**my heart a pandora box**

by *Imagineitdear*

**Summary**

Presenting as an omega at the age of 12, Bucky is whisked away from his family and his best friend Steve in the middle of school. He's taken to live in an omega house under the protection of the government and for six years, he never leaves.

But at age 18, it's time to be mated. Bucky can't decide which would be worse: getting stuck with the abusive director of his omega house, or being forced to mate a stranger. An alpha that could treat him even worse than Alexander Pierce.

Luckily, the alpha is less of a stranger than he realizes.

**Notes**

My first multi-chapter! I still have some editing to do, but I'm optimistic I'll update around once a day. Loving the abo tag and everything I've read in it for this fandom! Also been loving the identity porn and social media-centered fics, so I kinda . . . lobbed them all together? heheh. Hope this contributes well, even if it's particularly angsty.
Speaking of, please mind the tags. The rapes all happen between the time jump, but as this is Bucky's POV he casually and callously references it a lot in his thoughts. There will be one scene where he flashbacks while with Steve in chapter 5. If you have any more questions/concerns let me know!
THE OMEGA PROTECTION ACT (OPA)

The Omega Protection Act (OPA) is the federal legislation that gives protections and guarantees healthy living for individuals of the omega status. All individuals are entitled to:

- government-protected housing
- omega-prescribed education
- state and local government services
- privacy of records and identity
- federal mating services

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Omega Protections Section provides information about the federal guidelines established in the OPA through a toll-free information line: 1-800-518-0421. This service permits previous guardians, school patrons and local governments to call and ask questions about general or specific OPA regulations, including questions about the OPA Standards for Presenting, as well as filing an OPA compliance complaint.

Visit the following resources for more information.

Bucky presents at the age of 12.

In class, right before lunch break. He’s been sweating and feeling a bit feverish since yesterday evening. Their mother worked through the night, however, and Rebecca had teased him about being a sissy for taking the time to gel his hair just this morning. He isn’t about to give her more ammunition, just for a little upset stomach.

They’re talking in class about the Omega Protection Act when it all happens, ironically. Bucky’s heard of it. His parents, both betas, were lucky enough to have two children, but most of the population heavily relies on omegas to stay sustained. And, with the fertility crisis that started in the 50’s, the US government decided to start programs that would protect omegas.

“All states have passed laws requiring un-bonded omegas to be taken somewhere else, for their own safety,” Ms. Bodeman explains. “I’m sure some of you know a family member who went to an omega house.” A few people in the class nod. Steve, who always sits next to him,
conspicuously tosses a note onto Bucky’s desk. The breeze stirs, a strange scent accompanying it, which is exactly when the note of Bucky’s fever changes.

It’s less chills and sweats now and more a gathered burning in the low of his gut. He can hardly keep focus on his teacher and what she’s saying, just trying not to fall out of his seat. “… presenting as an omega is more likely if you have an alpha/omega pair of parent…”

He should have stayed home.

Steve “psssts!” until he looks over. The boy mimes at the note he passed Bucky insistently, his big eyes for once looking concerned. Bucky takes a shaky breath and unfolds it.

*You look like death warmed over. Go home!*

Bucky rolls his eyes, but turns to Steve and nods. He’s not doing any learning today anyways. Once Ms. Bodeman announces lunch break, he stands up, intending to make for the door with the rest of his classmates.

Then something trickles down his thigh, and half the room stiffens.

Well, maybe not half, but about a third, including Ms. Bodeman. She’s a beta—according to Rebecca, who presented a few months ago as an alpha and can now smell those designations—but her eyes still go wide as they zero in on him at the same time as five boys and three girls including Rebecca. They stand up. Nostrils flaring.

“Everyone OUT,” the teacher barks, loud enough to snap the affected children out of their haze. Bucky watches blearily as everyone rushes through the door, the only remaining Steve and Rebecca.

“You two can’t—” Ms. Bodeman starts.

“Is he sick, Ms. Bodeman? He smells funny,” Becca interrupts, wrinkling her nose. Bucky would protest, but he finds he can barely stay standing, much less speak.

“He’s presented, Rebecca,” the teacher says, looking a little pale. Steve frowns, puts a hand over
Bucky’s forehead like Bucky often does for him.

“As an alpha? Don’t they usually lash out, get angry?” Steve asks. Rebecca nods and feels Bucky’s forehead too, having experienced it herself.

Bucky shakes his head, shrugging her off. “I don’t feel angry,” he manages to say, leaning into Steve. The scrawny kid smiles at him worriedly,

“An omega, judging by his smell,” Ms. Bodeman explains, putting a hand on Bucky’s shoulder and gently pushing him to sit back in his seat. Bucky slumps into it, silently grateful.

“Omegas are supposed to smell nice, though,” Becca protests. “He just smells weird.”

“You’re his sister,” the teacher says. “You won’t smell good to each other, even if you’re an alpha and omega. Now, I need you Becca to go home and get some of Bucky’s things. Let your parents know what’s happened, if they’re home, and hurry back quick. You might get to say goodbye.”

Becca frowns; Bucky tries not to fall to the ground and curl into the fetal position. “Say goodbye?” he distantly hears Becca ask. “Why would they—?”

He hears Ms. Bodeman’s answer in bits and pieces. “He’s not safe, anymore . . . like I was saying . . . there’s places where omegas go, where the government protects them . . .”

Bucky blacks out after that.

He wakes in a small office room, lying on the floor with a cushion pushed under his head. The fever seems to have died down, no more chills and heat flashes as he takes in his surroundings. Desk, chairs, small window. A poster about “ENDURANCE” on the opposite wall.

The principal’s office. Bucky knows it well, thanks to all the fights he’s joined. Steve starts them; he’s older than Bucky by three years, but got held back because of poor health so that he fell into Bucky and Rebecca’s age group: middle grade. Used to be numbers for them, apparently, before the population got low enough one grade wouldn’t fill up a single classroom. But Bucky is glad, even if it means getting in trouble at least once a week.
Bucky wonders what he did now. He takes in his body: burning, in the deep of his gut, skin dry except for between his legs, which feel wet and slippery when he sits up. Did he piss himself? His pants are stained with it, and straining against his prick, which for some reason has decided to stand at attention. Is that why he’s in trouble?

The door opens, and a man walks through.

Bucky reels back, because he can smell him. This man. Though he stands just at the threshold, Bucky smells waves of calming, neutral scents. Like laundry detergent. He’ll later learn this means beta.

“Son, you need to come with me,” the man says gently, and helps him to his shaky feet. Bucky opens his mouth, but his head still feels cloudy. Words of protest unthinkable, much less in grasp. So he lets himself be led out of the school and into a nondescript car. In his inebriated state Bucky doesn’t know to protest, much less how.

He falls asleep at some point in the back seat, not waking up until the sun has disappeared and left the world after dusk. The man opens his door for him, gesturing with a kind smile, and leads Bucky to a huge, white country house just up the hill.

Bucky never sees his parents or Becca or Steve again.

STANDARDS FOR LICENSED OMEGA'S RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES
(REVISED Effective July 17, 2013)

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Six years later Natasha bangs on his door, calling out, “Wake up! Today is the day, James!”

Bucky rolls over in his too-small bed, the other omegas sharing his room groaning in protest. The sun has yet to rise, and it feels like he just barely fell asleep. Which might in fact be the truth.

When he gets to the hallway Natasha is waiting impatiently with three other older omegas behind her, wiping sleep from their eyes and shifting nervously. Rumlow, the disciplinary figure of the house, frowns at him.

“Are you excited?” Natasha asks in a bubbly voice, but with her back to Rumlow allows grimness into her smile, squeezing his arm.

“Couldn’t fall asleep,” he offers, though he can’t rid his voice of it’s sardonic edge. No matter. Rumlow will discipline when he wants to discipline, regardless of whether Bucky keeps his tone in check.

“Alright, omegas,” Rumlow interrupts, “you know you’re getting examined, not for mere breeding this time—for mating. Alphas are coming,” and at that two of the omegas quickly bowed their heads, ever submissive even at the term itself, “and they’re coming to choose one of you, if you’re lucky.”

“We could only hope to be so lucky,” Natasha says, sincere in everything but her eyes.

Rumlow snorts. “Some of you won’t be,” he says, glancing at Bucky pointedly.

Bucky fights the urge to smile.

Sure, he’s done everything possible in the last six years to look nothing like an omega. He’s stubbornly kept growing stubble, because unlike most omegas he actually can get a beard until they hold him down and shave him. He’s absolutely refused to wax any part of his body, or put on rouge. He has a workout he follows, morning and night, that’s helped his shoulders grow broad and his body put on muscle.
Though he’s leaner than any alpha he’s seen and probably could only pass off as a beta, Bucky is proud of the fact he’s more than what this house has tried to make him.

No matter what Alex whispers into his ear, every few months.

They get tested and checked up on again, even though the monthly check-up was only two weeks ago, and then assigned to a room for prep. Prep, apparently, involves a bath in various oils and perfumes, styling his hair, shaving his face and arm pits before trying to get at his smattering of chest hair with wax. Bucky puts up a fight then.

“I want to keep it!” he shouts, twisting and kicking away from the betas. Usually they give up and leave him alone, even if he does have to act like a petulant child for it to work.

This time, however, Rumlow is called in. He grabs him from behind, pinning his arms back and jamming Bucky’s legs down over his own with brute alpha strength. The betas are able to spread the wax over him, and with four long strips rid Bucky of any chest hair.

They rub soothing lotions on it after. Bucky lets them, even as he feels tears form. From the pain of the wax, he tells himself. Nothing else.

Then Alex enters, and all the betas scurry out.

“Rumlow said you’ve been giving them trouble,” he says, patting a hand on Bucky’s knee. Bucky is entirely naked, but it’s nothing new to Alex. “But you know? You look beautiful like this. All innocent and new.” He touches the sensitive skin on Bucky’s chest, smiling around his wrinkles. It only grows when Bucky says nothing. “Aren’t you going to say thank you, James? I just gave you a compliment.”

A test. Four years ago, Bucky would have stayed insolent and silent. Now he knows better. “Thank you,” he says quietly.

Alex’s wrinkled hand slides down Bucky’s chest, resting just barely above his small, omega cock. “Just remember . . . I could make an exception. Pull you out of the examinations today, let you stay here. Maybe for good.”

And that’s what it comes down to, Bucky knows.
He can stay here, with the known evil, maybe even get bonded to Alex if he could force himself to accept the bite. He can spend the rest of his life in this house, watching over other omegas, maybe making their lives a bit easier, even if his own is hell.

Owned by Alexander Pierce.

Fucked by Alexander Pierce.

God forbid, *bred* by Alexander Pierce.

And hope he dies sooner rather than later.

Or, he can face the unknown evil, and pray it’s not any worse. “I . . . want to see, I think. Before I decide. Just once.” He tries to keep his voice meek, innocent, docile.

Alex smiles indulgently. “Of course. This will be a good experience for you, I think—give you a taste of what the world has to offer.” His tone is sickly sweet, but something in it tells Bucky that, whatever the world has to offer, Alex believes it to be horrible.

He has no idea whether the old man is right or not.

"...not settled with taming your alpha nature? Ready to embrace your instincts and claim a true mate? Apply at your local clinic to have your name added to the registrar for federal mating services. After a few short tests you may be eligible! Call 1-800-445-4455 or ask your doctor for details..."

They aren’t lined up like for an auction, one small mercy. They’re sent to rooms. Rooms with two betas each, to oversee the examination, except for Bucky. Bucky gets two betas and one alpha—Rumlow.
He’s not sure whether to feel insulted or complimented that they trust him so little.

When the first alpha is led in, Bucky’s spine immediately stiffens. He can smell the scent immediately, cut grass and old wood and smoked meat. Rumlow and the other security alphas take suppressants, so he’s only had Alex’s weak scent to compare. This alpha is male, and middle-aged. His eyes walk up and down Bucky’s bare body immediately, looking slightly miffed.

“It’s a he,” the alpha points out. How observant. “How old is this one?”

“18, sir.” A beta answers.

“Hmm. Still just looks like a beta. I want to see him present.”

The betas nod, looking pointedly at Bucky. He scowls and does nothing. Rumlow raises an eyebrow, taking one step forward. “Now, omega,” he says in a firm, alpha voice, and to his secret shame Bucky’s resistance pools into jelly. That tone vibrates straight into his bones, almost forcing them to move. He turns around on the examination bench, getting on all fours before reaching back and tugging his thighs wider. Feeling cool air exposed to his small hole.

“Can I touch?”

“No,” Rumlow growls, and Bucky fights the urge to shiver. The other alpha growls back, and suddenly aggressive tension mounts in the room. The betas start up their calming coos, probably getting in between the two alphas, and Bucky is shaking like a leaf but otherwise frozen in his position.

Finally the alphas calm. Even with a suppressed scent, Rumlow seems to have won the silent clash of wills. “No matter, then,” the other alpha says with a huff. “I like females better anyway.”

He leaves, and there’s still sixteen more alphas to go.

The next six out of ten ask Bucky to present again, and Rumlow has to make him every time, but it otherwise goes smoothly. They’re mostly young, with the occasional middle-aged one, usually male with the occasional female. Here because they signed up, or because the DPF determined
their sperm count meant they must choose an omega. Talking over him and about him to the betas, commenting on his figure like he’s a prize horse. They all leave with little interest, considering he’s not the ideal omega. The only thing really going for him is his fertility.

Bucky thinks of Alex and his future, and can’t be sure whether he’s grateful.

Then the last alpha enters. Blond, muscular. Pleasing face. But he looks tired, Bucky notices next, not excited and full of energy like the others. He hardly looks up at Bucky before speaking.

“How fertile is this one?” he asks the beta, who looks at her chart.

“The most fertile one we have. Estimated 43% chance of pregnancy during each heat,” she explains.

His eyes shoot up in surprise, and Bucky fights the urge to snort. “Oh,” the alpha says eloquently, looking over Bucky finally. “You’re the one they wanted me to see.”

“Excuse me?” Rumlow says, looking both confused and irritated. Bucky can relate.

Then, unlike any alphas Bucky knows, the man blushes. He looks down, clearly uncomfortable, before he says, “I have to mate with a highly fertile omega. Since I’m a . . . very fertile alpha. DPF policy, and all that.”

Bucky’s never heard of such a thing; then again he’s never heard too much about how the DPF dictate alphas. He wasn’t aware they had such specific restrictions.

“What’s your name?” the alpha says, seeming to have gained back his courage.

Bucky glances at the betas, unsure of whether to reply. Is it against the rules, or were the other alphas just too big of knotheads to ask him questions themselves? He could simply not answer. Or just lie. “James,” he replies in a decisive moment. Not a lie, not close to the truth. But then the alpha smiles, eyes blue and crinkling, and Bucky almost regrets it just for that.

“I’m Steve,” he says, holding out a hand. Bucky shakes it, searching for his old manners from childhood even if this omega house has neglected them. “Nice to meet you.”
“Uh. Yeah,” he replies eloquently. The room is overpowered by too much alpha scent, but closer now, Bucky can smell him. Steve scents like spring air, like lavender and wood polish. Tame and good.

“How does this work? If I’d like to be put on his list?” Steve turns to ask the betas. The male beta snorts, not even attempting to cover it.

“You’d be the first on it,” he says, and Steve’s eyes widen.

“Oh,” he says, a slightly-endearing look of confusion on his face. “Because of my fertility rate?”

“Because you’re the only one interested,” Bucky says bluntly.

Steve looks shocked.

“You can discuss the legal matters with Director Pierce,” the woman beta says, leading him out. Steve looks over his shoulder, shoots Bucky a hesitant smile, before the door is shut behind them.

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The Greater 'O' Archive

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Question: Hey how did everyone adjust to leaving their orefs? I just got matched with this alpha named Derek. he's okay, and it's great to be online, but I really REALLY miss my friends back at my oref.--bringitbitch

Comments:

avaloner9: sorry, what's a 'oref'???

greatomod: It's a sort of acronym for Omega Residential Facility. Mostly people in the western US use it, while 'omega house' is the term the rest of the country uses.

avaloner9: lol too much slang happens in the west, i can't keep up ;,,,D

pinkyknot: @bringitbitch it sucks. sorry to say this, really am, but you probably won't find
your friends again. the original 'The Great 'O' Archive' got taken down for fuck's sake. social media would really be the only way to find them, and the FCC is pulling excuses out of their asses to keep discussions even like this to a minimum. god forbid omegas get any rights once they leave those hellholes. even alphas are annoyed.

**imzzz:** I know I'm going to get shot down in this kind of forum, BUT AS AN ALPHA I really would advise you ask your alpha Derek. Omegas thrive when they have community (exhibit a, my mate on this site and others). Even if you can't find your old friends--unfortunately some alphas restrict their omega's access to the internet if they're total knotheads--MAKE NEW FRIENDS. Welcome to the forum :)

**pinkyknot:** wow. finally an alpha knows what's up. Listen to this guy, @bringitbitch

**imzzz:** I'M A GUUUUURRRLLL.

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Bucky and the rest of the eligible omegas are finally allowed to eat, then. They get their uniforms to put on, given a pot of oatmeal to share. The mess room is quiet, all the younger omegas long gone and learning in classes at the moment. Bucky moves his spoon through the lops of food without any appetite.

“What happened?” Natasha asks, kicking him from where she sits across the table.

“What happened?” Natasha asks, kicking him from where she sits across the table.

“Nothing, really,” he shrugs, and at her glare elaborates, “just one alpha interested.”

“Were they nasty?” she asks.

“No. He was . . . fine,” he admits.

“Better than Pierce?” she presses, asking the true question.

And the answer? He has no fucking clue. Sure, Steve seemed like a nice enough alpha, given the circumstances, but he could change tune the second they are alone. He is tall, strong, young. Probably successful, probably sees himself as high above the likes of James Barnes. Probably would be right.

“I don’t know,” he answers honestly. “Any *not* interested in you?”
She rolls her eyes, but Natasha can’t hide many things from him. Her smirk turns down ever-so-slightly as she nods. “Just one, I wasn’t fertile enough. The rest all seemed very interested.”

“Which one do you hope for?” he asks.

Before she can answer a gentle voice interrupts, “Whichever one I choose for her, I’m sure?”

“Of course Mr. Pierce,” she says sweetly, looking behind Bucky. He can’t make himself turn and see Alex, but the man puts a hand on his shoulder anyway.

“The DPF agent is adamant we give you up, James,” he says close to his ear. “Something about high compatibility. Come to my office, so we can discuss.”

Bucky numbly gets up, leaving his untouched plate, and lets Alex herd him by the small of his back up to the director’s office room. Lets him lead Bucky to the love-seat and sit next to him. Alex puts a hand on his cheek, thumb rubbing against his lips.

Bucky jerks away.

He immediately regrets it. Alex never minds, when he does reject the old man’s advances. After a few years he’s started to believe Alex even likes it, hopes for it. Feeds off of Bucky’s obstinance. Which is why he keeps his reactions to a minimum—less encouragement.

This time Alex smiles, putting his hand on the nape of Bucky’s neck, right where his scent glands are, and squeezes. Hard. Bucky manages to only let out a squeak. “You smell so lovely. They say that’s a sign—of fertility, I mean. And the DPF agent says you are too precious to be given to just anyone. The state needs to be populated, and your genes can’t be wasted. Not now, when the chance for children is at a mere 5% per mated pair nationally.”

“Sir?” Bucky asks, trying to stay docile. Meek. Not letting the gears turn in his head yet, where this man could see.

“They want you mated with Steven Grant Rogers. He was the last alpha you saw, almost as fertile as you. He lives in New York, somewhere. A nice, private penthouse. He designs websites and paints—not a very alpha-like activity, but then you’re not much of an omega in action either, are
you? He’d breed you. I think the state will demand at least six pups from you, but it could be more.”

Bucky stared at him, uncomprehending. Six pups? Six?

“They’ll monitor you, but after that it might be less.” Alex cocks his head, looking down at Bucky with a sad, fatherly expression. “What do you have to say?”

“How long?” Bucky blurts out. Before he is mated, bonded, bred and expected to have six little ones. Before he is monitored, prodded, examined and birthed for the rest of his life. “How long before I leave?” he asks instead.

Alex slaps him. Bucky lets his body move, doesn’t fight the way his neck whips to the side. It just puts extra kinks in it, he’s found. He also keeps his head down, doesn’t make eye contact. Doing so just encourages another hit.

And God knows Alexander Pierce likes encouragement.

“After all I’ve done for you, that’s all you have to say? No thank yous? No goodbyes? Nothing but more insolence from the boy I’ve loved and raised all these years?”

And fucked. You forgot fucked, Bucky thinks.

Luckily Rumlow knocks on the door, and Alex scowls before opening it and barking, “What?”

“Miss Hill asked that James be brought down, sir,” Rumlow says, looking slightly taken aback. It’s easy to forget, of course, that Alex is an alpha when he hardly scents like one at all. But his voice can still carry that edge to it, when he wants. Bucky would know.

“Take him, then,” Alex scoffs, and storms out. Rumlow looks at Bucky with raised eyebrows, but only silently leads him down to the main lobby of the omega house. Just like that, Bucky is walking away from Alexander Pierce. He doesn’t even have to run.

Steve and a woman in a stiff blouse and skirt sit waiting. They both stand as he’s led down the staircase, Steve shifting from foot to foot nervously. The woman gives him a professional smile.
“James Barnes, my name is Maria Hill,” she says as she approaches, hand outstretched. Bucky is quicker to shake it this time, smiling back wanly. “I’m an agent representing the United States Department of Population and Fertility, under the borough where you’ll be living with your future mate.”

Steve’s coloring heightens again at that, Bucky notices, and for some reason it relieves him. “Okay,” he nods, wondering why this is important.

“I’ll be overseeing your case. Mating, bonding, breeding, etc.,” she continues briskly. “It’s important this happens without delay. I’ll drive you and Mr. Rogers to his home, where you’ll at least start the mating process. Do you know when your next heat is?”

“Uhh. December 14th? 13th? Somewhere around there.” Bucky bites his lip, avoiding looking at Steve while talking about this. Something tells him the alpha is blushing even harder.

“Good,” she nods, pulls out her phone. “I’ll put that in my calendar. Make sure to complete the bonding then,” she tells Steve, who is indeed looking redder, and then turns to Rumlow. “We have his belongings in the car. Is there anything else?”

Rumlow shrugs. “Mr. Pierce didn’t say anything.”

“Great, then we can get going,” she says, and begins heading for the door. Bucky blanches.

“Wait!” he says before he can stop himself. Miss Hill looks back, looking alarmed. “Sorry, can I just . . . my friend, Natasha. She’ll kill me if I don’t—”

“Oh course!” Steve interjects, looking mildly horrified.

“Any goodbyes are allowed, of course,” Miss Hill recovers.

Just then Natasha is rushing down the stairs, and Bucky immediately runs to meet her halfway, not missing the look of relief that flashes on her face before he pulls her into his arms. She mumbles, “Thought I’d missed you,” into his neck, nuzzling his scent gland with her nose.
Bucky shudders, wondering how he’ll survive without her. Without her silent love, her deadpan humor, her easy understanding. Her soft affection, underneath that stony exterior.

“It’s going with them,” he says back, into her curly red hair. He feels her body shake, just once.

“I’ll find you,” she promises, and pulls back to hold his face between her hands. “I will, James. I swear. This isn’t goodbye.”

Then she releases him, and Bucky is led by Ms. Hill out the door, out of the house he’s spent almost every second of the past six years in. It looks so much smaller, so much less significant as it shrinks in the car’s back window.

He’s not sure if where he’s going will be any better.
WHY AO SEX REALLY IS SO, SO MUCH BETTER by Sarah Hodgekiss

Sex is one of our biggest preoccupations — specifically knotting, natural or chemically-induced. But until recently, exactly what happens in the brain during this most intimate of sexual experiences was something of a mystery to scientists.

Now, however, American researchers have uncovered what goes on in an omega and alpha’s heads while knotting.

Scientists from Rutgers University, New Jersey, used scans to monitor their brains before, during orgasm, and after, finding that different brain parts are activated when various parts of the body are aroused. Findings showed up to 30 different parts of the brain are activated, including those responsible for emotion, touch, joy, satisfaction and memory.

They also discovered that sexual arousal numbs the omega nervous system to such an extent that an omega feels little to no pain — only pleasure. For an alpha, sexual arousal increases their testosterone levels higher than any other designation.

Another key hormone released during sex is oxytocin, also known as the ‘cuddle hormone’. This lowers our defenses and makes us trust people more, says Dr Arun Ghosh, a GP specializing in sexual health at the Spire Liverpool Hospital.

It’s also the key to bonding, as it increases levels of empathy. Omegas produce more of this hormone than any other designation, although it’s not clear why, and this means they are more likely to bond after sex. But for both omegas and alphas, the ten to forty minute knotting period includes an overwhelming release of oxytocin and dopamine. Unlike after the peak of normal intercourse, an alpha does not produce nearly any prolactin when knotting, as an omega's heat demands the alpha's sex drive levels to remain high . . . (continued on next page)

Miss Hill drops them off in the city—Brooklyn, Bucky recognizes, though it’s a different part of town then where he grew up—and Steve awkwardly walks up the steps with Bucky’s small suitcase before turning. Bucky hasn’t moved, staring up at the brick building.

His new omega house.

“James . . . are you—?” Steve asks after a few minutes, hesitant. Bucky is surprised to see concern on the alpha’s face, his heart speeding up at the thought he has to live with this alpha now.
Should he fight back, when they get inside? Should he run? But where would he go? Bucky has no idea if his parents still live in his childhood home, or where Rebecca ended up. He has no clue if they would even take him in. What if they sent him right back to this alpha, and Bucky was beaten and hurt worse than what Alex did? Is obstinance for the sake of his pride worth the consequences?

He forces a small smile onto his lips.

“Fine. Sorry,” he says, belatedly, ducking his head in what should be a pleasing move to an alpha. Decided, now. He follows the man through the main room to the elevator meekly. They don’t say a word as Steve presses the button for the top level, waiting in silence.

“We can get more things for you, later today if you want,” the alpha says as they enter his apartment.

‘Later’ because right now they have to fuck. Bucky nods, looking around and wondering how exactly they’re being monitored. Just by Ms. Hill? Recording devices? Hidden cameras?

The apartment is nice. Open, big kitchen, comfy rather than stylish furniture in the living area. Lots of windows. Two doors on the left wall, open and revealing glimpses of a large bed and the other a painting studio.

So Bucky says, “it’s nice,” before turning back to Steve. The other man has set down the luggage and is standing a little closer than he was, which allows Bucky to be a little braver for what he’s about to do.

He’s decided.

He grabs the alpha’s shoulders, and plasters his body against the hard line of Steve’s. He latches his mouth on the plush lips of the other man, and lets his biology do the rest.

His biology is a little fucked up, because he has no idea how to kiss Steve, but the man makes a surprised sound anyway, quickly returning in kind. He backs Bucky up to a wall, taking over the kiss with his tongue, and Bucky allows him in with silent relief. It’s not so bad. He’ll have to allow a lot more in soon enough, anyhow.
At least he was right in guessing that Steve would want enthusiasm. The alpha’s skin is flushed and his eyes look darker every time they part for air. Bucky’s tactic clearly worked. He’s been pretty good at reading people thus far in life—that Natasha loved him maybe more than an omega should love another omega, that Rumlow hated his job, that Alex wanted him to protest when he mounted him.

“Have you done this before?” Steve asks against his skin a minute later, though his voice doesn’t sound judgmental. He starts sucking on the skin behind Bucky’s ear.

Bucky lies anyway, trying to convince himself. “No.”

“I have, but not with an omega,” Steve admits, pulling back and looking a little red at the cheeks now. It might still be from excitement, however, excitement Bucky can feel against his thigh.

“Come on then,” he says, and tugs Steve so he’s walking him backward toward the bedroom. “We can learn together.”

It’s the right thing to say. Steve nods eagerly, and when they reach the bed Bucky turns to be the one beneath. But Steve seems happy with it, crawling over him and immediately mouthing at his neck, at the scent glands there. His hands move across Bucky’s body, and Bucky is surprised to feel a small amount of slick between his legs. It’s only happened during his heats, before this.

Bucky fears, for a panicked moment, what Steve will do when he smells it.

Then Steve rips his own shirt off, throwing it across the room, and grabs for Bucky’s. But Bucky is a bit too busy staring to cooperate. The alpha has a chest straight out of some sculpture, fit into broad shoulders and a very narrow waist. He’s not sure where to look first.

“Sorry. You’re very . . .” he says when Steve gives him a questioning look. “Strong.”

Steve’s mouth quirks up, just a little, before saying, “So are you.” He feels down Bucky’s chest under his shirt for emphasis, and Bucky swallows, wondering if that’s a good thing to the man or not. But when his shirt is off the alpha starts kissing up and down his chest, so it can’t be too bad.
Eventually they’re just down to their boxers, and Bucky is still wondering if Steve can smell his slick, his arousal. If he’ll laugh or not. Alex tended to laugh—of course, he thought Bucky in heat was hilarious in general, loved joining him in his heat quarantined room just to see the omega go wild. Never did much then, just teased.

No, he kept it in his pants until the heat passed, when Bucky was over-sensitive and sore.

Steve pauses, leaning back a little, and Bucky snaps back into the present. The alpha is frowning down at him, concerned. He can probably smell whatever Bucky’s feeling in the air. “Just nervous, sorry,” he says, putting his hand on the back of Steve’s neck to guide him back down. Steve lets him, but stops short of his lips.

“We can stop—”

Bucky pushes his mouth against his so the next words are lost, hoping to make his answer clear. This is his new life. He is not going back to the omega house.

Steve rubs their erections together, and through the fabric Bucky can feel the slight bulge of a growing knot. His hole leaks more slick, responding eagerly. Huh. A good thing, considering Bucky will need it. This will be a first time in a lot of ways—Pierce never had anything more than the slightest bump.

They shuck off their underwear finally, and Steve sucks in a breath as he looks down between Bucky’s legs. Bucky tries to keep his legs from snapping together, but still remind himself that this isn’t Pierce. Alex wanted resistance; this Steve wants eagerness. And Bucky needs to give him what he wants, unlike with Pierce. At least Bucky’s body has complied in that respect. He still needs to train his mind.

Steve scoots back and reaches for a pillow, propping it under Bucky’s hips. At this angle he’s as exposed as he could be on his front; luckily the alpha is busy looking down at Bucky’s crotch to notice his carefully blank face. It cracks immediately, however, when he feels a tentative lick on the tip of his cock. Then again, a longer swipe, and then one lower on his small balls.

“Steve,” Bucky says, wide-eyed at the ceiling. He’s not sure what to do with the sensation, how to react. Steve squeezes his hip with a hand before traveling lower, licking up the slick that glistens on his inner thighs. Bucky can’t hold back a groan, feeling more pulse from his hole at the sensation.
“Beautiful,” Steve says, and then licks straight at Bucky’s hole. He’s at it for a minute, and Bucky lets himself keep moaning when the alpha still makes no comment or jibe about the slutty noises. Then Steve leans back and starts prodding at his hole with a finger, sliding it in, then two. Bucky hisses, the feeling intense in a different way with slick to ease the passage.

Steve leans over him, and Bucky grabs him by the shoulders, willing his hole to stay relaxed.

“Go ahead,” he says, and Steve starts kissing him as he lines up, head nudging at the entrance. Then he pushes in, inch by inch, swallowing Bucky’s gasps with his mouth.

Steve is much bigger than Alex ever was, and Bucky’s starting to feel very lucky that his body responded to Steve like it did. He can’t imagine how painful it would be otherwise, as the alpha starts moving slowly in and out. Alex liked him dry, liked to feel him flinch and clench. Steve seems to like the easy glide as much as Bucky does. Plus, Steve is good at distracting him with kisses and the like, hands threading into his hair. He can focus on the new sensation, the new pleasure, and the pleased, aroused alpha scent in the air.

Bucky feels a small shudder go down his back as Steve picks up the pace at a new angle, hitting something, and he fights the urge to grab the alpha by the ass and make him go harder. Steve might welcome it, but being pushy is different than being eager and it’s a gamble Bucky doesn’t feel lucky enough to make right now. He’s gotten lucky enough as it is. He just lets himself moan, hopes that keeps encouraging the alpha like it has, and is rewarded with an even faster pace.

He spills onto his own belly, and looks down in shock. Steve groans and thrusts faster, latching onto his neck. Three thrusts later Bucky winces as the alpha’s knot finally pushes in, and Steve stills. Bucky feels it pulsing inside him, another entirely new sensation coupled by the old familiar one: a hard bite to his neck.

It won’t take, not unless he’s in the midst of heat, but Bucky’s stomach still flips at the feel of bonding hormones entering his bloodstream, a temporary euphoria masking the pain of the knot and the bite. Steve licks over it as he settles, still stuck inside him.

“Mmmmm,” he says against Bucky’s skin, rocking forward once. Bucky sucks in a breath as the knot nudges that spot inside him. “That was so good.”

“Yeah,” Bucky says, nodding. He stares up at the ceiling over Steve’s shoulder, wondering what will happen now. Pierce never stayed in him or in the room at all much longer after this part. He’s also a little out of breath, still, being crushed by the huge man.
Steve senses this just barely a second after, and immediately shifts so he’s leaning on his hands. “Do you want to move to our sides? I’m . . . not sure how long this will take.” He blushes, and Bucky decides it looks rather good on him.

“Sure, sorry,” Bucky says, letting Steve shift them over. In this position Steve ends up with his head right over Bucky’s heart, which Bucky hopes stops beating so irregularly. This is hardly the hardest fuck he’s had to endure, even with Steve’s cock so much bigger.

It actually might be one of the easiest.

“You don’t have to apologize, you know,” Steve says after a minute of silence. Bucky starts, looking down at the alpha’s blond head in confusion.

“What?”

Steve looks up at him with kind eyes. “Whenever I say anything . . . slightly commanding, I guess. You keep apologizing, like you think you should have read my mind.” The alpha chuckles, and Bucky stiffens as it does interesting things inside him. “I don’t expect that.”

“. . . Okay,” Bucky replies, not sure what else he can say besides ‘Sorry’ again. He hasn’t really noticed himself doing it. But Steve nods, seeming fine with the short answer. He starts rocking, undulating his hips so his knot shifts inside Bucky. He doesn’t stop, starts thrusting ever-so-slightly so that his knot catches on Bucky’s rim.

Bucky can’t help but spill again a few minutes later.

Finally Steve’s knot gets small enough he can pull free, and Bucky accidentally lets out a hiss. He freezes.

Steve immediately says, “Sorry, sorry! Sorry, it’s out now, sorry.”

He stiffens further when Steve leaves, wondering what he’s going to come back with, but it’s only a damp towel he proceeds to wipe Bucky down with. Doesn’t like things messy, then, Bucky takes mental note. But apparently doesn’t get too upset at a lack of enthusiasm. Also noted.
“Are you alright?” he asks softly, joining Bucky back on the bed and moving him to rest against the alpha’s chest. Bucky knows immediately the answer he wants to hear; luckily, it also happens to be not far from the truth.

“I’m fine,” he nods against the warm skin, and on a whim puts a gentle kiss right there. The alpha rumbles, but it feels like a happy sound. Bucky stops himself from making one in return. He’s rocked to sleep by the up and down movement of Steve’s chest, body spent but unhurt.

CASE NAME: UNITED STATES VS. NEWBURY 318

NO. 434. ARGUED FEBRUARY 16, 1968. - DECIDED JUNE 12, 1968. - 358 F.2D 557, AFFIRMED.

THE COURT AGREES WITH LESSER’S RULING. REAFFIRMING THE COURT DECISION FOR US VS. HOLMES (1956) THE DATE OF MATEHOOD OCCURRING PRIOR TO INTERNMENT, PETITIONER ALICE NEWBURY (Ω) HELD NO RIGHTS OVER THE ACTIONS OF HER MATED JOHN NEWBURY (α). BETWEEN PRESENTING AND MATEHOOD AN OMEGA HAS RIGHTS GRANTED BY THE OPF, WHICH ARE THEN ENTRUSTED TO THE MATED AFTER A BITE TAKES. AFTER AN EXAMINATION GIVEN BY EXPERT DERMATOLOGIST MICHAEL BENNION, THE BITE IS DETERMINED TO BE EIGHT WEEKS OLD. TWO WITNESSES, MARY KEY AND PHIL HARPER, ENCOUNTERED ALICE NEWBURY AT DATES AFTER THIS PERIOD BUT BEFORE HER INTERNMENT (9/12/67) (9/17/67). THE COURT DETERMINES JOHN NEWBURY TO BE WITHIN HIS RIGHTS AND OUTSIDE OF ANY VIOLATION OF RIGHTS OF HIS MATED. CASE CLOSED.

A different kind of rumble wakes him. Growling, loud and obnoxious and demanding. A large hand curves over Bucky’s stomach, and his eyes shoot open, remembering where he is. Who’s underneath him.

“Sorry,” Bucky says, for both waking Steve with his hunger and for being hungry in general. But Steve only laughs into his hair, shifting in the soft sheets.

“That’s alright. You need the rest, I think.” There's a bit of contemplative silence before the alpha speaks again. "What was your last name, before you were at the omega house?"
An innocent question, if abrupt. "Barnes," Bucky says, and feels Steve's chest move against them as the man sighs, long and heavy.

"Mine is Rogers," he says, slowly and full of something. Bucky nods, remembering Alex say so. But Steve waits so long Bucky wonders if he's missed something. Did he not hear the man right? Is this a test? Bucky can't fathom the right answer. But a second later his stomach growls, breaking the moment, and Steve motions for them to sit up. He stands, and Bucky sleepily watches him rummage through a large nearby dresser. After a minute he throws Bucky a plain shirt and sweatpants. “Lunch is a good idea. What are you hungry for?”

"Uhmm . . ." Bucky thinks back to his childhood as he dresses. Cheeseburgers were always a winner. Mac’n’cheese, of course, and greasy chips. Rebecca loved popsicles more than life; he would hide the blue ones just to provoke her, insisting they all tasted the same so it didn’t matter. His mom had a famous stew over rice Bucky can’t really remember the taste of, only that he burned his tongue many times trying to take a bite too soon. But none of this is very helpful considering Bucky has no clue what Steve wants him to be hungry for. And he’s still looking at Bucky expectantly, not offering any opinion on the matter.

“I don’t mind,” Bucky shrugs. “I mean . . . we didn’t really choose what we were served at the omega house. So.”

Steve immediately brightens. “That was then. You live here now, and here you eat what you like. C’mon, I’ll show you.”

So Steve bounds out of the room, leading Bucky by the hand to the kitchen. It’s themed blue with pale cabinets and silver appliances, organized and immaculate. Bucky takes care to notice the order of everything, where Steve keeps the vegetables versus the cereal versus the peanut butter. There’s also a little basket with take-out menus ordered neatly inside, and Steve flips through a few showing Bucky what they could order. Bucky keeps shrugging, and Steve seems to be getting impatient, but Bucky has no idea if faking an opinion would be better or worse for his situation.

Eventually Steve leans back against the counter, sighs and says, “Sorry. I’m not trying to overwhelm you, you should just . . . know you can eat whenever and whatever, alright? Kitchen is free reign.”

Bucky tries to relax his face when he smiles and nods.
Having sex seems easy compared to this, he thinks as Steve serves them both sandwiches. Steve is staring studiously down at his sandwich, and Bucky can’t stop shaking a leg. The silence is loaded. Steve clears his throat awkwardly, looking up at Bucky with a hesitant smile, but Bucky doesn’t smile in time. The other man quickly looks back down, and Buckey almost wants to suggest going back to bed himself.

But after lunch Steve seems to have gotten his bearings back, brightly deciding to show Bucky the one other unexplored room: Steve’s studio. The alpha explains how he mostly works from home, that he plays music from his computer but has an extra if Bucky wants to get on the internet. He explains how he usually goes on an hour-long jog every morning at 5 and gets groceries once a week, but otherwise has no definitive schedule. Bucky listens attentively, in the case he’s ever tested on it. But then there’s apparently nothing left to explain, and Steve shifts awkwardly for a few minutes.

“I’m not sure what you want to do,” he says, but it almost sounds like a question. Bucky resists the urge to chew his lip, at a loss of how to answer. Is he supposed to know? “So . . . uh, here.”

He gives Bucky the laptop, showing him a few different websites and his account to read books online. Useful. Kind, even, considering he could just chain Bucky to his bed and keep him there for his pleasure only. This is a way to pass the time.

“I’m sorry about this morning,” he says out of the blue, after showing Bucky Netflix.

“What?” Bucky blurs before he can stop himself. He does stop himself from meeting the alpha’s eyes, though.

Steve sighs. “We shouldn’t have just jumped into that. I don’t . . . I don’t really know you anym—at all. And you definitely don’t know me.”

Bucky briefly panics, but Steve doesn’t sound like he’s regretting Bucky, at least. He probably needs more eagerness. Bucky will work on that. He can, he isn’t a lost cause, even if he acted like one to discourage Alex.

Now he needs to encourage. “How old are you, then?”

“Eighteen.”

“Right,” Steve nods, looking down. “What’s your favorite thing to do?”

It should be an easy question, Bucky knows. But he’s not had much time for leisure the past six years. When he did, the same board games and books got old pretty quickly. “Running,” he decides on, thinking of how he used to run the track in middle grade and play chase outside the omega house when they were allowed some fresh air.

Steve smiles, though it looks a bit sad. “Yeah? Well why don’t you join me on my jogs? It’s good exercise, too.”

“At five in the morning?”

For a split second Bucky freezes, scared how Steve will react to such obstinacy. But he needn’t have worried again, it seems. Steve just laughs. "Yeah, I know," he says good-naturedly.

"I don't have shoes for it anyway," Bucky points out, glad for the excuse even if he's turning down exercise. But exercise with Steve sounds stressful, not relaxing like it usually is.

"Right! We have a lot of stuff to get," Steve says brightly, getting exactly the wrong idea. "The essentials at least, today. You can borrow a pair of mine for now. They might be a little big." He grabs a jacket from a line of pegs next to the door, taking down a leather one and handing it to Bucky. "It's a bit chilly," he explains when Bucky looks at it in confusion.

"I'm . . . coming with you?" he dares to ask. But there can't be anything else Steve is implying, can there?

"Oh. Well," Steve says, at a loss for words. "You always will, or uh, can. I mean, if you want," he finally manages, leaving Bucky as confused as ever. Because what does it matter what he wants?

"Okay," Bucky responds, chewing on his lip, and after a moment takes the jacket still outstretched. Steve's smile comes back like the sun breaking cloud cover; Bucky must have chosen correctly.
But then they're outside, walking, and Bucky is on a sidewalk surrounded by people for the first time in six years, and he's not sure he can do this. They haven't even made it to the first store when his breaths start to come in unevenly, his heart rate too fast and his vision swirling.

"Bucky?" he hears distantly, and then large, warm hands cupping the back of his neck. "Bu—I mean, James, James can you look at me?"

Bucky finally manages to focus in, and a second later recognizes Steve's concerned, very-close face. They are pressed against a stone wall, out of pedestrian traffic, but Bucky still feels like the whole world is looking at him.


Steve's concern doesn't fade. "I'm sorry, I should've known, we can come back later—"

"No!" Bucky protests automatically, and almost flinches at the surprise on Steve's face. But it doesn't twist into anger at Bucky's outburst, just confusion. "Sorry. No, I want to keep going, if, if that's okay."

"Sure, of course," Steve replies, backing up a little. He frowns, looking Bucky up and down, before suddenly brightening like he seems to when he has an idea. "Here," he says, and grabs Bucky's cold hand. "Let's try this."

For the rest of the walk and all throughout their shopping Steve keeps a grounding hand somewhere on Bucky, and chatters up a storm about such inconsequential things Bucky forgets them seconds later. But it does help him to stay focused and in the now, even if the touch of the alpha constantly on him also makes him feel . . . possessed. A bit like a pet. Then again, that's exactly what he is.

Steve buys him clothing, shoes, winter gear, toiletries, and any other small thing he can think of until there's literally no arm space left on either of them. It's long, and exhausting, and by the time they're done Bucky is ready to collapse. Steve seems to get that, whistling for a taxi, and takes everything out of Bucky's hands to load all the shopping bags in the trunk. The old beta man driving the taxi watches them with interest.

"Just got your omega, son? That's exciting," the driver says when they're both in and driving for a bit, and something unreadable flashes across Steve's face before he replies,
"He's not mine."

Bucky looks over at him in shock at the same time the driver says, "Oh? You just helping out a friend's mate?" The old beta man's eyes flicker between them incredulously.

"He's a person. And he's also right here," Steve says defiantly, eyes flashing. Something about his righteous tone almost sounds familiar.

"Steve," Bucky says quietly.

"Don't get testy, I'm not trying to claim him or nothin'—" the driver replies.

"Stop the car," Steve growls. The driver gapes from his rear view mirror. "I said stop the car." They've only made it a few blocks, but the old beta man pulls over, looking a bit flabbergasted. Bucky can relate. Steve slaps down a few dollar bills and gets out, Bucky following to get their things from the trunk. They really do have too much stuff to be walking.

When the taxi pulls away from the curb, all of Steve's fury seems to deflate; he sighs and finally looks over at Bucky. "I know you think I was being unreasonable. But you shouldn't be treated that way."

Bucky frowns. "But he didn't say anything rude—"

"He didn't even speak to you!" Steve explodes with, and Bucky feels his bones vibrate with the alpha tone he can hear in it. The anger radiating from Steve makes Bucky's stomach clench and his head ache; he flinches away, not noticing at first how Steve's face has fallen.

"I'm sorry, I'm not mad at you," he says, this time in a gentle, soothing tone. "But I can't stand . . . I won't stand for people treating you and me differently."

*But we are different,* Bucky might have protested if he wasn't in his current, survival state. He just nods, looking at the ground, not seeing Steve approach until the alpha's already wrapping thick arms around him.
"I won't yell like that again," Steve murmurs into his hair. "I didn't mean to make you scared. I swear. Please tell me how to fix this." Bucky lets himself lean into Steve, burying his head near the alpha's scent glands and taking in that soothing scent of lavender and wood polish. He tries not to imagine it, how the anger he's just seen a flash of could inflate, oppress, swallow Bucky whole. Steve seems so gentle, now.

"Get another cab?" Bucky suggests, and Steve barks a surprised laugh, pulling back with a smile.

"I can do that," he says, and turns around to start whistling for another. But he keeps one arm around Bucky's waist. Bucky lets him, and tries to convince himself that Steve lashing out then using soft, gentle tones isn't exactly like the behavior of Alexander Pierce.

Old Omegan Sayings:

"Gentility succeeds fragility."

"Love an alpha with your words, mate an alpha with your wild, tie an alpha with your neck, tame an alpha with your child."

"There is no ending without a beginning, but no beginning starts without an ending.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks to those who've commented/kudosed! Hope you're enjoying the story.

(Yes, I can't write a court decision to save my life. I tried ¯\_(ツ)_/¯ )
He keeps waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Bucky takes pride in being very, very good at reading people, but he’s not perfect. He knows that. If he was perfect, he would have foreseen that getting into trouble so often in class would make Alex take special notice of him. He would have seen the older omega boy, Pietro, was about to kill himself when his alpha was chosen for him. He would have realized Natasha was in love with him sooner.

After they ready for bed that first night Steve leans in to place a chaste goodnight kiss, but Bucky grabs him by the collar and deepens it. He lets out a small moan when Steve starts really kissing back, and the alpha slides one hand into his hair, the other down his lower back. "Can I...?" Steve whispers, hand barely tracing the top of Bucky's ass.

Bucky would laugh at such a rhetorical question, but he has a feeling Steve isn't joking. So he nods, and Steve grabs him there to pull their bodies flush against each other. Steve starts mouthing at the glands on Bucky's neck, and that's when his insides start twisting pleasantly. Bucky feels wet down there again, which is a huge relief, but also a turn on for Steve, apparently, because he doesn't pull away in disgust at the smell. He groans, squeezing Bucky's ass harder.

They fuck, and this time Steve wants to try an 'easier' position, which ends up being Bucky on his hands and his knees and the alpha mounting him. But Steve never gets nasty. Bucky comes with Steve's hand around his cock as the alpha fucks into him, and Steve groans, pushing in his knot as he does as well. Bucky winces a little, trying to slow his breathing as Steve maneuvers them on to
their sides, still connected.

Bucky falls asleep before the other man pulls out.

Their first week together continues in much the same fashion as the first day. Awkward silences, stilted conversation, many surprises, and lots of sex. Bucky doesn't even have to try hard to act eager for it, considering how much better it feels than with Alex. And Steve never calls Bucky names, or comments on his noises or body. He's not very vocal in general. He talks most beforehand and afterwards; “Do you want to?” and “Can I try this?” and “Did you like that?”

Bucky doesn’t really have to lie. Mostly because Steve asks if Bucky really wants to when he gets on his knees (the omega house taught him enough about oral sex) and wants to try things like biting his ear lobe a little, or getting him off with just his hand and fingers. Nothing scary, or hurtful, or humiliating.

And afterwards Steve talks about things: he likes it most when Bucky’s looking at him; he wants to know what Bucky wants; he’s worried because Bucky always winces when he pushes his knot in and Steve’s not sure how to make it go in easier. Bucky’s not sure there is a solution to that one, but he inwardly resolves to react as little as possible to the pain in the future. Not just to make Steve happy—Bucky would miss the feeling of his knot thick inside him.

Steve goes on his jogs; Bucky joins him after a few days despite the early hour, and enjoys the added exercise. Then they fuck, shower, and eat breakfast. In that order. Afterwards Steve goes into his studio where he paints, but also designs a lot of online sites and logos, which is where his primary income comes from. Bucky can either keep him company, read a book or some other quiet activity, or watch things on Steve’s laptop with earbuds in. At some point he makes lunch for them, picks one of the few rooms to clean, and then Steve joins him for dinner and the rest of the evening before they fuck again. Rinse, repeat.

Bucky learned a lot in the omega house. His education was centered mostly on the role of an omega in the home, how the Omega Protection Act has ensured they live safe, comfortable lives without a need for employment or practically anything but child-rearing. Bucky knows how to burp, change, feed, wash, and give CPR to a pup, he knows techniques for teething and toilet-training, but he doesn’t really have a hobby besides exercise. He knows how best to treat alphas, present himself, show submission, but Steve doesn’t seem to respond to that. He doesn’t say a word against any of it, of course, but Bucky’s not an idiot. In bed, Steve seems to like best when Bucky is . . . well, isn’t acting like a proper omega.

He takes to surfing the internet. It’s either changed in the past few years, or Bucky never noticed; but there are a few sites, however few, allowing people to interact, even a few that post on controversial topics. Bucky googles his parent’s names, and Rebecca’s, only a little disappointed when nothing fruitful comes up.
He’s not sure he would try to contact them anyway.

“Your friend,” Steve starts out of the blue over a bottle of wine one evening, and Bucky frowns in that polite way that doesn’t seem to upset him. “The red-haired omega?”

“Natasha,” Bucky confirms.

“Natasha. Right. Were you two close?” he asks hesitantly, and Bucky nods. “How close though? I mean . . . I mean, I smelled her a lot on you, the first few days you were here.”

It’s been two weeks. Bucky tries not to feel the sudden sense of loss that comes, when he didn’t know he smelled like her to begin with. “Yeah. We were.”

Steve doesn’t look like he’s done with the subject, but he doesn’t ask any further. Bucky’s not sure what to say. That he helped her through heats? Is that what Steve wants to know? He almost decides to say it, but what if that’s not what Steve is thinking at all? Then Bucky would just be making things worse.

They start out kissing slowly that night, sitting up in bed. Bucky starts sliding back, but Steve grabs him by the arm, falls onto the bed and pulls Bucky over him. “I want you inside me this time,” he whispers close to Bucky’s ear.

Bucky rears back immediately, blanching. Steve looks a little surprised, but also grimly satisfied.

“You’re in love with her,” he says, sitting up. Bucky’s in his lap, like this, and he has to stop himself from shrinking away.

“No.”

“Yes, you were, you smelled like her everywhere, you wouldn’t leave until you saw her. You were in love with an omega,” Steve says firmly, grimly. Bucky feels sick.
Should he keep denying it? Or give in, agree it was the truth? Which would be better for him, in the long run? Steve seems the type of guy to be set in his opinions, unless there is hard evidence to prove him wrong. Bucky has no such evidence.

But apparently his window to speak has closed. “James, it’s okay. Don’t look like that,” Steve says, putting a gentle hand against his cheek. Bucky closes his eyes, swallows, trying to focus on the texture of the palm: smooth, thick, large. Nothing like the papery, wrinkled ones that used to hurt him. “I don’t think there’s anything wrong about two omegas, together. It should be allowed. But I feel . . . horrible, knowing now you don’t even like alphas but were forced to be with one. I’m so sorry.”

That was . . . not what Bucky expected to hear. He’s still tensed for a blow. But Steve gently guides his head to the alpha’s shoulder, stroking his hair. Whispering “I’m so sorry,” again and again.

Maybe he should stop making expectations for himself regarding Steve. More often than not, they prove wrong.

“I love her,” he says, and he can feel Steve wince before nodding against his head. Bucky pulls back, trying to meet the alpha’s eyes. “But like . . . a close friend. I would help her through her heats, the best I could. I think she might have loved me the way you’re saying, but . . . it wasn’t like that, at least for me.”

Steve’s face is slowly morphing to confusion. “Oh. But just now, you—”

“I don’t want to. To, do that to you, I mean,” Bucky explains, but it comes out too honest. Too disgusted. Steve’s face switches from confusion to horror now, at the implication of Bucky’s words.

That fucking is something you do to someone, not with someone.

That fucking is not something you do to someone you care about.

(That Bucky cares about Steve?)

He tries to backtrack. “I mean—I’m not sure how, I haven’t, I just—”
Steve’s face is still horrified, hands pulling back, and Bucky has no idea how to fix this. He’s pretty sure he just undid every step of progress in their relationship, erased every moment of enthusiasm he gave Steve, because Bucky’s made it sound like he hated being on the receiving end.

He didn’t. Doesn’t. Bucky hated Alex fucking him, humiliating him, taunting him, but Steve? He is so good and kind, and all Bucky had to do was be eager. Can’t even get that right. A useless hole, as Alex called him, and Bucky's just proved him right.

“Bucky, if you don’t want to have sex,” Steve starts after too long, then hesitates. Obviously remembering that this isn’t just about them—that Ms Hill at the least is monitoring them. “We don’t have to right now. Just when you’re in heat. Alright? That’s our best chance at conceiving anyway.”

Bucky nods, because it sounds pretty much like an order, but bites down the “Sorry” that his instinct is begging him to say. It doesn’t matter. He’ll get what’s coming to him regardless.

“Okay,” Steve sighs, and turns down the bed to get to sleep. Maybe punishment will happen tomorrow. Bucky hovers uncertainly, wondering if he’s still allowed there. And if he is, how to get settled without Steve’s welcoming embrace. He eventually just sits on the edge and swings his legs on, curling up at the edge. Steve doesn’t say anything as he hits the lights.

Bucky doesn’t sleep at all.
The next few weeks are among the worst of Bucky’s life.
Worse than being taken to the omega house, maybe worse than his first few times with Alex, when his young hole was too small even for the old, incompetent alpha. Worse than when he got caught in Natasha’s quarantined room—Alex ordered Rumlow to beat her every day for a week for acting against her nature. For riding him, biting and dominating Bucky even in the midst of her heat.

It’s worse because for once in his life, Bucky has no fucking clue what he’s supposed to do.

For once, no one’s telling him. He still makes them lunch, helps with dinner. Reads series after series of books, finds a site to play puzzles on, watches all the best movies from the past six years. He even discovers a blogging site with discussions about omegas, omega houses, and what goes on in them. Mostly the demand for equal rights are coming from mated omegas, who are out of the omega houses and hate being unemployed, but there’s also discussion of heats. Of omegas dominating alphas instead. Of consent.

Bucky snaps the laptop shut when one post starts talking about sexual abuse in omega houses.

But for all that he’s staying busy, any time he so much as crosses paths with Steve there’s this high tension in the room, almost as bad as if they were two challenging alphas. Bucky doesn’t know what to do. Steve has yet to punish him, or touch him at all. It seems to him Steve was happier when he was fucking him, but Bucky knows if he tried to proposition the alpha it would get shot down.

He’s helpless. He’s failed. He’s going to be punished, maybe sent back to Alex. Only after being away from him for a month does Bucky realize how much he doesn’t want that. He’d do anything but go back to that face, that voice, that touch. Just the thought makes him nauseous.

But Bucky does like Steve’s face, Steve’s voice, Steve’s touch. Maybe because it’s so different—not just in his looks, but in his intent. Bucky wishes Steve would touch him again, even if it was in punishment.

At first he thinks maybe that’s the point. Steve’s punishing him by not touching him, or acknowledging his existence. But slowly he begins to wonder if Steve’s waiting for Bucky to make the first move, prove he wants to be touched again.

So one night he kisses Steve on the cheek while they’re making spaghetti. His heart is beating almost out of his chest when the alpha looks at him, startled—but then Steve blushes. Bucky decides that’s his favorite thing about him as Steve ducks his head and stirs the pasta. He does it again, every evening, and Steve keeps blushing but he stops ducking his head. He looks back at
Bucky with warmth, until one evening after Bucky’s pecked his cheek Steve grabs him by the neck and keeps him there to kiss Bucky’s cheek back.

There’s still a lot of silence, but it settles into something more comfortable. Steve makes no move to be intimate beyond the little kisses. Bucky figures Steve needs him to instigate, so he starts snuggling up to Steve at night, encouraging the alpha’s big arms to wrap around him under the guise, “It’s cold.”

Steve starts acting less guarded then, physically, more relaxed about touching Bucky. So Bucky goes in for the kill: he suggests they finish dinner with some wine, and on the couch leans in to give Steve a gentle, wine-tinted kiss.

They start slowly making out, Bucky leaning back to lay on the armrest with Steve over him. The alpha’s kisses are hesitant until Bucky bites, soothing with his tongue. Then Steve nudges with his own tongue, and Bucky moans, remembering Steve likes the sound, and lets him in. The simulated thrusting of the alpha’s tongue against Bucky’s makes his insides curl in arousal. He leans back, gasping, and guides the alpha down to his scent glands. Whenever Steve starts paying attention there Bucky always gets wet, and the smell of it makes Steve a goner.

Except Steve pulls back, frowning down at him, and Bucky feels his heart jump into his throat. “Why are you doing this?” he asks, then adds, “Tell me the truth.”

It’s an order.

“I want to stay here,” Bucky blurts out, knowing he shouldn’t. But he’ll beg if he has to. “I don’t want to go back.”

Steve makes a pained noise and pulls away, sitting at the far end of the couch, and Bucky’s heart plummets. He knows Steve wants enthusiasm, not desperation; it was a stupid thing to admit. And now he’s failed once again. He should have accepted Alex’s offer in the first place. Bucky was surely destined to suffer in that omega house for the rest of his life, considering he can’t even please the kindest man on earth.

Steve lifts his head from his hands slowly, distracting Bucky from his spiraling thoughts. The alpha’s eyes are red, but un-waveringly he says, “You don’t need to do this to stay.”

Bucky gapes at him. “But we haven’t—”

“You’re not. going. back.”
Tears brim over Bucky’s eyes. He hadn’t noticed them forming. The fear rooted in his heart is as present as ever, but hearing the words allow him at least to hope. Even if Steve’s promise doesn’t coincide with the reality of their situation or how Steve’s been acting before. How he’s acting now.

Bucky takes in a shaky breath. “But ever since we stopped—”

“I’m sorry. I won’t be like that anymore, I swear,” Steve interrupts again. “I know it was childish of me.” He scoots a little forward, takes Bucky’s hand gently and squeezes. “You’re here to stay.”

A little more of that fear rooted in him retreats, and Bucky feels like a heavy weight’s been lifted. He nods, squeezes Steve’s hand back. He wants to bring it to his lips, too, but . . . “Should I not kiss you anymore, then?” Bucky asks, thinking of the little ones they’ve been giving and receiving the past few days. Of the warm tingle that reaches his toes when Steve smiles at him.

“Do you . . . want to kiss me, James?” Steve asks in an uncertain voice. Bucky stares at him, blinks a few times, tries to figure out the right answer.

But he’s failed at finding it too often. “What do you mean?” he asks, eventually, tensing when Steve sighs.

“I mean when you kiss me, why do you do it?”

Bucky frowns. “Because . . .”

Because it makes Steve happy.

Because he wants to make Steve happy.

Because making Steve happy . . .

“It makes me happy.”
The storm clouds in the alpha’s expression immediately clear, a shining glow to Steve’s expression as he smiles.


“Okay. Then we should *definitely* keep kissing.” He jumps over Bucky, grabs him by the neck, and gives him a very loud smack on the lips. Bucky blinks up at him when Steve pulls away, face full of mischief, and for whatever reason the whole thing makes Bucky laugh.

It’s loud, and he almost shuts himself up when he sees how it startles Steve, but then the other man joins in, and starts smacking him with his lips all across Bucky’s face and neck, blowing a raspberry against Bucky’s clavicle. Bucky tackles him and kiss-attacks back.

There’s something light in Bucky’s chest, and he thinks the name for it might be hope.

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Google Search | omega articles

THE GREATEST 'O' ARCHIVE: Home

https://thegreatestoarchive.org/info

Our mission: spread awareness, encourage discussion, and promote change for omegas. Also to come up with a better title every time the site gets taken down.

| Results from thegreatestoarchive.org/info |
Private Chat

ereshoping: thanks for accepting this chat. you said in a discussion recently to contact you for help if someone is trying to escape their alpha.

jjbrams: describe the situation to me: how closely are you being watched, what mode of transportation do you have available, what allies do you have, that sort of thing.

hereshoping: he's kept me locked in the basement. the only time it's opened is when he comes in, but i think he leaves at least a few hours every morning. the house sounds pretty quiet. i found an old mostly working laptop in one of his boxes that i've been hiding from him. allies...the mailman? his dog noticed me from the basement window. he seems concerned.

jjbrams: concerned enough to help?

hereshoping: maybe? he kind of looks like an idiot.

jjbrams: stupid or ignorant

hereshoping: i really don't know

jjbrams: try http://www.wikihow.com/Open-a-Locked-Door. some of these won't work, but if there's stuff in the basement you might find the right materials to get the door unlocked. i would wait till you know the alpha is gone.

hereshoping: sorry, forgot to mention there are three heavy duty locks on the door. already googled it, haha

jjbrams: oh dear. okay, well....this mailman might be your next-best bet.

hereshoping: you got to be fucking kidding me

jjbrams: JUST HEAR ME OUT

Every Monday morning at eight o’clock Steve goes grocery shopping, rain or shine. Apparently six inches of snow won’t stop him either. Bucky doesn’t complain—he hasn’t tried doing that around Steve quite yet, thinks he’ll warm up to it later when they’re bonded—but he does get the things on Steve’s list very quickly, all the sooner to be home.
Home. Home in their apartment, with its big windows and the soft new age music Steve works to.

Steve is preparing for a thanksgiving dinner later this week, so they divide and conquer. His list is thankfully detailed down to how many ounces and the like, so Bucky manages by himself. Canned water chestnuts, canned pumpkin, dried coconut, cream of tartar . . . Bucky’s in the baking materials aisle when he rises from grabbing flour and starts at the sight of a Miss Maria Hill, behind a suspiciously empty cart.

“Miss Hill—”

“You’re not mating anymore,” she interrupts in a carefully neutral voice. Bucky blinks, trying to figure out an answer. Trying to get past the fact she knows in his brain. “Did you know the less a couple has had sex before attempting a bond during heat, the less likely it is to take? And that couples without a bond have a 30% less chance of conception? That’d give you two almost improbable odds, even with your fertility.”

Bucky swallows. Her face is still placid, but her words sound like a threat.

“He . . . he won’t,” he starts, then winces when he realizes he’s blaming this on Steve. “I mean, we haven’t. But it’s because I made him think I didn’t like it. And I . . .”

“The government doesn’t care if you like it or not,” she states plainly.

“I don’t not like it!” Bucky protests. He’s not sure why.

Does he?

Should it matter if it doesn’t matter legally, as she says?

“Well good,” Miss Hill answers. “Convince Steve of that. You need to be bonded, and it’s only another two or three weeks away.” She turns her cart around and starts exiting the aisle, turning around at the last moment to say, "I haven't . . . reported anything. But soon it won't be just me checking your progress."
Miss Hill's face is as empty of emotion as ever, but her voice holds a note of warning. Bucky watches her turn the corner out of sight, only realizing the bag of flour had dropped when he almost trips over it.

He can’t manage to act normal as they carry their shopping bags back to the apartment, either. Steve keeps glancing at him, a sure sign there’s something telling on Bucky’s face. He’s usually better at hiding emotions than this, but he can’t get the question out of his head.

Does it matter to anyone what an omega does or doesn’t like? Should it?

Bucky can’t ask Steve that—not yet, at least. Not when he’s so uncertain of the alpha’s answer. So he deflects. “Once me and Natasha were caught, during her heat,” he blurts out, and Steve predictably freezes in his tracks.

But he recovers in record time, just responding with a careful, “Oh?”

“Yeah. They were really mad at us both. Me for going into her heat room, her for dominating me,” Bucky says, staring at the street ahead. Not glancing at Steve’s face to gage his reaction before continuing. “That was her problem. She wanted . . . still wants, probably, to dominate and protect and care after. Not very omega-like. I didn’t have the looks or the attitude, she didn’t have the instincts. We were quite the pair.”

He finds himself smirking at the thought, until he remembers how she said nearly every alpha had been interested in her that day. He wonders who Mr. Pierce chose for her, and feels suddenly nauseous. “She’s probably mated by now, maybe bonded,” Bucky realizes aloud, a bad taste in his mouth. But . . . Steve. What if she got lucky too, has her own Steve? “I hope whoever it is, they. Understand, you know?”

Steve doesn’t say anything, so Bucky finally looks over at him. The alpha’s nose is red, eyes a bit wet, and he sniffs once. Bucky stares, feeling frightened and worried all at once.

“I’m sorry,” he says, falling back into habit, and Steve huffs a laugh.

“You’re sorry? No. James, I’m sorry. I hope she’s alright.” He looks Bucky in the eye then, too earnest. More sincere than Bucky knows how to handle. “I hope you’re alright.”
His heart breaks all over again, and he doesn’t even know why—he’s happy. So he stops, leans in, and kisses Steve quickly. He doesn’t stop to think why, but if he did it’d probably be because Steve is one of the best people he’s ever known. When he pulls back there’s a question in the alpha’s eyes, but Bucky just smiles and hopes that answers it.

He doesn’t allow Maria Hill’s words to hit him until that night, Steve curled up around him asleep, and Bucky wonders exactly where the hidden camera is in this room. If there’s a way to ever be free.

MOTHERS MONTHLY MAGAZINE (Iss. 46, Nov 2016)

In This Issue:

*Why Your Child Acted Like an Alpha, but Ended up a Beta* by Jess Regal (pg.10)

Muscles don't mean everything. An unfortunate amount of adolescents are quickly esteemed as alphas after their first big growth spurt, only to never experience the rut.

*Greasy Stains and Our Best Home Remedies!* (pg.12)

*Chances of Another Growth Spurt and the Signs* by Dr. Alec Morrison (pg.24)

A staggering 40% of all alphas report having a late growth spurt just before presenting. Know the signs!

*TOP QUIZ for Predicting Your Child's Designation—Ten Easy Questions!* (pg.28)

*A Need to Be Dominated: The Omega Child 'Fight Bravado'* by Neil Smith

Recent studies show most children who later presented as omegas experience a 'fight bravado,' the outer manifestation of an innate need to be dominated.

*How to Lose that Baby Chub the Healthy Way* by Rebecca Farther

Bucky is not hairless naturally. There’s some on his arms and legs, under his armpits, on his pecs and a small trail down to his groin connecting to his pubic hair. There’s stubble that is obvious after a few days, a fact Bucky is secretly proud of, and even his eyebrows grow more hair than
considered ‘acceptable.’ Natasha tried to tweeze them for him once, and he’d sworn never again.

He’s kept his face clean-shaven, as that seems to be Steve’s standard, and kept his arm pits smooth. But the rest he hasn’t touched since the beta workers at the omega house waxed him, and he probably needs to get on it, but Steve keeps brushing against the soft incoming chest hair and hasn’t said a word.

Bucky is trying. With their nonexistent sex life, yes; Bucky loves kissing him and strangely, he thinks his hole misses Steve’s knot. It keeps clenching in need whenever they go far enough for Bucky to get aroused, and he’s getting the distinct impression he won’t be satisfied until it’s filled.

But he wants Steve more than he wants his knot. Every moment the alpha is looking at him, content and warm, is another moment Bucky wishes he could makes Steve react like that more often. And, slowly, he’s realizing there are more ways to please an alpha than what the omega house taught him.

Two days before Thanksgiving, for instance, Bucky on a whim rubs his floury hand into Steve’s hair. The alpha looks at him in shock, at first, but luckily not long enough for Bucky to go full-panic-mode before Steve grins deviously and smacks a floury hand on Bucky’s behind. Then later Bucky offhandedly mentions the book he finished, and Steve spends the next hour ranting about the ending and giving a long list of suggestions that he thinks Bucky would enjoy.

“You read a lot?” Bucky asks him a little rhetorically, and Steve blushes.

“Sometimes,” he shrugs, looking down. Bucky feels a smirk growing on his face.

“You were a nerd growing up.”

Steve looks up and opens his mouth to protest, but caves under Bucky’s growing smile. “Fine,” he huffs, “I was a bit of a geek.”

“I guess alphas come in all shapes and sizes,” Bucky laughs, and Steve’s expression softens.

“Yeah, we do,” he agrees quietly. Something strange flickers in his eyes, a look Bucky doesn’t really understand.
That night Steve wraps around him from behind without prompting, stroking fingers against Bucky’s chest. Bucky tries to relax, but he can’t help replaying their conversation, wondering about Steve’s reaction. “Do you mind it?” he whispers now, not wanting to disturb the peace and quiet, but Steve still tenses.

“Mind what?”


Steve’s hand starts moving in a comforting circle again; he takes a while to answer. “Growing up everyone thought I would be an omega,” his low voice starts. Bucky scoffs, unable to imagine that. “No, really. Even . . . even the friends I had. Then I started growing taller, and my mom was so hopeful I wouldn’t get taken away, that I’d be a beta. When I presented as an alpha, and all those genes kicked in . . .” Steve sighs, sounding far too old. “My body changed. Who I was didn’t have to.”

Bucky twists around, looking for his alpha’s eyes in the dark. “So you don’t care.”

“No.”

“Even with me?”

Steve laughs, startling Bucky. But the alpha quickly stops and leans in, bumping their noses together. “Grow a beard if you like. Cuss and swear, belch, work out, I don’t care, B—James. That’s not what matters.”

Bucky believes him, if only because Steve has proved incapable of insincerity. But that leaves the question: “What does matter?”

“You,” Steve replies so easily, bumping their noses again.

An indescribably warmth floods inside Bucky, all at once filling and lifting him. He leans forward, finding Steve’s lips. The alpha inhales in surprise, but quickly responds, threading fingers into Bucky’s hair and leaning back so Bucky is half on top of him. They kiss and kiss, and Bucky
Bucky’s hair and leaning back so Bucky is half on top of him. They kiss and kiss, and Bucky starts to heat up even more, feeling warmer and more turned on than he ever has in his life.

“Please, can we—” he whispers between peppering kisses along Steve’s jaw.

“What do you want?” Steve asks back, hand tightening in his hair as the other one trails down his back. Bucky groans and thrusts once against Steve’s hip, letting him feel his erection.

“Not sure,” Bucky admits, because there’s too many options. Steve’s shown him so much more than what he’d known fucking to be: pleasurable for both, first off, but also creative, and selfless, and exciting, and new every time.

“Tell me if you want me to stop,” Steve says, and quickly flips them over so Bucky’s on his back under him. Bucky pulls off his pants and spreads his legs, ready.

But Steve doesn’t take out his own cock. He licks his lips and starts a trail of kisses down Bucky’s chest, following the small trail of hair down to his cock, and starts kissing around its base. Bucky chokes on a breath in surprise when he starts sucking on the head.

Steve goes slow, trying to get the hang of fitting Bucky into his throat, but it’s amazing regardless to feel a hot, wet mouth there. To feel Steve’s mouth there, showering affection even in that intimate place. When Bucky comes, it’s with a “Steve” on his lips.

There’s obviously still a lot more to learn.

THE GREATEST 'O' ARCHIVE

Private Chat

jjbrams: any updates??

jjbrams: talk to your mailman yet??
jjbrams: i hope you're not dead

jjbrams: you never told me--is the mailman hot?

jjbrams: im actually concerned now. please tell me if you're okay.

jjbrams: im so so so sorry if i got you hurt.

jjbrams: i hope you know how much unneeded anxiety you've given me if you're actually alright

jjbrams: oh god i killed you didn't i

jjbrams: im sorry.

The next jog they go on together takes Bucky and Steve farther than usual—to areas more familiar than usual. When he sees the street name he grew up on, Bucky almost grabs Steve by the shoulder to direct them away. As it is he falters, almost tripping at the sight. The alpha doesn’t seem to notice.

They pass buildings Bucky forgot existed; the corner he’d play baseball with a few of his buddies; a shop he used to buy gum from whenever he got his allowance. Even these innocent memories make his head hurt.

"Why do you keep crying?" Natasha asked him all those years ago, when Bucky had been at the omega house for only two months. She was sharing a bunk with him. "I can't fall asleep with you crying."

At the time Bucky startled out of his crying, surprised to see her small head hanging from the top
"I want my parents," he told her, though the desperation that rooted up in him at the words came no longer; just a horrible, aching, deepening sense of hopelessness. No matter how much he wanted his mom or his dad, no one seemed to believe it mattered.

"Try not thinking about them so much," Natasha suggested.

"I can't!"

"You can. I don't really think about my sisters anymore, and I'm a lot happier," she says. "It doesn't hurt as much."

Over time, he believed her. Memories caused pain, brought misery and loneliness. Feelings hurt him. Especially feelings that came remembering his mother stroking his hair, Becca laughing at him, his father squeezing his hand, his best friend Steve smiling around the blood dripping from his nose . . .

Bucky chokes on a breath, staggering back to the present. His cheeks feel cold and wet, and the air won't properly return to his lungs. Bucky stops, leaning against a brick wall and trying to recenter himself. But it doesn't help that every sight around him only brings him closer to hysteria. His parent's apartment, just ahead . . .

"Hey," a soft voice says, close, and Bucky leans toward the presence. His alpha wraps large arms around him, grounding, and Bucky tries to copy the slow motion of his chest and breathe.

Bucky looks up at Steve, his kind, concerned eyes. But they're also intense, watching him with scrutiny.

Probably assessing whether his omega has gone insane or not. "What is it?" Steve asks, surprisingly insistent. He's stroking a hand up and down the nape of Bucky's neck, brushing through his hair, just like his mother . . .

"Nothing." He slams that memory shut before it can spread inside him, eat Bucky from the inside out. He needs to get away from this street.
"What is it?" Steve asks again.

Bucky shakes his head, trying to move out of his arms and keep running. The sooner to be far away from here.

"What is it?"

"NOTHING!" Bucky roars, ripping away from the alpha. A few pedestrians glance over at them, annoyed.

Bucky flees.

His heart is pounding, first from the adrenaline rush, then from the exertion of sprinting full speed for so long. Bucky's running blind, but he knows where he's running. His feet know the way.

Steve catches up to him there, leaning over the edge looking down at the water. The alpha doesn't say anything. He doesn't touch Bucky either, just leans his elbow against the railing and looks at the water below.

"I'm sorry," doesn't sound like much right now, but it's all Bucky can give. He just shouted and pushed Steve away. In public. Doesn't the alpha have rights to throw him over this bridge after all that? "I lost control, I, I couldn't—"

"I'm glad," Steve interrupts, surprising Bucky into silence. Bucky glances over at him in disbelief, and the alpha shoots him a small smirk before returning his gaze to the water. "You can't stay in control forever, James. Sooner or later, we've all gotta let ourselves feel. Can't avoid it forever."

"I've done a pretty good job of it so far," Bucky argues halfheartedly.

Steve bumps their shoulders together, half-smiling. "Well now you know you can yell all you want. Won't bother me."

"Steve," Bucky protests, confusion twisting into frustration. "You can't say that. You can't—Omegas aren't supposed to—"
"I don't give a fuck what you're supposed to—"

"Why not!" Bucky demands, turning fully to Steve with a glare. "Why don't you care? My whole life I've been told you would, that there are expectations, and punishments, and I can't figure out whether you're just strange or you're playing with my head—"

"Why did that street make you react so much," Steve interrupts. Bucky blanches, mouth open but no sound coming out, and Steve looks grimly satisfied. "What was it? What did you remember?"

A mother, dry, gentle hands; a sister, peals of laughter; a father, firm strength; a friend, smiling bloody . . .

"Nothing," Bucky bites out, and starts walking back towards their apartment. He can hear Steve follow.

"Maybe if you can remember, I can answer," the alpha murmurs softly behind him.

Bucky shivers. He tells himself it's from the wind.

_________________________________________________________

THE GREATEST 'O' ARCHIVE

Private Chat

hereshoping: hey

jjbrams: OHMYGOOOODDD

hereshoping: sorry, didn't have the internet till now
jjbrams: are you okay???

hereshoping: im out

jjbrams: SHIT THANK GOD.

hereshoping: seriously

jjbrams: wait so it worked? the mailman guy isn't your new jailer right?

hereshoping: he's pretty cool

jjbrams: that doesn't answer my question

hereshoping: hugdog.jpg

jjbrams: AWWWWW. you guys look so cute together. i knew he was hot btw, i just have this sixth sense XD

Thanksgiving is a bit nerve-wracking, because Steve’s alpha mother is coming from Maine and there are about a hundred dishes Steve wants to cook at the same time. But somehow the pumpkin pie doesn’t burn, and the turkey is only a little dry.

When Sarah Rogers asks to be let in Bucky feels tense, out of his skin. The way he’s used to feeling around any alpha, though not really Steve anymore. When she’s at the door and Steve welcomes her inside, the older woman immediately zeroes in on Bucky, and for one second he wonders if she’ll throw him out. He’s got stubble on his cheeks, he’s wearing loose clothing and no shoes. He probably looks more like a homeless person than a proper omega.

But then a smile splits her face. She says, “Oh, Bucky!” and suddenly his world feels like it’s crashing in.
How does she know his childhood nickname? Who could have told her? Steve? How would Steve know? How would anyone have told Steve when not even Natasha knew?

His shock must be there on his face for all to see, and Sarah looks all at once mortified at herself and sheepish at Steve. The alpha looks livid.

“Mom, can you excuse us?” he says, voice harsh, and Bucky feels his spine stiffen at the tone of an angry alpha. It’s been a while since he heard it, and he follows Steve in a haze of submission as the alpha leads him into their room and shuts the door.

“I’m sorry,” Bucky says, and the alpha lets out a harsh, frustrated breath. He cringes, bowing his head.

“Hey hey, stop that now, no, I’m sorry James,” he says, suddenly gentle as he wraps comforting arms around Bucky. “I’m not angry at you, I swear.”

Bucky slumps into his arms, exhausted. Unsure what to say, what to do.

“If you want, I can have her leave. It’s alright. She’ll understand.”

Bucky shakes his head. “Can I stay in here?” he asks, and Steve moves out of the hug to kiss him on the forehead.

“That’s fine,” the alpha says earnestly.

So Bucky stays in their room, hearing the quiet sounds of conversation and eating as Sarah visits her son. Sarah, who knows his old childhood nickname, from long before he had been an omega. Before, when he was who he wished he was still: Bucky Barnes. Not James, or the thing Alex has sculpted him into being.

It’s about an hour later that Steve comes back up.
Bucky almost slaps the laptop closed. He’s been visiting more and more omega activist websites, talking about the injustice of sending children away from their parents under the guise of “safety.” All to ensure the population stops dropping, apparently, when it’s only grown worse over the years. Many are arguing for underlying reasons. He applied to get into an omega-only chat board just a few days ago, and is waiting for acceptance.

Just now he’s been reading an article about how one of the states, California, ratified a law that omegas were not required to go to live-in schools, just attend them and be picked up by their parent. Only omegas with unsuitable home situations are taken in. It isn’t perfect, but it’s progress. Three other states are considering it: New York being one of them.

He doesn’t close it, though, as Steve comes up behind him. Maybe because that rebellious streak Alex said he flattened out of him never truly disappeared, Bucky wants to see Steve’s reaction, good or bad. He wants to finally find the line Steve won’t allow him to cross.

But Steve just kisses him behind the ear, and says, “That’s a good article.” Then asks if he wants to eat anything before Steve puts it all away. Bucky agrees, lets Steve watch him get filled up, and then helps clean up: Steve doesn’t like messes. It’s one of the few things Bucky’s gotten right about the man.

That night Bucky tries. Mostly because of Maria Hill, to be quite honest. Maybe, just the smallest bit, because he likes Steve and he likes how their bodies fit. How their souls fit, even. It makes sense, in a way it never did with Natasha or Alex. So he doesn’t actually mind.

Steve obviously still thinks he does.

After a few minutes of lazy kissing Bucky tries to hike his leg up over Steve’s hip, but the alpha stops him, sighing against his mouth. “We’re just kissing. I don’t need anything else.”

He’s lying, in a way, because Bucky can feel his erection pressed between them. But Steve’s lies are always mild things like this, too easy to see through. Too kind, if that is possible. Not like any of Bucky’s lies.

Maybe Bucky needs to come clean about his lies.

Maybe this is what it will take for Steve to trust him to tell the truth.
“I have done this before,” he starts, and Steve’s eyes are questioning even in the dark. “I mean, when you asked me the first time, it wasn’t entirely true. I have done it.”

“With Natasha—”

“Not like that,” he says, shakes his head. He pulls away from Steve’s arms, because he doesn’t want to feel Steve pull away himself, in a second. Steve makes a confused noise, but Bucky continues, “I mean with an alpha. My . . . teacher. The director of the omega house, Alexander Pierce.”

Steve is still and quiet for what must be a few seconds, but feels like an hour. Bucky tries to keep his breath steady. “James. James, you mean he—?” Steve can’t finish.

Bucky finds himself rushing to fill the silence. “I was fourteen. Uh. Well, when it started. It’d been two years since I was taken there, and I was kind of a big trouble maker. He took over discipline for me around then, and. And then more. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry, I don’t know why I, I know it was wrong—”

“Bucky!” Steve interrupts, and Bucky’s apologies stick in his throat.

“Bucky, look at me, right now.” Then the alpha reaches over him and turns on the lamp. He leans over Bucky, puts two hands on either side of his face. “Look at me, Buck. You don’t have to apologize to me. That wasn’t your fault, alright? It wasn’t right, but you didn’t ask for it and you didn’t really want it. You didn’t, but he still took advantage. You hear me? You did nothing wrong. Not your fault.”

His blue eyes are so warm, so earnest. Bucky stares into them, not sure how to respond. Isn’t that his life now, though? Left floundering by this beautiful, honest, kind man.

“You called me Bucky,” he says, instead of answering. Steve looks startled only for a moment; then he sighs.
“That’s ‘cause I knew you as Bucky first,” he says, the smallest of smirks on his lips. Bucky stares, trying to understand. “I knew you back in middle grade, when you were the infamous Bucky Barnes, who beat Al Perkins on the track.”

Bucky keeps staring at him. If he tried, he would remember a Steve—oh god, was it a Steve Rogers?—and a bloody smile.

But there’s a threshold he hasn’t crossed in so long Bucky can almost physically feel the barrier there. The wall of safety, helping him cope and survive by narrowing his focus. But it isn’t made of bricks. And if Bucky takes just one small step past it he knows he’ll remember that tiny little shrimp of a kid, with a mouth twice the size of his fist. He will remember playing with him after school, getting him out of fights. Sharing his fears about Rebecca, his sister, being an alpha and what if he was only a lame beta when time came?

_Aw Buck, you know you’ll be just fine. Who wants to be a knothead alpha anyway?_ he would hear the kid answer, and Bucky would laugh in agreement, snag an arm around that Steve’s easy-to-reach shoulders.

That couldn’t be this Steve. This Steve is a mountain. This Steve is an alpha.

“Steve? The little scrap who’d start a fight an’ leave me to finish it?” he says, staring at this Steve. Who paints and designs for a living . . . wasn’t the little one always doodling over everything and anything? And everyone thought he’d be an omega, that his picking fights was all a show.

“Yeah, that was me alright,” Steve says, and his eyes look a little wet.

Bucky stares up at him with new eyes.

This doesn’t really change anything. Except for the fact it does.

Because it all make sense now.

“Steve, when’d you get so big and beautiful?” he asks, brushing a hand against the man’s smooth cheek. Steve laughs, and a tear trickles down against Bucky’s hand. He wipes it away, then grabs the alpha by the shoulders. He rolls Steve so they’re back to their sides, and immediately burrows into his chest. “It’s been you, this whole time?”
“It’s me, it’s me,” Steve assures, rocking him. Bucky tightens his arms around the other man.
“You’ve got to know I always regretted letting you take them from us, I didn’t. I didn’t know what was happening, but I just kept reassuring myself instead of worrying about you properly. I just—let them. I’ll never make up for that, Buck, I won’t, not for what you. Had to, endure, because of it.”

“I didn’t know what was happening neither, Steve. You didn’t know any better. We couldn’t know. Not about any of it.”

“I’ll kill him,” Steve says, arms tightening around him. “I’ll kill him.”

Bucky doesn’t have to ask who he’s referring to. “Tell Maria Hill, maybe. The government can lock him up.”

“But will they? We’ve got to make sure this doesn’t keep happening. Make it public, make sure everyone hears about it. A journalist maybe.”

“Okay,” Bucky says, feeling more tired than he’s ever been in his life. He nudges further into Steve’s embrace.

“Bucky. Do you—would you want to press charges?” Steve asks before he can. “It’ll be hard. Don’t do it for—for anyone but yourself. I don’t want to pressure you into—”

“I know.” Buck sighs, shifts so he can look up at the alpha. He wants to say, I want to. He wants to please Steve. But Bucky is beginning to think the truth will always end up pleasing Steve best. So he admits: “I don’t think I know how, though. To not be pressured. To not do as I’m told.”

Steve is silent for so long Bucky wonders if he heard him. “I realized who you were when you fell asleep, after our first time. You looked younger, more like the you I knew—”

“That kid’s long gone,” Bucky sighs.

“But that’s still who you are. Even when you . . . think, you have to do what I say, just remember
I’m not an alpha. You’re not an omega. We’re just Steve Rogers and Bucky Barnes, like old times. Alright?"

He makes it sound so easy. It’s not going to be. Bucky is positive of that, even if everything else about this man leaves him unsure.

But maybe that’s the point.

He places a kiss against Steve’s chest in answer, just like their first time, and Steve rumbles happily again. He presses his lips to the top of Bucky’s head, and the warmth that spreads through Bucky is without name. But, if it had to have a name, it might be love.
The second time Sarah Rogers enters their home, just four days before Bucky’s heat, she’s much more subdued but just as happy to see him. Bucky honestly doesn’t remember her much. All he recalls is the hazy image of a woman yelling for Steve from an apartment window.

But Steve talked about him a lot, and Sarah is so happy he is now “with someone so special,” like Bucky has earned every stamp of approval just for being friends with him once.

“Back then he didn’t have many friends, though,” Sarah explains, sensing Bucky’s confusion. “You were special. That’s why he talked about you—and I knew you must have seen in him what I do, long before he shot up a foot and gained twice the weight.” Steve blushes, hastily changing the subject, and Sarah smirks at Bucky pointedly.

After her pleasant visit, Steve says, “You want to do an extra shopping trip today? For anything else, I mean, that we might need?”

Bucky shrugs. He’s used to a six by six by ten isolation room, with a few water bottles and snack packs to stay alive by, and a toilet. What they have at home is more than sufficient.

“Let’s go, just in case,” he says, and Bucky nods in automatic agreement. So they grab a taxi and head to a super center. Steve stands uncertainly with him at the front of the store. “Anything you can think of . . . ? Just off the top of your head?”

Well, the first thing that comes to Bucky’s mind is fleece, but he’s not about to say that out loud. “I don’t know. We could look around?”

So the two make their way through the store, and end up buying three fuzzy (fleece) blankets, a few magazines, two packs of pudding and a sweater. Steve offers to buy him some “toys,” but Bucky immediately rejects the idea. On the basis that Maria Hill will be on their heels if no bond happens in the next week, of course. And also because Bucky honestly wants Steve. Nothing else.

He’s not analyzing his every action and word. Or trying not to, anyway, after Steve said he doesn’t want Bucky to feel any kind of pressure to do something, act a certain way. But that formed the basis for everything Bucky has done thus far, so he’s still trying to get a hold on not taking everything Steve says or does as a “sign.”
In the weeks since Thanksgiving all decorations were put up, an impressive amount for a recently single young alpha male. They wouldn’t need much else, for their pups, Bucky thinks. Just a few stockings. More presents under the tree.

Pups, which his heat could bring. God.

The night before Bucky’s heat is due, however, all the old fears come back. What if Steve laughs at him? He’s pathetic, when he’s like that. Helpless, needy, not even human. A wining hole, nothing more, that’s what Pierce called him. And he was right. He begged for the old man himself, when he got like that, for the man he supposedly despised.

In the end, he’d asked for all of it. With his childish behavior in class, lashing out, wanting attention. Begging Alex to knot him in the midst of heat. When the man finally mounted him it was right after sitting in on most of his heat, watching Bucky jack himself raw and cry out for something to fill him. Sticking his own fingers inside himself, trying to fit his whole hand.

Alex finally mounted Bucky after, when he didn’t want to think about sex ever again, because he deserved it. Because he’d been begging for it before. After all, didn’t Bucky end up helping Natasha, even when he felt no attraction towards her? Just like Pierce. He is just a body to use. A hole to fill.

Bucky jumps out of Steve’s arms and runs from the bed to the bathroom, barely making it before he pukes his entire dinner out. Steve is by his side quickly, rubbing his back gently and touching his forehead after he coughs and spits the remainder of it from his mouth.

“Sorry,” he croaks, and Steve sighs gently, raising the little hairs on Bucky’s neck.

“No apologies. Your body’s just preparing you,” he says gently. Probably right. Bucky’s body cleans out his channels about twelve hours before full on heat. He must be closer than he thought.

“I don’t know if I want you there,” Bucky forces himself to admit after rinsing his mouth, brushing his teeth. Steve freezes where he’s standing, looking hurt and confused. Bucky has to try very hard to not take it back.

“Thanks for telling me,” Steve says after a moment, trying to smile. “Do you . . . know why?”
“I don’t know,” Bucky says, though he does. He rests his forehead against the alpha’s clavicle. Strong arms settle across his lower back, a gentle embrace. Easy to step out of. “I don’t . . . want you to see me, how I’ll be.”

Steve slowly says, “You mean you think I won’t like what I see, when you’re in heat.”

“Alex didn’t,” Bucky says before he can stop himself. But it’s the truth—even if the mere mention of the name the past few weeks incites a strong negative reaction from Steve.

This time Steve just wraps his arms a bit tighter around him. “He did. I’m sure he did, or he wouldn’t have . . . hurt you. But he might have said he didn’t, because he’s a sick bastard.”

Bucky doesn’t believe this for one second. He remembers the absolute disgust on the old man’s face, every time he walked in. Letting Bucky know how badly the room reeked, because of him. He never took Bucky in heat.

“You might not like it,” Bucky says. And what if Steve doesn’t, but he lies for Bucky’s sake? Grins and bears it? The thought horrifies him. It also causes a sick twist in his stomach, because that’s exactly what happened between him and Steve when they first started mating. He hadn’t hated it, by any means, but he’d been too frightened to actually enjoy it.

Steve might be too disgusted to enjoy it.

“I will. You smell amazing in general, Buck. When you’re in heat, you’ll be beautiful to me.” Steve kisses his neck gently. “But I don’t have to be there if you don’t want me to.”

It would get them both in trouble. Bucky wonders if Ms. Hill is listening in right now, if she’ll intervene. But somehow, it’s also those simple words that decide for Bucky. “Will you tell me the truth? If you end up not liking . . . how I am?”

Steve frowns down at him, but Bucky makes sure his face is wide and open and earnest. Pleading.

“I swear it, Buck. I swear.”
Another world war had barely finished devouring the United States's budget, resources, and betas and alphas. The wreckage of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was still smoking. A president of three terms had died. Soldiers returned infertile, and the population crisis began.

In such a tumultuous time, who wouldn't cling a little closer to their vulnerable loved ones? Betas found their solace in 'Rock'N'Roll, omegas found solace in their children being safe from Nazi invasion. What did alphas find solace in?

Alpha politicians have always tended towards advocating Omegan Rights, and it only makes sense, as it would go against their very nature to not protect the most vulnerable of the designations. But for alphas returning home from violence and bloodshed and horror this became an even stronger instinct. Some might even say a manic need for control.

In 1951 on March 21st, Senator John Paul's daughter Elizabeth Paul Neumann was sexually assaulted by a beta and an alpha on her way home from St. August's Omega College, one of the first and only colleges for omegas before the shutdown in the 60's. She was taken to a hospital and stayed in critical condition for three weeks. The papers spread the news like wildfire, stirring up the populace—but especially alphas. A flood of cases detailing rape, violence, and murder of omega victims were revealed to the public soon after, though none of those omegas had a senator for a father.

In a climate of fear thanks to war and the resulting fertility crisis, plus a new, growing culture of alphas dominating omegas for their own protection, Elizabeth Paul Neumann's tragic abuse incited a radical change in the American people's perceptions of safety in their country. Government protection seemed the only option; especially with rumours flying that abuse of an omega could shock them into infertility.

And so, almost exactly one year after Elizabeth Paul Neumann's assault, the Omega Protection Act was installed.

Bucky wakes from a fevered dream of Steve thrusting into him, only to find reality is only slightly different. Steve isn’t naked for one, and he’s not awake; but Bucky knows he’s sending out waves of heat signals, so the alpha’s instinct just responded. His heavy cock is moving against the crack of Bucky’s ass, grinding down on it, and Bucky feels how slick it is, how his boxers are stuck to him from the moisture.

He grinds back, grabbing Steve by the hip behind him. Steve wakes with a groan, still moving until he realizes what is going on. “Sorry,” he says, pulling back, and immediately Bucky feels
tears spring to his eyes at the thought of his alpha leaving him.

He can control himself a little longer, though. “I’ll take a shower. Then . . . I want you here.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah. But only if you want to.”

“I do,” Steve replies, earnest as ever. “But first I’ll grab us some breakfast.”

By the time Bucky gets out of the shower Steve is back with a light meal of yogurt and blueberries. Probably still too much for his stomach to handle right now, but a kind thought.

“Please, just eat a few of them,” Steve pleads, and so Bucky pops about five of the berries in his mouth. His new boxers are already soaking, an alpha presence making things escalate.

Finally Steve gives up on the food, and settles down with Bucky in the bed. Bucky’s arranged the pillows to his liking the night before and just makes a few minor adjustments before laying down in the middle, feeling . . . content. Something Bucky’s never considered possible, starting a heat.

Of course, he doesn’t usually have a nice place to nest and a nice alpha to take care of him, like right now.

His alpha joins him, curling up from behind and stroking his bare skin. Bucky shivers, feels his cock stir as big hands caress his stomach.

“Alpha,” he says, shivering again, and is rewarded with that happy rumble he loves so much. Bucky lets himself purr a little back, shucking off his ruined underwear, and it only goes lower in response. “Please, alpha,” he whispers when nothing else happens. He wonders if he should present.

Luckily his alpha starts then to caress his hole, slip in two fingers at once, then another. Bucky keens, pushes back. His alpha nuzzles against his neck, pulling fingers out then lining up quickly to push in. It feels so full. So right. Especially when his alpha starts to rut into him, thrust in from behind until he feels so good he could die from the bliss. He holds onto the big arms wrapped
around him. His alpha is mating him, finally, after weeks of nothing. His alpha will fill him with seed, with pups to kiss and feed and love together.

Bucky’s eyes start leaking, beyond his control, and his alpha stills to wipe at them.

“Am I hurting you?” he asks, hushed.

“No,” Bucky laughs, hiccups. “I’m happy. I missed this.”

Steve squeezes him so tight his joy should burst out of him, but it only reminds him of the cock he clutches around. His alpha groans at the sensation, and quickly turns them so he’s on his hands and knees, face down, being pounded into from behind.

This way there’s no missing that spot inside him. His alpha hits it every time, and Bucky comes quickly. Steve rams his thick knot inside right then, making Bucky nearly white out, before he comes to at the sensation of seed shooting inside him. Filling him, so full, so whole.

He wants to say thank you, except it doesn’t feel like near enough to what he feels right now. But Bucky at least knows ‘I love you,’ is not something to say when you’re coming, not the first time. So he just lets Steve gather him up and rock him gently as they wait for his knot to go down.

They mate six more times that day, snuggling in the nest in between. Steve makes him drink water, makes sure he has a few crackers before allowing him sleep.

When Bucky wakes in the middle of the night he feels lucid enough to know he’s in heat, but not much else. Just that Alex is bound to come soon, and laugh that he’s so insatiable he can’t even sleep through the night. Bucky wants to pretend he’s asleep, but it seems Alex has been waiting in the room the whole time. He massages Bucky’s scent gland from behind, presses a smooth kiss there, and slots back inside him like he never left.

Bucky closes his eyes against it, against the feeling of pleasure. Wrong. He doesn’t want Alex to make him feel this way. The alpha rocks him gently, not rough and bruising usual, but it only serves to make him feel more nauseous. He lets out tiny sounds, trying not to make it obvious he’s crying. He doesn’t want to bond with Alexander Pierce, even if his body feels so pleased at finally being filled during its heat. He doesn’t want to.

Please god don’t make him.
But who better? And he keeps mouthing at Bucky’s scent glands, like an alpha does when they’re thinking about it. Bucky needs to accept it. It’ll happen anyway. He wants it, Alex has already proven that to him, so might as well give in to the bite. It’ll take. It will.

But Alex leans back and whispers, “Bucky,” not James, and the illusion shatters. Bucky comes to in his new apartment, his bedroom with Steve, in the middle of his heat with his alpha. Who has stopped and pulled out, probably did long ago, and turned the lamp on, looking down at him with guilt and concern. Bucky feels tears running from the corners of his eyes.

“It was a dream,” Bucky gasps, so so grateful that’s the truth. To be taken care of by this kind man, to be far away from Pierce’s grasp. “It was just a dream.”

“That’s right,” Steve nods with a wan smile, and settles back in the nest. “I’m so sorry, you were giving off signs in your sleep and I just thought . . .”

“It’s fine. Couldn’t have known,” Bucky says, and turns in his arms to face his alpha. Run fingers through his blond hair. Trace his nose, his eyebrows, his lips. “I’m alright.”

“You’re not,” Steve says quietly against his fingers.

Bucky opens his mouth to argue, but then shuts it, contemplating. He turns back around so they’re spooning. “I’m . . . better,” he amends finally, knowing this is closer to the truth. He’s not sure what Steve would equate as ‘alright,’ what mental state Bucky needs to reach still, but he knows he’s closer to the happiness of his childhood than he ever had been at the omega house.

Steve doesn’t answer, and after many minutes Bucky wonders if the alpha has fallen asleep. Which would be quite inconvenient, considering the heat is swinging back in full force no matter what time it is. “Steve?”

A half-conscious “hmm?” answers.

Bucky turns around and pats the man’s face. “Steve, I need you still.”

Steve’s eyes slit open at that, and he “hmms” again. Bucky is surprised to feel the arms around
him shift, and Steve sleepily starts kissing his mouth as he twists and pulls Bucky on top of him.

They keep kissing, and just that is all Bucky’s body needs to be ready. His head as well, because all he can think about is the warm lips kissing him and the hard body he’s rolling his hips against. Nothing else creeps in. He can feel Steve get hard beneath him, bare against his own cock.

“Alpha, I need it,” he begs when Steve does nothing else. His alpha still looks half-asleep. But he smiles and reaches between them, tugging at Bucky’s hip.

“Come on then,” his alpha murmurs, not rolling them over still. ‘Take it.”

He wants Bucky on top, it seems. Bucky’s still never tried it. But anything to soothe the burning inside him sounds good right now, so he lift his hips and lines up his alpha’s cock against his entrance.

They both groan as Bucky slowly seats himself, impaled. Bucky stares down at Steve, who looks much more awake now and is grinning up at him in victory.

“You just . . . want me . . . to do all the work,” he realizes, speaking around his pants as he starts moving up and down. Definitely more effort on his part. But it’s actually nice like this; fuller, yet not so stressful as having to lie there and take whatever is given even if he trusts his alpha. Steve just huffs a laugh, and Bucky leans down to kiss him.

He’s pretty sure he’s in love.

He’s pretty sure he wasn’t right in the head, for honestly considering staying in that omega house with Alex. Anything would have been better—and he’s lucky enough to have gotten the best.

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THE GREATEST ‘O ARCHIVE

*Omega Only Discussion*

ettubrute: but my alpha’s superintendent told her there have been eleven more reported
cases of suicide in the past year in PA. all in omega houses. if word actually could get out about this more people might take a stand, betas at the least.

hereshoping: let’s not forget the hidden statistics, all the deaths covered up as ‘accidents’ and shit. who knows what the country’s actual suicide rates for contained omegas are.

what_the_fuck: i get it guys, i really do. but here’s the thing: suicide can’t be part of our platform. CAN’T. alpha politician fuckers are immediately going to glum that onto ‘weepy emotional omegas, can’t take care of themselves’ bullshit, which would only enforce their argument that omega houses are needed. it’s too subjective, and it’s too risky.

greengirl29: @hereshoping *TRIGGERING* my friend hung himself in the middle of the night, and our omega house director took him down and told the police he probably choked on vomit in his sleep. the police agreed, even though there were fucking BRUISES around his neck. people want to believe what they want to believe. and alphas don’t want to believe they’re wrong, it’s against their nature.

ettubrute: that’s NOT their nature, that’s how they’re raised to think. my alpha was raised by a beta and an omega, and she turned out sweet and kind.

greengirl29: good for you, that’s an exception though

hereshoping: found the link! this article has been BURIED by its peers, but it’s really legit. this Dr. Banner guy did a study comparing the mental health in omega houses where their families could visit/day houses and no-contact houses: https://www.apa.org/pubs/databases/psycarticles/analysis-mental-health-in-public-omega-residential-facilities/

ettubrute: (typing)

Bucky is having a few hours respite from his heat when he sees the email detailing his acceptance to the omega group. The site, ‘The Greatest ‘O’ Archive, has all kinds of information, group chats and discussion boards going on, and a place to make his own profile. After Bucky puts in his basic information he clicks on the active one that requires a sign in, and tries to catch up with the conversation.
They're talking about suicide: something he's seen once, with Pietro. But not sharing experiences, debating on using it as a *platform*. It's a little disgusting. But the article one of them links looks interesting enough. Bucky didn't realize studies like that could happen, much less were.

To Bucky's supreme annoyance, he accidentally clicks on ‘hereshoping’s profile instead of the link—he’s still pretty bad at navigating the internet after all these years—and stifles a gasp.

‘Hereshoping’ has a picture up, and it’s not some abstract art or vague picture.

It’s Natasha.

She’s smirking at the camera, and there’s a happy golden retriever mix licking her face. Bucky can’t believe it.

“Steve?” he hears himself call, still staring in shock when Steve enters from his studio already stripping off his shirt. He sees Bucky’s face though, and immediately sits on the couch at his side in concern.

“Bucky, what—”

“Natasha.” Bucky points at the picture, confined to single words.

Steve looks and his eyes widen, and then his whole face breaks out into a smile. “Have you said hi yet?” the man asks excitedly.

Bucky shakes his head mutely, squinting back at the screen. “How exactly do I . . .?”

“Here.” Steve moves the computer onto his lap, clicking around quickly. When he gives it back the screen has a blank dialogue box with the title “Request a Private Chat.”

Bucky stares at the blank cursor for a second before writing: *Natasha, this is James Barnes. I saw*
your picture and couldn’t believe it. How are you? How long have you been away from the house? How is your alpha? I can’t believe I found you on the internet of all places.

It takes less than a minute before the screen pops up with a chat box and notification of ‘hereshoping’ accepting his request.

hereshoping: JAMES!!!! I can’t believe it. How are you??? And give me the honest truth.

bbarnes: I’m really lucky. The alpha you met briefly, his name is Steve and I was actually friends with him before presenting. He’s really good to me. You haven’t answered how you’re doing yet. Are you alright?

hereshoping: The alpha I ended up with was a grade-a asshole. Then I got to know his mailman, and he offered to help me escape. I’ve been hiding out with him since.

bbarnes: I’m so sorry. Are you hurt? If this mailman guy okay??

hereshoping: he’s a good guy. Has an even better dog :) I’m doing fine, honest.

Bucky finds himself abruptly tearing up, all at once filled with too much fear for Natasha and relief that she’s alright. Steve wraps an arm around him, wiping away Bucky’s tears with the other hand. “It still was so bad, at the beginning,” he admits, to himself and to Steve. “I was so afraid of you. I was so afraid of going back. I was . . . I was just scared.”

“It’s wrong,” Steve agrees, leaning his head against Bucky’s. “How they’re doing it. It’s been wrong from the day Omega Protection Act was signed.”

Bucky cries himself out, exhausted. “I hope my heat’s almost over,” he groans into Steve’s chest. “I can’t keep this up much longer.” His alpha chuckles, stroking his hair and relaxing back into the couch. They lounge for a bit, Bucky answering Natasha’s general questions about what he’s been doing, what he likes now, what he and Steve do. She signs off before him, saying ‘Clint’ the mailman was home, and they agree to chat in two days, same time.

“Are you afraid of me at all, still?” Steve asks out of the blue.
Bucky doesn’t answer right away, even if he immediately wants to deny it. He’s pretty sure he loves him. Because Steve is kind, and good, and will probably never hurt him—but Bucky is still scared by something. It’s just a matter of what.

“I’m afraid of having six pups,” he says after a while. “I’m afraid of, of Ms. Hill sometimes. I’m afraid of you realizing I’m not worth it—”


“I’m afraid because I love you,” Bucky realizes aloud, then. Steve stares at him, and then his face cracks into the widest of smiles, and so does Bucky’s, and—

They barely make it to the bed.

Bucky’s pinned underneath his alpha, being pounded into, being taken care of, when he feels a harsh new want invade his senses. His alpha is sucking on his glands, and it’s suddenly not enough. “Want you,” he pants into the pillow, almost too muffled to hear. He brings up a hand to the back of his alpha's neck, pressing insistently. “Please. Yours.”

Steve growls, the sound turning Bucky into absolute putty, and then bites hard against the spot, pushing in his knot at the same moment. Pain followed by a wave of euphoria crashes into Bucky’s senses as the bonding hormones enter his bloodstream, hopefully there to stay. It surpasses any release he’s ever had. Not one of body and mind, but of soul.

Steve laps up the trickle of blood and they both collapse onto their sides.

After that time the heat seems to die down. Bucky still loves the mating, especially now that Steve latches onto his bond mark each time and makes the experience so much more intense. But the need really isn’t there, and on the fifth and final day he declares his heat over.

“Good. We were running out of new sheets,” Steve quips, grinning.

SHOCKING

CNN Reports: Last night police in NJ discovered a group of six male alphas that had killed five alphas and taken hostage ten betas and twenty-four underage omegas in an omega residential facility. The offending alphas were apprehended immediately; however one, Christian Bennion, fought police custody and was shot in the head.

Based on witness testimony, the men first attacked the omega house on December 10th, quickly killing the alphas overseeing the facility. They subdued the remainder of the residents and specifically drugged the omega adolescents with the illegal gas form of NC3, a chemical often used medically to induce heat. The men sexually assaulted the majority of the household, from age 11 on up.

Police were informed of suspicious activity in the house four days later. Rick Adams, male beta aged 63, lived closest to the government property and was surprised to continually hear music with heavy base coming from the house. “It sounded like a college party going on,” he said. “That didn’t seem very sensible for a school.” Adams called the local police on December 13th and again on December 14th regarding the noise.

The police came to investigate the following morning, only to see three of the men sexually assaulting underage omegas right through the window.

“We immediately called for backup,” Officer Carter explained. “We had no idea how many alphas there were. It wasn’t a two-officer job.”

A SWAT team was quickly called in to arrest the men. Luckily, the male alphas were too inebriated with alcohol and illegal drugs to give much resistance or threaten further harm to their hostages.

For many, this crime comes as a shock, considering omega residential facilities are run to ensure safety for omegas, not to mention are government-protected. The police have released a statement...
The next day Bucky gets on the internet only to see an explosion of discussion all in regards to what’s on the news. He's a little late to the party, considering Steve and him haven't really kept up with the world during his heat, but all Bucky has to do is look up news on Google to see a dozen articles in the past 48 hours, the best match coming from CNN.

He reads it, and barely manages to keep his breakfast down.

Most of Bucky’s group is saying ‘THIS IS IT’ and ‘TIME TO LEAVE THIS ECHOCHAMBER’ and ‘DO NOT BE AFRAID, SPEAK OUT.’ Natasha left him a private message.

hereshoping: looks like this could be the breakthrough omegas need. there’s supposed to be a protest going on tonight, all the major omega groups are broadcasting for it. if you’re in brooklyn it’ll be a big one.

bbarnes: I’ll ask Steve. Sounds a bit dangerous.

hereshoping: DAMMIT James this is our freedom you’re talking about. nothing that important will ever be safe.

She’s right.

“Steve,” Bucky calls. He hears Steve pause his Enya music and walk out of his studio; there’s a rather adorable pout on his face.

“I thought your heat was over?” he says, a little forlornly. Bucky would laugh if he didn't already feel like crying.

“Yeah, but you need to come look at this.”

They read all the articles together; Steve’s face grows grimmer by the minute.
“This isn’t good, Buck,” he says after a while, shaking his head.

“Natasha and a lot of other omegas think it might make things change,” Bucky puts in.

“But for better or worse? The media could easily twist this into a reason for omega houses.” Steve frowns, clicks back to a previous article and rereads: “Is a mere four alphas on duty in omega houses enough? Most have closer to ten, one to two ratio for alpha vs. omega.’ They could push for more security, more isolation of omega houses as an answer to all this. Electrical fences, gates, you name it.”

“But doesn’t that mean we should make sure it does change for good?” Bucky points out, and Steve gives him a strange look. Bucky backpedals, not sure what he even means until, suddenly, he does. “I want to go to—there’s a protest, a protest of the Omega Protection Act happening tonight. I’m not sure where, but—”


“Sure,” Bucky says, slightly in disbelief. Steve nods, kisses his cheek, and goes back, resuming his Enya playlist.

THE GREATEST 'O' ARCHIVE

Question: We've all talked about how this should mean change. Omega houses should be taken down, omega adolescents should be reinstated into society. But let's talk about the repercussions for a minute. Alphas are RAISED right now to view omegas as little more than sexual objects. They're not used to having unmated omegas anywhere NEAR them. If we can finally get our freedom back, how do we also keep some semblance of safety? --imagineligers

Comments:

jjbrams: i think you just said it, @imagineligers. alphas need to be informed. taught correctly, in school and at home. but you know what? so do betas! so do OMEGAS! it took me three years to understand my voice meant something, that my alpha was not the end all be all. this is a sickness that's spread for more than sixty years, and i'm pretty sure we're all infected.

xaminer: ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE XP

omegahearteyes: Wise words from @ jjbrams. But should, should, should doesn't mean WILL.
We need to make sure this actually happens, and that means communicating to our politicians what laws we want. If you guys haven't yet contacted representatives from your state, DO IT. If you aren't going to a protest near you, GO. Etcetera. Talking here on this forum is nice and all, but it won't make a difference like taking action will.

theeternalranger: we have to be realistic tho. there's going to be more violence. the orefs in some ways have done what they were supposed to, and crime and violence against omegas (PUBLICLY talked about at least, let's not get into abuse at omega houses and by their alpha mates) will go up. that's reality.

jjbrams: sure. but never forget that 'orefs' as you call them were also supposed to be a solution. they haven't been. they've just shifted the responsibility of safety and good will onto the government, when responsibility should also be placed on each individual in america. they won't be used to that responsibility if omegas do join society again, yes, but at least now betas and alphas have the ability to exercise their human decency, like they used to. rape will happen. abuse will happen. violence and murder. BUT IT'S ALREADY HAPPENING. and if omegas can get some of their rights back, maybe people will start paying attention to it and change for the better can happen. maybe people will stop punishing omegas for things that happen TO them.

imagineligers: Oh wow, I didn't see all this till now. Thank you @jjbrams, now I know exactly what to say to my annoying sister :D

There’s a surprising amount of people who are not omegas at the protest. Bucky and Steve get to the street an hour early, and it looks like it’s already been going on for hours. There are a lot of posters being waved, talking about “RIGHTS” and “PROTECTION? OR CONTAINMENT?,” and “BRING MY DAUGHTER HOME.” A few are passing out flags and offering to draw the omega symbol with face paint. Steve gets one painted on either of his cheeks, and Bucky really wants to kiss him.

(He does.)

“I bet Rebecca went to one of these today,” Steve says, just loud enough in the crowd. Bucky turns sharply to him in surprise. He’d forgotten the two of them knew each other, much less spent the rest of school together.

“Would she?”

“I blamed myself—she focused her blame on the government. And rightly so,” Steve explains, smiling sadly. “Planned on going into law, according to her valedictorian speech.”
“She would,” Bucky shakes his head and says, remembering her hotheadedness fondly. Always ready to butt heads, to make her opinion known. A lot like Steve. He really should have suspected his friend would turn out an alpha like her, considering how similar their tendencies.

“Excuse me! Excuse me, would you like to explain why you’re here,” a beta says behind them, and Bucky turns to see a woman reporter holding a microphone and a cameraman behind her. She’s looking between the two of them eagerly, and Bucky wonders whose side she’s on. What if she asks something he can’t answer?

“We’re here to protest the Omega Protection Act,” Steve says confidently, and her eyebrows raise.

“You’re an alpha, sir, how do you think the law could be improved?” she asks.

Steve glances at Bucky. “By being revoked, first off,” he retorts, “and then replaced with laws decided on by the designation it affects: omegas, like my mate here.”

“Do you believe this one crime warrants repealing a law?”

“It’s not just about this crime,” Bucky interjects, though she still had the microphone pointed to Steve. The reporter moves it toward him, so he reiterates: “We’re not protesting the act just because of this crime. Protection of omegas from people like the alphas in New Jersey is important, but it’s become more of a punishment for omegas. We’re the ones expected to change, to hide so we stay safe. Congress should be putting in laws to make change so we don’t have to hide to be safe. Omega houses aren’t the solution.”

Most of what he’s just said came straight from the discussions in his omega group, but he thinks they would be proud of him today.

The reporter is staring at him with her mouth slightly open, a bit in shock, when Steve says, “This is also a good time to bring up DPF, which has taken away many omegas and alphas’ right to choose their mate in order to boost the population. It’s time to admit it’s not working; the crisis is as bad as ever. And maybe that’s because they’re being forced.”

The beta recovers then, glancing between the two of them with wide eyes before schooling her face. “Thank you for your time,” she says, turning back to the camera. “As you can see, alphas and omegas alike consider the omega house capture a catalyst for what’s wrong with the Omega Protection Act . . .”
“We made a difference,” Bucky murmurs into Steve’s ear. He rests his head on his alpha’s shoulder, linking their arms and pressing against his side for warmth. Steve wraps an arm around his waist.

“Hey, I heard what you said to that reporter,” a voice says behind them. Bucky turns to see a short, older omega male with a strange goatee looking at them with a glint in his eye. “Pretty stupid, talking so radically like that.” He’s holding hands with a tall, pretty alpha female, who rolls her eyes at him.

“We wanted to thank you,” she amends. “It meant a lot.”

“And they’ll have to air it, just because you’re such a hot couple,” Goatee says, smirking. “I’m Tony.”

“Bucky,” he replies, surprising himself. To strangers it’s always been ‘James.’ “This is Steve.”

They all exchange pleasantries; well, everyone except Tony, who seems incapable of saying something predictable. Pepper, his alpha it would seem, smiles brightly at them both like she’s just won the lottery.

“Would you be interested in joining our weekly forums?” she asks, smoothly taking out a stack of flyers from her bag and handing Bucky one. It reads, *I Present As Human, equal rights for all designations*, and where they meet weekly. “We’re trying to lobby senators and representatives for new bills to be presented. Next year there’ll be a new governor to convince too; we’re hoping to get New York on the same path as California.”

Bucky hands it to Steve to look at, still not quite ready to do anything big without his alpha’s support. But then maybe that’s not such a bad thing. Maybe it should just go both ways.

As if reading his mind, Steve says, “We’ll think about it,” smiling warmly.

♪

Jingle Bells, Alpha Smells,
Omega stayed in bed!

Beta baked a get well cake

And by winter they were wed! ♦

On Christmas day Bucky’s favorite gift is a slip of paper, with a phone number on it. Steve won’t say a word; just hands him his (brand new and activated) phone and gestures for Bucky to call.

“Hello?”

A woman’s voice answers, sounding barely contained with excitement.

She sounds so different, so much older, but still, Bucky knows. “Becca?” he breathes, and hears her half-sob, half-laugh into the phone.

“Bucky,” she says, sniffling. “Merry Christmas.”

But then the phone gets taken from her, and two much more familiar voices are talking over each other: his mom, incoherent and sobbing, his father, quiet and tight-voiced. Bucky finds out how Becca lives in D.C., that she was already down visiting their parents, who now live in Florida, when Steve found George Barne’s phone number.

When Becca wrestles the phone back the first thing she asks is, “I know you can’t say more than yes or no with the alpha this close, but has he hurt you?”

“No,” Bucky replies immediately. He’s never been more sure of anything. “No, he’s . . . Becs, remember the scrawny kid I used to play with? He was in our grade—”

“I know who he is,” she interrupts. “I just need to make sure. You can tell us the truth. DPF be damned, I’ll come get you and you’ll be free. I know a couple of colleagues who live near you—”
“Rebecca.” Using her full name works like it used to; his older sister finally cuts off. “Becca, I’m telling the truth,” he says firmly. Steve puts a hand on his shoulder and squeezes, so Bucky shoots him a reassuring smile. “Thank you, though.”

There’s a bit of silence on the other end, but finally she replies, “Okay.”

Then he hears his mom demand Becca put him on speaker so they can all hear, and Becca wants to make plans to visit, and his dad is talking about flying him and Steve out to them the second they’re able. It’s almost relaxing, listening to the mayhem of Becca and his mom trying to talk over each other and everyone’s enthusiastic insistence.

Bucky almost forgot what this is like; having a family.

“I’ll talk to Steve about it,” he gets in, but that erupts a whole new bout of talking, Becca declaring she doesn’t give a rat’s ass what the knothead says, his mom giving advice on how to not let an alpha bully him, while his father remains quiet.

“Can I speak to Steve for a minute?” George interrupts the women to say. All chatter dies.

Bucky glances over at Steve nervously, who raises an eyebrow in question. “Why?” Bucky asks slowly.

“Just want to explain a few things for him,” his dad replies easily enough. But for being a beta, Bucky’s father has never had a hard time being intimidating.

“Alright, if you be nice,” he chides, and George chuckles.

“Hand over the phone, son,” he says.

“My dad wants to talk to you,” Bucky finally clues Steve in. But the alpha nods, smiling. He obviously doesn’t understand what he’s in for.

Steve takes the phone from Bucky and says, “Mr. Barnes, sir? This is Steve.”
He doesn’t speak again for a long time. His easy smile fades, replaced with a sad somberness, only putting in a “Yes, sir,” and an “I understand, sir,” every now and then. Bucky bites his lip, waiting.

Finally Steve says, “I promise,” and after George’s answer hands the phone back to Bucky. “I told you to be nice,” Bucky says in disapproval.

“I was!” George protests, and the women laugh on the other side.

“He wasn’t,” Becca giggles. “But I’m glad. Means I don’t have to give Steve a talking to either.”

“Hun, is this your number now? Steve said you were getting a phone for Christmas,” his mom asks, and Bucky replies affirmative. “Good. We’ll call you every day, okay? Or as often as you’ll let us. I’m so . . . I’m so sorry, I know that we—” she cuts off with a choking noise.

Bucky’s heart sinks. “It wasn’t your fault.”

There’s a bit of silence, then Becca’s voice comes in much clearer. “You’re off speaker now, Bucky. Mom and Dad are . . . well, they’ve always felt horrible. I knew you wouldn’t blame them, but it still. Well. It was like you were dead, for so long.”

“I know.” Bucky feels like maybe he was, all that time.

“We can talk about it more later. It’s Christmas,” she sighs. “I hope you and Steve have a great day. And tell him that the same goes for me, if he forgets.”

“If he forgets . . .?” Bucky asks, but Becca’s switched on speaker again and they’re all cooing their love and goodbyes before he gets an answer. He has to be the one to end the call.

“Are you alright?” Steve asks. He’s looking at Bucky with concern, and Bucky realizes he’s been staring at the screen so long it’s gone black.

“Yeah.” Bucky blinks the dryness from his eyes, looks at Steve with a smile. “Everything’s great.” Without warning he jumps into Steve’s arms, the bigger man falling onto the couch.
cushions in surprise. “Thank you thank you thank you,” he chants into Steve’s neck, pepper ing it with kisses.

His alpha laughs, wrapping warm arms around him. “Merry Christmas,” he whispers into Bucky’s ear, and Bucky wants to ravage him right here right now amidst the wrapping paper. He manages to restrain himself.

“How did you find them?” he leans back and asks, and Steve’s smile turns a bit impish.

“I hired a PI,” he admits. “She was weird, but pretty cheap, got the job done. I know it hurt too much for you to remember, but your parents never stopped caring, Buck. She told me the new owners of your old apartment were instructed by your father to tell them if you came back. But they’d lost the number to call and only knew the Barneses had moved somewhere in Florida, so she started looking for a Barnes couple there, finally narrowing it down to them.”

“Speaking of my father, what did he say to you?” Bucky asks with narrowed eyes.

Steve’s smile grows tight. “Unfortunately what he had to, considering the society we live in.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“That omegas are a close second to property, in the government’s eyes. And alpha’s.”

“He ripped you a new one, huh?” he guesses, and by Steve’s hesitation to answer, correctly. Bucky leans back down and presses a gentle kiss against his alpha’s soft mouth. “Sorry,” he murmurs, then kisses him again. Steve huffs.

“I’m glad he did,” he replies. “Respect him more for it.” Then Steve starts kissing back properly, hands sliding up and down Bucky’s back, and Bucky rolls his hips against Steve until they’re both way too close to coming in their pants.

“Should we take this to the bedroom?” he says in a low voice.

The bigger man groans. “Probably not. My mom’s coming soon. What time is it?”
They check the time and Steve blushes scarlet; it's five minutes past noon, when his mom said she would arrive. The thought of her seeing them in this state is enough to make both their hard-ons fade. Bucky can’t help but kiss the pink on Steve’s cheeks, though, chuckling.

Sarah Rogers arrives not a minute later, and though Steve looks a lot less debauched than he would have five minutes ago, by her knowing smirk Bucky has a feeling she can tell anyway. And when she looks him up and down with the same smugness, the alpha woman winks at him.

Bucky blushes. But he winks back.

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**CNN LIVE: An AO Couple in the Brooklyn Protest Voice the Feelings of Many: 'Omega Houses Aren’t the Solution'**

*(6.2 million hits)*

The day after New Years the news explodes with more controversy: the parents of omega children assaulted in NJ want custody back, and the state has refused. Omegas are, after all, under government protection and jurisdiction until they are mated. Two different couples, a beta duo and an alpha duo in fact—which is practically unheard of, though not illegal unlike omega duos—are suing the state for improper care of their children and are requesting to go to court over it.

Steve and Bucky go to an *I Present As Human* forum, where there are many speakers including a beta named Sam Wilson talks about the most recent health bill that’s going to be voted on in a few months and how it could allow omegas more privacy and right to choose over their alpha mates. He comes up to Bucky afterwards, remarking on the news bit he saw Steve and Bucky in.

"You're both internet famous now, you know that?" he asks, smiling at them proudly. "Maybe just famous, if history writes our time kindly."

"Is there any other laws we should look out for?" Steve asks, and Sam's face turns a bit serious.
"I'll keep you guys informed. The DPF have a lot of employees going AWOL right now, though. Things might change with that, too, hopefully," Sam says, clapping Bucky on the shoulder before moving on to other attendants.

Natasha has a message for Bucky, too, when he finally has time to check back in.

hereshoping: WE SAW YOU ON THE NEWS. OHMYGOD. you're famous, James. all the news stations are talking about what you and your Steve said. Clint says you're both really hot too ;)))

bbarnes: Steve will appreciate that. Yeah, it just happened . . . I have this group to thank, I wouldn’t have known what to say otherwise.

hereshoping: what if something actually happens? what if omega houses got shut down?

Bucky first thinks that’s a ridiculous question, because obviously he’d celebrate. He’d get himself drunk, throw a party, find all the omegas he grew up with in the omega house and invite them. He’d cry. He’d sing. He’d maybe even press charges against Alexander Pierce.

But something else comes to mind, and Bucky’s heart almost seizes at the thought. So he types,

bbarnes: my pups could be safe.

Steve gets a call a week into the new year, telling him Miss Hill will be personally helping Bucky take a pregnancy test in ten days. Bucky spends the next week and a half fretting, fearing the test results whether they be negative or positive.

But Miss Hill never shows.

The night is soft, filled with the muffled sound of the city and Steve’s breath against his bond mark when Bucky wakes up. Not from a bad dream; he’s content to lay here, feeling warm and
safe and drowsy. The alarm clock says four’o’six in the morning, an hour before Steve usually gets them up to go running.

Bucky can’t stop thinking about their future children. What if he’s pregnant right now? He didn’t want any, forced with a stranger and someone he didn’t love. He’s not sure he wants one right now, considering the way everything is, still. What if he has an omega?

But if he is pregnant, now or someday soon . . . that gives him and Steve about twelve years to change the world.

He thinks they can do it.

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