# Out of My Element

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# Out of My Element

by theotherwolfinsideyou

## Summary

Dean goes into his first pre-heat at seventeen. John, not wanting to deal with it, drops him off at Bobby's. Bobby does what he always does; he takes care of his pup.

## Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Bobby is enjoying a nice cup of coffee on his porch when he hears the roar of a car driving down his road. He squints as he tries to make out the car from a distance; he didn't have an appointment today, and no one had called ahead. That wasn't entirely uncommon for hunters, however, and he isn't surprised when he makes out the shape of a black Impala.

Bobby makes his way down his front steps as John parks the car. John beelines to the trunk almost as soon as the car stops moving. Dean climbs out of the backseat, which is unusual; John almost always has him in the passenger. Sam's quick to follow him, and Bobby doesn't miss how he stands closer to Dean once he's out, looking at him with worried eyes.

"Something wrong with your phone?" Bobby asks. John's usually the type to give him ample warning before dropping by.

"We were in a rush," John replies gruffly. "Does Dean smell like a pup or an omega to you?"

Bobby furrows his eyebrows as he scents the air. Dean smells as he always does, pine needles and campfire smoke and apple pie, though he does smell strangely sweeter than usual. It makes Bobby want to wrap him up in blankets and keep him comforted and safe and protected from the rest of the world. What could be causing that?

He takes stock of Dean then. He's a bit taller than the last time he saw him--he'd be what, seventeen now? He looks more like his father too, though the softness of his omegan features obscures the resemblance. His face is flushed red, and he's swaying on his feet. His breaths are shorter than usual. When he notices Bobby staring, his eyes dart down, as if he's embarrassed to be perceived.

Bobby was young once. He clocks what's going on.

"Is he in *heat,* John?" Bobby asks incredulously.

"Almost," John replies. "I need you to look after him for the next couple of days. If he still smells like a pup to you, that is."

Bobby gives him a hard stare. He's almost offended that John feels like he had to ask. He and his instincts had accepted these boys as his pups years ago. "Of course he smells like a pup to me."

"Good," John pulls a backpack out of the trunk and shoves it into Dean's arms. The pre-heat must be making Dean unsteady, because he stumbles back from the force of it. "I'll be back to get him in a few days."

"Woah, John, slow down," Bobby says. "Are you sure that's the best course of action here?"

"Are you refusing?" John asks.

Bobby shakes his head. That's out of the question, really. If he turns them away John will just make Dean ride it out in a random motel room. It'll be better to keep him somewhere he's familiar with. "No, I'm just--"

“Great,” John swings open the driver’s door. “See you soon.” And with that he climbs into the car.

Sam hesitates. He doesn’t want to leave his brother; it’s written all over his face and scent. His instincts already tell him that he should be here guarding the territory, protecting his packmate while he’s vulnerable. He’s going to be a good alpha, Bobby can tell. He hopes, as he often does, that John will bring the boys around more. Sam needs an older alpha to model his behaviour off of. One that isn’t John.

“C’mon, Sam!” John orders.

“He’ll be fine, pup,” Bobby assures him. “I’m going to take care of him.”

Sam nods, and finally turns to join his father in the Impala. John’s gone the second the door shuts.

Bobby turns to Dean, who looks like he’s hoping the ground will swallow him whole. “Come on inside, pup.”

“I’m sorry, Bobby,” Dean stammers out. “I told him to just leave me--”

“You ain’t got anything to be sorry for pup,” Bobby opens his door. “Get in. You must feel like you’re boiling out here.”

Dean’s scent grows even sweeter as he walks toward him, and the urge to keep him safe increases tenfold. How the hell did John manage to drive away? Bobby wouldn’t be able to go half a mile if that was his kid.

“Why’d it take so long for your dad to get you here?” Bobby asks as they walk through his living room. Pre-heats last three days. John should’ve had plenty of time to drive Dean here and let Bobby get his house prepared.

“He was on a hunt and wouldn’t pick up his phone,” Dean says, looking straight down at his hands. “He didn’t come back until last night.”

Bobby takes a deep breath. Great. Just great. John rarely leaves his boys with enough money to eat three square meals a day while he goes on a hunt, and Dean would’ve needed more food than normal. Omegas and alphas alike need to carb load before their cycles, to give their bodies enough energy to get through their heat and rut and to minimize the amount of time needed to go to the bathroom during. There was no way Dean had enough money for all the food his body needed. Lord knows he probably gave most of it to Sam anyways.

“Alright,” Bobby stands up. “I’m going to make you a sandwich, and you’re going to eat it while I prepare the attic for you.”

“I’m not hungry,” Dean says immediately. Bobby knew he wouldn’t be. Heats and ruts are the greatest appetite suppressants in the world. Great if you carb loaded properly during your pre, terrible if you didn’t.

“Tough,” Bobby replies. “Sit down.”

Dean does without further complaint, and Bobby fixes him a ham and cheese sandwich and an ice tea. He puts it down on the kitchen table and brings his hand to Dean's forehead, ignoring the teen's grumbling in protest. Shit, he's burning up already. Bobby's probably got less than an hour before Dean's heat starts in earnest.

"I'm going to prepare the attic now," Bobby says. "I want that plate cleared by the time I get back."

Dean looks like he wants to complain, but Bobby silences him with a look. He waits until Dean takes his first small bite of the sandwich before leaving the kitchen.

He stands in the hallway, suddenly faced with the fact he has no idea what "preparing the attic" should entail. He hasn't had to set a room up for a heat since Karen was alive, and that had been over a decade ago, so long he barely remembered what she had liked. Not to mention those heats had involved his participation. This was a *very* different situation. The only thing he's solid on is bringing Dean blankets to nest with, and he already knows that won't be enough. He needs advice.

Bobby does the only thing he can do. He calls an expert.

"Been a while since you called, Bobby," Ellen answers on the third ring. "You in trouble?"

"You could say that," Bobby says. "I need a little advice. Omega-related advice."

"Am I the only omega you know?"

"More or less."

"What's the problem?"

"Winchester's kid is on the cusp of his first heat and he left him with me," Bobby says. "I'm a little out of my element here, Ellen."

"John just left him with you?" Ellen sounds shocked. "That's something he should be dealing with."

"You're telling me," Bobby sighs. "But the boy's here now. I gotta do right by him."

"Do you have enough time to take him to the Roadhouse?" Ellen asks. "I've got a heat room no one's using right now. It would probably be the best place for him."

"Nope. I think I've got an hour tops," Bobby replies. "John left it to the last minute, looks like."

"Of course he did," Bobby can practically hear Ellen rubbing her forehead in disappointment. "Can you take him to a heat hotel? Sioux Falls has got to be big enough to have one."

"He's underage," Bobby says. "I'm not his parent or guardian. I wouldn't be able to sign the admittance forms." He could've still done it, if John had written a letter of temporary guardianship. But he hadn't, for the same reason he hadn't taken Dean to a heat hotel himself;

it would've embarrassed him. He liked to treat Dean like he was a beta, and ignore anything that pointed to the contrary. Bobby's pretty sure he wouldn't have been able to raise Dean in this life if he allowed himself to see him as an omega.

"We'll have to make due with what we've got then," Ellen sighs. "Do you have anything for him to use?"

"Use how?" Bobby asks.

"He's seventeen," Ellen says. "It's not going to be a pup heat, Bobby."

Bobby's face reddens. "I'm an alpha, Ellen, I ain't got anything like that."

"Then it's going to be a rough time for him," Ellen sighs. "No way around that."

Bobby's eyes go to Dean, still sitting at the kitchen table clutching his ice tea. *Goddamnit, John* . "What can I do to make it easier on him?"

"Give him every blanket you own," Ellen instructs. "Pull them out of storage if you need to. Did John leave anything with his or Sam's scent?"

"What do you think?"

"This poor kid," Ellen breathes out sharply through her nose. "Definitely give him the sheets off your bed then, and some of your clothes."

"What else?"

"Give him a heating pad if you got one," Ellen continues. "He's going to be so hot he'll think he won't want it, but it'll help with the cramps. Give him some ice packs too. Replace them every few hours, but leave them outside the door. That's crucial; *never* open the door, not unless you're sure he's dying. The kid's going to be embarrassed enough."

"I know that much, Ellen," Bobby huffs.

"Don't leave the house," Ellen continues. "Heats make you feel weak and vulnerable in a way alphas can never understand. He'll freak out if he thinks he's in the house alone, especially because he'll already feel like he's been abandoned by his pack. Make noise every once in a while to show him you're around."

Calling Ellen was definitely the right call, because the opposite is true of ruts. Whenever he's in rut he gets so territorial he'll growl whenever the house creaks. "Anything else?"

"He had enough to eat?" Ellen asks.

"I wish," Bobby snorts. "I'm guessing I should give him the same food I'd give an alpha in rut?"

"Yup. Soup, grains, blander fruits. Nothing that would upset his stomach," Ellen replies. "And lots of water, as cool as you can make it."

"That it?"

“That’s all I can think of, yeah,” Ellen goes quiet for a second. “You’ve got your faults, Bobby, but you’re a damn good alpha, you know that? Not many would be willing to do this.”

“Yeah, well. Somebody’s got to,” Bobby says. “Call me if you think of anything else.”

“I will,” Ellen promises. “Good luck.”

Bobby hangs up.

He gets to work quickly, stripping his bed of its sheets and blankets and throwing them in the attic, before adding the blanket from the guest bedroom and the living room. It should be a good enough place for a heat. It’ll offer Dean the most seclusion out of anywhere in the house besides the basement, and he’s not about to put him in the bunker. He and Sam have slept up there before, which also makes it familiar. Bobby’s got two beds up there, which he pushes together to give Dean ample space to nest on. He’d already seen Dean nest a few times in that setup for him and Sam, so it should be good enough. Maybe he should have Dean set up a permanent nest here after this. Karen’s nest had always been important to her, and Bobby’s house was probably the most permanent location in Dean’s life. That might do more harm than good, though. He’d have to spend quite a lot of time separated from it.

That’s a future concern. He’s pretty sure three blankets won’t be enough, so he starts to root through his closets. He finds the old boxes rather quickly, hidden under a pile of old clothes.

He thumbs the cardboard thoughtfully. He should’ve thrown these out years ago, really, along with most of Karen’s things, back when having reminders of her around every corner was driving him mad. But he hadn’t been able to throw out a single item from her nest. That space still felt untouchable to him, a realm he had no right to destroy. So he’d thrown everything into a few boxes and shoved them in the back of his closet, where they’ve remained until now.

He wonders how she’d feel about him giving all her blankets to a pup to use, and instantly knows she’d be happy about it. She’d always been warm and caring and eager to help others, a few of the many traits he’d loved so much about her. Besides, Karen had always wanted an omega pup. He can’t count how many times she’d talked about daydreams of teaching them how to scent and nest and be an omega. One of his biggest regrets in life is letting his fear of fatherhood stop him from giving her that pup she craved so badly.

Over the years, he’s wondered many times if that would’ve made it easier or harder to lose her, if they'd had that pup. They could’ve brought her back to him, in their eyes and scent and face. But that has its own faults. John had told him, once, how hard Dean’s scent was for him to deal with, similar as it was to Mary’s. Sometimes he looks at the boy with such sadness you’d think Mary was dying all over again.

*Focus on the pup you’ve got,* he reminds himself. He brings the boxes to the attic, before making his way back down to the kitchen.

Dean's scent still has a touch of that intense sweetness, but it's overshadowed now by one that's intensely bitter, strong enough to make Bobby want to turn on his heels and walk away. *Well, shit*. If Dean's real heat scent is already taking over, then Bobby has less time than he'd thought.

He pats Dean's shoulder, and Dean turns his head in disgust. Bobby's scent must smell just as terrible to him as Dean's does to Bobby. Bobby's heart warms at the sight. He's seen Dean as his pup for years, but it's nice to see that the feeling goes both ways. Nothing smells worse than a family member while you're in heat or rut, a nice little safeguard mother nature created to protect against inbreeding. You'd have to be scentblind or demented to ignore it.

"I've got the attic ready for you," Bobby says. "You ready?"

"Yeah," Dean replies, but his voice shakes and Bobby already knows he's lying. Underneath that bitterness, Dean smells *terrified*.

Bobby frowns. Has anyone bothered to tell him what's happening to his body, or what this is going to entail? John sure as hell didn't. Bobby knows Dean's been enrolled in a few high schools, but he doesn't know in which states. Some have worse sex education than others, if they have it at all. There's a real possibility that the only information Dean has about heats is from other teenagers, porno magazines, and TV.

"Listen to me," Bobby puts his hands on both of Dean's shoulders. "Have I ever let anything bad happen to you, pup?"

Dean shakes his head.

"I'm not about to start now," Bobby promises. "I'm not going to lie to you. These next few days are going to be rough. You're going to be uncomfortable, and you're going to be in pain. But you're going to get through them, because I ain't going anywhere. I'm going to take care of you, just like I always do. Alright?"

Dean's looking straight at his feet, but he mumbles an "alright," and that's good enough.

"Good," Bobby pulls him to his feet. "Let's go."

Dean's unsteady on his feet, so Bobby picks him up and carries him to the attic. He puts him down on the bed with the blankets, and runs to the kitchen to make him some more food and water. By the time he returns, Dean's covered in so much sweat he's gleaming.

"Alright, pup," Bobby kneels beside the bed. "I'm going to leave you alone now, okay?"

Panic rushes across Dean's face, and Bobby cups his cheek reassuringly. "Trust me, you don't want me here for what comes next."

"I don't think I can do this," Dean whines. Bobby's never heard him whine before. It breaks his heart.

"I know," Bobby runs his thumb under Dean's eye. "But you're going to have to be strong, pup. Every omega goes through it. You've faced a lot worse than this. Just keep telling

yourself that."

Dean clenches his eyes shut. He still smells terrified.

"Say that back to me," Bobby instructs.

"I've faced a lot worse than this," Dean's voice is so quiet Bobby can barely hear him.

"Damn straight you have," Bobby moves his hand to Dean's hair. "You've faced a *hella* lot worse than this, pup. This is going to be nothing."

"Okay," Dean replies in a voice that isn't a little bit believable, but it's the best Bobby's going to get in the time he has.

"I'll be putting water and ice packs outside your door every few hours," Bobby says. "I'm going to be here the whole time. I ain't going anywhere. You holler for me immediately if you need something, alright?"

Dean nods. Bobby kisses him on the forehead, before standing up. "You're going to be fine, pup."

Dean doesn't look like he's going to be fine, but it's all Bobby can do in the time he has. He closes the door.

The next three days pass very, very slowly. Bobby cancels all of his appointments at the auto shop in favour of performing the loudest duties he can around the house. Every three hours or so he brings Dean water and restores the ice packs and heating pad once Dean puts them outside his door. He spends most of his time reading on his couch and making calls to other hunters. It'd almost be relaxing, if he wasn't so worried for the kid. He's taking the food Bobby gives him, but Bobby doesn't know if he's actually eating it. A hundred things could be going wrong up there.

When Dean finally hobbles down the staircase, looking more tired than Bobby's ever seen him, Bobby can't be more relieved. His scent has gone back to normal, though it's got the bitter edge of an omega who's had an unsatisfying heat. Bobby pulls him into a hug, and Dean grasps him tight.

"Hey there, pup," Bobby says. "You're okay. I've got you."

Dean just holds him harder. It's the first time he's hugged Bobby since his scent came in, which was what, three years ago? Bobby holds him steady and runs a comforting circle on his shoulder. "You hungry?"

"Starving," Dean says, voice cracking. Bobby sits him down at his kitchen table and gets to making porkchops, even though it's not even midday. He's got to get some protein into the boy.

"Do I really have to do this for the rest of my life?" Dean asks as Bobby puts down the plates, sounding so miserable it makes Bobby's heart ache.

“Unfortunate fact of life, pup,” Bobby replies. “It ain’t all bad, though. It’s nice if you got an alpha.”

Dean averts his gazes and hunches his shoulders, and Bobby almost laughs before he thinks about it for a few seconds. Dean will probably be taking an alpha soon now that he’s had his first heat, if he hasn’t already. Bobby remembers that vividly, that sense of curiosity that follows your first, making you wonder if what your body had so desperately called for is as good as you think it’ll be and then finding out that it *absolutely* is. It’s not like Dean will struggle to find an opportunity, not with how often John leaves him and Sam alone. All he’d have to do is tell Sam to scram for a few hours, and he could open the door for any alpha he wants.

The idea fills Bobby with rage from deep inside him, so suddenly he has to grip the table to avert it. *Woah.* It’s a rage that feels almost ancient, and certainly paternal. He doesn’t want some alpha putting their hands on his pup.

Bobby decides he needs to quickly think about something else before his scent sours. “I called your dad. He’ll be here to pick you up soon.”

Dean bolts to his feet. “I need to do the laundry.”

“I can do that for you,” Bobby says.

Dean shakes his head rapidly. “No, you can’t.” And then he’s gone. Bobby puts his porkchops back in the oven to keep them warm. He practically has to force Dean back into the kitchen to make him eat.

When John comes to get him, Bobby almost doesn’t want to give him back. The omega’s still exhausted and weak, and he knows John’ll immediately drag him onwards to wherever the next hunt is. But Dean can’t be more eager to go. John couldn’t have pushed the car’s stick into park before Dean is mumbling a “thank you” to Bobby and rushing to the passenger seat.

John still has the courtesy to walk out and greet him. “Thank you, Bobby. I’ll remember this.”

“You could’ve called ahead, you know,” Bobby replies. “You should take him to a heat hostel next time. That’s what’s best for him, and you know it.”

“He’ll be eighteen next time,” John replies, and it’s clear he’d rather be talking about anything else. “He can make up his own mind.”

“Good,” Bobby replies. “Tell him he can always come back here. He needs to hear that.”

John nods. “See you around, Bobby.”

Bobby has enough time to wave goodbye to Sam and Dean before John’s driving away. Dean doesn’t look at him, and Bobby hopes he’ll get over this embarrassment by the time he sees him next. The pup’s got nothing to be embarrassed for. Bobby loves John like a brother, but sometimes he wants to smack the man.

The Impala disappears on the South Dakotan horizon, and Bobby hopes, like he always does, that he’ll see those pups again soon.

End Notes

Cross-posted from Ao3!

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