Nothing Stronger in the World

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by theotherwolfinsideyou

Summary

Mike's instincts have been driving him crazy since Will disappeared, and don't settle until he sees the omega safe and sound in the hospital.

Mike wanted to crawl up the walls of the hospital waiting room.

Will was *alive.* Will was safe and breathing and somewhere in this building and Mike couldn't take it. Every instinct he had thrummed, telling him to find his packmate and make sure he was safe. He knew he wouldn't settle until he saw Will with his own eyes.

Before this week, Mike had never felt like much of an alpha. Mom was always quick to tell him that was normal, that he wouldn't grow into his instincts until he shed his pup scent, but Mike didn't believe her. Troy and the other alphas in his grade had no problems acting like their secondary gender, with all the posturing that came with it, and Mike didn't fit into any of it. Most days, the only proof he had of his alphahood was his greater likelihood to butt heads with Lucas over something he should've let slide then he was with Dustin, and that was nothing. Everything else about him screamed beta.

Then Will went missing, and suddenly Mike was feeling instincts he'd never felt before. Will's absence was a gaping hole in the Party, like a body missing an organ, and Mike had *felt* it. It wasn't an emotion; it was a feeling deep inside him, from some place he'd never felt before, and it was all-consuming. It had scared Mike at first, before he'd gotten used to it, that *need* to fill the emptiness by finding Will. Even when he had Eleven to distract him, that feeling had been ever-present in the back of his mind, urging him to make everything right by finding Will. For the first time in his life, he'd felt like an alpha, because he was sure that the feeling was only so intense because he was one.

Maybe it was because Will was their omega. They weren't a pack, not officially. They couldn't be until they were older, with adult scents and developed instincts and a decision on whether Mike or Lucas would be head alpha (which was going to be a nightmare and a half), but they were as much of a pack as they could be and Will was their pack omega. Alphas were protective over omegas, everyone knew that. It'd make sense that Will going missing would awaken Mike's instincts. He knew it was an alpha thing, because he'd talked to Lucas and Dustin about it, and only Lucas had felt the same way. Dustin was a beta, and his worry about Will had been an emotion.

Even then, the way Lucas had described his instincts sounded less intense. They weren't ever-constant and all-consuming. Mike was sure the difference came from the fact he'd known Will longer. That had to be it. Ever since he'd met Will on that swingset, he knew Will was his to take care of. Lucas didn't need to feel the same. He knew Mike would.

The door opened. Mike looked up to see Jonathan. Jonathan opened his mouth, which was all the confirmation Mike needed.

He sprung to his feet. "He's awake?"

Jonathan nodded, and Mike rushed to shake Dustin and Lucas awake (even if he hadn't talked to Lucas, he'd know his instincts were weaker. Mike *never* could've fallen asleep without seeing Will). They ran to Will's room, not slowing down despite several nurses telling them to.

Joyce was sitting on the bed, but Mike hardly saw her. All he could see was Will. He was lying on the bed, skin slightly pale, but uninjured. He smiled wide at the sight of them.

Mike was hugging him in an instant, ignoring Joyce's pleas to be careful with him. Will's scent was weak and slightly bitter, but it was there, and one whiff sent that feeling of emptiness inside Mike scattering. His shoulders untensed for the first time in days.

He let Dustin and Lucas hug him too, before taking the chair closest to the bed. Lucas and Dustin went on a rant about everything Will had missed, his funeral and Troy pissing himself and everything that went down with Eleven, but Mike barely listened. He was focused on Will, on the smile on his face and the bags under his eyes. When Will started coughing, Mike winced.

It took a long time to catch Will up, and by the time they did, it was time to go. Dustin and Lucas hugged Will one last time. Mike let them go, before sitting on the side of Will's bed.

"I really missed you," Will said, softly.

"I missed you more," Mike replied. "I'm never letting you out of my sight again."

Which was a ridiculous thing to say, obviously, seeing as he was about to leave, but Mike wanted it to be true. He never wanted to feel like some intrinsic part of himself was ever missing again.

"That'd be hard to pull off," Will smiled.

"After everything we did this week? It'd be easy," Mike said. "We're pretty much superheroes now. Nothing bad will ever happen to you again. We won't let it."

"Okay," Will's voice was soft. Mike hugged him again, hard. He wished he had his adult scent, so he could smother Will with it and make sure Will never felt alone again.

It took a lot of willpower for Mike to leave Will's side. His instincts wanted him to set up shop in the bedside seat and stand watch, to make sure nothing came to hurt Will. He was pretty sure he'd feel that urge for a long time. Maybe forever, now that he knew how much it hurt for Will to be gone. But he managed, ignoring every instinct screaming for him to go back.

Joyce was standing outside the door. Mike would bet she'd been watching them the whole time. If his instincts had gone crazy over Will being gone, he couldn't imagine what Joyce must be feeling right now. Mom always said that there was nothing stronger in the world than an omega's drive to protect their pups.

Joyce smiled at him as he walked past. She smelled like hot chocolate and caramel, warm and inviting. Omegas usually inherited their mom's scent; Mike hoped that Will would, when they were older. It'd suit him. "You're going to be a great alpha, Mike. I'm glad Will has you."

That took him aback. Mike was skinny and weak and couldn't have less of an interest in sports or anything else "alphan." He'd heard classmates whisper about how little of an alpha he was so much he'd started to believe it. Except here Joyce was, clearly seeing something that rest of the world had missed. Including Mike.

"Thank you, Ms. Byers," he eventually said. "I'm glad he has you too."

She hugged him, quickly, before sending him back to his Mom. They drove home in silence. Years later, Mike would realize what the bitterness in Nancy's scent meant, that she never got to fill her own emptiness. But in that moment, all he could think about was how badly he wanted them to turn around.

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