vulnerable to its effects. He will also be subject to mandatory psychology sessions to keep an eye on his development.”

Judge Van Dorn put down the paper.

“I find myself in full agreement to these term, though I also rule that the defendant be allowed the chance to apply for parole after one year. Note that this does not guarantee his sentence will be shortened. That is up to him. Case closed.”

With a bang of her gavel, it was finally over. For now.

Chapter End Notes

I gotta admit, guys, if ever I have the motivation to do so, I might go back over the court thing and fix a lot of the details, but, I'm just so glad to be done with it, right now.

The only things left to figure out, now, are:

- getting Clark to meet his birth parents
- making Powers cough up the dough and fucking off
- more fun sexytimes between Clark and Bruce
- Ending on a... full note...

I might start posting my Fantastic Beasts three-way story soon, but... here's the thing: It's not as heavily story-driven as this one. It's really meant to be porn. Another thing with it is that I know that the next Fantastic Beasts movie will be coming out next year, and although my story will obviously be taking an altogether different route than the films, I'm curious to see how much Newt will be involved in taking down Grindelwald, because I'm wondering if I might want to include some of those elements in my story. I was actually kind of saddened to see that Graves won't be a part of it. I had sort of hoped that they might find him somewhere, that he might be involved in the
war and that we'd get to know the *real* Graves. but, I guess the truth is that, in canon, he is very dead. Fuck you, Grindelwald...

P.S. to J.K.: PLEASE GIVE CREDENCE A HAPPY ENDING!

Also, I got the 20th Anniversary of Harry Potter edition of the Fantastic Beasts book. It looks more like a true textbook, like something you would expect given that it was on Harry’s list of set books for his first year. I like to go through it while listening to the audio book as read by Eddie Redmayne. It makes me happy ^_^
Chapter 41

Chapter Summary

The bitch is back and promptly sent packing. Clark meets with Kara and readies himself to meet his birth parents.

Chapter Notes

Finally getting this up. See the notes on my ColdFlash fic.

Oh, you are in my blood like holy wine
You taste so bitter
And so sweet, oh,
I could drink a case of you darling, and I would
Still be on my feet
Oh, I would still be on my feet
— A Case Of You by Joni Mitchell

Bruce and Clark were sitting on a loveseat in the lounge after the boys had gone to sleep. Conner didn’t count, of course, and Clark often felt his stress easier to manage while holding his son.

The lab at the clinic had called Clark directly to tell him the test results, and it was confirmed: he and Kara were definitely related.

“What do you want to do, now?” Bruce asked gently.

Clark sighed.

“I want to meet them. I want to tell off my biological grandparents. And I want to start telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”

Bruce frowned.

“How do you mean?”

“The Internet has evolved by a lot in the ten years I was away from it.” Clark explained. “I once wanted to be a journalist. I was frightened away from it recently because of Leslie Willis. But I’ve been doing some reading, and I know it’s not all bad. And, there are ways of getting your voice heard without being attached to a newspaper or magazine.”
Bruce was intrigued, now.

“What did you have in mind?”

“I’m gonna wait until this thing gets settled with Powers before I post anything, but, in the meantime, I’m going to write about my experiences, as much as I can remember. Some of it’s hazy, because I wasn’t okay, and I think I was trying to push down just how bad it was, but writing about my recovery should be easier, because everything was clearer, sharper. Like I had finally woken up. I’ve found a few different blogging sites, and I’m trying to pick which one I’ll post to. I’m also trying to decide if I want to do any video ones, because I know YouTube is a big way of getting your voice heard, but I’m not sure I want to film myself recounting those experiences, precisely. I might do videos of other things, later, and make sure I link back to the blog so that people can find it if they come to know me through the videos, first. But, the point is, I want to be a voice.”

Clark had a determined look in his eye.

“I want to be heard, to help show that abusers can’t expect their victims to stay silent.”

He looked down to Conner and stroked his cheek.

“I want to go to school,” he said. “I want things to be the way they should have been if I hadn’t had my life put on pause.”

Bruce smiled.

“Pick your program, and I won’t stand in your way.”

Clark smiled back.

“I’ll wait until Conner’s two.” he said. “But, there is one other thing.” Clark’s smile vanished.

“I still love you, that hasn’t changed. But, would it be alright if we wait until I graduate before we bond?” he was looking near Bruce, but not quite at him. “It’s just, I feel like I need to try to be a whole person again before we get there, and I feel like going to school, first, will help me achieve that.”

Bruce sighed, then nodded slowly.

“I’d be lying if I said that didn’t hurt, but, I get it.”

“I’d still be here,” Clark rushed to say. “I’m not leaving. I just feel like bonding might be too soon, before I can figure myself out.”

Bruce reached out to cup Clark’s cheek.

“I understand, Clark. And I’ll help in any way I can, in any way that you want me to.”

Clark turned his face to kiss Bruce’s palm.

“Thank you.”

***

Clark looked up as the coffee shop bell jingled. For the fifth time, Kara was not the one walking through the door.
Clark was feeling antsy in the busy environment, but not as bad as he had been back in the early days of his recovery. He’d intentionally wanted to meet with Kara alone; another step to being himself. Of course he would eventually want to include Bruce in this part of his life, but he needed to face it on his own, first.

The coffee shop had lovely, if expensive, desserts, and Clark could see himself getting addicted to the milles feuilles. The spinach-feta croissant was delicious, too.

At the sound of another jingle, Clark looked up and felt a wave of relief upon seeing that Kara had finally arrived. She scanned the room for a moment, smiled upon spotting Clark, and went over to join him.

“Good job on securing the comfy chairs.” she said, setting down her messenger bag. “Not always easy in this place.”

“There was a couple of people here when I first arrived,” Clark explained. “But they saw me holding Conner and then insisted I sit here.”

Kara chuckled.

“Good to know there are still decent people about. I’m just gonna get a coffee, be right back.”

“Sure. Actually,” Clark pulled a ten dollar-bill out of his pocket. “Could you grab me another chai tea? It’s really good.” he indicated his empty cup.

“I got it.” Kara said. “Consider it my small welcome-to-the-family gesture.”

“How about you take this anyway, and we can go halfsies on a box of macarons?” Clark countered. Kara smiled as she took the ten.

“Excellent. Which ones do you want?”

“The bumbleberry and salted caramel seem good. Maybe even candy apple?”

“More proof we’re related. Those are the ones I would’ve picked, too.” Kara grinned and made her way to the counter.

Clark settled back into his chair and sighed. His phone went off with a soft-sounding alert, and he realised it was time to feed Conner. His anxiety shot up again, as this was the first time he’d be feeding him in a place that was completely open to the public. The restaurant where Bruce paid for the victims and their families to have breakfast had a private room, and though he had fed in front of strangers before, it had still been in a relatively safe environment while surrounded by people he trusted.

Clark’s eyes darted around the room and then fell upon a sticker near the door that read “Breast-Feeding Encouraged Here.” Feeling empowered by this, and a slight thrill of defiance spiking through, he thought ‘fuck it,’ and readied himself to feed his son.

*Let one person get offended. Clark thought to himself. *Just one. And I’ll throw some science in their face.*

Kara returned as Clark got Conner latched on, and stopped to coo.

“Somebody’s lunch time?” she crooned, grinning as she sat down.
“More like second afternoon tea. Or… Linner? Somewhere thereabouts.” Clark joked at the frequency at which puppies had to be nursed.

“Liquid diets go through quickly.” Kara said, placing the box of macarons on the table between them and Clark’s drink closer to him.

“So,” Kara sighed after taking a sip of her drink. “What should we talk about?”

Clark sighed.

“I guess figuring out when I should meet my birth parents.”

Kara nodded, then bit her lip.

“I haven’t actually told them, yet. I wanted to wait to ask how much you wanted them to know before meeting.” she sighed heavily and cast her eyes downward. “I did something I shouldn’t have done.”

Clark blinked.

“What did you do?”

“I looked at the file Harley had on you.” she admitted. “Without her permission. That’s a breach of confidentiality. I saw your middle name and I knew.” her throat swelled with guilt. “Aunt Lara had wanted to name you Kaleb. She made sure to tell everyone around her involved in your birth. And, of course, I read about what happened to you… before. I didn’t tell anyone about that, though; just that you were in the care of a support Alpha.”

Clark felt like he should be angry about this, but couldn’t be; it was enough that he’d been unduly angry at his mother for keeping the secret of his adoption for so long. He understood that Kara’s actions hadn’t been malicious, but born of a desperation for wanting to find him.

“Promise you’ll stay out of my file from now on?” Clark checked.

“Absolutely.” Kara promised.

“Good.”

They were silent for a moment, each sipping from their drinks and eating from the macarons.

“I guess,” Clark broached. “You can tell them that I was in a bad marriage, but that I’m getting better, now. If they want to know more, I’ll be telling them when I get comfortable enough to do so.”

Kara nodded.

“That sounds good.”

“Maybe we could meet next weekend?” Clark offered.

Kara smiled.

“I’ll call them tonight. They usually stay with me when they visit, and I think were a bit due to come down, anyway. Haven’t seen them since Christmas.”

“Great.” Clark agreed. “Bruce is going on his first business trip since before I came to live with him, and the boys are all going to be busy, too, so it’ll be great for me to not stay cooped up inside.”
Damian was going to spend time with Nyssa, Dick sleeping over at Barbara’s, Jason was going to celebrate the Japanese festival of the dead with Tatsu and her family, and while Tim was still going to be in the house, his friend Rachel was visiting and Clark had a suspicion that he’d prefer not having too many adults in his hair; he was at that stage where he was ‘too cool’ to hang out with grown-ups. Alfred knew how to quietly make sure they still had food without hovering, so that just left Clark.

“You can come by in the morning to meet my sister.” Kara offered. “It’ll be just us and her wife. I’ll ask for aunt Lara and uncle Jorden to swing by in the afternoon, so we can have lunch, first, and then you can be settled before meeting them.”

Clark nodded.

“That sounds perfect.”

“Also, um,” Kara sipped from her drink. “Your adoptive parents, did you want them to be there?”

“My dad passed away a few years ago.” Clark said, but continued before Kara could offer her condolences. “I would eventually want mom to meet with them, but, I’d like to meet them without her, first.”

Kara nodded.

“Alright.”

“Whore!”

Clark and Kara both jumped at the sudden shout, and Clark’s heart began to hammer in his chest.

Veronica Vreeland.

_Dammit._ Clark thought, almost at the brink of panic, but then a sudden determination welled up inside him. He gently eased Conner off, making his son cry with frustration at the interruption of his meal, carefully handing him to Kara and then quickly buttoned his shirt before standing to face Veronica.

“Bruce said he’d made it clear you’re to stay away. Get your coffee, and then either leave, or sit in another part of the café.”

Veronica sneered.

“And here you are, having coffee with another Alpha.”

“My cousin. And I’m having tea, thank you. If you think this is such a problem, go tell Bruce about it. You can even take a photo as proof.”

“And what about baring yours tits for the whole world to see?” she countered.

“I was feeding my pup. Which is legal, and even encouraged in this place.” he pointed to the sticker in the window. “I don’t know what your excuse is.” he indicated her deep v-neck. He didn’t honestly think there was anything wrong with a person wearing revealing clothing, it was up to them how much of their body they wanted on display. But, since she went there, he might as well call out her hypocrisy.

The door to the café chimed.
Veronica seemed stunned for a second, as though she had forgotten what she was wearing. Anger clouded her features, and then her arm went up, Clark raising his own to block it…

And then her wrist was caught in mid-air, and Clark looked to see Bruce, a frightening air of fury on his features, one which scared him with its intensity.

“I have told you.” he growled. “Clark is my family, and you are to keep away from my family. If I have to order a restraining order, I will. But if I do, I will make it public knowledge that it exists, and exactly why Veronica Vreeland is not welcome at any Wayne industry functions. Do I make myself clear?”

“Why him!?” Veronica screamed, trying to pull her wrist from Bruce’s vice grip. “He has nothing to offer you!”

“He has everything to offer me that I could ever want. You only have your money and your looks. I have money, and beauty fades with time. Should’ve invested in some human decency.”

Bruce let go so suddenly that that Veronica stumbled on her spiked heels, barely keeping herself from falling. She turned to look at the people around her, hoping for some shred of sympathy.

Clark looked, too, registering the shock present on most of the faces, and the anger some exhibited towards Veronica. Then, she left, somehow managing to walk with her back straight and head high, not wanting to show how deeply she’d been cut.

The coffee shop erupted in applause, and Clark turned beet red, even feeling a little weak. Bruce was guiding him back to his seat like it was nothing, then carefully took a fussing Conner from Kara, and handed him back to Clark. Without putting thought into it, Clark made to open his shirt again, knowing Conner was probably still hungry. Bruce helped him without saying a word, then sat on the arm of the chair so he could wrap his arms around him, a warm, comforting presence to ground him.

“Vindictive ex?” Kara asked.

“You have no idea.” Bruce said.

“Well, I guess this saves me doing shovel talk on behalf of my cousin.” Kara joked, trying to lighten the mood.

Clark smiled.

***

“I’m sorry, Clark.” Bruce said once they were in the car and on their way back to the manor.

“You shouldn’t have to apologise for her.” Clark said. “She wants to be a bitter bitch because she doesn’t get that kindness goes a long way, that’s her own damn fault.”

“In retrospect, I would have never paid her any attention,” Bruce explained. “But before I found myself wanting to do more than have a place for my knot, she was a willing candidate every time.”

“And then you grew up?” Clark said with a teasing smile.

“And then I found Selina.” Bruce clarified. “After her, I didn’t find it gratifying anymore to take up with someone unless they had some brains to go along with their body. Doing things with someone like Veronica is like cheap porn. It’ll get you off, but not actually satisfy.”
Clark bit back a grin.

“And what am I like?”

Bruce smiled.

“You’re like the sweetest of wines. You seem mild at first, but then within no time you’ve snuck up on me and taken over my senses and…” Bruce stopped short. “I suck at this kind of thing.”

Clark grinned, a pretty blush colouring his face.

“You started out pretty good.”

Bruce grinned back.

***

William brought Chloe along with him when he returned to Perry’s bar to get the update on his search.

Perry and Jimmy were both at the counter, again, and it was just as quiet as the last time they’d been in, still too early for the Friday night crowd.


“Mm!” Chloe approved. “Raspberry lemonade and vodka, please.”

“Jimmy?”

“Coming right up!”

In a quick, neat motion, Jimmy ran a lemon wedge along the edge of a tall glass with a short stem, then spun it upside-down in some pink sugar, placing the wedge on the edge when he was done. He then tossed the vodka bottle into the air, caught it behind him with the opposite hand, then poured it halfway into a shaker, topping it off with the juice, only shaking it a little before straining it into the glass, so as to not water it down too much, then finishing it off with a pump of sprite to give it fizz and add to the flavour. The finishing touch, a mini umbrella, and he slid the glass down the bar towards Perry, who stopped it and picked it up in the same motion before placing it down on the counter in front of Chloe, a coaster slid beneath it faster than she could pick up on the action of his having produced it in the first place, then stuck in a straw.

Chloe and William clapped, impressed.

“Been working on that for a while.” Jimmy said. “It adds a little something.”

“Nearly had a heart attack when I saw him practicing.” Perry said. “But he had the sense to use bottles filled with water instead of liquor until he got the hang of it.”

Chloe sipped from the drink.

“Mm! That’s delicious.”

Jimmy gave a slight bow and winked.

“Perry, you got something for me?” William called them back to the matter at hand.
Perry pulled a stool from over the side onto the inside of the bar and sat down, folding his arms on the wood surface so he could lean in close.

“Jimmy was able to track down Powers’ hacker, then follow the trail of breadcrumbs to see where they’d been. Hospital records were targeted. Your grandson being AB negative, while your Martha and Jonathan were both positives. That was clue one. Clue two, Martha having all the standard prenatal doctor visits on her four failed pregnancies, and then nothing leading up to Clark’s arrival. Clue three, Clark’s birth parents had been looking for him, and their blood types did match, as did the information they had put out regarding when their son was born; the timing matched.”

William sighed.

“Would Jimmy be able to prove absolutely that Powers’ hacker opened those medical files which are supposed to be confidential?”

“Not without incriminating himself.” Perry said. “He doesn’t have a white hat, so he would have had no legal protection to allow him to uncover that.”

William sighed again. People adept at hacking could get certification allowing them to take jobs for people and organisations who needed a hacker’s skills, but if one went around without the certification, even with the best of intentions, they could still face jail time.

“Thanks, Perry.” William told him. “We should hopefully be able to prove through other means that the information was obtained illegally.”

They stayed just a bit longer for Chloe to finish her drink, and then William dropped Chloe off at her apartment.

“Chloe?” William stopped her before she stepped out of the car. “If Powers comes to you again, tell him you refuse to talk with him and if he has anything more to discuss regarding Clark’s lawful inheritance, he knows how to reach me.”

“I promise.” she nodded.

***

Clark found himself sweating slightly as he perused one of the websites Barry had recommended, his heart pounding.

They’d been chatting over their mutual love of sci-fi, and somehow ended up discussing their past pain. Clark was getting frustrated over the fact that he still couldn’t bring himself to give himself over completely to Bruce, despite almost everything else they’d done.

Barry had been quick to reassure him, explaining that he and Len had been dating for a year before anything happened, and that was a few years after he’d been attacked. Then, he suggested alternative fantasies, and the toys with which one could carry them out. If one imagined something that wasn’t entirely human, it made the situation more abstract and easier to handle. Once Clark felt like he’d managed to get full control of his sexuality, it should become easier to break certain barriers with Bruce.

And so, tucked away on the window seat in the nursery, Clark looked over the items available.

Bad Dragon certainly had… interesting items. As did Primal Hardwere; Clark had never thought about oviposition, but, now that the idea had been presented, he found himself very much wanting to try it.
“What in the hell is that?”

Clark slammed the laptop shut, his face burning as he avoided Bruce’s gaze.

“Um, well, just, um…” he swallowed. “Some things I thought might help.”

Bruce nodded.

“Let me know if you need the credit card.” and he walked away to greet Conner, who was lying on his back in his crib, chewing on a crinkly-sounding puppet.

“How’s my brave boy doing today?” Bruce asked, smiling at his pup. “Have you wrestled that puppet into submission, yet? Ready to face Freddy and the gang? It is Freddy, right?” he checked with Clark, who had been introduced to the games by Barry, as well.

“Freddy Fazbear, yeah.” Clark said as he gathered up his laptop. “I wouldn’t let even Damian play it, though.”

Bruce frowned.

“It’s about animatronics at a restaurant. He’s been to Chuck E. Cheese.”

Clark chuckled.

“How about when you get back from your trip I have you check them out?” Clark said. “Trust me, if it weren’t for the fact that Tim’s already playing, I don’t think I’d let him do it, either.”

Bruce rolled his eyes.

“Well, little man, I think it’s bathtime for you tonight, isn’t it?” he turned back to Conner.

Conner gurgled, reacting to the higher pitch Bruce was using.

“Let’s get you downstairs.” he picked him up and nuzzled his nose before kissing his forehead. Bruce had just tucked him into the crook of his elbow, when Conner gave a little grunt, making Bruce pause.

“I think that’s his pee noise.” Bruce said, and brought him to the changing table, unbuttoning his onesie and pushing it aside.

“I can get that--” Clark offered, about to put his laptop on the rocking chair.

“Nah nah nah.” Bruce stopped him. “Parents are supposed to take turns, aren’t they?”

He undid the diaper, but then frowned when he saw it wasn’t even slightly damp.

“Huh. I was sure that was the noise he makes when he pees. Oh, well.”

Unfortunately for Bruce, he had decided to work on Conner facing him head-on, instead of from the side, and then Conner did pee, dampening the front of Bruce’s button-down and tie.

Clark bit down on his hand, trying not to laugh, but lost it when Bruce started laughing.

“You were planning this, weren’t you?” he said to Conner. “You thought, ‘hmm, how do I make sure people know he’s my daddy? Ooh, I’ll pee him, that’s how.’”
Clark, still laughing, managed to wheeze out the words, “I’ll get you a towel.” and left, leaving his laptop on the bed while he went to the bathroom.

“See what you did, Conner?” Bruce continued. “You made mommy pee himself. He’s gonna pee himself laughing because you peed daddy. Everyone’s gonna need to pee when they find out you peed daddy.” he leaned in and blew a raspberry on Conner’s tummy, making Conner laugh loudly as he chewed his fist.

“Good boy, Conner.” Bruce leaned forward and kissed his forehead.

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Clark let out a heavy sigh as he stood in front of Kara’s apartment building. He looked over the names for the buzzers, spotting a KZ with little flowers and squiggles drawn around it, and pushed the button.

“Hello?”

“It’s Clark.”

“Hey! Do you have a lot of puppy stuff with you? We don’t have an elevator.”

“Uh, well, I did bring the stroller--”

“Say no more! I’ll be right down.”

There was a buzz and Clark opened the door, maneuvering the stroller over the threshold and into the building.

Kara was down in no time, along with a red-haired woman, her hair almost like a french bob.

“Clark, this is my sister, Alex.” Kara grinned as she introduced them. “Alex, this is our cousin.”

“Happy to finally meet you!” Alex shook his hand, grinning.

“Okay, Alex, you take one end, I’ll take the other?” Kara proposed.

“I can put him in his sling and fold it up.” Clark said.

“Nonsense.” Alex said. “He’s sleeping. Let’s give his highness the royal treatment.”

Alex bent to pick up the front and of the stroller while Kara took the back end, leaving Clark to carry the diaper bag.

They only had four floors to go through, and the stairs weren’t cramped. Kara’s apartment was one half of the top floor with a large window overlooking the city, flooding the apartment with sunlight.

“Nice place.” Clark said.

“Thanks!” Kara said. “You can sit here.” she pushed Conner’s stroller beside a wide, cushy armchair. “And we’ve got finger foods for right now. We’ll be having something bigger, later.”

“Maggie’s gone out to get sugar for the dessert.” Alex explained. “We didn’t think to ask if you like seafood?”

“Love it.” Clark grinned, aiming straight for slice of what looked like smoked salmon and cream
cheese in a tortilla wrap.

“Mm!” he closed his eyes as he ate it. “I must have been a cat in another life. I love smoked salmon. I think I was also missing seafood while I was pregnant. Alfred flatly refused to serve it.”

Alex and Kara chuckled.

“What would you like to drink?” Kara inquired. “I’ve got lemonade, chocolate milk, and a few different Kool-Aid flavours to pick from.”

“Blue raspberry?” Clark asked hopefully.

“Is there anything better?” Kara joked, and opted for making a whole pitcher.

After everyone had their drinks, Kara sat down on the sofa beside Alex.

“To family.” she lifted her glass.

Clark and Alex clinked their glasses with hers.

“To family.” Clark agreed.

After taking a drink of the Kool-Aid, Kara turned to Clark.

“How have things been with your mother?” she asked, concerned. “You mentioned that it got a bit rocky after she told you.”

“We patched things up.” Clark assured her. “I just needed some time to process.”

“Oh, good.” Kara sounded relieved.

There was a knock at the door and Alex bolted up.

“It’s probably Maggie.” she said as she went to answer it.

Alex and Maggie greeted each other with a quick kiss.

“I’m so sorry.” Maggie said quickly. “I have to go. They’re short and need some extra coverage in the Narrows.” she handed Alex the sugar.

“Of course that would happen today.” Alex groaned. “Can you just come meet Clark for a second?”

“Of course!”

Alex walked Maggie to where Clark was sitting.

“Clark, this is Maggie.” Alex introduced. “Maggie, my long-lost cousin.” she grinned.

“Pleased to meet you.” Maggie held her hand out to shake. “I’m sorry I can’t stay, work called.”

“She’s a cop.” Alex explained. “And this is Conner.” she gestured to the stroller.

“Oh!” Maggie exclaimed. “He’s, um, he’s a cutie!”

Clark got the sense that Maggie wasn’t too enthusiastic about his puppy.

“Listen, I gotta dash. Pleasure, Kara, as always. Clark, good to see you. Alex, I’ll see you tonight.”
“I’ll walk you to your car. Be right back, guys!” Alex called out as she left.

Clark looked to Kara with a raised eyebrow.

“Maggie’s not fond of pups.” Kara explained. “Alex is hoping she’ll change her mind.”

Clark nodded as he ate a cracker with some cream cheese and a smoked oyster on top.

“That’s a tough one.”

“Yeah.” she agreed as she took another drink of her Kool-Aid.
Okay, guys, I never thought I would do something like this on this scale, but, here it is:

In the chapter where Clark and Kara go to get their blood drawn to confirm being related, I had made up siblings for Clark in the form of two as-yet undeveloped characters with the names of random Kryptonian good guys I looked up. Here is my conundrum:

It's very easy to make Kara and Alex gel with Clark, because I know they do in canon, and I already like them a lot. I had made them cousins with Clark because cousins is what they are in the comics/TV shows.

HOWEVER, as I've been developing the interactions with the three of them, I find I like the three of them hanging out so much that I don't really want to have to add more to the mix beyond the biological parents. Having them as cousins means I eventually have to introduce the siblings and Kara and Alex's parents, and this world already has a lot of characters for me to juggle.

So now, I put it to you, my readers, to help me out:

I am seriously considering going back and changing every mention of Clark and Kara being cousins, and instead have it be that in my story they're brother and sister. This would extend to make Alex Clark's sister as well, and avoid me having to put in an extra set of parents and two other siblings.

Question: would this bother you guys? Or are you fine with this change?

I'm going to leave this here for ten days, and I hope most of you will give me your answers within that time frame.

Also, as I posted in the notes on my ColdFlash fic: if you like all three of my stories, make sure to subscribe to the series so that you don't miss updates on some of them. This will also be important as I will be writing little side chapters for some of my characters later on, and if you're not subscribed to the series, you'll probably miss those.

Love you all, and thank you so much for all your kind words so far.
Majority seems to be that people either agree with the siblings move or don't seem to mind either way. The people who want them kept as cousins do bring up some compelling arguments which almost make up for their lower numbers.

HOWEVER, there is something which the people who want them kept as cousins seem to be assuming: that it would change other things in my story. Literally, the only thing I'd be changing is the wording; cousin becomes sister/brother depending on the circumstances, and aunt/uncle would be replaced with mom/dad; I would also alter the scene where Kara shows pictures of siblings to Clark, instead just showing a picture of his biological parents when they were younger compared to a more recent photo.

While there are a lot of places where these changes have to be made, they don't really alter the flow of the story. When Kara is showing the photos to Clark, I literally just Googled Kryptonian good guy names and didn't give any immediate thought as to what these unknown siblings might be like; I still don't know who they are. Kara and Alex are already planned and have some development written out, and I already have plans regarding Clark's biological parents based on their past experience with having their son ripped away from them.

Now, that being said, as I pointed out, the arguments brought up by the people who want them to remain cousins are very well thought-out. So, I have come to a compromise, as suggested by RedHoodwillalwaysbeabatkid (thankee, I agree):

I'm going to double-check if I made any references to Kara and Alex having still-living parents and remove/change those, so that it will be as if they lost their parents when they were teens and were taken in by Clark's biological parents. I will also change the photo scene as pointed out above.

Hopefully this keeps everyone happy.

See you guys, soon!
Chapter 43

Chapter Summary

Clark finds out more about what his birth mother had to go through, but, all in all, a lovely evening is had. After Bruce returns from his trip, however, Clark experiences his first parenting crisis.

Chapter Notes

Warning for recollections of body horror. Also, to go along with the change of Kara and Alex being raised by Clark’s birth parents, I made some slight alterations to chapter 30, namely writing in why Lara and Jorden had to take them in.

Sorry about the slow update, guys. It's weird how my mind seems to want to work on everything else except the one that's in most need of work for some reason, to the point where I dug an old, unpublished fic out of mothballs and posted that, instead.

Just an FYI, there’s something I wrote to happen near the end of this chapter, and you should watch this video before you read it.

P.S.: I made the pie recipe I mention in this chapter this past weekend: it was delicious. Also, the filling is basically pudding, so you can make it just as pudding and substitute the butterscotch chips for chocolate, remove the cinnamon, make it with fruit, whatever.

I’ll never be able to protect you from everything,

But don’t expect me not to try.

When you scrape your knee or get the flu,

You won’t be the only one who cries.

— Momma, you were right by Clark Kent

When Alex got back, she and Kara started asking Clark about life on a farm; both being city Alphas, their best taste of country life came from watching Road To Avonlea when they were pups.

“Well, it's a lot of work.” Clark said. “But you’re automatically the coolest pup in show-and-tell when you bring a kid wearing pajamas to class.”

Kara and Alex erupted in giggles.

“Wait wait wait.” Alex held up a hand. “Was it you or the goat wearing pajamas?”
The three burst out laughing.

“My dad drew the line at me and the goat wearing matching onesies to school.” Clark joked, earning another round of laughter.

Conner began to fuss, so Clark scooped him out of his stroller and gently bounced him.

“It’s okay, puppy. Look, auntie Kara, and now you get to meet auntie Alex!” he turned him so he could see the two Alphas.

“Hi!” Alex greeted gleefully.

Conner grunted with frustration, not happy at having been woken.

“Are you hungry?” Clark asked, checking his phone for the time. “It is about feeding time, I guess.” He balanced Conner in his lap and undid the first few buttons on his shirt, then tried to get Conner to latch on, but he was being stubborn, still showing his displeasure at being woken up.

“Aw, come on, Conner.” Clark tried to gently open his mouth with his finger and tried again to get him to latch, but failed again.

“Dammit.”

“Do you need one of the bottles?” Kara asked, referring to the ones he’d had her put in the fridge upon his arrival.

“Maybe-- oh, no, there he goes.” he sighed with relief. “Hunger, one; stubbornness, zero. If ever he throws a tantrum when he gets older, I’ll just have to tell him he can’t have dessert.”

“Ooh, speaking of dessert, I better get on that pie crust.” Kara said, heading for the open concept kitchen.

“What kind of pie?” Clark asked.

“Butterscotch cinnamon.” Kara said, smiling. “I’ve been watching Nerdy Nummies on YouTube, and this one was inspired by the pie in the game Undertale.”

“There’s a YouTube show dedicated to nerdy cooking?” Clark asked. “I’m gonna get fat without needing to get preggers again.”

Kara and Alex laughed.

“Here.” Alex said, turning on the TV and booting up the PS4. “We can watch some episodes while Kara works on the crust.”

Kara had prepared the crust the night before, so all she had to do was roll it out and put it in the two pie pans before popping them in the oven, then came back to join Alex and Clark on the sofa while it baked. When it was done, she set it out to cool, returning to the couch again during this time, as the filling set quickly so she needed the pie crust to be completely cool before she started. Conner had finished feeding, and Alex offered to burp him so that she could hold him while they watched the TV.

It wasn’t long before every morsel Alex and Kara had set out was gone, the three of them binging as they watched episode after episode of Nerdy Nummies.

“I need sugar.” Clark moaned.
“Same.” Alex and Kara said at the same time. Kara got up to check the crust; it was ready, so she started making the filling, watching the TV from the kitchen island stove.

“Ooh, wait, what’s that?” Clark pointed out a cooking video not by Rosanna Pansino, but which seemed to be related to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Alex clicked it.

Pizza Gyoza.

“Ooh…” Clark drooled. “I’m making those for the boys. I’m gonna try it with egg roll wrap instead of making the dough from scratch, though.”

“They look amazing.” Alex agreed.

“Okay, guys, the pies just need to set.” Kara announced as she came to sit with them. “Can I get a hand with the chicken, Alex?”

“Sure.” she handed Conner back to Clark.

“Can I do anything to help?” Clark offered.

“Um, yeah,” Kara said. “If you could chop the carrots and rutabaga, that’d be great. They’re already peeled and have been soaking overnight.”

“Perfect.” Clark said, going to lay Conner down in his stroller. Conner didn’t like this, though, so Clark pulled out the sling carrier and bundled Conner in it, keeping him securely pressed to him. Conner stopped crying, satisfied.

After he was done with the vegetables, Kara put them to boil, while Clark changed Conner’s diaper.

“Dammit.” Clark muttered. “Got paper towel?” he called out. “I’m afraid your nephew just consecrated your hardwood floor.”

Kara and Alex giggled while Alex grabbed a roll to bring to Clark, along with a plastic shopping bag.

“So, not that I’m complaining,” Alex said, kneeling next to Clark to help clean the mess. “But why do you refer to us as his aunts? We’re more like second-cousins to him.”

Clark shrugged.

“It’s kind of the role you guys are playing. I mean, some people have friends in their lives who act like aunt or uncle to pups. And besides, from what Kara said, I haven’t got siblings.”

Alex sighed sadly.

“Did she tell you why?”

Clark looked up from Conner.

“No?”

Alex grimaced, then looked to Kara.

“Kara?” she called out. “Did you want to leave the other thing to aunt Lara?”

Kara looked up, looked from Alex to Clark and back again, then sighed, like she realised what Alex
meant.

“Go ahead.” she said flatly.

Alex turned back to Clark.

“Lara’s parents tried to get cosmetic surgery done on her, so that it wouldn’t show that she had ever had a pup in the first place; we’re talking tummy-tucking, erasing the stretch marks, and even hymenoplasty. But they were so desperate to keep it secret, and they had already blown a ton of money on covering up your adoption, that they didn’t go for the best care. Aunt Lara’s lucky to be alive, but she can’t have pups anymore. When she turned eighteen, she ran away to uncle Jorden’s house. His parents paid to repair the cosmetic damage, but there was no fixing-- the other problem.”

Clark felt sick. In his mind, this was no different from rape. This was a violation, pure and simple, and it had been authorised by her parents.

“Did they even care?” Clark asked, horrified.

Alex shook her head.

“They think she brought it upon herself, for ‘illicit’ relations.”

“I’m sorry.” Alex said as Clark finished putting Conner’s diaper one, then buttoning his onesie. “I realise it wasn’t the best timing.”

Clark held Conner to him, just feeling so grateful for his existence.

“I don’t think there could be a good timing.” Clark told her.

“There is a bit of good news.” Alex told him. “Grammie and grampie found the doctor who did it, and tipped off the local district attorney. They couldn’t get him on what he did to aunt Lara, because it was paid in cash, and of course her parents refuse to admit having paid him, but they got him on mutilating a bunch of others. He got off on hurting Omegas, especially.”

Clark frowned.

“How long ago was this?”

“About ten years ago, why?”

Clark sighed.

“It’s probably too late, now, but…” he bit his lip. “I was just wondering: since her parents had all these things done to her without her consent, if he were to plead guilty to what he did to her, specifically, and testify to the fact that her parents paid him… I mean, I know he’s a scumbag and deserves to be incarcerated, but would he be willing to get a shortened sentence in exchange for bringing their crimes to light?”

“They tried that, actually.” Kara said. “But he preferred the DA not being able to prove that aunt Lara was one of his patients without either his confession or her parents coming forward, and saw the situation as mutually beneficial.”

“I hate people.” Clark muttered.

“People suck.” Alex agreed. “We’re actually all aliens getting ready to go to the homeworld, as proven by our higher intelligence. Welcome to the family.”
The three burst into giggles, the mood lightened a little. Alex picked up the pee-soaked paper and tied it into the plastic bag to be thrown out. Kara held onto Conner while Alex and Clark washed their hands.

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“Well, the veggies are ready.” Kara declared after biting into a particularly thick piece of rutabaga.

“Is the whole meal cinnamon-based?” Clark asked as he watched her season the vegetables. He had seen Alex handle the chicken, which clearly been in a cinnamon-marinade. “Not that I don’t like cinnamon, but that’s a lot of cinnamon.”

“Actually,” Alex snorted as she mixed some lemonade together. “I think it’s Dune-based. She’s been on a kick, lately.”

Kara looked up, a completely serious look on her face.

“The spice must flow.” she said, purposely making her voice sound hollow and creepy, tilting her head to one side.

Alex and Clark laughed, making Kara break face and laugh, too.

The door buzzer went off, and Alex, Clark, and Kara shared a look.

Alex went to answer, while Kara went to Clark and put her hands on his shoulders, giving him an encouraging smile.

“Nervous?”

“Yeah.” Clark nearly squeaked.

Kara squeezed his shoulders and hugged him, mindful of Conner in his sling.

“Everything will be fine.” she whispered.

Clark took a deep breath, and nodded.

“Thanks.”

Kara pulled back, smiling again, and Clark walked with her to the door.

Kara opened it at the sound of a knock, and in walked a male Alpha with blonde hair like Kara, and a female Omega with dark hair that had a slight wave to it, like Clark sometimes saw if he went too long without getting it cut, though hers had streaks of grey. They both had blue eyes, the Alpha’s framed by glasses.

They greeted Alex and Kara with eager hugs, then looked at Clark, and everything seemed to pause.

Clark stood there, waiting for… *something*. And then Kara took the initiative, clearing her throat before speaking.

“This is Clark, and his son, Conner. Clark, Jorden and Lara.”

Clark swallowed painfully and walked up to them. Jorden was a bit unreadable, but Lara began to cry, putting her hand to her mouth and dropping her purse to the floor.
She tried to speak, but couldn’t, just holding out her arms and Clark hugged her.

There was something in her scent that reminded him of his mother; it just felt right to be near her.

Jorden stepped forward hesitantly, placing a hand on Clark’s shoulder, gently giving it a squeeze.

“We’ve searched for you for so long.” Jorden said, a frog in his throat which he quickly cleared.

Clark didn’t try to break from Lara’s embrace, but turned to look in Jorden’s direction, silent tears tracking down his cheeks.

“Kara and Alex told me everything you both went through. I’m happy to finally meet you.”

Lara finally pulled back and Alex had some tissue for her.

“My little boy.” Lara said, still sobbing. “I knew, I just knew that one day I’d find you. Oh, God!” she crossed herself, briefly pressing her palms together. “I’m sorry. Kara told us you’d been with a support Alpha. I wish we could have found you sooner.”

Clark shook his head.

“I definitely wouldn’t want to go through it again, but the timing which led to me finally getting out of there gave me my son.” he carefully lifted Conner from his sling, who’d begun to whimper from Lara’s crying.

Lara put her hand to her mouth, a fresh wave of sobs as she beheld her grandson.

Jorden helped bring her to the sofa, Clark walking with them, and the three of them sat together, Lara in the middle. Kara and Alex retreated to the kitchen to finalise dinner, letting their aunt and uncle get acquainted with their son.

“You can hold him, if you want.” Clark offered.

Lara gingerly took Conner into her arms, holding him to her chest and began to gently rock him. Conner complained for a little, the crying making him cry, but gradually he seemed to sense that it was a good crying and relaxed as he chewed his fist.

Jorden stroked Conner’s hair with his hand.

“I never got to see you as a puppy.” he said sadly.

“I just got to see the doctor cutting the cord and then a nurse took you away.” Lara said, her voice still raw, though her crying was quieter, now.

Clark was crying, too, though silently.

“I’m sure mom wouldn’t mind showing you pictures.” he said thickly. “I know it’s not the same, but, she was good at capturing moments, including those she’d embarrass me in front of my friends with.”

Lara and Jorden chuckled.

Lara held Conner out a little, so she could look him over again.

“He’s beautiful, Clark.” she said, tearfully. “You’ve done well.”
Clark smiled sadly.

“It’s funny, my support Alpha, who’s actually my… um…” Clark stopped, looking upward. “I’m not sure what word to use, but I’ll explain that, later. He has dark hair, he’s adopted three boys that also have dark hair, he has one biological son who looks just like him, and now he and I are together, Conner looks like he could be his, biologically, too.”

“You mated with your support Alpha?” Jorden asked.

“Not yet.” Clark explained. “We’ve agreed that we’re going to, but it wasn’t really much of a proposition, so I feel like fiancée isn’t really the right term, but boyfriend just sounds so highschool.”

“How come you’re not mating, yet?” Lara asked.

“Well,” Clark started. “I do love him, a lot. It’s just that I had been mated and married right out of high school, and, well, that’s what led to me needing a support Alpha in the first place. Now, I wanna be able to go to university and try to figure myself out, since my life was basically on hold for ten years. Originally we were thinking either my next heat or he go off suppressants and we go with his first rut, but then I had some time to think it over, and even though I know he’s not like Lex, I realised I needed some time for me, to be my own person. So, I’ll still be living with him, but take that time to sort things out before we make any life-altering changes.”

Lara suddenly looked uncomfortable.

“I wanted to wait to ask you, after Kara’s first e-mail which contained your full name. You were mated with Lex Luthor?”

“Yeah.” Clark looked uncomfortable now, too.

Lara looked almost furious and carefully handed Conner to Jorden, before putting her face in her hands.

“What is it?” Clark asked.

“Lara’s parents were hoping to have her marry Lionel after his first wife died.” Jorden explained. “That’s another big reason why they were so angry when she got pregnant.”

Kara and Alex looked at each other, then towards the living room.

“You never told us that.” Alex said.

“Wouldn’t he have been way too old for you?” Kara asked, disgusted.

“Lex was already ten at the time, and Lionel was in his forties.” Lara affirmed, equally disgusted.

“They were saving money to fix the scars from the botched surgery after Clark was born.” Lara further explained, her voice flat. “They hoped that, so long as I was still pretty enough, Lionel wouldn’t mind if I couldn’t give him pups, since he already had an heir. That’s why, as soon as midnight hit, making me eighteen, I snuck out with just whatever Jorden and I could fit in his car in a hurry.”

“You were waiting for her?” Clark smiled at Jorden, who looked pretty proud of himself.

“Pulled up at midnight on the dot, right outside her bedroom window. She started handing me bags and boxes, and I loaded them as quick as I could.”
“Ended up leaving with quite a haul.” Lara said. “Only things I left were furniture, my console TV, tape player, and most of my clothes. I just took a selection of what I might need in a week, plus my books, tapes, and some childhood toys I wasn’t ready to part with.”

“Didn’t want your clothes?” Clark was curious as to why.

“Nun in street clothes is pretty much the look my parents saddled me with.” Lara explained, rolling her eyes.

“I remember how excited she was to get her first David Bowie shirt.” Jorden grinned.

Clark’s jaw dropped.

“You listened to David Bowie?” he asked excitedly.

“Still do!” Lara said, then crossed herself. “God rest his soul.”

“I think I might actually be able to put up with mom going over the photo albums with you to see the make-up I wore in high school.” Clark grinned. “I even dyed my hair orange for a while.”

Everyone laughed.

“What are the odds?” Lara said, delighted.

“Well, mom had a bunch of his old records.” Clark explained. “And then I found a VHS of Labyrinth in the school library.” he snickered. “Package.”

Lara snickered in turn while Jorden rolled his eyes.

“Always comes back to Labyrinth…” he muttered, exasperated yet amused.

Conner started to fuss a little, and Jorden bounced him to try calming him, but Clark checked his phone and saw that two hours had passed already since his last feeding.

“He’s just hungry.” Clark explained, undoing his buttons and then holding his arms out. Jorden passed Conner to Lara, then Lara passed him to Clark. Conner surprised him by latching on almost immediately.

“Oh, now you don’t fight for it?” Clark said in a teasing tone. “You’re just trying to make grandma and grandpa think you’re a little angel. Workin’ extra-hard to hide them horns.” he smiled up at the Zorels. “He’s fussy about latching most of the time.” He explained.

“It’s great that you nurse.” Lara beamed. “It helps develop bonding, more.”

If Clark was still wearing glasses, he would have adjusted them, nerdy-style.

“Actually,” he smirked, hearing Adam Conover’s voice in his head. “Even bottle-feeding will help develop the puppy-mother bond, because it’s not the breast milk itself, so much as the act of holding them close for feeding, the satisfaction they get from eating, and what feelings they pick up from the parent. Chemically-speaking, formula is just as healthy for pups as breast milk. I just happen to be able to nurse him with relative ease, so I do.”

Lara face-palmed.

“He’s definitely yours, Jorden.” she groaned, but with a smile.
Laughter rang out through the apartment.

“Dinner’s ready!” Kara called out.

Clark carefully rose to his feet, still holding Conner to him and then reached out with his left hand, intending to steer the stroller next to a place at the table, but Lara put her hand on his.

“Let me help you.” She offered, and followed him with the stroller, while Jorden pulled out a chair for him near one end of the table. Jorden sat at the end nearest him, while Lara sat beside him. Kara sat at the opposite side next to Alex.

Even though it was Kara’s apartment, and both she and Alex were Alphas, this configuration was the sisters both deferring to Jorden as head of the family, and worked with him to make sure that Clark and Lara were served, first, before serving themselves; Jorden served himself last of all, the default of head Alpha ensuring that his pack was provided for.

“Is it alright if I say grace, Clark?” Lara asked.

“Sure.” Clark agreed. He had been raised somewhat Christian, though his parents never inflicted any sense of shame associated with things like his having had a relationship with Lana or his fluctuating between masculine and feminine attire (though his dad had found the makeup a bit much).

Lara took Clark’s hand, and Jorden placed his hand on Conner’s head, since Clark was still holding him for nursing. With his other hand, Jorden took Kara's hand, and she held Alex’s. The table would have been small enough for Alex and Lara to close the circle, but the amount of dishes on it made that a bit of a hazard.

“Heavenly Father,” Lara began. “We are so grateful to thee for reuniting our family. We know that thou art merciful and loving, and that the plans of the wicked and spiteful will always eventually fail. That those wounded by their misdeeds will be granted thy justice, for you count the tears of your spirit young, and always provide a path by which they are avenged. Please bless this food, lovingly prepared by the hands of our nieces, and bless Kara for having us in her home, and for the foresight she had to help find our son. And bless Clark, for the journey he’s had to endure, and grant him that his new mate will treasure him as he deserves. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.”

There was a murmured echo of ‘Amen’ around the table, and then everyone dug into the fare.

“I’m curious,” Clark turned to Lara. “Your parents raised you religiously, right?”

“Mm-hmm.” she replied as she chewed some chicken, patiently waiting for Clark to get to his point.

“Obviously, way too over-the-top.” Clark elaborated. “But that didn’t turn you off to religion?”

Lara smiled as she swallowed her food.

“It did, in a way. I don’t subscribe to any single doctrine as put forth by any one church. But even at my most skeptical, I’ve never been able to tell myself that I don’t believe in a higher power. So, I went back to the Bible, and researched the original Hebrew and Greek. I compare this with historical context; i.e., what were the common denominators among other civilisations of the day, and what was happening to the Jewish people specifically back then, which may have influenced doctrine and practices. I also consider the most basic messages taught by Jesus; that God loves us and wants us to be happy.”

Clark smiled.
“That sounds great.”
Lara smiled in turn.

“So, Clark,” Jorden jumped in. “Have you got any plans? You mentioned university.”

“Jorden--” Lara gave him a look.

“It’s just a question.” Jorden asked.

“I’ve been thinking of journalism.” Clark said. “I had wanted to before, but didn’t get to.”

“Why journalism?” Jorden asked.

“Well, when I was in highschool,” Clark began slowly. “We once had a guest speaker who told the story of how he exposed that, on an isolated Native reservation, the plumbing for the area was so messed up, that the sewage water was contaminating the drinking water. They had tried asking for help, but the state government didn’t seem too pressed into fixing it.”

Clark became more enthusiastic and animated as he spoke.

“After the journalist exposed what was going on, other outlets picked up on it, and it put pressure into fixing the problem. I want to be one of those people who raises the voices of those who need it. Especially now that so many people seem so happy to distort the truth, I feel like it’s even more important than it used to be.”

Jorden nodded while Lara beamed.

“That’s really good work.” Kara commented.

“Hopefully people will be convinced.” Jorden said, a bit darkly. “All the coverage Michigan’s gotten still hasn’t helped Flint.”

“They are working to replace the pipes.” Clark said. “It’s not gonna happen as soon as it should, but it is happening. With the wigged-Cheeto in office doing something every week that gets people talking, people get distracted.”

Jorden rolled his eyes, nodding.

“How in the hell people thought putting a toddler in charge of the country was a good idea, still confounds me.” he said, obviously having this type of conversation often.

“Chris Evans has been tweeting awesomeness in his wake.” Kara pointed out. “It’s like he’s not just playing Captain America anymore; he actually embodies his values.”

“Careful.” Alex said, teasing. “Wouldn’t want to let Manuel find out about your crush on the Star-Spangled Man.”

“Pfft!” Kara brushed her off. “It’s one of those situations where, if the situation presented itself, we just have to make sure the other is available for a three-way.”

“Hold on,” Clark said, pretending to sound wounded. “You’re not gonna leave poor Bucky out in the cold, are you?”

Kara gasped.
“Oh no, you’re right! Wow, talk about the makings of a wild night.”

“Group sex with two genetically-enhanced super-soldiers?” Clark said. “It will certainly be a long night.”

“You say genetically enhanced,” Lara said. “And all I can think is Khan from Star Trek.”

“Aw,” Clark pouted. “But Doctor Bashir is so much nicer.”

The table erupted in laughter, annoying Conner, who had finished feeding, so Clark set to burping him before returning him to the stroller.

The evening continued in that way: they shared the same political views, liked a lot of the same genres, and generally just got to know each other.

Clark couldn’t be sure what he expected when he first came over to meet his biological parents, but certainly wouldn’t change a thing.

When it was time for Alfred to come pick him up, there more hugs and Clark’s heart felt full. He had exchanged phone numbers with them and promised to have them over at the manor. He wanted Bruce to meet them, but also invite his mother; she had seemed a little withdrawn when he’d told her he was going to meet them.

Lara and Jorden both really just wanted to thank her, because they found she’d done a great job of raising him. But Clark suspected that his mother needed to meet them, so as to know for herself that they didn’t see her as a bad guy in this situation.

***

When Bruce returned late Sunday night, the boys had already all gone to bed, but Clark stayed up after his shower writing stuff on his laptop. He looked up as Bruce walked into the room, pulling his suitcase behind him.

“Hey.” he greeted softly, smiling fondly.

“Hey.” Bruce returned as he stepped up to the side of the bed Clark was closest to, then leaned over to give him a kiss.

Clark grimaced and pulled back.

“You smell.”

Bruce winced.

“It’s Bill’s cigars, isn’t it?” he asked as he straightened up, sniffing at his suit jacket sleeve and grimacing.

Clark nodded, wrinkling his nose.

“I’ll go shower and throw everything in the hamper.” Bruce said, making a swift retreat.

Clark looked back to what he had been typing, trying to figure out a good place he wouldn’t mind pausing for the night, as he figured Bruce would want to go to sleep and not be kept up by monitor light or clacking keys.

Just as he finished up and put his laptop in the bedside drawer, he heard the beginnings of fussing
coming through the puppy monitor, and sighed, rolling his eyes as it turned into full-on crying.

“It’s because you know daddy’s home, isn’t it?” Clark muttered, getting up to go check on Conner.

Clark’s heart began to pound as the crying escalated, and he swore he could feel that something was wrong.

He picked up pace, racing into the nursery, hitting the lightswitch immediately.

There was a wasp on Conner’s hand, and he was screaming as much as his tiny lungs would allow.

Without thinking, Clark raced forward, grabbed the wasp in his hand, and quickly grabbed a wet wipe from the box on the changing table, as it was nearest, using it to completely envelop the wasp and squeezed until there could be no doubt that it was dead, throwing the whole thing against the wall in disgust. He then used another wipe to quickly wipe his hands and then picked up Conner to look him over.

His arm was slightly swollen at the site, but he didn’t seem to be having any severe reaction. Clark held him close, trying to soothe him, wincing as the cries were now right next to his ear, but also feeling a pang in his heart that he hadn’t been able to keep his son safe. He and Bruce had bought supplies for puppy first-aid, so he’d have to look up what to use for a puppy as young as Conner. First things first, however, needing to figure out how the wasp had gotten into the room.

Clark started with the window, the obvious culprit; they had left it open to get cool air at night for Conner.

Sure enough, there was a small tear in the screen near one of the corners. Clark cranked the window shut and headed for the bathroom, with the intention of moving the crib out to the bedroom later.

Bruce must’ve finished his shower just then, because he ran from the bathroom, naked and dripping, coming to a halt in front of Clark just as he was exiting the nursery.

“What happened?”

“There’s a hole in the screen.” Clark said, still trying to soothe Conner. “A wasp got in. I squished it in a wipe, it’s on the floor in there.” he cocked his head towards the nursery. “Could you toss it while I figure out what I need to use to help reduce the swelling?”

Bruce moved fast while Clark grabbed his phone and brought Conner to the bathroom.

A quick Google search found a twenty-four hour medical advice hotline, and Clark called them, explaining the situation.

They explained that any medicine they had for pups would have to halved for Conner, and to apply ice to the swelling. Clark should also monitor how things looked for the next hour, and if any new symptoms appeared or if the swelling got worse, to take him to the hospital immediately. Clark thanked them, and hung up.

Bruce was there, now more dry and wearing some pajama bottoms.

“Puppy Benadryl, only a few drops, half of a puppy Aspirin, and an ice pack.” Clark said quickly, and it was dawning on him how close he was to crying. “We should take him to the hospital if the swelling gets worse or anything else happens within the next hour.”

Bruce went to get the Benadryl and Aspirin as Clark held Conner closer to him. He wasn’t crying as
hard anymore, but was still distressed, and Clark began to sob with him.

“I’m sorry, Conner.” he kissed his cheeks and scented. “I’m sorry I didn’t see the hole in the screen. It’ll be better, soon.”

Bruce returned and Clark held Conner’s mouth open for him to be able to stick the eyedropper as close to Conner’s throat as possible without choking him.

“Let’s get him to the kitchen so we can apply the ice-pack.” Bruce said. “We can crush the Aspirin to make it easier for him to have after.”

Clark nodded, unable to speak for the moment, and stood to follow.

As they rode in the elevator to go down, Bruce held Clark, leaning in to scent Conner to help with soothing him.

After they had administered the Aspirin and applied an ice-pack (there were several malleable ones in the freezer for emergencies), they sat at the table, very close, both trying to keep Conner calm. He didn’t care much for the ice-pack, trying to fight it off, but Bruce held it to his arm while Clark held the rest of him.

“They said an hour, right?” Bruce said.

“Yeah.” Clark said, a little hoarse from crying (Bruce had already thrown out the pile of tissue he’d amassed).

“How about we go, now?” Bruce offered. “You can sit with him in the back seat, to keep an eye on him, and if nothing happens by the time we’re in town and the hour’s passed, then we can turn back and breathe a sigh of relief. It’d be safer than waiting here if something happens.”

Clark sighed and swallowed.

“Yeah, we’d better go.”

***

Clark was counting his blessings when the hour passed and the swelling on Conner’s arm had gone away. He and Bruce were sitting in the parking lot of a mini-mall just across from the hospital, and Conner was feeling much better, chewing a squishy ring Clark had brought along.

“Want some late-night takeout?” Bruce pointed to a Vietnamese place which was still open.

Clark shrugged.

“Sure.”

The two a.m. crowd was certainly an interesting bunch; there were some loud talkers who clearly just left the club, a twitchy-looking hobo, and a couple clearly in the middle of a break-up. The only two that didn’t seem too bizarre was an Asian-looking guy and his dark-skinned friend, whom the woman in charge of the counter seemed to prefer from the others in the restaurant.

After placing their order, Clark and Bruce sat at a table near them, and then another lady came into the place; she looked almost as dirty as the hobo, with dark circles under her eyes. She immediately struck Clark as just… wrong.

She walked straight up to the counter, and asked for a silver spoon. The worker offered a plastic
spoon instead, but the lady insisted on having silver. When the worker continued to refuse, the lady asked to use the bathroom. The worker said no and asked her to leave, but the lady just headed into the bathroom, anyway.

“What kind of fancy place does she think this is to ask for a silver spoon?” Clark whispered, confused.

“She just meant a metal spoon.” Bruce whispered back. “She needs it to heat her heroin.”

Clark felt the shock slowly wash over him. The worst he’d ever known anyone to get up to in Smallville had been weed.

“I’m really not in Kansas, anymore.” he mumbled.

Bruce smiled and put an arm around him, then leaned in and kissed his cheek.

Since they’d just ordered a large order of wonton soup with two spoons, they received their order fairly quickly and returned to the car, locking the doors and sitting in the backseat with Conner secured to his carrier, who was just starting to nod off.

Clark looked up partway through eating the soup and saw that the addict had left the restaurant and was walking around, looking at all the cars.

“Crap.”

“What?” Bruce asked, then followed Clark’s gaze and saw the lady for himself.

“Don’t worry.” Bruce said. “If she comes over, we’ll leave.”

At that moment, Clark saw the Asian guy and his friend leaving the restaurant. They made brief eye contact with the addict, and then booked it for their car, which was right behind Bruce’s.

Clark and Bruce looked through the rear window as the lady walked up to the Asian guy’s car and knocked on the driver’s window. Clark really wished he knew how to read lips or had super-hearing or something, because whatever the Asian guy was saying was confusing the addict and making the dark-skinned guy look like he was going to piss himself with laughter. After a bit, they pulled out of the space and drove away.

The lady turned and Clark groaned as she spotted them, then came up to knock at their window. Bruce lowered the window just a tiny bit, then slipped a fifty through the crack before closing it again, silently waving the woman away. She grinned as she clutched the bill in her hand, shouted ‘thank you,’ and ran off.

Clark and Bruce laughed at the absurdity of the situation as they finished their soup, then returned home.

Bruce helped Clark move the crib to be next to the bed, tucked Conner in, then he and Bruce snuggled together to go to sleep.
Chapter 44

Chapter Summary

Parenting is hard, sometimes... and some people are damn stupid...
Martha meets Lara

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Close your eyes

Have no fear

The monster’s gone

He’s on the run and your daddy’s here

— Beautiful boy by John Lennon

Clark groaned as his phone went off at six to nurse Conner. Bruce stirred, but stayed in bed while Clark nursed him. They both woke again at eight, again because Clark’s phone was reminding him to nurse, and Bruce helped him with changing his diaper. Then Clark and Bruce grudgingly woke again at ten to, one: feed Conner, two: go eat breakfast with the boys. Since it was still summer vacation, they didn’t need to get up as early as during the school year, but Bruce had implemented a rule that everyone should try waking no later than ten even on days they didn’t need to go anywhere, which was also to make sure no one went to bed at a ridiculous hour. He’d decided to implement that when, one morning, he had woken early to get ready for a meeting later that day, and discovered Tim was awake, playing on his computer.

“You’re up early.” Bruce had commented, noting the 5:45 time on his alarm clock.

“I didn’t go to sleep.” Tim confessed.

So, ten o’clock wake time it was.

“How late did you get in, dad?” Jason inquired, seeing how tired he and Clark were.

“In from New York, after midnight.” Bruce mumbled before taking a sip of coffee. “In after needing to take Conner downtown after getting stung by a wasp, two a.m.”

“He got stung?” Damian quickly asked, looking fearful for his little brother.

“He’s fine.” Clark said, who was in the middle of nursing him. “We gave him some medicine and put ice on his arm, but we wanted to be closer to the hospital just in case he got worse. After the swelling went down, we ate wonton soup, got chased by a junkie, and came home.”
Bruce shook his head.

“Those two guys got chased by the junkie. She just came to our car, after. I warded her off with a fifty dollar bill.”

“What’s a junkie?” Damian asked.

“Someone who does drugs that aren’t good for them almost all the time and can’t seem to stop.” Jason answered quickly after placing his hand on Tim’s mouth.

“Why would someone do that?” Damian asked, and everyone saw a good teaching moment emerging.

“Some people do it because they think it’s a cool thing to do.” Jason said, as Tim smacked his hand away. “Because they have friends who do it, or they might be at a party where other people are doing it and don’t want to be the one not doing the drugs. But then, they get hooked, because those kinds of drugs are addictive; they make you want them all the time.”

“Some people might start because they’re mad at their parents.” Clark added. “I knew some people in my highschool who smoked just because they knew their parents would hate it, and they thought their parents were too controlling, so it was a way to rebel. But the problem is, yeah, okay, the parents aren’t happy they started doing this, but then the person smoking or doing the drugs is the one stuck with this gross habit that’s going to ruin their health.”

“Depending on what drugs they get on,” Dick chimed in. “It can completely ruin their lives, not just their physical health. You get to this point where all you can think about is getting more drugs, and then you stop caring about anything else in your life.”

“So, like, when people smoke marijuana and then they want crack?” Damian asked, and everyone did a double-take.

“Damian,” Bruce asked gently. “Where did you hear these words?”

“On the last day of class, our teacher showed us a cartoon that had a bunch of cartoon characters trying to stop a boy from doing drugs.”

Clark groaned, face-palming.

“Clark?” Bruce asked.

“I know what cartoon he means, my parents had recorded it for me when I was little. It’s actually a fun cartoon, but, it goes on the misconception that marijuana is a gateway drug.”

“Ah.” Bruce nodded, then turned back to his son. “Damian, after we’re done eating, we’re going to watch a different show that talks about drugs, okay?”

“Ooh!” Tim grinned. “Adam?”

“Yes, Tim.” Bruce smiled at him.

“I’ve got the full series on a jump drive.” Tim declared. “I can bring it to the theatre room and plug it into the Playstation.”

“After breakfast.” Alfred reminded him as he poured more tea for Clark.

***
After the drug episode of Adam Ruins Everything was over, Bruce and Clark turned to Damian, encouraging him to ask questions.

“But, I thought smoking was bad for you?” he asked.

“Smoking is, because breathing in smoke isn’t good for your lungs.” Clark explained. “But there’s a lot of things they put in cigarettes that’s worse than just smoking marijuana by itself. If cigarettes were just the tobacco leaf, they wouldn’t be as bad, but they’re not.”

“But the thing is, Damian.” Bruce said. “Marijuana can actually be used to help a lot of people. It has things in it which can help people with pain, like arthritis, and there was even a case of a pup who had really bad seizures, and when his father was able to get him medical marijuana, he got better. It didn’t cure him, but it was better than the stuff the doctors were making him take. And you don’t have to smoke it: it can be made into pills, or oil to cook with, or even just breaking up to plant and cooking it into food.”

“It’s actually a great thing which could be used to make a lot of people better,” Clark explained. “But for too long people have been made to think it’s a bad thing and they don’t want to listen.”

“Wow.” Damian declared. “I wanna show my class that video.”

Bruce and Clark shared a look.

“The teacher you get this year might not want to confuse your class after your old one showed them that cartoon.” Clark said.

“They also might get in trouble if there are parents who disagree with it and then complain to the school.” Bruce added.

“I know something he could show his class.” Jason spoke up. “There’s a Pinky & the Brain episode called Inherit the Wheeze, that shows the dangers of smoking. The teacher would probably be fine with that one.”

“Great!” Bruce said. “How about we watch that, next?”

Tim retrieved the box set DVDs and started checking for the right disc.

***

Clark knew this was probably a cruel move, but he knew that part of it was his fault for getting mad at his mother in the first place. She had withdrawn, and didn’t seem too eager to talk about his birth parents at all. So after making her promise that she’d visit the following weekend, he arranged with his grandfather that he would be the one doing the driving, and then invited the Zorels, including Kara and Alex, to visit as well, but without telling his mother.

“I’m both liking and not liking your plan.” Bruce told him after he’d explained what was happening. He was sitting on the sofa next to Clark, in their usual position of Clark’s legs in his lap, his laptop on them, but Conner was having fun button-mashing the keyboard, so Bruce had a blank document to let him mash to his heart’s content.

“I feel the same way.” Clark replied. “It will either fix things or backfire drastically. But, it’s better than doing nothing. For some reason mom feels she’s somehow partly to blame for them not getting to raise me. She and dad just wanted a pup, and they used a legitimate agency. How could they know about any of it? The only ones to blame are Lara’s parents and the people who didn’t stop to ask what she wanted as opposed to what they wanted. Lara and Jorden are just happy I got to go to a
good home; not every pup put up for adoption is that lucky. Sure, they would have wanted to raise me themselves, but since they couldn’t, at least I wasn’t adopted by skinheads or worse.”

“What’s a skinhead?” asked Damian, who had just entered the lounge very quietly without meaning to.

Clark swallowed and Bruce’s eyes widened.

“That is a very complicated thing to explain,” Clark said slowly. “But, let’s just say, they’re not very nice people.”

“How about this, Damian,” Bruce urged him to approach the sofa and Clark pulled him up to sit on his thighs, but facing Bruce. “Let’s file that one under ‘things to be explained when you hit adolescence.’”

“Another one?” Damian whined.

“Sorry, pup.” Clark stroked his back. “It’s a pretty big one.”

“No, Conner,” Bruce held him back. “You can push the buttons, not climb on them.”

Conner grunted, squirming to get out of his father’s hold.

“Damian,” Clark tapped his shoulder. “Could you go get the soft mat and a few of his toys, please? I think he needs to roll around.”

“Okay.” Clark helped Damian to slide off carefully, and the pup went to the ottoman which contained Conner’s things.

Bruce balanced holding Conner and his laptop so that Clark could slide his legs off before taking Conner and sitting on the floor in front of the sofa.

Damian brought the mat and toys and Clark placed Conner on the mat.

“Damian, can you try waving a toy to get Conner to come to you?” Clark asked. “I wanna see how he moves.”

Damian held up a set of rubbery keys and shook them from the other end of the mat.

“Come on, Conner!” Damian encouraged, smiling. “Come on!”

Conner held up his head, smiling and cooing, then proceeded to drag himself over towards Damian.

Clark reached over and tried to encourage Conner into a crawling position, but he just went back to dragging until he reached Damian, who gave him the keys. Conner squeed and began to chew on them.

“He’ll get there.” Bruce said, smiling. “He’s still pretty fast.”

Clark grinned.

“Dad once told me of this time, when I was still dragging, that I was always trying to get into the bathroom. They didn’t want me to go in there, for obvious reasons. One time, he was just laying in bed to rest with me on a blanket on the floor next to the bed while mom was out. He said I looked at him, like I was trying to figure out if he was seeing me, and he squinted his eyes so they looked kinda closed, but he could still see me. He watched me turn around and drag myself across the
hardwood floor as quick as I could. He waited till I turned the corner, then jumped out of bed and cut me off, closing the bathroom door. Then I just stopped where I was and cried. He said I moved pretty fast.” Clark got a lump in his throat, as he often did when thinking about his father. He sniffed, but was smiling.

“It was like I knew I wasn’t allowed in there, so I was determined to do it, anyway.” He looked down and smiled at Conner. “I’m gonna have to keep my eye on you.”

Conner had dragged himself around to look at his mother, following the sound of his voice, and laid down to chew on the keys. Clark reached out and booped his nose, making him smile around the key in his mouth.

Clark urged him to let go of the key for a moment, and stuck his finger in his mouth, feeling along the gums. The puppy books seemed to agree that first teeth could start sprouting at four months, and Conner was five months, so Clark checked once or twice a day.

“Anything?” Bruce asked, watching.

“I’m not-- oh! I think I found one!” he passed his finger over it again, and there, right about mid-way on the bottom left, was a little hard spot, practically a speck. Clark smiled.

“That would explain why he’s been getting more fussy about feeding.” Clark said. “It’s closer to the back, so he needs something to chew that’ll actually reach-- ow! Not my finger, Conner.” Clark withdrew his finger and wiped the drool on his shirt while Conner put the rubbery key back in his mouth and proceeded to chew.

Bruce scooted off the couch to join them on the floor, placing his laptop aside and reaching down to pick up Conner, holding him up and smiling.

“You got a tooth coming in!” he grinned. “You’re gonna be having big-boy food, soon!”

Conner gurgled and smiled, happy that his daddy was happy, and his mommy seemed happy, too.

Damian crawled over to sit between Clark and Bruce, also grinning up at Conner.

“Soon, we’ll have Alfred introduce you to all of Damian’s old favourites.” Bruce continued to talk to Conner. “His top favourite was sweet potato. Do you think you’ll like sweet potato, Conner?”

“I grew up on a farm, he’d better like whatever we put in front of him.” Clark smirked.

Alfred had already talked with Clark about making all the baby-food from scratch by using actual cut-up vegetables in the food processor on puree; the same went for meats.

“You hear that, Conner? Mommy’s got no patience for fussiness.” Bruce smiled as he gently bounced Conner. “You learn to clean your plate.”

Conner made a high squeal, not understanding Bruce’s words, but enjoying the happy tone he used.

Clark was always happy to see Bruce interacting with Conner; it made him beam, he couldn’t help it. Smiling like an idiot, Clark shifted Damian in-between his legs, and leaned to lay his head in Bruce’s side, holding Damian to him.

“Oh, what’s this, now?” Bruce grinned, shifting Conner to one arm so that he could put the other around Clark.
“I’ve got the best Alpha.” Clark said simply.

“If you say so.” Bruce said as he stroked Clark’s arm.

“Hmm.” Clark snuggled closer. “I know so.”

***

Clark was pacing, Conner in his arms, who was crying up a storm.

The tooth he’d found was very quickly joined by a second, and Conner wasn’t liking them at all.

Bruce walked in the bedroom from the bathroom.

“I can’t find it.” he said. “I was sure we had Orajel.”

“He keeps spitting out the teething ring.” Clark said, trying again to stick it in Conner’s mouth, but he just shook his head and yelled.

Bruce looked at the alarm clock, wincing at the three a.m. time glaring back at him.

“There’s a few twenty-four hour pharmacies.” he suggested.

Clark sighed.

“Let’s just try to avoid the junkies.”

“Yeah, I don’t have cash on me.” Bruce said as he checked his wallet. “Just plastic, tonight.”

So, they got into the car, Conner in his secured carrier while Clark continued to try convincing him to chew the teething ring, and found an open Walgreens.

To their dismay, there were at least ten people in the store, most of whom had the tell-tale signs of being addicts.

Clark held Conner to him, keeping close to Bruce, while they tracked the aisle with the Orajel. Bruce grabbed a handful of the puppy sort, and they headed directly to the registers.

“Would you shut that pup up!?”

Clark and Bruce jumped back as one of the other patrons screamed at them.

“He’s teething.” Bruce said firmly, turning on his protective-Alpha face after getting over the shock of having been yelled at by a complete stranger. “We’re getting this,” he held up the Orajel. “So that it won’t hurt and he’ll stop crying.”

The stranger looked from one to the other, then narrowed his eyes at Clark, before turning back to Bruce.

“Next time, keep your breeder at home with the bastard!” the stranger barked. “No need to go spreading your misery to the rest of us just because you sired a brat!”

Under normal circumstances, Clark would have yelled something back, but as Bruce got into rebuttal with the stranger, he noticed out of the corner of his eye the cashier taking one of the tabloids from the front of her register, stare at it, then look back at them with wide eyes, looking back to the tabloid, and then back at Bruce. Her jaw dropped.
Clark realised the cover had Bruce’s picture on it. Some bull about a movie star whose heart he’d supposedly broken (he’d learned not to pay attention to those publications in high school), but the important thing was that the cashier recognised Bruce, while this idiot clearly didn’t. She picked up her phone, and Clark heard the pager sound off, though he couldn’t make out what she was saying over Conner screaming in one ear and Bruce and the stranger going at it in the other.

He back away from the yelling, smiling as he saw the manager go to the cash register. The cashier pointed at the tabloid, then at Bruce, and said some quick words to the manager, who walked right over and tapped the stranger on the shoulder.

“I’m going to have to ask you to leave, sir.”

“Me!? He’s the one who’s got a brat screaming and bothering people!”

“Puppies can’t always be contained,” the manager looked Bruce up and down and spotted the Orajel. “Especially when they’re having a toothache. You, on the other hand, as an adult, could have decided not to yell at this poor family who are probably stressed enough with their crying pup.”

“I’ve been coming here for years! You’re gonna turn me out over this!?”

“I am pointedly explaining that someone who I know for a fact works night security at the Wayne Enterprises building should know better than to yell at his boss.”

The man sputtered, then the colour drained from his cheeks and turned back to look at Bruce, really look at him properly.

“It’s the five o’clock shadow, isn’t it?” Bruce turned to Clark for confirmation.

“Hon, it’s grown into three-day shadow.” Clark tried not to smile, but wasn’t fooling anyone. “I think anyone who works at your building is also probably used to seeing you in a three-piece suit, not flannel pajamas and a t-shirt.”

The man dropped his basket of items and ran from the store.

“Our sincerest apologies, Mr. Wayne.” The manager offered.

“No need.” Bruce told him. “You and your cashier did some quick thinking. I would like to be sure, however, that in the case of anyone being wrongfully berated because of something like a crying pup, that you would help them, as well?”

“I’ve got three, myself, Mr. Wayne, I know what it’s like.” the manager smiled.

Bruce nodded and Clark followed as he strode to the cash register like he owned the place (which, if it wasn’t part of the Walton’s chain, he might’ve), and placed the handful of Orajel onto the counter.

The cashier looked to her manager, and turned back to Bruce.

“He says it’s on the house.” she said in a small voice.

“Save that for someone who actually needs it.” Bruce told her firmly before pulling out his debit card. “I have the money, I don’t need a handout.”

She scanned the items, bagged them, and ran his card. While this happened, Clark saw out of the corner of his eye that the other people in the store, junkies and all, were all at the head of the aisles, and had clearly been listening to the proceedings.
When they got back to the car, Bruce slid in next to Clark and held him while he applied the Orajel. When he finished, Bruce kissed the back of his neck.

“Are you okay?”

“Just a little shook.” Clark said, leaning back against Bruce. “I think that's kind of poetic justice, though. Like, anytime anyone is being shitty to someone else for no reason, their boss should find out. It might make them think twice if there's a possibility they could be in trouble at work.” Clark smiled. “One of the benefits of living in a small town, actually. One of the guys at school who was really crappy to me? He tried to get a job at Pete’s dad’s garage. Pete saw him waiting to be interviewed, so he went to his dad and was like ‘this guy treats Clark like crap.’ And his dad asked ‘what did he do?’ And earlier that week, he had put a bunch of unwrapped condoms in my locker, right? So one of the interview questions was something like ‘if an Omega came in needing help with their car, what would you do?’ and the guy tried to sound like he would be totally professional. So then Pete’s dad was like, ‘so you wouldn’t leave unwrapped condoms in their glove-compartment?’” Bruce snorted and started laughing, causing Clark to start laughing through the rest of his story. “And-- and Pete was watching-- through the office window-- that opened onto the rest of the garage… and said the guy went pale and then started coughing out of nowhere, like he’d choked on something… Pete’s dad got him some water and when he was better he told him to get out.” Clark erupted into a full-belly laugh along with Bruce. Conner grumbled and whined from the noise as he chewed on his teething ring, but he wasn’t crying anymore.

Clark sighed, still chuckling.

“I’m tired.”

“Me, too.” Bruce said. “Let’s go home.”

***

“Did Conner get stung by another wasp?” Tim asked at breakfast.

“No, just teething.” Clark mumbled, while Bruce looked like he was going to face-plant into his pancakes. “And we were out of Orajel.”

Damian shifted in his seat, looking uncomfortable.

“Was I this much trouble, father?” he asked meekly.

Bruce’s expression immediately softened and he turned his chair, patting his lap for Damian to come to him, then held him close.

“You definitely had your set of challenges.” Bruce said as he stroked his hair. “But I wouldn’t trade any of it for one second. I love you, Damian. Being a parent just means that sometimes you lose some sleep, but that’s what weekends are for.”

Damian smiled and nuzzled his father some more, then returned to eating his breakfast. When Bruce turned back to his plate, Clark took his hand, and they shared a fond smile.

***

Clark was working with Alfred in the kitchen to make sure everything would be ready for when the families arrived, but Alfred ended up having to chase him out because Clark’s nerves over making sure everything was just right were making them bump into each other a lot more than should have been happening.
The Zorels arrived, first, and Clark happily introduced them to the boys. Bruce was running late from a board meeting, but was already en route.

“So, uh, I kinda have something to tell you?” Clark said nervously as they sat in the lounge.

“What is it?” Lara asked, concerned.

“Mom doesn’t know you’re here.”

Lara and Jorden both looked somewhat disappointed.

“I know, I should’ve been up front about it.” Clark said quickly. “But she might not have come. She feels partially responsible for you not being able to raise me, and doesn’t like it when I talk about you.”

“It’s not her fault.” Lara said, shocked.

“I know, and I know you never blamed her or dad, but she doesn’t get it. I figured hearing it from you would convince her.”

Jorden lay his hand on Lara’s shoulder and she reached back to take it.

“Alright.” she said. “I’ll see what I can do.”

They sat in the lounge just talking for a while, getting to know everyone. When Bruce arrived, Clark was both excited and relieved; excited to introduce his biological family to Bruce, and also relieved that Bruce was there before his mother.

Alfred, ever the fore-thinker, warned Clark when his mother arrived before opening the door to her.

Clark felt his heart pounding, his throat swelling, right to the moment his mother crossed the threshold of the lounge, his grandfather behind her. She halted just a few steps inside the room and stared.

Clark stood, and Lara and Jorden followed. They walked up to Martha and Clark could see how pale she’d gotten from the reveal of the extra guests.

Before Clark could even begin to think of what to say, any rehearsed scripts out the window, Lara stepped forward and pulled Martha into a hug.

“Thank you.” she said simply, and Martha began to cry, holding on tight.

After a bit, they all led Martha to one of the couches, where Clark sat on one side of her, William on the other, and just held her, while Lara sat in front of her on an armchair Jorden pushed forward and held Martha’s hand.

“You love him.” Lara said when Martha’s sobs had lessened. “That’s all I could have asked for, was that he be in a loving family. Martha, you needed a pup and my son needed a family, since my parents denied him from me. I couldn’t have asked for anything better.”

Lara’s face crumpled and silent tears tracked down her face as she continued, her voice tight as she held back sobs.

“My parents used to torment me about him, saying he had probably ended up in one of those terrible foster homes with too many pups that the care-givers don’t care about since they aren’t theirs, that since I had been so careless in creating him that my punishment would be that he be denied a loving
family. Martha, when Clark told me about you and your husband, you have no idea how relieved I was.” she whimpered as she stopped, then sniffed before continuing. “You are exactly what I prayed for to take care of my puppy, because I knew the likelihood that I’d find him was almost non-existent.”

William and Clark shifted so that Lara could come join them on the sofa, the two women embracing as they cried.

Alfred produced a box of tissues for them before retreating to the kitchen.

***

Later that evening, after everyone had eaten, Clark, Kara, and Alex were sitting around one of the end-tables in the lounge, moved for their convenience with three armchairs around it. Everyone else was watching a movie in the theatre room.

“Going in-person would probably be best.” Clark said, even as the thought made him anxious beyond belief.

“We could write up a script of sorts.” Alex offered. “Even if you don’t get everything word-for-word, it would help you remember most of the things you want to say to them.”

“The hard part is going to be getting them to listen in the first place.” Kara said.

“I know how to get them to listen.” Clark said. “But I hate it.”

Alex and Kara looked up at him, waiting.

“I haven’t legally gotten my name changed, yet.” Clark prefaced. “It says Kent-Luthor on all my IDs, including my passport. I can introduce myself as Lex’s widow, and they’ll probably be pleased as punch to invite me in.”

Alex and Kara nodded.

“Yep.” Alex agreed. “They’ll probably be chomping at the bit to talk to you, then.”

“When do you get to change your name?” Kara asked.

“Waiting on stupid Powers to agree to give me money.” Clark grumbled.

The three looked up as both Martha and Lara walked up to them.

“Busy bees?” Martha asked, her hands behind her back, and Clark swallowed as he recognised her ‘I-know-you’re-up-to-something-and-you- will -tell-me-so-help-me-God’ look.

Kara and Alex felt an equal apprehension as Lara was sporting a similar look, her arms crossed and a much-too-sweet smile on her face.

Clark decided in that moment that it didn’t matter who you were or how old you were, your mom was tougher than you.

“We’re going to tell your parents what they did was wrong?” Kara smiled awkwardly.

Lara sighed.

“You honestly think you can convince them after all this time?” she said.
“We thought if I told them what I went through,” Clark said slowly. “Seeing as they had wanted you to be Lionel’s second mate, if I explained to them what kind of Alpha he was, and what I went through being mated to Lex, maybe they would understand that what they wanted for you wouldn’t have been a good life. They looked on from where they were standing and thought there could be nothing better than for you to have that life, except that they didn’t realise what that life actually entails. I thought I’d give them an insider’s view.”

“We don’t expect they’ll be convinced.” Alex explained. “But basically show that they lost in almost every way. You ended up mating the Alpha you wanted, Clark got a loving family, the only part they would have approved of was that he got into the Luthor family, and that was the part that ended up being a living hell, but then he escaped that. The one part of his life they would have been overjoyed with was the one that was terrible, and he got away.”

Lara and Martha both sighed.

“You get one shot.” Lara told them. “And whether it works or not, stay away. But I’m pretty sure it won’t be until they’re in front of the judgement seat and they’re asked why they mistreated their own flesh and blood that they’ll have any inkling that what they did was wrong. As far as they’re concerned, I brought it upon myself, because that’s what helps them sleep at night.”

Chapter End Notes

As you can probably tell, even though she's happy Clark got a good home and everything, Lara is bitter at her parents. She does everything she can not to let it affect her relationships with others, but she is bitter. Sometimes, it doesn't matter how much you want to move on, some hurts are too much to let go of.

So... our landlords have been trying to sell the house, and we knew it was eventually going to mean we'd have to leave, but now we have an actual date: March 1st, 2018

I may fall behind in my writing as I try to clean and organise our cramped apartment. Positive vibes would be much appreciated...
Chapter 45

Chapter Summary

Clark tries out a toy.
Barry and Clark are rapidly becoming BFFs, and rope Bruce into playing a video game. After, however, Clark thinks he can finally move onto the next step in being sexual with Bruce.

Chapter Notes

This is maybe half a page shorter than my usual ten, but the next part started getting longer and I realised I could cut it for another chapter and put this up as is.

Again, apologies for slow updates, but packing is draining (the good news is my landlady extended the move-out date to the end of March instead of the 1st). However, a plot bunny recently wrestled me into writing a cute fic, inspired by Neutralfan's fic of the Avengers playing Five Nights At Freddy's, so I started one of them playing Bendy and the Ink Machine; chapter one of that has been published. Both games appear in this chapter, as well.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It's not dirty with you
It's not scary with you
It's a breath of life
A communion hearts
The sunshine to heal my wounds
— Loving you by Clark Kent

Clark felt nervous and aroused as he beheld the silicone toy. Bruce was at the office, and the only pup home was Conner, currently napping in his crib; Alfred was getting groceries but would return in a couple of hours.

The dildo was state-of-the-art with multiple vibrating and pulsing settings, as well as an inflatable knot, all done through remote control, laid aside at the moment.

At Barry's strong recommendation, he’d also ordered some cumlube from Bad Dragon, and had a bottle at the ready.

Clark got up and laid down a large towel on the bed, then propped up the pillows to lean back
against. He stripped down, sat on the towel, and started by taking hold of his cock. Even though he
knew it was ridiculous, he got a sudden image in his mind of Lex showing up in the room, smiling.

Clark let go, and pulled up his laptop. Barry had managed to steer him towards some less cringy
videos, telling him about how just watching for a little bit and then having the noise in the
background would be a great distractor to keep bad thoughts away while trying to get off.

He pulled up one of his favourites, which showed an Alpha who looked a little similar to Bruce,
tenderly pleasing his Omega partner. There was no talking in this video; although Clark like talking
with Bruce during sex, he found that dirty talk in porn videos was eighty-percent of the time
degrading towards whoever was on the receiving end.

He resumed stroking himself as the Alpha in the video sucked off his partner. When the Alpha
started spreading the Omega’s slick around to make sure he was ready for penetration, Clark took a
small amount of lube and started rubbing it on his entrance. Even though he didn’t need it, it did feel
nice. It was rather viscous and Clark brought his hand back to his cock, moaning at the feel of the
lube as his hand glided more easily along his length. Definitely a good purchase.

He jumped at the feeling that was almost electric, unused to it. He trailed the tip of the toy all along
his cleft before pushing just the tip inside, moaning at the sensation as he did so.

He turned the vibration off for a moment, and pushed the whole toy inside himself without pause,
halting only at the base.

Clark turned to look at the video as he got used to the feeling of being filled with something bigger
than fingers, clenching and unclenching around it. The Omega was riding the Alpha, now.

Clark carefully sat in such a way that the toy would stay in and started playing with the settings.

For a little while, he just had the vibration up to its highest setting and tried to watch the video, but he
couldn’t keep his eyes open, leaning his head back as moaned from the feel of the vibrations hitting
the most intimate parts of himself.

He started shifted his hips and stroking his cock; the toy would slide out a little, and he would sit
back on it, but that wasn’t enough.

Adjusting himself, he took hold of the base with his other hand and started pushing and pulling it
from his passage. He bit his lip as he whimpered, getting so close so fast, and cried out as he came,
sitting back onto the toy, and then quickly pushed the button on the remote for the knot, his cry
extending into a long moan as he felt it lock inside himself.

The video was over, but he didn’t notice or care. His eyes were closed as he felt his orgasm linger on
the waves of the vibrations, gently holding his softening cock.

He felt himself start to get sleepy, so he turned off the vibrations, but left the toy inside as he fell
asleep.

The knot part of the toy must have had a timer, because when Clark woke up a little later, it had
deflated.

He washed his hands, carefully cleaned the toy and remote, then put them away in his underwear.
drawer. Then, he checked under the towel he’d sat on to be sure there was no mess on the bed, and chucked the towel into the hamper. Conner was still sleeping, and it would be another half-hour before he needed to nurse, so Clark took a shower and finished in plenty.

When he and Bruce got into bed that night, Bruce didn’t say anything but he smiled at Clark while pointedly sniffing the sheets. He and Clark made out a little before falling asleep.

***

“Okay, run it by me one more time?” Bruce asked. Barry had come to visit with Clark, the two of them becoming closer friends every day, and they decided to make a sort of double-date-at-home by having Len over. Then, both Omegas had the idea of getting Bruce to play Five Nights At Freddy’s, since he still didn’t understand what was so terrible about animal characters at a pizza restaurant. Jason had gladly helped them set up the laptop to be connected to the wide-screen TV in the theatre room with a wireless mouse and keyboard on a small table in front of the front row of seats. Then, they turned out the lights. Jason and Dick were watching Tim, Damian, Conner, and the twins in the lounge with a few board games; Bart was at the Queens’ to be with Roy.

“Wait until the phone call finishes,” Clark explained. “But make sure that when it hits one a.m. that you check Pirate Cove just the once to stop Foxy from coming to your door.”

“And if Golden Freddy shows up,” Barry added. “Quickly bring the camera up to make him disappear.”

“I thought he only shows up if the poster appears?” Clark frowned, remembering playthroughs he had watched.

Barry shook his head.

“Some people figured out that on night one, as long as you keep the left door closed against Foxy and once in a while check your right door for Chica, you can sit through without doing much of anything. When Scott caught wind of that, he patched it that if you go inactive for too long, Golden Freddy appears in your office.”

“Dammit.” Clark said.

“Are you gonna make Len take a turn after me?” Bruce asked.

Len chuckled.

“Barry already made me play all five of those things. I don’t get why he plays them, they just scare the crap out of him, and then I have to check the closet for Foxy to make him feel better.”

“I know Foxy’s not in our closet.” Barry rolled his eyes. “But thank you for the plushies.”

“He got you the plushies?” Clark grinned.

“I’ve got the core four, Golden Freddy, Mangle, Springtrap, and a Pop figure of Puppy.” Barry listed off. “I also took a real Jack-In-The-Box, spray-painted it to have the colour scheme of Puppet’s box, and replaced the clown inside with a little Puppet I made of similar materials.”

“That is cute.” Clark said. He wasn’t much one for plushies, but he could appreciate others’ like of them.

“See? Cute plushies!” Bruce said. “How is any of this scary?”
“Just start the game.” Clark said.

Bruce clicked the icon and the game started up, quiet, ominous music with static and the dark image of Freddy in the shadows appeared.

“Okay, that does look spooky.” Bruce agreed.

“Click on New Game.” Clark instructed.

Bruce got through the first two nights unscathed, which Clark found both miraculous and unfair. Bruce was at five a.m. on night three when Foxy got him.

“How!?” Bruce asked. “I was right there to close the door!”

“It’s because you went looking for him in the hallway.” Barry explained. “Foxy runs straight to your door, no interlude, unlike the other three. You can stop him when you see him in the hall, but it’s safer that if you see he’s getting ready to sprint, that you get ready to close the door immediately. You see he’s left his space, you put down the camera, you close the door.”

“Damn fox.” Bruce muttered. Clark noticed he wasn’t getting scared, so much as frustrated, because he had been doing so well and then got railroaded. “I’ll give the game this, it does have a spooky atmosphere. Whoa, wait, did those posters change?”

“Yeah, they do that.” Barry said.

“Five pups--”

“Don’t stop to read them.” Len interrupted. “Foxy’ll get you again.”

“I’ll bring them up and read them out.” Clark said, searching on his phone.

“What in the hell?” Bruce said after Clark finished reading the articles. “Are the pups inside the suits?”

“That’s the going theory.” Barry explained. “You find out more with the other games.”

“I almost feel like telling Tim he can’t play them anymore, but I don’t know how I’d enforce it.” Bruce said.

“Just make sure Damian doesn’t get to play until he’s at least Tim’s age.” Len said. “He’ll be sleeping in your bed for a long time afterward.”

“Luckily, he has two older brothers and a grandfather figure which are able to delegate guarding against nightmares.” Clark said. “Well, at least until Dick moves out.”

“What about Tim?” Barry asked.

“He’s not old enough for Damian to feel like he can actually protect him from anything.” Bruce explained. “He tried, once, when I was out of town and Dick was with Barbara, but only Alfred or Jason would do, and Jason had banged up his wrist trying out Dick’s motorcycle, so Alfred had taken him to get patched up. At twelve, Tim was legally old enough to watch over him, but couldn’t get him to calm down in the slightest. Ended up having to phone me.”

Bruce managed to get night three on his second try, but had more trouble with nights four and five. When he did finally get them, however, he let out a victorious ‘Ha!’ and leaned back in his chair.
“Okay, I get it, now.” Bruce said. “Can’t say I’m scared, exactly, but I do get why so many people would be.”

“Hey, Clark,” Barry turned to him with a grin. “Do you like old cartoons? Like, really old cartoons?”

Clark frowned, intrigued.

“Yeah? Like old Mickey Mouse stuff?”

“Nah, I mean more like the OG Betty Boop.”

Len groaned and Clark hitched an eyebrow, smiling.

Barry grinned and pulled the table closer so he could log out of Clark’s Steam account and log into his, instead.

“Bendy and the Ink Machine?” Clark asked.

“It’s not great gameplay, but it is interesting. Here, you play.” he pushed the table to Clark. “Just remember that in chapter one, as creepy as it might get, you can’t die. There’s a couple of little startle moments, but only one real jumpscare near the end, and you can’t avoid it. Just remember, though, that you can’t die.”

Clark took a deep breath and started the game.

Even armed with the knowledge that he couldn’t actually die, he couldn’t help getting a feeling of dread as he made his way around the area.

“This is easy to get lost in.” Clark observed.

“Yeah, the downside to the design.” Barry said, leaning back with his hand on his rounded belly, idly rubbing. “It looks so similar everywhere with the lines and everything that it kinda blurs together.”

“Okay, why would I want to start this machine?” Clark whined slightly after having found the six items he needed as he walked towards the main power switch. “This seems like a terrible idea. I feel like I should just run for the exit and never come back.”

“Unfortunately, you don’t get that option.” Barry said, smiling as Len reached from behind him to kiss his hair and rub his belly in turn.

Barry took pity on Clark and warned him about the incoming jumpscare as Clark returned towards the now partially-boarded room for the Ink Machine. The warning didn’t stop Clark from jolting as a horrific ink creature showed itself from behind the boards, trying to reach for him.

“Okay, just run for the exit.” Barry told him.

“Oh, now I can leave?” Clark said, edging on panic, but, just a few feet from the door, the character fell through a shaft in the floor into a different room. He traversed through waist-high ink and eventually made his way to a room with coffins, candles, and an inky pentagram before the character blacked out.

“What the hell?” Clark said, leaning towards Bruce as the credits scrolled. Bruce put an arm around him and kissed his hair.
“Here.” Barry said, carefully leaning to tug the table and closing the game before heading to YouTube. “MatPat explains it.”

With Bruce holding him, Clark started feeling better as he watched the Game Theory video, truly interested in learning about the old Fleischer cartoons and his rivalry with Walt Disney.

“How do you play these games?” Bruce asked. “I admit, the story is interesting, but if it scares you, just… why?”

“I’ve never actually finished Five Nights At Freddy’s.” Clark admitted. “Got to night three of the first game last month, now I’m on a long break.”

“It took me a couple of years just to finish the first two games.” Barry said. “Kept having to take long breaks. Still haven’t touched the third one. I’m trying to work myself up to it, because it has a good ending and a bad ending and I want to do the good ending first go, but you have to make sure you get every step right.”

“Mommy!” Don ran in, tears running down his face, his sister and Jason hot on his heels. “Dawn’s cheating!”

“Did not!” Dawn shouted at him. “Dick said it wasn’t cheating!”

“Both of you, shush.” Barry said calmly but firmly, gesturing with his finger. “Don,” he pointed to his son. “Take a deep breath, and tell me what happened. Dawn,” he turned to his daughter. “You’ll get your turn.”

Turned out, they had been playing a game where you had to build paths with cards with lines on them to get around the board but without falling off, and could likewise lay them in such a way that your opponents would get knocked off. Dawn had successfully sent Don’s piece off the board, and he hadn’t liked it.

“Don,” Barry said, urging his son to come up to him so he could wipe his face with some tissue and hold his hand. “I know daddy’s had to explain this to you, before. Just because you’re losing the game doesn’t mean the other people are cheating. Sometimes you win, and sometimes you lose. I know you don’t like losing, but it’s not fun for people if you get upset every time. If you can’t learn to just have fun playing the game, then no one’s gonna want to play with you.”

Don’s face crumpled as fresh tears ran down his face. Barry brought him closer for a hug and stroked his hair as Len came to sit beside him and drew Dawn in to make it a group hug.

“We love both of you.” Len said. “And we know that sometimes living with people every day means you sometimes lose your patience with them. But there are some things you have to learn to let go in life. There are some things that just aren’t worth getting mad about. A game is just something you do together to have fun. You don’t have to always win. Just enjoy playing.”

It was clear the twins were tired as they had been visiting for a few hours, so Len and Barry opted to leave for the evening.

“We should try doing a Saturday at the park.” Clark told Barry as they buckled up the twins.

“That’d be great!” Barry said, grinning. “I’m on mat-leave, so it’d be great for me to have something to do outside the house.”

“Instead of obsessively cleaning everything.” Len smirked. “Did the kitchen three times, last week. I counted.”
“We use the kitchen every day.” Barry said. “It gets messy.”

“Three times in one evening?” Len teased. “After supper when the dishes were already in the dishwasher?”

Barry opened his mouth to protest, then closed it again, realising Len was right.

Len chuckled and drew Barry in for a sweet kiss.

“I love you, puppy.” he whispered.

“Love you, Daddy.” Barry whispered back.

Clark felt the love radiating from a few feet away and lay his head on Bruce’s shoulder, who responded by putting his arm around Clark’s waist.

“Have a safe drive.” Bruce bid them as they got into the car, windows down as the evening air was pleasant.

“Thanks for having us.” Barry smiled from the passenger seat and Clark waved. The car revved into life, and took off down the pathway.

Clark nuzzled into Bruce’s neck.

“I can has cuddles?”

“Only if your grammar improves.” Bruce teased, but embraced him regardless.

They bid the boys good night, tucking Damian in, and then Clark nursed Conner in bed while leaning against Bruce, sitting between his open legs.

After laying Conner down in his crib, Clark scented Bruce and started planting little kisses on his throat. Though Clark had been getting use out of the toy he’d bought, they hadn’t been intimate in a little while, and Clark was feeling bold.

Bruce stopped him by taking his face in his hands, looking him in the eye.

“What do you want tonight to be like?” he whispered.

“I think I might want to try riding you.” Clark whispered, his heart jackhammering as soon as he said it. “But I need you to talk to me, keep me going through it.”

Bruce kissed him on the mouth.

“I can do that.”

They started on their sides, an unhurried mix of kisses and caresses. As always, Bruce paid tender attention to every inch of Clark’s face and neck, waiting for him to move lower before doing the same.

Bruce gave each teat a thorough suckle, getting a bit of milk for his trouble.

“Taste so good, Clark.” Bruce told him huskily just before kissing him.

Clark’s abdomen was less loose, though still with a sort of plumpness which one might confuse for the beginnings of a brand-new pregnancy if they didn’t know better. He teasingly blew a raspberry
against it, making Clark laugh, before kissing his way down further.

“Wanna taste more of you.” Bruce growled softly.

Clark smiled as he turned onto his back and let his legs fall open on either side. He lifted his hips slightly and Bruce placed a pillow, then rested on it as Bruce began placing tender kisses on his inner thighs.

So far, this was familiar territory. Bruce sucked him for a bit while gently fingering him, then lifted him by the hips so he could eat him out. Normally, Bruce would either keep going until Clark came and Clark would then help him get off, or wait until he was warmed up before Clark would in some way help Bruce get off while Bruce continued to get him off at the same time.

He still needed to be able to look down and see Bruce’s dark head of hair, however. Almost every fanfic he’d read had the Omega presenting for their mate (or the bottom Alpha presenting for the top), and it was written in such a romantic, sexy way that he fantasized being able to do that with Bruce, one day. It was the position his hindbrain said he should be using; but everything else in his body fought against it, because Lex had used it. Lex had shown his ownership and dominance over every facet of Clark’s life, and using the presenting position had been one of those ways, because presenting was a show of submission to one’s Alpha. Where such submission was supposed to be a show of trust, a way of quietly saying ‘I give myself to you,’ Lex had taken.

Someday… Clark fervently wished as he whined from Bruce’s fingers working their magic within him. Someday, he would cross that barrier. But tonight, he had another to cross; that of letting Bruce penetrate him fully.

“Listen to you.” Bruce teased as he rubbed along Clark’s prostate, earning more whining, before taking him into his mouth again.

“Bruce…” Clark said with some difficulty, his jaw slack from the pleasure. “I wanna be on you.”

Bruce withdrew his fingers and let Clark’s member go softly, a thread of saliva joining for just a moment until it broke. Bruce climbed over Clark and kissed him deeply, their members pressing against one another for a moment before rolling over with Clark on top, straddling his waist.

“I’ve got condoms in the top drawer.” Bruce pointed to his nightstand. “Just in case.”

Clark smiled.

“Always prepared.”

Bruce smiled and shrugged.

Clark leant forward to kiss him, then rolled off him to go get the condoms. He tried not to act like he was well-aware of the view he was offering Bruce by crawling, and Bruce didn’t say anything as he admired it.

Clark smiled as he saw the label read ‘ribbed for Omega pleasure,’ and carefully detached one from the rest before knee-walking back to Bruce. He placed the condom aside and stretched out next to the Alpha and started kissing him as he took him in hand and began stroking him, making sure he was at full hardness, while Bruce reached up to hold his face in both hands.

Clark pulled back after a bit. He was still horny, still feeling very much cared for, but the anticipation was starting to make him anxious. Bruce picked up on it and kissed his forehead.
“Hey, take your time.” he told him. “I just want you to feel good.”

Clark let out a little sigh.

“I know.”

Clark got onto his knees and took the condom, again.

“Do you want me lying down or sitting up?” Bruce checked.

Clark bit his lip as he considered.

“Lying down for now?” he said, unsure.

“Okay.” Bruce told him, using one hand to stroke his thigh reassuringly.

Clark took a deep breath, pausing to remember the steps, as he hadn’t used one since he and Lana had been together, and she was usually the one who put them on him.

*Make sure it’s in the right direction, pinch the tip, roll gently.*

He giggled.

“What?” Bruce asked.

“Just remembering the wooden replicas they had in sex ed.” Clark said. “We were only about ten people in class that day because a bunch of the parents had written notes to excuse their teens from anything having to do with safe-sex practices.”

“How many of them ended up with themselves or their partners pregnant?” Bruce hitched an eyebrow.

Clark frowned as he thought.

“Only five in the whole grade that I know of, but one of them had apparently tried to get his girlfriend to use a condom, and she stealthed him.”

Bruce cringed.

“What is this new-fangled speak you youngins use?”

Clark laughed.

“It means, old man, she put on the condom where he could see, but then took it off before actually penetrating him, and he didn’t know until it was too late.”

“I’m an old man, now?” Bruce crossed his arms.

Clark grinned.

“Yes, a healthy, well-toned,” Clark ran a hand along his abs. “Sexy old man, who’s about to get a ride from a twenty-something.”

“Thirty-something, as of three months ago.” Bruce reminded him. “Or did you so soon forget the birthday blowjob I gave you at midnight?”

Clark stuck out his tongue.
With a sudden determination guiding him, Clark opened the condom, and rolled it down Bruce’s length. He felt his pulse quicken, something almost like panic about to hit, but then he turned and looked into Bruce’s eyes, and it was like Bruce had picked up on his hesitation. He reached out to stroke his thigh again, and looked at him with a soft smile.

Clark smiled back, swallowed, then moved to straddle Bruce, again, just above his cock. He looked back, trying to figure out his next move.

“Need me to hold you open?” Bruce offered.

Clark looked back at him and nodded.

Bruce reached forward, his crunches clearly paying off, and held Clark’s buttocks parted. Clark knelt upright, then reached back for Bruce’s cock and slowly began to sink down on it.

He shivered, struggling not to clench, and slowly sank down. He looked to Bruce, whose expression was torn between concentration and reacting to the pleasure of breaching into Clark’s heat.

Clark sat back, and Bruce let go, lying back and just focusing on being inside Clark. Clark was still shivering, the unmistakable feel of a real, hot cock inside him, but fuller than he remembered ever being stretched before.

Bruce took hold of Clark’s hands.

“You alright up there?”

Clark blinked, then smiled.

“Yeah, I’m good.”

He leaned forward until he could brace his arms on either side of Bruce’s shoulders, and began slowly rolling his hips, feeling Bruce slip in and out of him.

Bruce reached up to hold Clark’s face in his hands, the pulled him down for a kiss.

“You feel so good.” Bruce encouraged him. “Who’d have thought you gave birth only a few months ago? You’re so tight, Clark.”

Clark grinned.

“You feel good, too.” Clark told him. “My nice, big Alpha.” Clark punctuated this by adding a bit more strength into one of his down-strokes.

And Clark did feel good. He was with Bruce, his Alpha, even if they hadn’t bonded, yet. Bruce hadn’t forced him to this in any way. Bruce asked him what he wanted, and let him go at his own pace. Which Clark decided to pick up as he leaned in to kiss and suck at Bruce’s neck.

Bruce held him and kissed him back, their joined moans getting louder and faster.

“Clark--!” Bruce warned. “My knot, I gotta--”

Clark hesitated as Bruce’s meaning caught up with the pleasure-mush that his brain had become, and then quickly rolled over, landing next to Bruce as the Alpha removed the condom and jerked himself to finish, catching his come in his hand and rubbing it all over his crotch.

Clark was jerking himself, too, thoroughly enjoying the sight of Bruce panting in post-coital
exhaustion, come covering his cock.

Bruce glanced up.

“Do it, here.” he said hoarsely.

Clark got over just in time, and his seed was mingling with Bruce’s, making a big sticky mess on the Alpha’s crotch.

Bruce swirled the come around a bit, then started smearing it on Clark’s crotch, which made him erupt into laughter.

“You weirdo!” Clark declared, but Bruce was grinning.

“I guess this means we’ll have to shower.” the Alpha shrugged, his lip curled mischievously.

Clark flicked his nose and then rolled off the bed, Bruce right behind him as they went to clean up.

They didn’t do anything special for washing up, just made sure they wouldn’t be covered in semen, but when they finished, after drying himself, Bruce took a fresh towel and draped it on Clark’s shoulders before scooping him up, earning a yelp as Clark clutched at his shoulders.

Bruce smiled as he carried Clark back to the bedroom. It was a little more difficult than it had been in the early days of Clark’s pregnancy, but still manageable.

Bruce laid Clark down on the bed and then positioned himself over him, leaning in for a sweet kiss.

“Need anything?” Bruce asked him as he nuzzled his neck.

Clark thought about that. He’d been doing sexual things with Bruce for a while, now, but felt as though that final step of being penetrated by him was such a large chasm to jump. Now that he’d done it, though…

“I just need you to keep loving me.”

Bruce smiled softly and kissed Clark’s forehead.

“Always.”

Bruce settled on Clark, leaning his weight on his side so as not to leave Clark crushed under beefy Alpha, then reached back and covered the two of them with the blanket.

Chapter End Notes

What I wrote regarding Clark and Barry being both fascinated and yet scared of actually playing those video games is accurate to myself; I love the lore, but I’m pretty chicken.
Chapter 46

Chapter Summary

One problem down, but another one arises?
Bruce confesses something to Clark he's not proud of.

Chapter Notes

So, one thing looks like it gets resolved rather quickly, but it feeds into something else.

If it looks like we're nearing the end, it's because we are. Literally just one more hurdle to be taken care of, and then there won't be much left after that.

P.S.: I'm sick. Stuffed nose, sneezing, coughing. Ew.

_Because of you_

*I try my hardest just to forget everything*

_Because of you_

*I don't know how to let anyone else in *

_Because of you_

*I'm ashamed of my life *

_Because it's empty *

_Because of you *

*I am afraid *

— _Because of You_ by Kelly Clarkson

Bruce had hired someone to update the air conditioning so that they wouldn’t have to open the windows, avoiding further incidents of wasps. It was just in time, as it turned out that late August surprised them with a record heatwave.

One night, however, Clark woke sweating and uncomfortable in the August heat. He groaned as he kicked off the blankets, and Bruce was beside him, his sleep broken as well.

“The A/C break down?” Clark grunted as he rubbed his eyes.

Bruce looked to his alarm clock, and it was blank.
“Power’s out.” he grumbled.

Clark groaned in response as he forced himself to sit up.

“I’d better check on Conner.”

“I’ll get on the landline and call the power company.” Bruce said as he fetched a pair of boxers from a drawer; it was too warm for anything else. “I’ll turn on the generator, after. It’s not full power, won’t be able to turn on the air conditioning, but we can set up some fans to keep keep from going completely insane. I’ll help you move the crib out, too. The heat’s probably gonna bother him, so he’ll want to be near us.”

Bruce ran into Alfred in the downstairs hall, a dressing-gown over his pajamas and already on the phone with the power company.

“I understand, thank you.”

Alfred hung up and turned to Bruce.

“They’re unsure of what would have caused the interruption, but we’re not the only ones affected. They have crews attempting to find the source as we speak.”

Bruce yawned as he nodded.

“Thanks, Alfred. Help me with the generator?”

“Of course, sir.”

The Beta followed Bruce out to the backyard with a flashlight so he could see properly to get the generator going.

“If I might suggest, Master Bruce,” Alfred said as Bruce repeatedly tugged the line. “While Master Damian might be old enough to keep a stiff upper lip with the heat, it might not be such a good idea for Master Conner.”

Bruce grunted as he struggled to get the generator going, only responding when it finally roared to life.

“I was thinking that, too.” he shouted over the din of the generator. “I’ll tell Clark to get Conner ready and wake Tim and Damian. Could you wake Dick and Jason?”

“Right away, sir.”

Clark had stripped Conner down to his diaper and was trying to soothe him but he was clearly finding the heat very uncomfortable and didn’t seem to like the feel of the fan much, either.

“We’re going to a hotel.” Bruce told him. “I’m going to get Damian and Tim. Do you need help getting things packed up? I figure just a few days’ worth, at the most. They’ll probably have it fixed tomorrow, but I don’t want to take any chances for Conner in this heat.”

Clark looked up and smiled.

“I should be fine with packing. Thanks.”

Clark put Conner down pretty much in the middle of the bed so he wouldn’t easily fall off, and then went to grab his suitcase from the closet. He threw in three jeans and four t-shirts, as well as three
pairs of pyjama pants. Underwear and socks were next, toiletries, and then he checked to make sure Conner hadn’t moved before going to grab things from the nursery. Ten onesies for the suitcase; for the diaper bag, a mountain of diapers, a spare box of wipes, a fistful of receiving blankets, and a few toys. On top of everything, he put in his laptop, just in case.

“We’re going on an adventure, Conner.” Clark smiled as he sat beside his son, holding his hand as the pup continued to snuffle and cry. “I suppose being in this family means you’ll know luxury for a good part of your life. But, you know, when I was little, I think I only got to stay in a hotel maybe three times. Each time it was fun, because I would run around the place to learn the layout, try vending machine snacks; they’re not actually that great and way too expensive, but it seemed like a cool thing to do. But, hey, the most important part that you’re going to care about, is there’s air conditioning where we’re going.”

Clark looked up as Bruce walked in with Damian in his arms leaning on his shoulder, a duffel bag on the other shoulder, and cordless phone to his ear, now that the generator was offering partial power.

“Two suites and a room, yes, preferably all on the same floor. And could you put a crib in one of the suites? Thank you. We’ll be there in under two hours. Breakfast in the morning to be delivered around ten. Thank you very much. See you, soon.” he hung up and turned his attention to Clark.

“Jason’s getting Tim ready.” he put Damian down on the bed, and the pup immediately curled into a ball, sucking his thumb. “I’ll get my things together and then we can go down to the Lincoln.”

Clark nodded while Bruce took out his suitcase and started packing.

Smiling at Damian, still hanging onto sleep despite looking flushed and sporting a sheen of sweat, Clark reached over and smoothed his hair back from his forehead, earning a slight frown.

***

Everyone was feeling reluctant to get out of bed the next morning; after having escaped the sweltering heat that Wayne Manor had become, the five-star hotel beds were way too comfy to want to get out of. Luckily, as breakfast was delivered to the rooms, they didn’t have far to go.

Bruce answered the door when there was a second knock twenty minutes into their breakfast. After some hurried talk with the visitor, the Alpha returned to the table and asked for Clark to join him in the bathroom.

“What’s wrong?” Clark asked after Bruce had closed the door.

“This.” Bruce said simply. He was holding out a tabloid whose front page photo had the whole family at the desk of the hotel. The pups’ faces were blurred; Clark, Dick, Bruce, and Alfred’s faces were not. The headline read: BRUCE WAYNE’S SECRET MATE!?

“The hotel manager told me that they’re going through the security camera footage to find out who took the picture, but, if you’ve got five people in the lobby with their cellphones out and more than one are pointed in our general direction, it gets a little hard to pin down. You’re not named, but someone’s going to make the connection, soon. The easiest thing to do at this point is to address it head-on. You don’t have to say anything if you don’t want to, but I will be having a press release issued, and, as it involves you, I’d like your input. We might even have to talk to your mother and grandfather for any legalese regarding your inheritance from LexCorp.”

Clark closed his eyes and sighed heavily as he face-palmed.
“This is the one part I hate about being in upper class.” he grumbled.

“I know.” Bruce cupped his cheek. “I can schedule something with my PR people for this afternoon if it works for your family?”

Clark nodded.

“I’ll go call mom.”

***

Jason was accompanying Tim and Damian to the Natural History Museum while Dick and Barbara decided to try practise-parenting with Conner for the afternoon. Clark was a little on edge about having Conner out of his sight but not in the same building, but he barely had room to worry about that, due to a new problem.

What was supposed to be a laid-back talk regarding the press-release got upgraded to defcon one by the time they got to the Wayne Industries in the late afternoon, as a new headline had surfaced:

**WAYNE SWOOPS IN ON LUTHOR’S WIDOW???

“It gets worse further in.” Julie Madison, Wayne Enterprises PR guru and no-nonsense Beta commanded the room without trying. “There’s speculation on your pup’s true parentage, and hints that even you are not who you say you are, that your whole marriage to Lex was a sham.”

“It was.” Clark said sourly. “Just not for the reasons they think.”

“My first question: Mrs. Kent, Mr. Clark, would your efforts towards obtaining Clark’s inheritance be hindered if we directly address the abuse?”

Martha cleared her throat.

“I think it’s pretty safe to assume that these hints of Clark’s supposed false identity were fed by Powers, but I’d rather not reveal as much unless more comes forward.”

William’s Blackberry had dinged while Martha was talking and he checked it; whatever it was made him smile in a way that filled Clark with anticipation, but he waited until Martha was finished talking.

“We have some good news in that regard.” William said. “Tess Mercer, the head of the Daily Planet, has been sitting on the irrefutable proof that she is Lionel Luthor’s illegitimate daughter. One of her journalists was approached to print these stories about Clark, but, as soon as Tess saw them, refused them. She’s reached out to me and agreed that we have her full support on any statement we’d like to make.”

“Does that mean Chloe’s job is safe?” Clark asked.

“Completely secure. If any more is said about your being adopted, we can go to Tess about the whole story, including that Powers threatened Chloe’s job.”

“Which means that for now,” Julie said. “We stick to the simplified deceased mate, pregnant, support Alpha story. We mention that in the negotiations for your inheritance, a paternity test was already carried out; we explain the exact reasons for your being in the hotel, we leave it simple and to the point.”
An official statement was written up and perfectly tailored over the course of the next hour, and then e-mailed to Tess Mercer, who promised to have it in the evening edition and again first thing in the morning.

***

On the cover of the Gazette the next day:

**CLARK KENT-LUTHOR LIED ABOUT TRUE ORIGINS!**

It was time to pull out the big guns.

***

**DAILY PLANET EXCLUSIVE: LEX LUTHOR DOMESTIC ABUSE SCANDAL**

The Daily Planet has received exclusive details regarding the ten-year prison Alexander Luthor kept his husband in. Clark Kent kept his silence following his gradual recovery of being completely isolated from friends and family in the hopes of quickly gaining his rightful inheritance and rebuilding his life. It is very heavily believed that the powers that be at LexCorp have been purposefully dragging his name through the mud these past few days in an effort to prevent him from doing so. Since this slander has surfaced, Mr. Kent has seen no choice but to break the silence. See page 2A for more...

***

Alfred was at the door as soon as Clark returned from visiting with the Zorels.

“Master Clark, this letter arrived via courier this afternoon.”

Alfred handed over an official-looking white envelope with the LexCorp logo on it.

Bruce, who had dropped Clark off in the morning and picked him up after work, took over holding Conner so that Clark could read the letter.

Mr. Kent,

As it has come to our attention that certain persons have been intentionally acting against your lawful inheritance as the mate and husband of our late founder, we, the undersigned, have seen fit to issue a vote of suspension against them, and have included your first cheque. These will be issued to you monthly, and we would be more than happy to negotiate further if you find it inadequate.

Our sincerest regrets for this situation,

There was a list of signatures from the board of directors.
Clark felt an immediate bubbling mix of discomfort at the number of zeroes on the cheque (despite being technically wealthy for his entire adult life, he had never really looked at the figures), but also excitement because it was his. This felt like a final severance of any ties he might have had left of his old life.

“Clark?” Bruce asked, cutting through the haze.

Clark grinned and looked up.

“Looks like dinner’s on me?” he held out the cheque. Bruce laughed, Clark joining in, and then Conner squealed and gurgled.

***

Clark thought he must be crazy. These people would certainly think he was.

“We won’t be far.” Kara assured him.

Alex was in the backseat with Conner, Kara’s yellow beetle still had its engine running to combat the November chill. “We’ll just keep circling the block until we see you on the step.”

Clark sighed.

He could do this.

He’d already had the chance to practise his ‘marrying-into-money-isn’t-going-to-make-you-happy’ speech at his grandfather’s request to help his friend Jimmy patch things up with his mother. Martha had happily supplied her own observations which had led her to preferring a farmer over any riches her so-called peers could offer. This, combined with the fact that Jimmy’s mother could see that he was happy where he was at in spite of having to balance school and work, and she seemed to be willing to keep an open mind.

Clark could already tell this was not going to go down as easily, which was why he’d waited so long.

But it needed to be said. Even if nothing changed, it needed to be said.

He walked up the stone steps and pushed the button for the bell.

It was only a moment when he was greeted by a woman who looked maybe a bit younger than his grandfather, her hair obviously dyed blonde to combat the silver, in that short, wavy way which told him this woman probably slept with curlers in her hair.

“How can I help you?” she greeted, sounding as homegrown and sincere as the pastor’s wife on the Sunday picnics of his youth. Impossible to reconcile the mannerisms with the woman who had allowed her daughter’s pup to be taken from her and then to undergo forced surgery, only to scoff when it went wrong.

“Nara Lorvan?” Clark wanted to be sure.

“Yes?” she continued to smile.

“My name is Clark Kent. I was wondering if we might speak, along with your mate, if he’s available?”
“Of course.” she said cordially. “But we use the terms ‘husband’ and ‘wife,’ as we are lawfully wed in the sight of God.”

Clark nodded. *There it is.*

“My apologies.”

“Come in, Mr. Kent-Luthor.”

*Strike one.*

“You’ve been reading the papers, then.”

“Seigel! We have a visitor!” she called at the stairs as the passed them. “Yes. We follow all things regarding the Luthor family with great interest.” she led him to a sitting room which had so much lace trim on… *everything*, Clark tried very hard not to wrinkle his nose in disgust. “Please, sit down, Mr. Kent-Luthor.”

“Thank you.” he turned up the farmboy charm as much as he could without giving himself an aneurysm.

He noticed she didn’t both offering him anything, but didn’t really care, as he didn’t plan on staying long. It made him wonder whose side she was on, however, given that they had read the articles published about him.

“Hello, there! I’m Seigel.” A man looking decidedly older than his grandfather presented himself, and Clark stood to shake his hand, resisting the urge to wipe it off, after.

“Clark Kent.”

“Mr. Kent-Luthor said he wished to speak with us, dear.”

“Very well, though I wonder at why. We’re not very much in comparison to the proud line of Luthors.” he chuckled as he sat beside his wife on the… *settee?*

*In comparison? I think your values are very similar. And who owns a settee anymore?* Clark thought as he sat back in the chair.

“Well, it has come to my attention that, at one point, you had wished to align yourselves with the family.”

“Unfortunately, our daughter, God rest her soul, chose other paths.” Nara said firmly.

“Your daughter passed away?” Clark frowned.

“She might as well have.” Seigel nodded, and Clark felt a chill.

“I see.” Clark pinched the bridge of his nose before clearing his throat and continuing. “I don’t suppose the articles you read regarding me came from the Daily Planet, did they?”

“Oh, heavens, no.” Nara said as though it was the most ridiculous of notions. “Did you know they hired five queers in the last year? And they’re actually proud of it!”

“Well, as Lex Luthor’s widow, allow me to explain what being an Omega in the Luthor household is like.” he said with a sort of finality, pausing only a moment to see if they would stop him, but didn’t. Then the words poured forth like a flood.
“When Lex presented me to his father in an official gesture following his proposal, Lionel spoke about me but not to me for the majority of the evening, thinking Lex was crazy for marrying a farm boy. At first, Lex was actually quite sweet to me. And like a fly to the honey, I got stuck. I wasn’t allowed to go anywhere without him, and he eventually stopped taking me out altogether. I wasn’t even allowed to see my parents; I missed my father’s funeral. Lex started using liquor to make sure I would never say no to his advances, until I became so trapped in the cage he’d built in my head I stopped fighting. After Lex died and I found out I was pregnant, I was confused, because not once did I get pregnant in all the years I’d been with him. It turned out he was using contraceptive injectors without my knowledge; the only reason it failed this time was because of a bad batch.”

“I think perhaps you’d better leave.” Seigel’s voice was near a growl, and if it weren’t for the sudden desperation that Clark felt to make sure he had said his whole piece, he felt he might’ve cowered.

“I have one more thing to say, and then I’ll be gone. I’ll make it as fast as I can.”

Seigel and Nara stared, but remained silent. Clark thought Nara’s eyes might be filling with tears, but he pressed on.

“The papers you’ve read were right about one thing: I was adopted. But I didn’t learn it until last year. My biological parents’ names are Jorden and Lara Zorel.”

Seigel stood.

“Those names are not welcome in this house and neither are you.” Seigel’s face was an alarming shade of red. Clark steeled himself against the smell of angry Alpha, refusing to back down.

“Not finished.” Clark said darkly, and he picked up speed as he talked. “I’ve met them. They’re kind and loving people who help anyone who needs it. My mother, the woman who raised me, even gets along with them. You wished upon your daughter that I would be in a terrible living situation, but the people who raised me were the best any pup could ask for. The only time I was in a terrible living situation was by marrying into the family you would have sold your daughter to without a second thought because you think money is such a great thing. I grew up on a farm and it was a million times better than one day as Lex’s mate.”

“Get out before I call the police!” Seigel shouted, though it looked and sounded like it took every ounce of his strength to do so.

“I’m gone!” Clark shouted back. “But I needed to make sure you knew what kind of hell you were willing to condemn your daughter to, instead of the loving marriage she got from the man who would have willingly raised their pup alongside her if you hadn’t ripped me from her!”

Clark turned on his heels and left, not allowing himself to feel any regret when he heard Nara’s sobs, slamming the door as he went.

He ran past four houses before he saw Kara’s beetle and ran to the edge of the sidewalk to signal. He got into the back seat with Maggie and held Conner to him as he cried.

Kara drove around for a while, giving Clark the time to get it out of his system, before finding a Dairy Queen and pulling in.

“I know it’s cold out, but, how do Blizzards sound?”

“Sounds fucking amazing.” Clark said morosely.

Alex went in to get the ice cream and brought it back to the car. Clark was about halfway done
before he spoke again.

“They don’t want to be wrong. They’re so certain they did the right thing that before I even said I was their grandson, just by telling them what the Luthors were really like, they wanted me to leave. I managed to get it all out before I left, though.”

“That’s probably all we were ever gonna get, anyway.” Alex frowned. “At least they know you and aunt Lara found each other, which is something they would never have wanted, considering the steps they took.”

Conner started fussing, and Clark looked at the time on his phone; he was due for feeding in ten minutes. Clark put his Blizzard in a cup-holder, shed his coat, unbuttoned his shirt, and removed Conner from his car seat. He latched on almost immediately, making Clark sigh with relief.

***

Bruce listened patiently while Clark told him what happened. They were in bed, Bruce holding him close. Bruce hadn’t yet been told the full extent of what had happened to Lara, only that she’d had no choice in giving up her son, so Clark had had to explain from the beginning.

He held him close, running his fingers through his hair, squeezing tighter whenever it seemed like Clark might cry.

“They broke the law.” Bruce told him flatly, when Clark had finished.

“Statute of limitations has probably run out, nevermind proving it all.”

“It could probably be done.”

“They’re old.” Clark said. “Old with sick minds and sick souls, if they have them. I just wanted them to know that even though Lara didn’t get to raise me that we still had good lives in spite of their best efforts, and that the Luthors were horrible people.”

Bruce kissed his hair.

“Let me know if you change your mind.”

Clark frowned and looked up.

“You’ve never really let anything truly go, have you?”

Bruce smiled sadly.

“I hate knowing that people who really deserve it go unpunished. It’s led me to do things I’m not proud of.”

Clark frowned.

Bruce sighed and sat up.

“I almost killed the man who killed my parents.” Bruce explained.

Clark’s eyes widened in surprise.

“When I found out he was trading information about a cellmate in exchange for parole, I couldn’t let that stand. I took a gun to the courtroom. I had planned to get him while in the crowd of journalists,
but someone else got him, first. Someone hired by his former cellmate to prevent him from testifying."

Clark swallowed and sat up as well.

“At first, I was considering sending the man a bottle of wine or something.” Bruce looked disgusted with himself. “But then I found out just what kind of crap he was up to. His name is Carmine Falcone; we’re talking one of the worst mob bosses this city has ever seen. I started realising that right and wrong aren’t so clear-cut. The man who shot my parents was desperate and scared. Falcone made a living out of doing bad things, and he profits most by keeping people desperate and scared.”

“So what did you do?”

“Wallowed in my own self-pity for starters.” Bruce gave a hollow laugh. “And then I met Selina. She’s the only other person I’ve told about what happened, and she turned me on to charity work. I started giving to organisations that took away people’s desperation, then founded a few of my own and fused them together. Safe injection centers where people can get clean needles and other supplies and shoot up while surrounded by people who can instruct them on the right dosages and help them if they O.D. Food banks where people can just go in for a hot meal or bring home a week’s worth of groceries. Shelters where people can hunker down for the night with a hot shower and wash their clothes. And then I talked to Harvey, and he put me in touch with Commissioner Gordon. They told me what they needed so they could get the big fish. Cannabis was legalised in the state in 2012, and there’s currently legislation being worked to pardon non-violent drug offenders who were caught with the stuff, but Gordon’s been doing his best to turn a blind eye to them for most of his police career, especially if they can help him get people at the top. So I talked to the people working and volunteering in the shelters and everything else, and we came up with a plan to help with that. A year before we met, Falcone was taken in for the last time.”

“And now he gets to luxuriate in a nice jail cell.” Clark said with a slight smile.

“He’s dead.” Bruce said flatly.

Clark swallowed harshly.

“One of his businesses that got exposed was human trafficking. And more than a few of his victims had fathers and big brothers who were in the same prison.”

Clark nodded slowly.

“Need some YouTube?” Bruce offered. “I realise that was a lot.”

“Sure.” Clark agreed and reached for his laptop.

***

December third, two weeks later, Clark got a Facebook message from Kara that read 911, so he quickly made a grab for the landline and called her.

“What’s wrong?” he said as soon as she picked up.

“Lara’s parents are suing her for the money they spent on her medical care.”

Clark was stunned with disbelief for a moment.

“Are you kidding me!?”
“Nope.”

Clark thought for a moment.

“They assume I’ll help her so they’ll get money out of this.” he realised.

“That’s what Alex and I thought, too.” Kara confirmed.

Clark sighed.

“Did Lara tell you specifically not to tell me?”

“Maaaybe.”

Clark sighed heavily, and then it hit him.

“They figure I’ll give her money to settle quickly. If Lara’s up for it, we can drag it. Expose them for every-- wait…”

“What?”

“Gimme a second.”

Clark wasn’t sure how, but he was ready to bet his whole inheritance that Powers was involved somehow.

“Kara, their house was… nice, but not like ‘let’s blow our pensions on this mad venture’ nice. How do you think they’re paying their lawyer?”

Silence.

“I didn’t think about that.”

“I need to call mom and do some digging. I’ll call you back.”

Martha was in court, but William was available. Clark explained everything to him.

“Either I or your mother will get back to you as quickly as possible, but give us a few hours.”

“Thanks, grandpa.”

***

They couldn’t make a definitive trail from Powers to the lawyer, but Martha and William were about ninety-seven percent that was where the legal fees were coming from.

Lara refused to set foot in a courtroom.

“I can’t do it.” she said with finality. “I have had literal nightmares about my parents holding me down while the doctor who hurt me tears you out of my stomach. I can’t do it.”

“What about a victim impact statement?” Martha offered. “We can either record you talking, or you can write it as a letter to be read in court. You won’t have to see them.”

Lara’s face crumpled and Jorden held her for scenting.

“What good will it do?” she sobbed. “The DA ten years ago wasn’t able to get them.”
“We’re trying another approach to that regard.” William assured her. “We just need your statement.”

***

“Come on, Tommy.” Bruce jeered at the handcuffed Alpha across from him

“No fucking way.” Thomas Elliott spat. “You can’t prove it.”

“They’re finding more victims every day, piling on your sentence. Just admit this one, and who paid you. What have you got to lose?”

“You sure ain’t offering me any wins, Wayne.”

“We used to be friends, Tommy.” Bruce told him. “What the fuck happened to you?”

“My wife left me and took my daughter, you son of a bitch.”

“And so you think all Omegas deserve to be punished?”

“Someone’s gotta teach ’em to stay in their place.”

“Was growing up in a two-Omega household that bad?” Bruce frowned.

“Don’t you dare.”

“Both your parents were Omegas, I remember. I remember my parents explaining to me that I could love whoever I wanted, just like Tommy’s parents.”

“Shut up.”

“Didn’t you mourn them after that car accident?”

“Shut up!”

“You told me you’d get the asshole who t-boned their car. Maybe I found out who it is.”

“You’re lying.” Tommy looked incredulous.

“I’m not. And the way I see it is I’m not responsible what happens during a prison riot. I don’t like it, but I’m willing to offer you a name if you’ll plead guilty in court and identify your victim in a row of photographs.”

“Fine.” Tommy growled. “Like you said, I ain’t got much to lose.”

Bruce left the room, feeling exhausted.

“What do you think he’ll do,” Harvey asked. “When he finds out the drunk driver has been dead for three years?”

“Not my problem.” Bruce said. “He’s going back to lock-up, anyway. This is for Lara.”

***

Thanks to having Martha and William on the case, Lara and Jorden were able to finally access names and dates that had previously been denied them, so that everyone involved in Clark’s birth and adoption could be subpoenaed.
“It’s likely to be very quick.” Martha assured everyone. “I don’t see this as taking more than a day. As soon as the judge hears what happened, there’s no way he would think they’re owed any money.”

It wasn’t until January 2018 that they were finally able to get a court date, scheduled for the end of February. It turned out it had taken so long because most judges found the idea of parents suing their daughter for medical expenses done when she was a teenager to be ludicrous.

Clark promised he’d call Lara and Jorden as soon as it was over.

Bruce was with him for emotional support, and Kara and Alex were eager to see the people responsible for their aunt’s pain get their nonsense thrown back in their faces.

“So, who’s this judge that finally agreed to hear the case?” Clark leaned over to whisper to his mother and grandfather.

William leaned back towards him.

“Joseph’s an old friend of mine. He’s all about what’s fair. The Lorvans aren’t getting a penny.”
Chapter 47

Chapter Summary

Justice.

Chapter Notes

I'm finally moved in, but, oof! FOUR FUCKING DAYS WITH THE UHAUL! Long story short, most of the packing that should have been done two months ago wasn't, and so we had to pack as we went for a lot of the stuff, and now I'm pretty much broke. We're living off of just the bare bones of what was left of food from our pantry (which is mostly canned foods). Dad gets paid on Thursday, so then we'll be able to get REAL FOOD. I want steak with a side of roast potatoes and carrots mashed up with rutabaga, please! And eggs for breakfast! No more freezer waffles! I'm gonna get a heart attack from all the extra sodium and sugar!

Hopefully I'll be able to start writing more regularly, but, after the move, comes the unpacking. Help...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

I’ll try to forgive you

I’ll pray for that strength

But whether you live to see it

Is not a promise I can make

— These wounds I can’t forget by Clark Kent

“All rise for the honourable Joseph Dredd.” called the bailiff, and the room stood in unison.

Judge Dredd sat and took a moment to look at the papers in front of him, look from the Lorvans to William and Martha, then nodded for the bailiff to tell everyone to sit.

“Prosecutor Belinda Conine may begin opening statement.”

The Lorvans’ lawyer stood. She had long, dark, curly hair with streaks of grey, looked only somewhat older than Martha, and somehow familiar. Clark wondered if he might have met her before Lex started hiding him away in their penthouse; he had taken him to a couple of LexCorp staff Christmas parties in the early years of their marriage.

“Your honour, I’m going to be perfectly frank. This lovely couple wanted nothing but the best for
their daughter. She did some stupid decisions and got herself pregnant when she was too young to care for her pup. Her parents helped her by getting her the best medical care they could and ensuring her pup would go to a good family, and did everything they could to help her afterward. She repaid them by leaving as soon as she was of age and cutting off contact: a low blow to one’s parents. A few months ago, her pup, now an adult, came to their home and shouted obscenities at them.”

Clark felt himself grow cold. He made a note to himself to always record important things from now on. Bruce took his hand and rubbed circles on the back with his thumb.

“The Lorvans,” their lawyer continued. “Are old, quiet people, who don’t disturb anyone, and certainly didn’t need someone to come in and yell at them for something which happened thirty years ago, which was no doubt a trying time. For emotional damages, we request the amount paid for their daughter’s medical bills to be reimbursed.”

She sat down without another word.

William stood and walked to the front of the room and faced the judge. Clark remembered finding his grandfather to be at once imposing and safe when he was a pup. Now, he saw only the imposing part, and was thankful to not be on the receiving end of the icy cold stare.

“I am representing Lara Zorel in absentia. I have a very different story to paint from her pregnancy onwards. I realise that only some of what I have to say has any substantial proof to back it up, while the rest will be a he said/she said. However, I have strong faith that that proof which I do possess will be enough to cast strong doubt on the Lorvans’ claims. I have no doubt that they were acting in their best interests, but whether those interests were good for their daughter is another thing entirely, which I hope to bring to light.”

He sat down. Clark felt more assured.

Grandpa’s on the case. He remembered his grandma saying when his dog had gone missing. His parents were celebrating their anniversary in the city, a trip paid for by his grandparents, who had come to the farm to watch Clark. Sure enough, William had returned with the mutt, covered in mud and looking absolutely proud of himself. Found him in a duck pond two miles down the road, William had said, shaking his head. Didn’t hurt any of them, just had fun barking at them.

Grandpa’s on the case.

“Our honour,” Conine had stood. “I have in front of me the records of expenses paid for by the Lorvans for their daughter.” she brought them to the front. “As you can see, one of the best hospitals in Kansas, known for their neonatal department. Everything was made to be as smooth and efficient as possible for the birth, aftercare, and adoption processes. They spent a considerable amount for hers and the pup’s well-being.”

William had his own folder at the ready.

“Does defense have something to say about the process employed here?”

“I do indeed, your honour. We’ve asked every conceivable question to Mrs. Zorel, and one of those questions was ‘did you want to give up your son?’ Her answer, these are all verbatim: ‘I never wanted to give him up. Jorden,’ that’s her son’s father, ‘was ready to do the right thing and stay by me. His parents even offered their aid so that neither of us would have to give up going for post-secondary studies.’

“She was asked, ‘did you communicate this fact to your parents?’ Her answer: ‘I begged them. I
pleaded. I did not want to give up my son. I told the nurses at the hospital. I told them I wanted him named Kaleb, like in the Bible, so that he’d find his way home.’ She was asked: ‘What about the adoption agency?’ Her answer: ‘I never got to speak to them. My parents handled all of it without me.’ I would like to point out to all here present that, given that Mrs. Zorel was sixteen at the time, she was of the age where she should have been interviewed to determine if she was competent enough to understand the process that was giving up her son. This interview never took place. I have for witness the agent the Lorvans spoke to. Permission to bring forth my first witness?”

“Granted.”

“Matilda Mathis, please take the stand.”

An woman looking older than William stepped forward, and Clark caught the subdued scent of Beta as she passed him by. The bailiff brought out a Bible and she said her oath, then went to sit at the witness stand.

“Matilda Mathis, you worked with the adoption agency in Wichita for a good number of years, yes?”

“Yes, I did.”

“Do you remember the Lorvans?”

“Very clearly.”

“What is it about their case that made them stand out?”

“They told me their daughter had been assaulted, and that the incident had left her so distraught that she needed specialty care. I take note of these incidents, since I also fight for Omega rights and use examples of incidents, without names, of course, to bring to attention the issues that Omegas face daily. But this one struck me in particular because of what happened the day her son was born.”

“Could you elaborate?”

“In cases of closed adoption, especially where, as we had been told by the Lorvans, the puppy is taken immediately and the mother never gets to see it. She had snuck out of her room and into the neonatal unit, where I had gone to check on the puppy personally; I made sure to not disturb her, pretending I was looking over a different puppy. She checked each of the units until she found the one with her son. He didn’t have a name on his label, since newborns are typically left nameless until they’re adopted, at which point the adoptive parents choose a name. However, she was listed as his mother. I watched as she took a pen from the patient clipboard attached to his basin, and wrote on the label and on the clipboard. She even went through the papers to make sure she hadn’t missed anything. She then picked him up and held him, and kissed his head, and whispered the words ‘I will find you.’”

Clark didn’t realise he’d started crying until Bruce handed him a handkerchief and held him closer.

“She put him down, and walked out, crying quietly. I realise that should have been a red flag, but I didn’t do anything, except checking what she had written, which was the name Kaleb. I made sure when he got adopted that his new parents were aware that his birth mother had wanted him named this, and they used it as his middle name.”

“In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?”

“I would have talked to her. I would have asked her to tell me what she wanted.”
“No further questions, your honour.” William sat down and took Martha’s hand.

“No further questions, your honour.” William sat down and took Martha’s hand.

“Counselor, do you have any questions?”

“I do.” Conine stood and approached the stand.

“You say you would have asked her what she wanted. How would that have changed anything?”

“If she didn’t want to give up her puppy, I would have put her in touch with the resources necessary to ensure she could keep him.”

“But clearly her parents thought it best for her to give him up.”

“But was it the best thing? From what I’ve found out afterward, he did go to a good home and I’m sure no one involved would trade that time. But I wonder now at her parents’ motives.”

“Elaborate.”

“As I found out recently, their story about their daughter being assaulted was a fabrication and she went on to mate and marry her puppy’s father.”

“So you would have helped an underage person defy her parents?”

“Sixteen is the age where a mother is allowed to make decisions in regards to her pups. We could have had the pup placed in foster-care near where she lived for her to visit as often as possible, and kept an eye on her living situation so that, on the day she would be ready to take her son back, she could have. Instead, her parents signed away her parental rights under the falsehood that she was unable to make decisions.”

“You’re assuming that she was able to make this decision.”

“They lied about the assault.”

Conine sighed and walked away.

“No further questions.”

“The witness may step down.”

“Your honour,” Conine said. “I would like to call Martha Kent to the stand.”

Clark stiffened and watched as his mother stood, walking with rigid poise to the bailiff, and placed her hand on the Bible.

Martha sat and Clark could see as she steeled herself.

“Mrs. Kent, do you love your son?”

“I do.”

“If you had known when he was still small about his origins, would you have willingly given him up?”

“I would have spoken to his birth mother and hoped we could come to an arrangement for visits.”

“And if she was unwilling to negotiate?”
“I can’t answer that.”

“You can’t or you won’t?”

“You’re asking me to imagine a scenario wherein Lara Zorel would have been unwilling to negotiate. I’ve met her, and I cannot imagine that scenario. She even thanked me for giving Clark a loving home. So, no. I cannot answer that question.”

Clark could see through the cracks in his mother’s armour; she was trying very hard to keep her composure.

“If the Lorvans had not arranged for Lara to give up her son, you would never have had Clark, isn’t that true?”

“Yes.”

“Are you comfortable with that scenario?”

“If the Lorvans had not arranged for Lara to give up Clark, I would never have known. Obviously, I’m happy to have raised him. I love him a great deal. But you are asking me to comment on an impossible scenario. Since he was put up for adoption, I got to raise him. If he had not been put up for adoption, I would never have known about him, so I would not know something was missing, since there would be nothing to miss. In that situation, I would be unable to comment on whether I wish I had him, since none of this,” she indicated with her hand. “Would be taking place. In fact, as my science-fiction-loving son would likely say, temporal mechanics are a pain in the rear.”

The room laughed and Clark saw his mother’s eyes light up, her armour back to full strength.

Conine looked frustrated.

“No further questions, your honour.” she hissed as she returned to her seat.

“Mr. Clark, do you have any questions for your daughter?” the judge looked amused.

“No, your honour, I think she’s just blown holes in any further attempt at lawyers asking ‘what would you do differently?’”

“Step down, Mrs. Kent.”

As Martha returned to her seat, Clark caught her eye and smiled, earning a smile in return.

“I have another witness, your honour. A former doctor who was entrusted with Mrs. Zorel’s care.”

“Have him brought forward.”

From the back of the room, two police officers walked a man in blue prison garb to the front. He was cuffed at the ankles and wrists, and after swearing his oath, the officers latched a chain from behind the stand to the man’s handcuffs.

“Thomas Elliott, former surgeon, now facing time for having mutilated several Omega patients. Mr. Elliott, do you know the Lorvans?”

“Not everyone tells me their names, but they look familiar.”

“If I show you a series of pictures of Omega females, would you be able to pick out a former victim of yours?”
“Yes.”

“As you can see,” William showed the pictures to the Lorvans, first, and then the judge. “These images are all taken from around the same time period so that none of them stand out for their modernity as being incorrect, and they all have similarly dark hair and blue eyes.”

The judge nodded.

“Proceed, counselor.”

William laid the pictures in front of Elliott. Elliott took his time to look them over carefully.

“This one.” he held it up.

William took the picture over to the table where the Lorvans were seated.

“Mr. and Mrs. Lorvan, is this your daughter?”

There was a moment of silence that felt like it had stopped the air in Clark’s lungs.

“Yes.” Seigel said, finally.

“Mr. Elliott, what can you tell me about this case?”

“Her parents wanted a tummy-tucking, removal of stretch marks, and a hymenoplasty. They paid in cash, and didn’t want me to say anything.”

“And what did you do?”

“Objection, your honour!” Conine interrupted. “The actions of Elliott are his own, not the Lorvans’. What does any of this have to do with the issue at hand?”

“Mr. Clark?”

“Ten years ago, Elliott was being tried for crimes against other Omegas. Since the Lorvans paid in cash and asked him not to talk, the only way for it to be proven that Lara Zorel was his patient, was for either he or them to admit it. At the time, he didn’t, hoping to avoid a larger sentence if at least one person couldn’t be traced back to him. He has agreed to cooperate this time, since he hasn’t much to lose. His actions led to others taken by the Lorvans, which we will get at in due time.”

“Overruled.” Judge Dredd agreed. “Answer the question, Mr. Elliott.”

“I moved her ovaries to be inside her uterus and stitched it shut, made a tear from her vagina to her rectum so that it made one, massive hole, and instead of erasing her stretch marks I made incisions to make them more prominent.”

Clark felt his stomach lurch. Bruce held his hand tightly, quietly urging him to breathe.

“Would these injuries have been life-threatening?”

“A heat would have triggered something with her reproductive system, very painful, but, other than that, no. I don’t kill my patients, I want to make sure they live with what I do to them.”

“No further questions.”

“Your honour,” Conine stood. “I don’t see why this man’s testimony should be included. He is a
“Convicted psychopath.”

“I’ll get there, your honour.” William assured. “I have established the wounds inflicted upon Mrs. Zorel, and now, unless the prosecution has any questions for Mr. Elliott, I will call my next witness.”

The judge looked to Conine, who shook her head and sat down.

“The witness may leave the stand.”

The guards returned and led Elliott from the stand.

“You owe me, Brucie.” he said as he was led past the bench where Bruce and Clark were sitting.

“You’ll get yours.” Bruce told him.

William stepped up to the judge and handed him a folder.

“These are the hospital records indicating the emergency hysterectomy and re-stitching of her perineum. Her parents paid for only the minimum required to repair damage caused by Elliott; though, as you can guess, she was no longer able to produce pups after this. When asked about this time in her life, Mrs. Zorel says that her mother in particular said she deserved her fate for having been, and this is a direct quote, ‘a heathenous slut.’”

Nara burst into sobs and her husband put an arm around her while leaning to whisper something to his lawyer. Conine stood and addressed the room.

“We request a one-hour recess, your honour.”

The judge nodded at the bailiff, who made the official call.

Clark stayed put, waiting for the Lorvans to leave the room. As they walked beside the bench where he was seated with Bruce, however, Nara tried to dash to Clark.

“I’m sorry!” she screamed, hysterical as Seigel tried to hold her back. “I’m sorry! Tell her I’m sorry!”

Bruce stood to make a barrier in front of Clark and Nara shrunk back towards her husband and he led her from the room.

Clark felt frozen in place, shocked and ashamed. Bruce had to try a few times to get his attention to lead him from the room in turn.

***

“This isn’t your fault, Clark.” Martha assured him in one of the boardrooms, holding both his hands in hers. “She’s regretting her actions now, but she could have said something then. Even if it was all Seigel’s doing and Nara didn’t want it, she could have found a way to give her a kind word in private. Instead, she called her a slut and showed her no sympathy.”

“I asked Lara if her parents had ever established contact. Jorden confessed that they had, once, but that he’d hidden from her. And they’re nothing nice. I won’t go into detail, here, since they’re evidence, but I have them to show Joseph.”

Clark sighed as he nodded.

“I’m just trying to reconcile the crying woman with the one who said those things to Lara.”
“Some people never change.” Bruce said. “They’ll fight to the death to continue believing they’re right. But then others, when it’s least expected, will receive the right information at the right time and it’ll hit them, and make them see their previous beliefs in a different light.”

Clark nodded. He wanted Conner, but Dick and Barbara had him back in Gotham while he was an hour away in Metropolis.

Bruce took his hand and laced their fingers.

“It shouldn’t be much longer.” Bruce told him.

“It may even be cut short.” William said. “After what happened back there, if Seigel has any love for his wife, he’ll have the sense to call the whole thing off. He must know we have him. He’ll only be drawing out the inevitable if this continues.”

“Are you hungry at all, Clark?” Bruce offered. “I can grab something from the coffee shop across the street.”

Clark shook his head.

“I just want this to be over.”

“We still have forty minutes of the recess. Fresh air?”

Clark sighed.

“Sure.”

They made it as far as the front doors when they saw the crowd of paparazzi gathered at the bottom of the steps.

“Dammit.” Bruce muttered as he pulled out his cell phone and walked Clark back to the boardroom. A quick Google search revealed the phone number for the café across the street and Bruce verified with everyone food and beverages. Clark suddenly felt the need for cheesecake and apple cider in view of the situation.

***

Nara Lorvan was not in the courtroom when they resumed, but Seigel was and wanted to continue. Conine seemed less certain than she had before; tired, like she was just waiting for it to end.

“Your honour, given Mrs. Lorvan’s outburst earlier, you can see how this whole situation has been deeply upsetting. I would like to call Clark Kent-Luthor to the stand.”

Clark had been more or less expecting that he might be called, but it still made him go numb. Bruce squeezed his hand and stood with him, only letting go when Clark started walking to the stand.

Clark swore the oath as though on auto-pilot, and took the stand.

“Mr. Kent-Luthor--”

“Kent.” Clark corrected. “I no longer wish to be associated with the name Luthor.”

“And why is that?”

“The short answer is that my marriage was not a happy one.”
“You marriage was one of the things brought up on your visit to the Lorvans. Did you feel it was somehow their fault that you ended up in that situation?”

“No.”

“Then why mention it?”

“After making contact with my birth mother, I found out that the Lorvans had hoped to push her onto Lionel Luthor as his second mate. I just wanted to let them know what kind of life she would have had if they had succeeded.”

“You seem to think that Lionel Luthor is the same as his son.”

“He never hid his contempt for my being from a farm. Although being Lex’s mate ended up being a nightmare, he painted a pretty bleak portrait of what growing up under his father was like. I can’t imagine what it must have been like for Lex’s mother.”

“This is pure conjecture--”

“Objection, your honour.” William stood. “This has nothing to do with the Lorvans, but if they would like an idea of what Lionel Luthor’s mate must have gone through, I have a mountain of suspicions as laid down by people who knew the family as well as a sworn affidavit from their private physician who was willing to admit to having been paid a large sum to keep from telling the police any of her own suspicions regarding the nature of Lillian Luthor’s various injuries over the years.”

Clark’s eyes darted to Seigel, who looked angry.

“Sustained.” the judge agreed. “Counselor, please stick to the details of this case.”

“Yes, your honour.” she paced a small distance before turning back to Clark. “The Lorvans couldn’t have known about this. Why bring it up?”

“So that they would know.” Clark said simply. “I wasn’t happy with Lex. I was at first, but, once he had me where he wanted me, where he knew I wouldn’t fight anymore, he revealed his true self. I wanted them to know what would have happened to their daughter if they had managed to get her to marry Lionel. It wouldn’t have been happy, and they probably wouldn’t have gotten anything out of it. They thought being linked to the Luthors would benefit them, but it would have just put their daughter in a living hell and if Lionel could avoid giving them a penny, he would. Lex cut me off completely from my friends and family; wouldn’t even let me go to my father’s funeral. That’s what being with a Luthor was like. And I needed the Lorvans to know that they were wrong to think that things would have been better if Lionel had married Lara.”

Clark jumped as Seigel brought his fist hard onto the table.

“If an Omega obeys their mate, then their mate has no reason to treat them badly! Nara has never once given me reason to correct her in all our years of marriage! My daughter would have learned her place as Lionel’s mate! Just as you should have learned yours!”

The judge banged his gavel.

“Mr. Lorvan, stand down, or I will find you in contempt of this courtroom.”

“Why are you supporting this ludicrousness!?”
“Bailiff, have him removed.”

Conine looked both bewildered and relieved as he was removed from the courtroom.

“No further questions, your honour.” Conine said as she sat down.

“Anything to add, Mr. Clark?”

“No, sir.” William winked at his grandson, who smiled back.

“Mr. Kent, step down.”

Once Clark was seated, Bruce holding him for scenting, the judge cleared his throat.

“Given the evidence before me, I think it is an easy choice for me to say that the Lorvans are not owed a penny for what was a clear case of severe emotional abuse and complete disregard for the well-being of their daughter. No damages are to be paid, case dismissed.” he banged his gavel and left swiftly.

***

Several things happened very quickly over the next few months.

Nara left her husband. Belinda Conine worked pro-bono towards a swift separation and equal distribution of assets, even going so far as to set Nara up in a little bachelor apartment.

Nara tried to reach out to Lara, but Jorden had to pass on the message that she wasn’t ready to talk. Martha brought the Zorels some strawberry-rhubarb pie and assured Lara that she didn’t owe Nara a thing; that she should only talk if she truly felt ready.

Clark pitied Nara, but couldn’t bring himself to see her, either, resolving himself to only visit if Lara did. He had tried to figure out if he would have done the same if he had been in her shoes, but couldn’t bring himself to consider it. Every time he looked at Conner while following this line of thought, he felt himself overcome with a fierce need to protect his pup.

Seigel took to sending nasty letters to everyone involved: Nara, Lara, Jorden, Kara, Alex, Martha, William, Clark, and Bruce. Alfred started screening the mail at the house, and Bruce did the same at the office. After nearly a hundred such notes had been accumulated, they were shown to Metropolis PD, who went to have a chat with Seigel about the meaning of the word harassment. The letters stopped shortly afterwards.

When both Nara and Seigel needed medical assistance for being away from each other for the first time in decades, Nara’s medical bills found themselves paid for anonymously, while Seigel’s did not. Bruce didn’t say anything when he overheard Clark discussing the details with his mother over the phone.

***

Near the end of spring came a lightened mood as Bruce arranged for more days spent between him, Clark, and the four youngest; Dick was caught up in getting ready for his second year in forensics study as well as getting ready to move in with Barbara.

On Clark’s thirty-first birthday, Bruce woke him promptly at nine-o’clock to show him Conner walking unassisted from the doorway of the nursery to the bed, then squeal to be lifted. Clark grinned as Bruce handed him to him for scenting, proud of his little pup.
Conner started burrowing his face to Clark’s chest, wanting to nurse, even though he was now on solids. It was a good bonding moment for them, so Clark gladly removed his pajama shirt for his pup.

Bruce curled up beside them, holding close, and kissed Clark.

“Happy birthday.” he said tenderly.

“I love you.” Clark told him, earning another kiss.

Conner stopped nursing just under ten minutes.

“Mama, bana.”

“Alright, little monkey.” Clark smiled. “Let’s get you some bananas.”

Alfred had a lovely spread of pancakes and fresh fruit made up for breakfast, though Conner only got the fruit.

The day was spent with the family, everyone offering various writing-related gifts, including a new laptop with wireless mouse and keyboard to make it easier for bedtime typing (from Bruce, picked out by Tim).

The final gift, an envelope, was handed to him by Damian, who blushed as he apologised for having opened it without permission.

“It arrived three weeks ago, which gave us all time to pick out your gifts.”

Clark stared as he saw that it contained the logo of Gotham University, then opened it up, already feeling his throat swell.

Dear Mr. Kent,

as you were a bit tardy in your application, we unfortunately don’t have space for you for this year’s journalism program. However, we will gladly put you at the top of the list for next year’s program and look forward to having you with us.

Clark sniffed and smiled.

“So that’s why all the writing stuff.” Clark grinned and brought Damian in for a hug.

“Damian called us all, personally.” Martha beamed. “He wanted everything to be just right for his mother’s birthday.”

“You’re a good boy, Damian.” Clark told him as he scented.

In the evening, Bruce brought Clark to a five-star restaurant and booked a table in the VIP section so that they could have a little privacy. Clark tried raw oysters for the first time and ended up loving them.

Bruce waited until they were finished dessert and then took Clark’s hand in his, looking at him very seriously.
“Clark, I know you said you wanted to wait before mating, and I won’t pressure you about it. But, I was wondering if you’d like to take another step with me.”

He took a small black box from under his coat and knelt beside the table. Normally, the Alpha was supposed to stand and wait for the Omega to kneel submission. Clark felt himself go numb with anticipation, even as Bruce’s hand on his radiated a comforting warmth.

“Clark Kaleb Kent, will you marry me?”

For the second time that day, Clark felt his throat swell, tears threatening to spill. He slid out of his seat and threw his arms around Bruce, breathing in his safe Alpha scent.

“Yes, I’ll marry you, Bruce.” he whispered.

Bruce pulled back just enough to show him the ring: it was black titanium with blue stones marking the perimeter. Clark held out his left hand and Bruce slipped it on his finger, then the two kissed sweetly.

“I promise, Clark, to love you, to always keep you safe,” Bruce vowed as their foreheads were still pressed together. “To help you be your best self, and never, ever, hold you back.”

Clark smiled.

“I promise, Bruce, to be by your side, to love you and stand by you and-- oh, fuck.” Clark kissed him again, and Bruce grinned into it.

Best birthday ever.

Chapter End Notes

As you might have guessed, we are nearing the end. There's probably only one or two more chapters to follow, which will probably be time-jumps.

However, there are a couple of things I intend to write as tie-ins to this story:

Future pups???

Jason helping Tatsu through her heat

Surprising news regarding Dick's ex, which will also have a tie-in to Harley's later.

Tim and Rachel hooking up, which will be linked to some of the time-jumps in this story as I don't intend to write them any younger than sixteen.
Chapter 48

Chapter Summary

Some heat sex, mating, more sex, and a look at what life has become in the Wayne household.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

_Somehow I’m here_

_I survived the storm and found the shore_

_I stand now in the sun and calm_

_And have all I love with me_

— _Survivor of the Storm_ by Clark Kent

_Four years later…_

“Mom! I can’t find my katana!” Damian shouted from the top of the stairs.

Clark sighed heavily.

“Check that Narnian portal you call a closet! Conner, come on, Alfred’s gonna be leaving to take you all out, soon, and I have to go to work.”

“I don’ wanna go!” Conner kept his arms fiercely crossed, preventing Clark from putting on his light jacket.

“Moooom!” Damian

“Damian Usfur Wayne, do you _really_ need it for the first day of class?”

“Well…” he hesitated. “At orientation, yesterday, there was this shy boy who had an animé-print shirt, and I thought he might wanna see it…”

Clark rolled his eyes, but smiled.

“Did you check your closet thoroughly? It’s a thin piece of wood, it might be lodged in a corner.”

“I’ll try again.”

“Can you help me with Conner, first? Hold his arms while I get his coat on.”
Damian knelt to hold Conner’s arms out in front and, between the two of them, through the whining tantrum Conner was throwing, they managed to get the coat on. Conner proceeded to throw himself on the floor, kicking and hitting the wood while wailing up a storm.

“I should’ve known you were being too easy as a puppy.” Clark sighed. “You were gathering strength for when you got big enough to really give me trouble.”

Damian smirked.

“Oh, we wanna hit the floor? Okay, let’s hit the floor!” he proceeded to mimic Conner’s tantrum with very fake crying, making Clark laugh, which made Conner slow down and eventually stop, looking confused and frustrated that his tactic hadn’t worked.

Damian stopped and knelt back, grinning at Conner.

“Well, that was fun, but I’m all kicked out, now.” he kissed Conner’s cheek with a loud ‘Mwah!’; Conner frowned and wiped his cheek, making Clark and Damian laugh.

“Better hurry if you want to get your katana to school.” Clark urged him, and Damian bolted for the stairs.

Tim came along, yawning, as he put down his backpack and laptop bag before slipping on his coat.

“Conner, stay here.” Clark placed him next to the closet. “Tim, over here.” he led Tim just inside the lounge.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing’s wrong, exactly.” Clark said. “But Alfred told me he found a certain something in the kitchen garbage while he was taking it out yesterday.”

Tim turned bright red and cast his eyes to the floor.

“Now, as we are the only two Omegas in this house, and I know I haven’t had any need for pregnancy tests lately, I can only assume—”

“Yes, mister investigative journalist. ‘Twas I.” Tim grumbled, before explaining very quickly: “It was just a scare, we got caught up in the moment, and Rachel forgot to pull out before her knot went up. We were using a condom, but…” he shrugged.

Clark nodded. Knotting severely reduced the efficacy of condoms, as it was easier for any ejaculate to seep out through the top while the Alpha was tied to their partner.

“When Bruce gets back, if you want, we can talk about putting you on birth control.” he said calmly. “You’re seventeen, we get it.”

“Isn’t Conner living proof that birth control isn’t one-hundred percent?” Tim cocked an eyebrow.

“But then you have two methods instead of just one, decreasing the overall chances of pregnancy.”

Tim nodded.

“Okay.”

Clark placed his arm around Tim’s shoulder, holding him close as they returned to the entrance, just in time to see Conner scrambling up the stairs as fast as he could, his coat and rain boots left behind
next to the closet.

“Conner Jonathan Wayne!” Clark called as he and Tim went to catch him.

***

When Bruce returned from his trip to Hong Kong, the boys were already in bed, but Clark had fallen asleep at his desk in the lounge. Bruce gently nudged him awake.

“Hrpmh?” Clark said, still not quite aware.

“You’re gonna hurt your back.”

“Bruce…” Clark said sleepily as he straightened up, a lazy smile spreading on his face. “You’re home.”

“Yep, time to go to bed, now.”

“Perry wants this piece by Friday.” he half-heartedly protested.

“And it’s Tuesday. Well, Wednesday, since it’s after midnight. You still have two whole days. Come to bed.”

When they got settled under the covers, Clark snuggled up to Bruce, who gladly opened his arms for his husband.

“Bruce?”

“Yeah?”

“I have to go off suppressants next week.”

“I remembered.” he kissed his forehead.

“I want us to bond.”

Bruce was silent. He’d been hoping, of course, but not wanting to push while Clark figured things out while not mated to him. Bruce had needed to be exerting very careful control whenever Clark’s yearly heat happened as he went off his suppressants to reset his cycle. But now, Clark was inviting him to bite and claim him at last, and Bruce felt so blessed.

“I love you.” he replied, finally, kissing Clark’s forehead.

“I also want another puppy.”

Bruce pulled Clark in for a tight hold.

“You’re sure?”

“I’m sure.”

Bruce kissed him sweetly.

***

For Clark’s heat, Jason and Tatsu got Tim to stay with them while Dick and Barbara watched Damian and Conner; the reasoning for this was Damian seemed to be best at getting Conner to snap
out of his temper tantrums but Jason and Tatsu could only house one guest in their tiny apartment.

Clark’s pre-heat struck mid-afternoon while he was editing a couple of short stories he’d intended to send to a magazine. He called Bruce while making his way up the stairs.

“Bruce Wayne’s phone.”

It was a young man’s voice, not Bruce’s usual secretary, Janice.

“Clark Kent; it’s urgent that I speak with Bruce.”

A scoff.

“I’m sure it is, Mr. Kent. I should advise you that Mr. Wayne does not give statements to the press--”

“Listen here,” Clark interrupted, his rising heat with the accompanying cramps cutting any sympathy he would usually have. “The basics of any new job is to know who you’re working for. And if you were to do a five-second Google search, you’d find me under ‘spouse’ on Bruce’s Wikipedia page.”

Clark rolled his eyes as he heard the clatter of keyboard keys, followed by an audible gulp.

“I’ll go to him immediately, my sincerest apologies.” the guy sounded a bit panicked.

Clark put the phone down while he quickly stripped, then brought the phone back to his ear. There was the sound of a few muted, distant voices, and then:

“Clark?” Bruce’s voice, concerned. “It’s started, hasn’t it?”

“Hurry, Bruce.” Clark whined.

“I’ll be right there. Drink lots of water. Love you.”

“Love you.”

***

When Bruce arrived, getting hard just by catching his Omega's pastry-sweet smell in the hall, Clark was already pretty far gone; his pre-heat never lasted very long.

“Alpha?” he whined while Bruce made his way to the bed, dropping clothing as he went.

“Right here, Clark.” Bruce crawled to Clark on the bed, kissed his hair and leaned in for him to scent.

“Want you, Alpha.” Clark sighed.

“You want my knot, darling?” Bruce crooned. “Want me to put my pups in you?”

Clark’s eyes blew wide at the suggestion.

“Yes, Alpha, please! I’ll be so good, please!”

“Shh.” Bruce soothed him, petting his hair. “You’re already good, Clark. You’re the absolute best. I’m gonna make you feel good, honey. My perfect mate.”

Bruce kissed him deeply, holding him close.
“You want my mark, Clark?” Bruce asked him. “You want the world to see who you gave yourself to?”

“Bruce, Alpha, please, I’m yours.” Clark whispered desperately.

Bruce jerked Clark to orgasm, first, helping him to clear his head, kissing him and whispering assurances of his love the whole time.

“How do you want it, Clark?” Bruce asked him as he came down from his climax.

Clark rolled onto his back, pulling Bruce with him.

“Like this, Bruce. Take me, Alpha.”

Bruce felt a flush of pride as Clark moaned at the first of Bruce’s fingers inside him, making absolutely sure he was ready. The flood of slick had already caused a wet spot on the bed beneath Clark’s hips.

“Here comes my cock, Clark. Take it, darling, I know you can take it.”

Clark pushed down as Bruce slid inside without effort, whining happily.

“Fuck, yes, Alpha, please.” Clark moaned, grasping at Bruce’s broad shoulders.

“How can I say no to that?” Bruce grinned as he gave in to his drive to fuck his Omega.

It had taken them time to get here, for Bruce to be able to be on top while making love; for Clark to want to be knotted.

But Bruce loved every moment he got with Clark, and while Clark had needed to regain his independence, he so obviously loved it when Bruce went Alpha on him, and Bruce wasn’t about to betray that trust. He wanted to take care of his Omega, but not at the expense of Clark.

“Love you, Clark.” Bruce said huskily as he kissed a path down to suck at his ear lobe. “You’re so perfect for me. My beautiful, smart Omega.” he said this last with a hint of a growl, then started teasing the skin over Clark’s scent gland with his teeth.

Clark held tighter, kissing every inch of Bruce he could reach, unable to focus on much of anything than the perfect Alpha cock sliding along his passage.

“Mmph… Ah, Bruce!”

“Let it go, Clark.” Bruce encouraged him. “Let yourself go.”

Bruce kissed him and added a bit more strength to the thrusts.

“Let yourself feel good. My beautiful Omega. You should always feel good.”

Clark yelled as he came, his hole tightening around Bruce’s shaft. Bruce grunted at the pleasure mixed with pain as Clark’s nails dug into his shoulders; Clark had quite the grip, and Bruce loved it.

Bruce held Clark closer, chasing his own climax within his Omega’s hot, willing body.

“I love you, Clark.” he whispered, panting. “I love you.”

With a growling cry, Bruce did one last hard thrust as his knot popped, and then he was clamping
down on Clark’s neck.

Oh.

It was as if the earth no longer spun. He and Clark were the only ones, and he felt Clark’s love seep through to his soul.

“I love you, Bruce.” Clark said weakly.

Bruce pulled back to look at Clark, and smiled at the sight. He was completely fucked-out, blissful and almost dozing, barely keeping his eyes open.

Bruce leaned in to kiss him softly.

“Turn with me, Clark. It’ll be more comfortable for both of us while we’re tied.”

Clark mumbled something Bruce didn’t catch, but held on as Bruce worked to turn them over without hurting Clark.

Clark settled on top of Bruce, snuggling into his shoulder, and gradually fell asleep. Bruce pet him for a while, before passing out himself.

***

Clark woke to Bruce kissing and sucking the bite mark.

“You vampire.” Clark mumbled, smiling.

Bruce drew back, smiling back at Clark.

“Please tell me I’m not one of the sparkly ones.”

Clark was confused for a moment, but then remembered Dick explaining Twilight.


Bruce leaned in to kiss him, then stilled, their foreheads touching.

“Shower?”

Clark thought this over.

“I guess a quick one wouldn’t be a bad idea.”

“We do have lots of bed to soil before we change the sheets.” Bruce pointed out.

Clark chuckled.

“Okay.”

“Then food.”

Clark hummed happily as he ran his fingers through Bruce’s hair.

“My Alpha loves me.”

Bruce turned his head just right to kiss Clark’s palm.
“So much, Clark.” he spoke with his lips still touching Clark’s palm. “I love you so much.”

After their shower, Bruce found a note just under the door, left by Alfred:

*Ring the bell when you're able, and I'll send something up in the dumbwaiter.*

Bruce felt a wave of gratitude towards his pseudo-parent, and walked to the other end of the room where the seldom-used bell-pull hung.

“We’re eating in?” Clark asked.

“Alfred’s insistence.” Bruce showed him the note.

Clark smiled.

“We should do something extra-nice for his birthday.”

“He won’t let us, but I agree.”

“We’ll find a way. Trust the boys to figure out a way to distract him.”

It wasn’t long before they heard the sound of the dumbwaiter’s pulleys in motion, and opened it to find savoury sandwiches and a pitcher of iced peach tea.

“Thank you, Alfred!” Clark yelled down the shaft.

He thought he heard some sort of reply, but it came out a bit garbled, making him chuckle.

They ate in companionable silence, knowing it would be best to get the meal finished and out of the way before the heat rose again.

“I saw your piece about the brothel bust, this morning.” Bruce told him as he finished off his sandwich. He chewed and swallowed before continuing. “Gordon said he’d been trying to get proof of the human trafficking involved in that place for over a year, but none of the Omegas there would talk, and then suddenly someone dropped off a jump drive with audio confessions, enough to get a warrant on the place. I tried to do that a few months back, hoping my name and influence would be enough to get some of them to trust me, but it didn’t work. I guess someone had a better strategy than me.”

Clark turned bright red, biting back a smile.

“Clark?” Bruce frowned at him.

“Well, let’s just say, sometimes a rich suit can be intimidating.” he started, nonchalantly. “They wonder if you really know what it’s like to be them, or if you’re just being condescending. But show up in tattered jeans and a flannel shirt, and tell them just enough details of your abusive late husband…”

Bruce’s jaw dropped.

“And then they know you share their pain, that you’re one of them, even if you’re not in their exact situation.”
Bruce sighed heavily, rubbing his face with one hand.

“You went down to the docks by yourself?” Bruce said, sounding like he shouldn’t be surprised.

“Now that would be silly.” Clark said, exaggerating his mannerisms. “Chloe was waiting in her car for a quick getaway if needed. I’m reckless, not stupid.”

Bruce chuckled.

“Oh, Clark. What am I going to do with you?”

“Hmm…” Clark exaggerated his mannerisms, again, as though he was thinking long and hard about a suggestion. He then placed the tray of dishes on the floor, then leaned over and crawled closer to Bruce, who caught the scent of the heat rising again.

“How about you fuck me silly?” Clark whispered dramatically.

Bruce cupped his head and kissed him deeply, then Clark pulled back, grinning, and crawled slowly to the head of the bed, just a bit off from the first wet spot, and presented.

Bruce could have sworn his heart skipped a literal beat, and quickly dove in, licking enthusiastically at Clark’s dripping hole.

Clark’s toes curled and he writhed, gripping the comforter tightly as Bruce eagerly ate him out.

“Bruuuuce…” Clark moaned softly.

Bruce chuckled against his ass but said nothing.

Clark almost felt like he could come from this, alone, but it wasn’t what he wanted.

“Fuck me, Bruce, please.” he begged softly, whining. “Fill me up, breed me. I want your pups, Alpha, please.”

Bruce finally pulled away, only to stick two fingers in, instead.

“You want my pups, Clark?”

“Yes.” Clark replied, almost without breath, jolting as Bruce pressed along his prostate.

“You wanna get a nice, round belly filled with my pups?” he continued to tease Clark’s prostate.

“You want nice, round breasts filled with milk?”

“Ngh-- yes, please, Bruce!”

“My beautiful Omega.” Bruce crooned. “You’re such a beautiful mother. You’re so good to our boys. You want more, darling? A nice, big pack with lots of pups?”

“Alpha, please!” Clark whined.

Bruce removed his fingers and lined up, inserting himself fully without warning, causing Clark to gasp loudly at the sudden (but welcome) stretch.

Bruce chuckled as he withheld from moving, watching as Clark moved his hips back and forth as thought by reflex.
Clark finally realised he was the only one moving and looked back with a whine, frowning at Bruce.

“Sorry, sweetheart.” Bruce smiled at him. “I was just admiring the view.”

With that, he pulled back and thrust forward, then came forward more so he could bracket Clark’s arms with his own as he began thrusting in earnest.

“So beautiful.” Bruce said huskily as he pressed his lips to the bite mark. “I love you, Clark. So much.”

Bruce shuddered and growled as he came, thrusting his knot as deeply as he could get. He kept rolling his hips, his knot pressing on all the right spots until Clark came, too, unleashing a high-pitched cry, and the two collapsed onto the bed.

Bruce started pressing and kneading Clark’s belly, an instinctual want to try working his Omega’s womb to accept his seed.

Clark purred and leaned into the touch, sated and happy.

***

The heat lasted another four days, at the end of which Bruce declared that Clark smelled different, more like how he had when he’d first come to the manor.

The two excitedly waited until the recommended few days before checking out a few pregnancy tests. Three of them came out positive, two negative, and two others didn’t react at all.

“This is stupid.” Clark grumbled. “This is one of the most expensive brands on the market and it can’t even tell me a simple yes or no.”

“Let’s call doctor Jones and make an appointment.” Bruce assured him. “He’ll be able to tell us for sure.”

It took a couple of weeks, but Clark was able to go get his blood drawn and John promised to rush his results for that afternoon, giving him the chance to spend some time with Kara and the pups.

They had just gotten a set of four year-old twins named Zack and Jayna. Their mother had been one of the Omegas rescued from the illegal brothel, but his mental state was in such a state of regression that he could barely care for himself, let alone his pups, though he did seem to have the instinct to be loving with them. It was determined that they would have to be adopted together, for their own sake, and that the new parents would arrange for weekly visits for the twins’ mother, so as to not add to his trauma if he couldn’t see his pups. In the meantime, they were working towards an easy separation by keeping the mother away from the twins for longer and longer periods of time.

“This will be the first time they’re apart for more than a day.” Kara explained as she squeaked a rubber duck at Jayna. The twins seemed to especially enjoy baths.

“What’s the prognosis on their mom?” Clark asked as he did tiny splashes towards Zack.

“He’ll probably never be able to live on his own, again.” she sighed, then stood and motioned for Clark to follow her to the crib room, just outside the bathroom.

“There’s also a possibility that he’ll have to be sterilised.” she said in a low voice. “He went into heat shortly after arriving and kept trying to present for the Alpha orderlies. Harley was really torn on whether it was better to give him a toy and hope he’d figure it out, or stick him with Plan B shots and
leave him with a specially-trained Alpha who would help him get through the heat. In the end, she started him with the toy, staying with him briefly to help him know how to use it, but he kept throwing it away and trying to get at the orderlies, and reacted very distressed when they wouldn’t help him. He started hurting himself in a way which was consistent with some scars he had, which we’re pretty sure were the result of punishments the people at the brothel would deal him. He interpreted the orderlies’ refusal to help him in that he was being punished for something. So Harley called in one of the Alphas who’s trained for these situations, and he helped him until his heat was over. He did seem better for it, but…” she trailed off, sighing.

“Someone could take advantage later down the line if being in heat means he tries going for any Alpha that’s near.” Clark concluded.

“Exactly.” Kara said morosely. “He doesn’t have the presence of mind to make proper judgements, anymore. It’s like he’s turned wild.”

Clark bit his lip.

“But he still loves his pups.”

“Yeah.” Kara said with a bitter chuckle. “Through everything, he still looks after them whenever they’re together. Their learning of speech has been delayed, because since mom doesn’t talk, they don’t, either. I think they associated talking with the bad people, and only more recently have started to realise that nice people talk, too.”

Clark smiled.

A blonde Alpha, about as broad as Bruce but a little shorter, entered the crib room and made his way to Kara.

“Could we talk?” he spoke in a deep, quiet voice.

“Sure, Nathaniel.” Kara said. “What’s up?”

“Um…” he hesitated, looking at Clark.

“Oh, this is my cousin. Clark, Nathaniel Adam.”

“Hi.” Clark smiled and held out his hand, which Nathaniel shook.

“I have the twins in the tub.” Kara explained, peeking in to make sure they were still okay. “Did you need to talk in private? Clark, you could watch them for a minute, right?”

“Yeah, no problem.” Clark agreed.

“Well, no, it’s okay.” Nathaniel said, more relaxed now that he knew who Clark was. “It’s about the twins, actually. I know that I’m supposed to try holding back attachment with my line of work, but, well… I was wondering if I could adopt them.”

Kara’s eyes widened and her mouth dropped open, then her expression softened into a smile.

“Actually, Nathaniel, if you’re absolutely sure, that might be the best thing, given the situation.”

Clark didn’t want to assume, but then Kara confirmed what he’d suspected based on what they said.

“Clark, Nathaniel is the one who helped the twins’ mother during his heat.”
Clark smiled.

“I was wondering if that was it.”

“Yeah.” Nathaniel blushed. “I mean, I’ve helped more than a few Omegas who’ve ended up here over the years, the ones who, in spite of what’s happened to them… or rather, because of what’s happened to them, need someone to help them feel good while making sure they feel completely cared for, instead of just being used. Make sure that they know that I’m there for them, instead of the other way around, y’know? Instead of them feeling used, let them know what it’s like when someone actually wants them to feel good.”

“That’s good work.” Clark agreed.

“Yeah.” Nathaniel shrugged. “Like, I don’t see myself as the type to settle down, but, I figure I can do this. Anyway, I usually try to keep myself detached enough from the situation, kind of just think ‘hey, this Omega looks a lot better now, I did a good job.’ And then leave it at that. But, I dunno… I just feel like I wanna help his pups. Like, I feel like this is something I’m meant to do, y’know?”

Kara looked like she was trying not to let out a sob.

“Of course. Let me just get them out of the bath and you guys can spend some time together.”

Clark felt a brimming of happiness as watched Nathaniel interacting with them, at how positively they responded to him.

_There’s the open window, he thought to himself. Doors may close, but it’s never the end._

***

“So, you might be expecting more than you think.” John told them as he studied the chart.

“Wait, what?” Bruce asked.

“Since the two of you are sure about the timing of conception, these elevated hCG levels usually only mean one thing: multiple pups.”

Clark swallowed.

“Can we check?”

John smiled and shook his head.

“Still too early. I’ll schedule you in a month from now for your first ultrasound. Even then, it’s not going to be one hundred percent unless we get really lucky with the placement.”

Clark was having trouble telling if he should laugh or cry or shrug. All those years not having pups, then Conner came along, and now…

“Yes, please.”

***

With the boys still at school and the rest of their day booked off, as soon as Bruce got Clark home, he pressed him to the wall and fell to his knees, kissing and sucking at his (for now) flat stomach.

Clark grinned at him for a while, running his fingers through Bruce’s hair.
“Silly Alpha,” he teased. “You don’t want Alfred to catch us, do you?”

Bruce looked up at him and smiled, running his hands along his sides.

“Were you thinking of something a bit more than this?”

Clark grinned.

“A bit more.”

“Hmm…” Bruce stood and considered him, then leaned in and…

Sniffed.

Bruce was sniffing all around Clark’s face and neck.

Clark smiled and waited, and then, finally, Bruce leaned in for a kiss.

It was short, but lingering, and then Bruce’s lips were next to his ear.

“What do you want?” he whispered, and Clark felt a shiver which turned to warmth as it pooled in his gut.

“Make love to me, Bruce,” he whispered back as he pressed his cheek to Bruce’s.

To conserve energy, they took the elevator up, pressed against one another as though to be apart even by a few centimetres would be painful.

They helped one another to undress at the foot of the bed, and then laid beside each other and lazily exchanged kisses and caresses.

When Bruce slipped inside, Clark let out a shuddering gasp and held Bruce to him as he began to thrust, wrapping his legs around his waist.

It was a wordless communion of the flesh and soul, but not silent.

Clark whined and moaned beneath Bruce, and Bruce responded with low growls and groans, sucking and nipping at Clark’s neck.

Bruce lost control and knotted Clark sooner than intended, but continued to move his hips, determined to help Clark join him over the edge.

Clark’s orgasm was almost a surprise, a sudden rush of heat and sparks along his passage, and then he exploded with a loud cry as he gripped Bruce harder.

They lay exhausted for a while, but managed to eventually turn over, so as to be more comfortable.

***

Eight and a half months later, sitting in a private hospital room with a cesarean incision which he couldn’t feel yet, thanks to the excellent drugs, Clark was holding a puppy girl in each arm, while Bruce was holding a pillow on Clark’s stomach. One of them was an Alpha, the other would either be Beta or Omega, but they couldn’t be sure until she’d present.

“Well,” Bruce asked, looking tenderly at his mate and puppies. “Which one’s Carrie and which one’s Stephanie?”
Clark thought for a moment.

“Stephanie for the Alpha.”

“Okay.” Bruce smiled.

“Bruce, I’m getting sleepy. You better take them.”

Bruce wheeled the wide bassinet closer and took first Carrie, followed by Stephanie, laying them side by side. They barely fussed, probably just as tired as their mother from their sudden entrance into the world. Still, as Bruce watched, they wriggled closer together, sharing each other’s body heat.

Bruce smiled, feeling his throat swell with pride, then leaned in to give them each a kiss before returning to Clark’s side. His mate’s eyes had fallen shut, so Bruce just brought the bassinet as close as he could to the chair next to the bed. The chair was fairly comfortable and could lay back halfway, which he did, drawing up his wool coat as a blanket.

The rest of the family would be in the next day, but, for now, it was just the two of them with their newest pups, and their hearts were full.

Chapter End Notes

Well, I'm pretty sure this is it, guys. Now, as with all trauma victims, of course Clark will still have his bad days, but, he's probably as far as he can come, now.

I will write the odd insert now and again to go with this, as I said at the end of the last chapter. There's going to be looks at some of the others' lives, and I will likely write some in-the-future pieces showing the pups more grown up, as well as some inter-quels about Clark and Bruce. But, as far as this main piece is concerned, I don't think there's much left to be said about it.

If any of you have any requests of something you'd like to see within this universe, feel free to comment. I can't promise I'll do every single request that comes my way, but when I do, I will always credit the people who requested it., and gift it if you have an AO3 account.

I thank each and every one of you for accompanying me on this journey. When I started writing this back in 2016, it had been about four years since I'd written, and longer still since I tried sharing my stories with others. Your support has been phenomenal, and I'm forever grateful. See you around the interwebs!

Until then,

I remain, my friends, your obedient servant,

C. L.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!