

## Astra Filium

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# Astra Filium

by [SS98](#)

## Summary

Louis' father, Markus, had extinguished the hearth's fire and picked up his younger brother while the Omega pried himself away from daydreams. Markus offered his son a half-smile. "You will be good for him, and he for you."

## Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

# Prologue

## Chapter Notes

Dedicated to users [sexystylinson](#), [nocontrol\\_lou](#) and [Thousandstimes](#)

*“You’re going to be Astra Filium, and it’ll be the hardest thing you ever do.” Louis’ father, deceptively youthful in appearance despite his ninety-four years, relates to him.*

*They were sitting in front of the hearth in their family cabin three nights after an estranged but not unbidden suitor – an Alpha – came calling. Granted, that was after Louis stirred quite a scene in the Alpha’s domain.*

*“Comforting.” Louis murmured through a half-smile.*

*Of his twenty-three years, he’s been an Omega wolf for ten and never experienced fear so leaden that it prevented him from acting on a conscious decision. Trepidation perhaps has made an appearance or two. Like now in the company of his father and dozing little brother the emotion settles its unnerving tendrils on his core and tugs every so often to remind the Omega it’s still there. But the frigid talons of dread have evaded Louis all his life. That’s his blessing, his mother seems convinced; his grandmother was the bravest Alpha to lead their pack and she also was unburdened by fear or self-doubt. Her name was Aelia and she was devotedly fierce in the protection of her pack.*

*When Louis was born two days before his revered grandmother died, she had been in self-imposed isolation that is a tell-tale sign of a lycanthrope’s end. Aelia prepared to lay down for the last time by drawing away from her loved ones and her dear pack members; her mate, Marcella, had died a year earlier and Aelia was eager to be reunited with her.*

*Six months of hiding herself came to a shattering halt when Aelia made her way to the packhouse for Louis’ birth. She stood at the door, distant but not detached, as her first grandchild took his first ever breath and spoke two words in a voice that was coarse and grating from disuse: Ex Astra.*

*“From the stars.” Louis’ mom had told him when he confirmed as an Omega and the stories of his mischievous childhood were being told, with some tweaking. “She was much like her old self when she approached you that day, though she never tried to pick you up.”*

*Louis felt a pang of melancholy when he thought of his illustrious grandmother, a touch of misery and a tide of admiration. Not everyone could harbour love for her, but respect for her was standard. They shared a birthmark as well, a fact that always felt like a blanket of reassurance and comfort when Louis traced the patch of skin. Sitting under a tree at the*

*breach of winter he would study the 'diya' shaped mark on his wrist and smile; the wind would pick up just a little when he did, he mused to himself. The diya is an Eastern festive lamp used once bring the blessings of the Gods to peoples' homes and Louis hopes that the slightly irregular imitation on his wrist is more than a coincidence.*

*Now, he tended the subduing fire and rested his head on his father's knee in tentative recollection of his meeting with the Alpha that he is going to Bond with, Harry. Mordere is what the old wolves called it – the mating act that binds two souls and the subsequent bite offered to the Omega by their dominant as a private homage to the unity. Recent laws were passed to grant Omegas the right to resist a Bond mark as one could see it as archaic, but many were honoured to bear their Alpha's bite.*

*Louis planned to grant Harry permission for the Bond mark. While the Alpha managed to render unease in nearly every person within earshot – he had been stepped on as a pup by his father's aggressor and the injury left with a permanent soft grunt at each exhale – Harry also holstered a prim devotion to the wellbeing of his pack that only ancient bloodlines could master.*

*Harry had ancient eyes; Louis could describe them in no other way. They had travelled through time, garnering eons of knowledge and perhaps arrogance as they awaited the birth of this Alpha. Or maybe they had lived in many heads, gazed through hundreds of perspectives and deposited all that agedness into Louis' future mate. Slightly weathered marble was washed in saffron then a blue dye from the woad plant by an ancient and developed the alluring emerald green of Harry's eyes. Broad but not freakish for a dominant lycanthrope and pale enough to render some concern in Louis, was the Alpha.*

*"You like him." Louis' father interrupted his shameless thoughts.*

*The Omega's hum was distant. "I don't loathe him."*

*"That is the standard your mother held for me when we Bonded. Your nest will prosper, I feel."*

*"He still does frighten me."*

*"He is an Alpha from a bloodline of domineering Alphas, his great grandfather was the most hellish by far."*

*Of course, everyone heard tell of Cassius. Harry's great grandfather had lost his right to be pack leader when his son challenged him and won. Cassius took on the name Vetus Lupus in their pack which means 'Old Wolf' and it enraged him so that Cassius bided his time in hostile peace until Harry's birth. Cassius never took a mate and lived an unnaturally long life – many accused him of practising the darker arts to attain this – which allowed him to challenge Harry's father, Asher, when the pup was born. Their nest was at its most vulnerable, but Cassius was defeated, and Harry was injured. Unfortunately, Harry's father suffered fatal injuries and died a day later. With a new-born Alpha pup, Harry's mother, Anne, could act as pack leader until Harry came of age.*

*There had been a brief verbal tussle the day of their meeting – very minor if you ask Louis – and things were tense between him and Louis. That is a story for another day. Regardless, in a moment of lapsing stiffness, Harry angled his piercing stare at Louis with the blank concentration of a student or admirer. His stoic expression did not give as he respectfully nodded at Louis' parents then the Omega himself before leaving.*

*The two weeks that followed were not unlike the rest of Louis' days spent assisting in the cabin that took care of pups or preparing the meat that Alphas brought back for supper. Unbeknownst to him, Harry's mom dispatched a sort of courtesy letter to them in fervent apology of the poor outcome of their meeting. Louis' mother took one glance at it and imposed it on her mate along with a soliloquy about how fate itself would bring Louis and Harry together if not them.*

*In the letter Anna had spoke in jest of her talk with Harry not seven nights after leaving Louis' home. According to her: 'If I am to call myself proficient in reading my brooding boy son, I'd say that he could be smitten. At least to a degree his stoicism allows. Can you believe he tried to describe your Louis' eyes as 'encapsulated stars on the brink of victory or collapse'? Dare I say, when did he get a close enough look?'*

*The mention of stars rang too similar to Aelia's name for the Omega and Louis' mom, Johannah, was thrilled enough to drag her son across part of their wilderness for a meeting of reconsideration. Thankfully, Harry had not bothered with any other possible mates and – if Louis would be so bold as to admit – the Alpha looked pleased at their reuniting. That was four days ago, and a day later Harry had brought some of his wolves to partake in an informal festivity that familiarised their packs and eased nerves going forward.*

*A bonfire was lit. Pairs and trios danced in the warmth of the dancing golden flames, crying out at the moon in song and drunken delight. Though the impending Bond of Harry and Louis that united two distinguished lineages and packs were being celebrated, the two did not have a moment of privacy.*

*Harry seemed to frighten the pups enough that they'd yap or playfully snarl up at his towering dignity and he would simply stare back at them like he'd never seen a pup before. Louis had to save a few from aggravating him too much. Mostly however, Louis would catch Harry's eye over the bonfire or glance up from the meat he was slicing to find the Alpha's gaze fixed studiously on him.*

*Louis' father, Markus, had extinguished the hearth's fire and picked up his younger brother while the Omega pried himself away from daydreams. Markus offered his son a half-smile. "You will be good for him, and he for you."*

# I

Once every three new moons the Alphas from seventeen districts convened at what is considered an ancestral cathedral. It was once constructed as a means to ending the perpetual hostility between the existing lycanthrope packs that was as sanguinary as it was fruitless.

Louis questioned the history of those ancient towers currently being maintained by selected individuals from each pack. Those wolves chose to devote their lives to the upkeep and integrity of the cathedral. Furthermore, there exists a magisterial basilica at the centre of the known world to which senior or figures of authority from all races – lycanthrope, fae, the non-living and mortal – reported in cases of enquiry or emergency.

Louis' been there once for a rare public forum and the conduct of the commanders enthralled him. Surely those that held power over the world should be conceited, vengeful and somewhat cruel when deducing the means to an end. Quite a pleasant surprise was it to uncover that the *Consilium* were fair and patient with even the most aggravating visitors though they tried to be unwavering and their decision is always final.

Harry is due back from a meeting with the other Alphas at the old temple after midnight. He had sent word to Louis that he chose to make the journey home rather than spend the night there. Louis joked that Harry would miss him too much and the Alpha had promptly agreed which shocked the Omega into dropping his tea.

"He always comes back from those meetings with funny stories." His companion during most days for miscellaneous duties is Niall, a Beta that often broke out into song and enjoyed dragging anyone unfortunate enough to grab his attention to the river for a concert.

"They're only funny to you, Niall." Louis' brow pinched in concentration as he sliced cleanly between meat and fat. They're supposed to be making stew on an open flame by now, but Niall is slacking in chopping his allotted vegetables.

"I remember when I was somethin' like twelve years old, our Alpha Harry came home and told us some other Alpha wanted to cut down on how many mates a dominant can have."

Louis did glance up from the game meat then with a quizzical brow. It was no secret that some nests had one dominant and two Omegas or two of the latter and one Alpha. It failed to shock and disgust for three hundred years now although the Alpha in question must prove that they can provide for such a home. Louis made a mental note to ask Harry later what that trial process entailed. All were at peace with their laws save for technicalities with regulations – often to do with territory or wealth – and to suggest such a restriction meant speaking for the masses without actually consulting the public.

"He was shot down of course. No surprise." Niall continued.

"Niall, the potatoes." Louis reminded the Beta lightly.

They were joined shortly by three hunters who had taken the day off or were forced to because of healing some minor injury, and some members of Louis' family pack that chose to accompany his move to Harry's pack.

Xander is Harry's best Beta hunter with a penchant for aggravating Niall by merely being present. Sometimes they would spurn a fiery argument from a monotone group discussion about poisonous berries and Louis had to force himself between them.

"Ew." Niall looked appalled when Xander winked at Valentina, an Omega from Louis' old pack with astounding silver hair and a gift for conjuring medicine from roots and spring water. They were all at the same table and everyone within earshot stiffened except Louis who sighed.

"Please." Louis directed this at Niall in an act of silencing any further disruption to their afternoon.

In a way, Louis' Bond with Harry bore the Omega's subsequent authority as the hierarchy demanded. However, Louis likes to think that in the year he sat beside the pack Alpha as mate and confidante, he had gauged the pack's dynamic well enough to earn their trust and respect. It was a fragile and abstract notion that he always felt was teetering on the edge of unjustified; his nightmares sometimes re-imagine his fear that they will resent him one day.

Niall hopped off his perch on the extensive table for food preparation and began concentrating on peeling potatoes.

"Louis." Xander sounded unsure in addressing the pack Omega as anything but. Louis had assured them his preference lies in familiarity rather than formality in this regard.

"Xander?" Louis returned, just barely amused as he turned around to exit the packhouse.

The hunter had leapt over a stray stool now and shuffled up beside him. "Do you know what tonight is?"

"It's stew night." Louis peered into the nursery where pack members' children learned to socialise and master two skins.

"No- Well, yes but no."

Xander had attracted the attention of passing company with his clumsy hand gestures. Louis has always known him to be this uncoordinated, yet Harry insists the wolf is agile and unparalleled in stealth by the other Betas. Xander, with his tawny hair and heterochromatic eyes.

"It's *Hesperides* tonight." Xander rushed his words like he was embarrassed to bring it up. "And the Alpha won't be back until it's almost over, so we thought it wise to- to ask you."

*Hesperides* referred to the early nymphs in a world so ancient it must be forgotten by most. But not just any nymphs. The Hesperides were daughters of Nyx and Erebus that personified the golden hour of the day – by far the most magical – and since then their representation has

morphed into an annual ceremony hosted by a respected pack of Omegas only that reside on otherwise neutral territory. Their origins were dark and gruesome as old dominants did not welcome the notion of unmated Omegas choosing to live apart from them, but time was kind to the latter.

Louis initially thought *Hesperides* to be a night-time gathering of lascivious and intoxicating festivities but was taken aback in hearing from Harry that nothing of the sort went on.

*"Usually there's a fire burning from noon, a most enchanting spectacle on the shore. The Omegas don't allow any visitors near their homes." Harry explained one night after supper. "They welcome all who are curious without actual invitations, I suppose. They prepare food and tell stories that they couldn't possibly have lived to witness."*

*"Do only Alphas go?" Louis asked.*

*"Mostly." Harry offered his version of a shrug that was a perfunctory jerk of his left shoulder and coughed. "The Omegas don't have a fixed location for this so the Alphas have to track... it."*

*"It?"*

*"The Hesperides don't have a scent to follow and the fire they set doesn't cause smoke. Finding them is challenging."*

*"How is that possible?" Fire without smoke sounds like a myth.*

*"They don't elaborate even if you ask but some of the older wolves think they've some sort of oath to the Gods that birthed the Hesperides all those centuries ago."*

*An enigma, it seemed. Some kind of passage through time that these Omegas held to their breast which carved their dignity and mystique into this time. They were respected and valued amongst their neighbours. Louis has never seen their pack Alphas volunteer to sit through storytelling and outright ignored their collection of books in the packhouse. However, Hesperides would draw them out of their cabins without hesitation.*

*"Keep the forgotten legacies alive in exchange for outlandish wisdom? Sounds fair." Louis' voice was almost dreamy. He thought of fair and gifted creatures hidden from society with their knowledge and slight mysticism tucked away.*

*"It is more than chapters and dictating notes of insight, Omega." Harry pressed, struggling for the right words. "They tell of a time before even the old world in our history books. The philosophies of a civilization that says it drew itself together from thin air and yet there are so many like it. Some more timid, others bold and crass. Gods that were as absurd as the creatures we share this world with. The old literature, customs and even science. Much of it is obsolete now so I suppose it is just storytelling but it does not fail to enrapture."*

*"To hear of what could have been the first minds to render poetry." Louis smiled to himself. "Have you been to a ceremony?"*



*His Alpha had settled down beside him but Louis wasn't done. He crossed his legs and took one of Harry's wrists in his hands as if he needed an anchor to this plane.*

*"Once." Harry replied with his eyes slipping shut. "My mother encouraged me to go because the Hesperides supposedly offered insight into the world seen and unseen without being dull. It takes something away from a dominant's integrity to forego the chance to hear those Omegas speak, she said."*

*"Niall told me that the Hesperides have their...gathering on the same day that the old civilizations would have Valentine's Day which is apparently a kind of romantic exchange of sweets and-"*

*"Valentine's day." Harry rolled the word around like it was foreign and confusing.*

*Louis had been studying Harry's calluses absentmindedly and glanced up to find his mate peering studiously at him like he did the day they met. It had stunned the composure off him then and still does now. Unfortunately, Louis also felt some of his awe stunted by his own impulsiveness.*

*"Don't look at me like that." He squinted at his Alpha. One of his few burdens is poor eyesight at night.*

*"Like what, Astra Filium?"*

*Sometimes Harry can be playful without anything triggering it. The mood arises often enough to thrill Louis yet infrequently still so it catches him off-guard. A tug on the neckline of Louis' shirt while they lounged about or taking a quick minute to imprint his scent on any stretch of his Omega's skin within reach, were mild indicators of flirting.*

*"Louis?" Xander yanked him away from his wandering thoughts.*

*"Yes, it's fine if you and the others go as long as no responsibilities here are left behind." Louis found himself in a fit of laughter when Xander and the others that were obviously eavesdropping for the verdict started howling.*

*A recollection of the night he discussed *Hesperides* with Harry breezed through his focus. He had been intrigued by mention of the enlightened Omegas and perplexed by the wolves' appreciation for them. Louis heard himself say Xander's name softly.*

*"What time do you return from *Hesperides* normally?"*

*Perhaps he could go with them. Just for a peek. His trademark nagging curiosity will not fade until at least an iota of this affair becomes known. It would be a thrilling endeavour, Louis thinks, to catch a glimpse of the what intrigues so many.*

*The question seemed to through Xander off-kilter because his forehead creased like a puzzled academic. "Before dawn. Why do you ask?"*

*No, he reminds himself of his standing duties here at home especially since some of their Alphas will be gone.*

“Dawn? Aren’t you tired during the day then?”

The others were sufficiently distracted and paid mind to little else besides the impending venture to see the mysterious forest beauties and experience their hospitality.

“Never. Part of the magic, I guess.” The Beta flashed Louis a grin and disappeared inside the packhouse.

*Magic.* Louis turned his attention back to the sizzling oil and garlic but he did not leave that word behind. Magic is almost a fairy-tale now; there are no witches and seers because science and technology prevailed – at least in the major cities – and actual medicine rather than putting one’s faith in an unseen energy. Or maybe it’s just that magic abandoned them, sucked out of the world now that society made a mockery of it.

## II

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Louis is roused from his slumber when a leaden weight settled against his hip. Harry's skin is damp from a recent shower and the Alpha had gracelessly slotted himself against his Omega.

"Took you long enough." Louis mumbles.

Since Harry had managed to delve beneath the covers and cling to Louis with a not completely unwelcome earnest, the Omega made a quick work of confirming his suspicions that the Alpha's hair is still wet enough to dampen their bedding.

"How was it?" The enquiry was perfunctory rather than curious. The political aspect of Harry's duties was often tedious.

"Unbearable." Harry's response was muffled by the fact that he'd seen fit to hide his visage against Louis' front.

Louis could hear that the otherwise low whistle that accompanied Harry's breathing had risen noticeably in pitch.

"Are you okay?" He opened his eyes then and peered down at his mate. "Your chest—"

"I'm fine." Harry insisted. "Just happens when I travel."

Of course, Louis knew that. Harry could lead his hunting pack for miles into the woods and not have so much as a short breath but when he bothered to venture beyond their borders, he seemed susceptible to even the finest strain on his lungs.

"C'mon." Louis ignored the impending resistance and tugged on Harry's wrist. "I'll make some tea."

The tea leaves came from a local indigenous plant that Valentina was especially fond of. She made trips every morning to pick fresh leaves and prepare them before bringing multiple batches to the packhouse for everyone. For the treatment of Harry's troublesome chest, Louis added fresh ground ginger and a thumb-sized cinnamon stick.

"Don't look at me like that." Harry's eyes followed him while he tossed the aromatic ingredients into boiling water on the stove, an expression of pointed disdain vivid in his features.

"I'm still not a pup." The Alpha grunted in the way offended dominants only know how. Louis had done this before thrice and whilst Harry appreciated the care, he favoured staying in bed with his mate much more.

“Oh, I know.” Louis left the tea to simmer and went to leave a chaste peck on the tip of Harry’s nose followed by one on each cheek and a bonus kiss on the Alpha’s forehead. He did it to distract Harry’s restlessness and because he enjoyed dolling out affection to his mate.

Harry stood at over six feet of a refined build that could only come from years of training to be the ferocious guardian of their pack and an unquestionably stealthy predator. Louis’ watched him train the newly initiated members and tear into rogue wolves that ventured too close to their lands. His wolf is a spine-chilling imposition at any gathering. The Alpha also manages to look at Louis like he’s some glorious, conspicuous creature that’s wandered into Harry’s life out of turn and completely captivated him.

“How was your day?” Harry let Louis try to wring some of the excess dampness from his hair by tilting his head back. Fortunately, that meant he got to peer up into Louis’ almost luminous eyes that he found to be reminiscent of an azure sky.

“Made stew and gave Xander permission to go to *Hesperides*. Spent time with Anne and checked on the nurseries. Oh, and I convinced Val to teach me more about her new method for drying herbs for medicinal pastes. Fair warning, I think she’s going to ask you to let her go into the city soon.”

“Oh, she has asked me already. Thrice, if I recall. She believes frequency will encourage my approval.” Harry drinks nearly half the contents of the mug that Louis hands him, impervious to the scalding tea.

“You’ll let her go, won’t you?” Louis raises an eyebrow. “She’s so excited.”

“I will when I decide on who’ll go with her.” Harry sighs. “I don’t want to hamper her education but the city is intimidating and merciless to outsiders.”

Louis has not been to any of the cities but the prospect is intriguing and he does look forward to going one day. The greatest city, *Turrim*, housed the basilica at the edge of its border and that’s as close as Louis’ ever gotten to the most progressive side of society. The city closest to them stood just beyond the last hint of their forest and was called *Praesidio*. A lot of their monthly supplies – which included manufactured medicine, slightly unsavoury weapons, and random essentials – came from there.

“Maybe Xander can accompany her. He’s been to the Praesidio with you a few times.” Louis suggests as he glances at the time. It’s just after three in the morning and they’ll have to be ready for the day in little over four hours.

“Perhaps.” Harry had long ago mastered the art of hiding his distractedness. If it weren’t for Louis’ attention to detail he might have gotten away with secrecy since being mated. Alas, he has also come to understand that it is wiser to be candid when he feels troubled. “I don’t think I care for politics anymore.”

Harry’s expression was one of disgust and Louis could sense the disquiet through their Bond. He said nothing however, and waited for Harry to continue.

“One of the other pack Alphas suggested, in jest *I thought*, that the minimum age that allows our kind to mate be lowered.” Harry refused to look at Louis while he spoke, using a low timbre as if he were ashamed to even bring this up. “It was not as easy as I thought to quell that recommendation. The repercussions of such a rule would be devastating to families that can’t protect their children and those shifters that are mated against their will.”

Disgust is the simplest description of what Louis felt inching up his throat. “But that won’t happen.”

“Yes, but compromises are becoming steep.” Harry set down his mug and made a grab for his Omega. “The vampire royal families are managing to claim more land and they’re much closer to our borders than I thought.”

Vampires were one of the non-living races; Louis doesn’t understand why that became their label because vampires breathe, need sustenance and reproduce like shifters or fae. The vampire royal houses have withstood the test of time and their immortality seemed to make them predictably arrogant. Regardless, Louis always thought they kept to themselves and news of their swelling control does not bode well. Balance is key for peace in their world.

“How are they claiming more territories?” Louis brushed his fingertips through Harry’s hair in unsteady comfort.

“Bargaining with the one thing the rest of us don’t have.”

Eternal life. That was their gift and whilst most other races certainly had impressive longevity, to live forever is still a dream. Even a drop of vampire’s blood is poison and since they could not be bottling their immortality per se, they must have found another way to share their gift for the right price.

Markus had tried to teach Louis their laws once and the latter had clung to every bit of information, unaware of whether it would be of aid in the future. He remembers that there were restrictions in place so one race did not become a self-proclaimed ruling party.

“The vampires can’t take or even buy land for their sole ownership anymore.” Louis pondered out loud. “So, they must be merging.”

Something like adoration briefly passed over Harry’s expression. He is well aware that his mate is learned and proficient yet a reminder of those splendid attributes never fails to leave him in awe. “Yes, Astra Filium.”

Louis paid no mind to the shift in his Alpha’s mood. “How would they...join houses with other species? And why? Vampires are always so proud of their pure bloodlines.”

“I also imagined that they’d rather go extinct than *dilute* their bloodlines but it seems we are wrong. They’ve been agreeing to inter-species marriages which produces hybrid children.”

“An immortal shifter.” Louis feels queasy. Long ago the ruling parties had trifled with power beyond their control and the price was swathed in the blood of thousands.

“I don’t like it either. Now that we know, enquiries will be made to the vampire houses in question and the *Consilium*.” Harry has had enough of grave matters for today and downed the rest of his tea before touching a closed fist to his chest. “I feel better. Come, Omega. I want to return the favour.”

## Chapter End Notes

Please bear with me and the details I'm trying to stuff into these first few introductory chapters. Once I get into the groove again and the plot is underway (more so than it is now) everything will be more palatable I hope. Thank you for taking the time out of your day and read this. You have no idea what a thrill it is for me to read your comments and feel reassured that this isn't garbage. Much love, S.

### III

#### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*A list of things that Harry is markedly fond would be scant. Prior to ever setting eyes on his mate, the Alpha's world revolved around being primed for the position of pack leader. And he was honoured to serve because his wolves needed him. Though still an esteemed privilege, Harry has come to realise that his Bond with Louis – passionately stubborn and remarkably quick on the uptake – falls second to nothing.*

*His first encounter with the spellbinding Omega had been in the woods just beyond Louis' old pack's borders where he looked on in plain horror and poorly disguised awe as Louis chased down a stray pup. He blundered in grabbing hold of the nuisance youth in time to avoid being noticed by a grizzly bear that had been fishing for salmon at the river. Harry, even at the determined pace he forced his limbs to abide by, was too far away to be of help.*

*Louis' wolf is many pounds lighter than Harry's and carries an ashy coat as opposed to Harry's dark brown fur. Regardless, the Omega sought to recklessly slam his body into the massive bear when it swiped at the now fretting pup. The Gods were on Louis' side that day because the beast was disorientated for a brief moment though it barely slipped on the sharp rock ledge and it gave Louis the chance to slip away with his little troublemaker.*

*They were unscathed and Harry had remained unnoticed when he finally breached the treeline across the river with his mother. For the first time he has to make a conscious effort to slow the raging organ in his chest that threatened to burst forth and expose his dread.*

*What if the bear hadn't been blind-sided by the foolhardy Omega?*

*Anne noticed the ghost of an unfamiliar glimmer in her son's eye and laughed heartily.*

*"That's the pack Alpha's son." She said, to which Harry feigned indifference though he was prodding the air with his muzzle trying to catch the Omega's scent. "His name is Louis."*

*That day Harry felt something like a faint sprig of fear implant itself in his chest where it will forever reside now that Louis is his mate. Subsequently, concern for the Omega's safety and happiness haunts him constantly. There are times when Harry frets over the possibility that he is doing a poor job of being a good mate and overall companion, but Louis reassures him without hesitation that he is content.*

*Louis, unbeknownst to Harry's conflict, knew there would be an Alpha visiting and gathered the subtext his father struggled to articulate when explaining why Harry is not a loathsome or repugnant creature. Markus wanted Louis to have a mate – a painstaking and unwavering Alpha that was proud to have his son for a partner – and the latter had made peace with it long ago.*

*In the midst of trying to stay wary of this new Alpha that will introduce himself, Louis also reprimanded the culprit from his run-in with the bear brief but firm. The pup happened to be son of one Markus' hunters and scorned at authority the way most young wolves do, but he received Louis' gentle scolding with tucked ears and apologetic licks to the Omega's palm. Louis softened at the pup's pitiful whining and bundled him up for a trip to the packhouse where they'd most assuredly find a cookie or three.*

*By this point, Harry had made his way into their territory and Markus went to escort their guest. Louis' father introduced certain members of their pack but failed to notice Harry's searching gaze over his shoulder or across the courtyard.*

*"I must apologise on behalf of my mate. Johannah is feeling a little under the weather-"*

*"There was an Omega chasing after a pup by the river. He went so far as to almost put himself between it and a bear some four times his size." The Alpha stated, levelling his host with a piercing stare like he wondered if kind old Markus would lie to him. "I'd like to meet him."*

*The pretence of Harry's visit is one of peace and lies in the shadow of a more unpalatable reality. Markus' pack is one of five that sat more inland whilst Harry's land sat abreast to what is considered the border of lycanthrope territory. The five inland packs were bounded by the remaining twelve shifter packs with their respective regions that were similar terrain to Harry's. Beyond that border was considered no man's land that bridged shifter and fae ground. The unoccupied land was sometimes riddled with bothersome aggressors or exiled members of other clans. Rarely one of Harry's patrolling wolves would capture a wereleopard or even diminishing vampire that they were within their rights to execute.*

*Markus' pack is inadvertently protected by the borderline packs because of his minimal exposure to any threats. This seems to have nursed the idea in another neighbouring wereleopard pack that Markus is weak and their recognised leader, the Khaan, has twice joked about challenging Markus for the territory. To prevent this, Louis' father planned to ask Harry – a young but nonetheless accomplished and respected Alpha – for aid in either emerging victorious in the challenge or suggesting an alternate approach.*

*To his surprise, it was Louis that proposed merging their packs. He commented that should Harry ask for his hand and accept Louis as the heir to his father's pack, then it should silence the egotistical Khaan.*

*Louis is set to inherit his pack if he remains unchallenged when Markus steps down and he realised that his preferred skillset does not necessarily lie in combat. Whilst the Khaan's control over his land and wereleopards is not warped or cause for alarm, Louis does not think much of someone that opts to insult his father publicly and be jovial about usurping him. The chaos that would ensue if a member of one species overthrew another is unthinkable.*

*Louis wants to protect his home and the people that have shared meals with him but he acknowledges the fact that in the event of a challenge, he would lose. His solution then is to merge by Bonding with an Alpha he finds to be pleasant enough and that Alpha is Harry. In*



*this way, when Markus does retire the two territories will exist where they reside now and remain under traditional leadership.*

*Johannah had accompanied Louis on a visit to Harry's pack when the Alpha was away some months ago. They assumed it was the quarterly meeting of the Alphas because Markus too was occupied at the distant cathedral. Louis found himself impressed by the systematic comings and goings of the border wolves and was fascinated by their sophistication. He met Xander and Niall that day in time to brace himself for mastering the art of diffusing their skirmishes. Additionally, none of the wolves seemed to harbour animosity towards their leader and described Harry as aloof but never negligent.*

\* \* \* \* \*

"You haven't changed since then, you know." Harry commented, the tinge of affection now outperformed by smugness.

"What do you mean?" Louis, in apparent contradiction to Harry's peace, was trying to wrestle free of his Alpha so that they may get on with the day's duties.

He relented just long enough to catch his breath but Harry snatched up the moment to spend time offering some well afforded reverential attention to the curve of Louis' throat where his Bond mark rested. His Omega is especially sensitive there and Harry enjoyed prompting Louis' little breathy moans every time he paid it mind. He'd sometimes hear a complaint when he'd delve into the intimate space with the icy tip of his nose or equally cold fingertips; oftentimes he could render Louis' barely audible gasp when he pressed his lips to the mark. It was a predicted shock to the Omega's system and needed some acclimation.

"Forgive me but I feared you would...fade if you had failed to settle in here and accept my pack." The Alpha admits, having the grace to appear uncomfortable when he met Louis' eye. "Or worse, that it had all been a façade."

Louis could not help the laugh that tumbled from his lips. It was musical and enchanting like everything else about him, according to Harry. He drew said Alpha close enough for their lips to meet – a kiss that deepened of its own accord.

Harry was not well versed in anything besides instinct when they made love and while Louis also never bothered to have a lover before Harry, he seemed to have more grace than the broad-shouldered, lumbering Alpha. Lack of practice paired with fervent want made more amusing and fantastical first experiences with his Alpha.

Dawn had just passed and Louis wonders if he should feel guilty at a fleeting thought that hinted he should skip today altogether and stay in bed with Harry for the sake of practice. However, that possibility was flung out of his mind when he felt Harry trying to flip him over.

Louis tutted at his adorably barbaric dominant. He caught Harry's bottom lip between his teeth but barely got hold of the Alpha's throat before utilising minimal leverage to roll them over. Harry was momentarily stunned and landed on his back with a frustrated grumble. They

were both naked already from their amorous pre-dawn activities which also meant that Louis is delightfully slick and Harry is able to impatiently slip two fingers in him.

His Omega mewled in that urgent but still restrained way that made Harry desperate. Louis took a second to gather himself and tried to harness the pleasure from Harry's intrusion without being side-tracked by the Alpha's play for dominance again.

"You thought we got a bear to play along so you'd find me appealing when I saved a pup from it?" Louis' eyes had glazed over and his words were starting to string together as he hurried to finish the question. By the end he didn't even care if he was audible.

When Harry tried to sit up Louis didn't allow it. So, the Alpha continued his torturous ministrations until the tell-tale signs of Louis' certain arousal made an appearance. He watched the Omega's chest flush a deep red down to his belly button, accompanied by the lightest sheen of perspiration from his flustered response. Louis' slick is pleasantly concentrated with pheromones and as the boldest indicator of Louis' need, it was often subject to some shyness on Louis' part.

Initially, Louis would avoid Harry's gaze when his desire grew this potent or try to wriggle free entirely. Both acts were abominable in Harry's eyes but he never forced Louis. His Omega used to be beautifully brazen and a force to reckon with in every regard except intimacy. That circumstance has made a pleasant change.

"Stop." Louis regarded him with poorly concealed impatience. "Stop thinking about before."

Harry did not allow himself to be dissuaded this time when he sat up so Louis retaliated by connecting their lips once more, being drawn into Harry's scent and taste crowding him in. It was overwhelming and intensely comforting so much so that Louis sometimes craved this tender warmth. He shifted his knees on either side of Harry and took the Alpha's face in his hands, teasing Harry's tongue with his own. Harry tastes like green apples which confuses him a little because they haven't left the bed for breakfast yet. Louis' position falters when his leg doesn't pull free of the sheets in time and Harry has to keep him from tumbling off the bed.

"Your enthusiasm is most agreeable, Omega." Harry's self-satisfied chuckle was not welcome.

Louis emits a huff, soft but sharp enough to convey his displeasure at being mocked.

Now is not one of the times that Louis wants to be reassured and loved carefully. Something combustible and unforgiving was building at his core and Louis wanted it to render that exhaustive bliss. It could only come from having his Alpha's knot which drove his earnestness. He could tell Harry was in a mood to be playful and embrace a leisurely pace but Louis was beyond that now.

Harry stopped Louis from grabbing his own length for immediate relief. Without thought, the Omega reached behind to grab at Harry's wrist and pull free from the Alpha's cruel slow – and agonisingly shallow – ministrations. The Alpha did not budge.

“Harry.” Is all Louis managed, a faint plea at the back of his throat. He couldn’t recognise his own voice for how urgently he wanted to be knotted. “*Harry.*”

“No.” The Alpha responded in a clipped but not unkind tone. He drew Louis impossibly nearer and fitted a third finger alongside the first two. “Open your eyes.”

Louis’ skin felt like it was on fire and he wasn’t going to have his reprieve yet. He shamelessly savoured the stretch of his rim to accommodate Harry’s fingers, slipping a little under the haze of blinding pleasure and helplessness. When he tried to hide from the lewd noises of his heightening slick production in the crook of Harry’s neck, the Alpha used his free hand to necklace Louis’ throat and keep him upright.

Louis could feel Harry’s arousal agonisingly close to where he needed it. His punishingly determined Alpha sought out his Bond mark on Louis’ neck once more, adorning it with careless kisses as he suffered through the Omega’s relentless gyrating. Slick had created a near sinful image by dripping down between them, all but coating the Alpha’s hand where he prompted more out of his moaning Omega.

Harry’s had enough of drawing out their matching agony and releases Louis all at once. He hardly has to make Louis turn over this time because the Omega readily takes up the position. Louis barely manages a full breath before Harry’s body blankets him, pressing him into the mattress until the sensation teeters on the edge of discomfort.

Louis couldn’t move if he wanted to and feeling the pressure of Harry’s erection pushing into him with cruel deliberateness pulls a deeply satisfied moan from the depths of his raging core. All his movements are restricted and Harry unconsciously grabs his hip with bruising strength but Louis relishes it. He tries not to concentrate on the mild burn of being stretched by Harry’s girth and the Alpha plants mindless open-mouthed kisses across his shoulder blades for a distraction.

“*Placide, Omega. Placide.*” Harry tried to discourage any of Louis’ impending movement resulting from desperation. He waited until his senses no longer prickled uneasily from Louis’ rapid heartrate or shallow breathing.

“Move, you brute.” Louis spoke through gritted teeth and his threatening tone only served to further provoke Harry.

The Alpha reached for Louis’ thighs, shifting them further apart so he can settle more comfortable between them. He growled when Louis took the opportunity to move and almost separated their bodies entirely before Harry took hold of his hips again and rammed back in until he was fully sheathed in the Omega’s slick heat.

“You are awfully stubborn.” He couldn’t recognise his voice for the Alpha timbre it had taken on.

Louis shuddered at Harry’s molten tone. His Alpha was not quite annoyed yet and Louis would like to be knotted before that travesty strikes.

*“Move.”* He pleaded, rolling his hips back to meet Harry’s and began muttering his gratitude when Harry finally chose a pace.

It was a hurried and brutal one that had Louis falling forward against the crumpled and ruined sheets with a drawn out mewl. He struggled to keep from touching himself because his climax would be more intense if the stimulation came from Harry abusing that sweet spot. His own length hung neglected beneath him, making Louis jolt at the slightest contact with it. Harry purposely brushed his straining length when he reached up to tease Louis’ nipples, tugging and taunting them with his fingers.

Louis’ orgasm hit him like a truck and his lips were frozen in a silent scream as Harry kept thrusting mercilessly. He felt his body resist the initial swelling of Harry’s bulbous knot at the base of his length and knew he’d be sore for at least the rest of the day when his Alpha merely ignored that faint resistance.

Harry enjoyed watching his length pull free of Louis’ body just for the fact that it seemed to cling to him, the deliciously lubricated rim dragging across his most sensitive skin as he withdrew before slamming back in.

Something hummed to life in his chest in that familiar scorched and yearning sensation that speaks for his and Louis’ Bond. He immediately lowered himself to cover Louis’ frame and embrace his mate, that rumbling heat in his ribcage rumbling to life when Louis accepted his kiss a little tiredly but with no less enthusiasm.

Harry managed to bring Louis to another orgasm before his knot grew too uncomfortable to move and he feared hurting his mate. He forced an arm under Louis and thrust one last time to ensure he was properly seated as his release emptied into his Omega.

*“I’m going to be sore and bloated all day.”* Louis didn’t sound all that displeased at the prospect.

He was not the biggest fan of Harry’s arrangement of them after they knotted like this – the Alpha forced his legs apart as they lay on their sides so his shin rested rather uncomfortably atop Harry’s. There was no convincing the Alpha otherwise because Harry knew it was the least uncomfortable position to keep pressure off his knot – and thankfully Louis’ bladder – and he was right.

*“That’s quite a pleasant image, if you ask me.”* Harry surprised Louis by pressing the palm of his hand into the Omega’s tummy. Louis squeaked and brushed him off as the Alpha’s gritty laughter rang in his ear. It was not a painful sensation but Louis was confused by the misplaced pressure enough to shy away from it.

*“You know there’s an awful lot of volumes focusing on Omega anatomy at the library in Praesidio.”* Harry has taken to nuzzling the back of Louis’ neck where the greater area of his mark rested, nipping and sucking the tender flesh beneath which lies a quaint focal point of Louis’ saccharine scent.

*“Is that what you go there for now?”* Louis dropped his head for his chin to meet his chest so Harry has easier access to their mark. He experimented once with pulling away after Harry

began paying extra attention to him in this way but the Alpha looked ready to pin him down if necessary.

“Sometimes I am early to the Alpha meetings.”

“Did those volumes- *Harry*, that’s not very comfortable.” Louis warned lightly when the Alpha took to almost reopening the bite. Alphas take much pride in the marks they give their mates and often get carried away when paying their mind afterwards.

Harry pressed a kiss to the base of Louis’ skull by means of apology and refrained from continuing his treatment of the Bond mark after ensuring that he drew no blood.

“Did those volumes tell you anything about Omegas being able to train bears then?”

## Chapter End Notes

I needed to get this out because the next chapter will only be ready in two weeks. I also desperately want to hear your thoughts on the smut because it's been a long time since I attempted writing such a scene and don't want to disappoint. There is more to add to the day Louis and Harry met which will come in the following chapters. I apologise if the format gets a little confusing. Additionally, I am trying not to use their surnames as you have noticed.

Thank you for taking the time out of your day to read my story :) S.

## End Notes

hi.

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