



Dybbuk's Detritus

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Category: Erotic, Romance, Dark

Description: "When darkness descends, the wings of the wind will show the way to bright prosperity."

Rurik Rybak: I am the Aleph-Tav, or Alpha-Omega, of the Rybak Family. Started by my otter ancestors, we are one of many mystical communities centered around a branch of the Etz Chaim, or Tree of Life. We have lived peacefully, if not a tad isolated, for centuries. That is until my best friend, Chloe, has a vision during an orgasm that begins us down a dark path of survival at the hands of evil, the likes of which we've never seen.

Theo Adler: My convocation of bald eagles have been tracking a soul sucking demon, the dybbuk, for decades. My grandfather was unable to vanquish the demon, being injured in the process. I am not enough to destroy it myself, but the demon and fate guide me to those who can. When I take my place next to my fated mate, with the Rybak Family at our backs, I know there is nothing we cannot do, so long as we are together.

Of course, that can't happen if my mate loses his soul.

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Rurik “Aleph-Tav”/ “Avot” Rybak 1.

I grab a page from the scattered stack currently littering my desk, when my office door flies open, banging against the wall. I don't jump, I don't look up. I'm used to Chloe's behavior by now, I've even grown fond of it over the years. Right now, however, I'm trying to figure out what this missive means for my people and the paranormal community at large.

“Rurik, we need to talk. And fuck. I'm itchy.” I spare her a fleeting glance, then look back at the paper.

Dried, mummified remains of shifters found. 11 cities so far worldwide. 13 victims. No bite marks, no visible injuries, no signs of struggle. Men, women, and two children. No physical features in common.

“Rurik, I'm serious. You need to bone me.”

I place the paper on the stack, clasp my hands on my desk and meet her pleading eyes. She's my height, 5'0", pixie cut, currently black hair and bright green eyes. She's also a witch with precognitive abilities, and my best friend.

“My dick doesn't work on demand. You could at least try to romance me a little.” I raise an eyebrow in challenge, which she ignores, huffing and throwing herself in one of the chairs in front of my desk, which she then uses as a footrest for her big black boots.

“What would be the point? You aren't my type and I'm certainly not yours. We fuck

because it's fun, a way to kill time, and it helps when my mojo is backed up."

"I'm not a fucking plumber, Chloe." She titters into her hand and tilts her head in appraisal.

"Yeah, you kind of are. Come on, dick me good, Aleph-Tav, it's important." She's serious, despite her language.

I sigh, glancing at the papers on my desk again. Maybe she can shed some light on what's going on in the Paranormal world. "Alright, give me a few minutes, I'll meet you in my rooms."

"You're the best, Rurik, I'll even grunt really deep so it's like you're fucking a man."

"You're ridiculous. Go." She bounces out of my office, heading upstairs to my suite. I live in the Aleph House, seeing as I'm Aleph-Tav and the leader of the Rybak Family.

Typically, a group of otters, my animal counterpart, is called a family, and the leader of a shifter pack is called an alpha, their mate an omega. My ancestors came from Russia in the 1830's to the United States, settling in Bellevue, Nebraska, of all places. They were drawn here by the Etz Chaim, or the Tree of Life that became the center of my people's land. We are of Jewish decent, and use the Hebrew designations, Aleph for alpha, and Tav for omega. I am an omega, and the heir to the Rybak Family, therefore, I am the Aleph-Tav. When, if, I ever meet my mate, they will be the Aleph. Unlike many packs or dens, it matters not in our family if you are alpha, omega, or beta to rule, so long as you are the first born and qualified to lead. In my case, I am the only born of my parents and damn responsible.

My great-grandfather found it humorous to name his rag-tag group of shifters, witches, warlocks, and any other Paranormal creature who happened to come along, a

Family. So, almost 200 years later, the Rybak Family is still going strong.

So long as we can help other communities figure out what's causing this rash of deaths plaguing our kind.

Putting the papers down on the desk, I stand and stretch, realizing I've been sitting here for hours. The responsibilities of the Aleph-Tav never cease. And my most important one, finding a mate, preferably fated, is proving to be the most elusive. Those of my generation in our Family are unable to take a forever mate until I have. We are a horny menagerie.

Thinking of my nameless, faceless, forever mate, my dick plumps in my pants as I ascend the stairs to my suite and to Chloe. It's odd, I'll admit, having your best friend as a fuck buddy, even odder when you consider we are tav. It's safe for us, though. No chance of pregnancy, no chance of emotional attachment beyond friendship, and her precognition is most effective during moments of heightened emotions. If I can make her cum, I can make her talk.

We are simply placeholders until the real things comes along. I pray to the Fates that mine arrives soon. As much fun as it is "dicking" Chloe, as she so eloquently refers to it, I long for the day when I'm on the receiving end, rapturous bliss at the blunt end of my mate's cock.

Opening the door to my bedroom, I find Chloe already naked, spread eagle on my bed, and fingering herself. None of that is remotely interesting to me, but I could use a release now that I've been thinking about what my mate might be like.

With no preamble, I strip, then mount the bed and her in quick order, thrusting to the hilt. Her eyes roll back in her head, her jaw slack, and her chest heaving. She's clenching around my shaft within seconds. A steady rhythm has me hurtling to the finish line, imagining my slick ass filled and stretched by my aleph, him tugging on

my hair, biting into my shoulder—

“When darkness descends, the wings of the wind will show the way to bright prosperity.” Chloe is in the throes of a vision, her body shaking as she cums around me, pulling my own release from my balls.

I drop, chest to chest, until we catch our breath. I finally muster up enough strength to roll over, resting an arm over my eyes. “You know, Chloe, I really hate it when you do that shit while I’m fantasizing about my aleph.”

“Sorry, not sorry.” She says, before sobering. “What do you think it means?”

“I think we have some tough days ahead, bestie, if what I just read downstairs is any indication. Though, I appreciate that your warning had a silver lining. Perhaps, we may fare better than others have when the darkness descends over Bellevue.”

“Aleph-Tav, this is only the beginning. This is merely a portent, an amuse bouche, of what is headed our way. I feel our Family is in for a whole manner of changes.”

I lean up on my elbow and stare into her green eyes, clouded over with worry. “There will be others to come for us after this darkness?”

She nods absently, biting her bottom lip. “I believe so. But I don’t get the feeling it will destroy us, on the contrary, I believe it will fortify us.”

I plop back down with a heavy sigh, “Tilly better have my favorite chocolate silk pie handy; I can’t face the impending doom with my low blood sugar.”

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Theodore “Theo” Adler 2.

Fates, I’m exhausted. I’ve been flying for days with little to no rest. My bald eagle and I are in desperate need of real sleep, non-processed food, and maybe a good wank to settle the nerves.

Unfortunately, we are so close to the dybbuk, I hate to waste time resting when so many could be in harm’s way. Double unfortunately, I’m still not sure how to stop it.

I come from a long line of proactive shifters determined to keep the Paranormal community safe from Supernatural threats. And the dybbuk is a particularly nasty one. A ghost-like soul sucker created centuries ago when the soul of a fairly wretched dude failed to cross over after death. It has survived by consuming the souls of the innocent, their bodies no more than mummified remains when it has had its fill.

The dybbuk has been operating under the radar for decades, after almost being caught and destroyed by my grandfather. I owe it to him, to my convocation, and our kind to succeed where others have failed.

Which leads me to now, circling high above Sheboygan, Wisconsin hoping for a brief respite before following the soul sucker to its next destination. I have a feeling where it’s headed, but there is no way my eagle and I can fly that far without a break.

I spot an old motel on the outskirts of town that looks decent enough to rest my eyes and regroup. Landing softly behind the building, I shift quickly, changing into the clothes I wear in a bag around my neck when flying. Most people know about shifters, but it’s still unsettling to see a grown ass naked man behind a sketchy

building at night with glowing yellow eyes.

Rounding the building, I open the door to the lobby, ignoring the grating tinkling bell announcing my arrival. I ding the old-fashioned bell on the counter and wait for someone to help me.

And wait. And wait. Finally, a man I'm sure wandered the desert personally with Moses, shuffles to the counter from a doorway behind it. He eyes me up and down with his lips pursed, then sniffs. His features brighten slightly, softening. "A bald eagle? I haven't seen one of you in ages. Where you from, son?"

I inhale deeply, drawing the musty scents of the motel into my lungs, filtering through until I can pick out his unique odor. "Rabbit?"

He scoffs, leaning his fragile frame against the counter. "Come on, if I can tell you're a bald eagle, rather than just 'bird', surely you can narrow my species down."

I mirror his stance so I can get a better whiff of him, "I want to say...cottontail?"

His lips tip into a semblance of a smile briefly, "I'll accept it. Eastern cottontail." He says proudly.

I incline my head in respect, "I apologize, I haven't had much interaction with the rabbit community, and I've been traveling for what seems all my life." I answer honestly. My convocation is in Alaska, at least those of us not out hunting for baddies.

"No harm, son. Let's get you a room to rest before I have an unconscious bird in my lobby." He teases, though, his face remains the same. When I'm given my key, an honest to Fates key, I struggle to put one foot in front of the other long enough to make it to my room.

I barely shut the door before I'm collapsing on the firm, creaky bed, face first.

I'm not sure how long I sleep before I jerk awake. My room is dimly lit with the early morning sun, and from the bed, I see I'm alone. I'm not sure what woke me, until I remember why I'm here. Fuck!

I scramble to my feet, rush through my ablutions in the bathroom, strip, repack my bag and step out into the cool air. I shift immediately, the bag around my neck, and take off, less than gracefully, from the parking lot.

There is a tug in my gut that connects me to the dybbuk. It's an irksome discomfort that has plagued me for the last year as I track it from city to city around the world. I'm always a step behind.

Allowing that tug to guide my eagle, we fly above the city for only minutes before I'm unable to stifle the urge to land. There in the house in front of me, with its picturesque wrap around porch, blue shutters, and matching door, is the evil that I've been tracking. I pray I'm not too late.

Shifting on the porch, I bust through the front door to find a young woman cradling her baby, screeching to the heavens, as her alpha mate struggles to keep his soul intact.

"Shift!" I urge, the overwhelming scent of feline suffusing my nose. The woman moves behind me, the sound of her clothes tearing fill my ears. She growls and then the baby's cries are muted into a whine as I presume it shifts as well. "Run!" I yell again, leaving her to figure it out as I grab hold of the man's arm and pull him back. It doesn't break the connection, only weakens it. Standing in front of the man, I ignore the chilling cold of the dybbuk and push the man with all my strength.

His eyes, dull and nearly lifeless, meet mine. His lips are cracked, and his flesh

begins to harden beneath my fingers. No. No. No!

“Take...care...of...them.” He whispers. I nod, continuing to push him. That is until he just gives up, gives in, and allows the dybbuk to consume him.

I spin around and face the darkness that clouds my vision. “I will find a way to end you. You have my word.” I seethe, impotent to affect any real change until I find someone who can help me.

As I run back outside in search of the mother and child, I can’t help but get the feeling it’s laughing at me.

No matter, I will defeat it in time. I pray not many suffer the consequences of my delay.

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Rurik 3.

“Rurik, has Chloe mentioned anything about this?” My father, the previous Aleph, asks with a concerned furrow to his strong brow. Gavril Rybak is a large man, with a larger personality. He’s fierce, protective, and one hell of an Aleph. His shoes are too big for me to fill in more ways than one. Though I try.

I sigh, sitting back in the armchair in his and my mother, Anastasia’s living room. He’s referring to another missive sent to us by a neighboring shifter pack, alerting us to be on the lookout for an unknown entity targeting shifters.

“She has.” I meet his eyes, when I recite her warning, “When darkness descends, the wings of the wind will show the way to bright prosperity.” I pick up my tablet and pull up the news page from Sheboygan about the latest attack. A young male tiger shifter, mummified, his front door broken down, his wife and infant missing. “I’m not sure what to do. She says that while the darkness will be troublesome, this is actually the beginning of many good things to come. It seems we will have an ice cream swirl kind of future here in the Rybak Family.”

He tilts his head to the side, “Is your blood sugar low?” I shake my head with a smile. “Forget about ice cream—” He ignores my gasp of outrage suggesting such a thing and continues, “is there an ETA for death and destruction? Have you notified the coven?”

“No ETA, it’d be so nice if the dark forces would file a flight plan.” Unable to sit still any longer, I stand up. “I have a meeting scheduled this afternoon with the council. Chloe relayed what she knew to Magnus. Hopefully, we can come up with a plan to

protect the Family.”

“I know you’ve struggled these last few years as Aleph-Tav, but Rurik,” he stands, placing his hand on my shoulder in comfort, “I wouldn’t have retired and left you in charge if I wasn’t 110% confident in your abilities to lead.”

“It’s mathematically impossible to be more than 100% anything.” He chuffs when I roll my eyes.

“Don’t underestimate the pride a parent possesses for their child. All you can do is take the information you are given and do the best you can with it. No one can ask anymore of you than that.”

“Not even 110%?” He smacks my shoulder and I hold it, hissing at the pain.

“Oh, stop it. I didn’t hit you that hard.”

I step away from him, fighting the urge to smile. “I’m a delicate tav, a fragile omega, and you are a big, growly aleph.”

“I’ve seen you rip apart a rabbit and pick your teeth with the bones of a frog.” He deadpans, unamused at my attempt at guilt. I shake out my shoulder and pick up my tablet and papers off the coffee table.

“Tell mom I’m sorry I couldn’t stay to see her. Did you want to come with me to meet with the council?” I ask, already knowing he doesn’t want to.

“No thank you. I’m gonna grab lunch here and then go hunt down your mom for my dessert.”

“Gross.” I wave over my head as I leave their house. Walking down the path towards

the center of our village, I find my feet venturing away from the Aleph House and straight to the Etz Chaim.

Dropping to my knees before the enormous Ash tree, I dig my fingers into the dirt at the base of its thick trunk. A vibration travels up my arms and cascades down my body to settle in my toes. There are thousands and thousands of ash trees around the world, but a select few are truly Trees of Life, connected by an intricate and mystical network of roots that bring comfort and rejuvenation to our kind around the world.

And as I rub my fingers along the roots, I feel that connection tethering me to the earth and reminding me that I am not alone. That no matter where I am, I am never far from those just like me, Supernatural, Paranormal, eccentric, and exquisite, seeking the same acceptance and guidance and love. A place to belong.

The Rybak Family has been one of those havens for nearly two hundred years, and I pray to the Fates that it lasts another two hundred at least. That anyone seeking refuge, or brethren, or community, or their sense of self, can find what they seek in our welcoming arms.

And I pray we can find a way to face down those who seek us harm and preserve our humanity in the process.

Opening my eyes, I stare up the grayish bark of the Etz Chaim, letting my eyes lose focus as I take in the branches that support life no matter the weather, stretching at least 50 feet in either direction, the trunk that extends at least 200 feet into the sky, so tall it seems impossible not to touch the clouds from its crest. Inhaling deeply, I open my lungs to accept what the tree has to offer its humble servant.

“Aleph-Tav!” Magnus, a warlock from the Family’s coven, yells for me. His thick chin-length gray hair flowing in the wind as he moves in my direction. He’s taller than me, though most people are, at about 5’9”, thin, but handsome in a silver fox

kind of way. He's kind and nurturing and has proven to be a blessing to all of us.

I squeeze my fingers in the dirt once more, offering a silent prayer of gratitude to Etz Chaim, God, and the Fates, before standing and dusting my fingers off on my jeans.

"What is it, Magnus?" His normally soft features are pinched in concern.

"An unknown vehicle has been spotted on Family land, heading to the village center. Chloe said she's experiencing..." he pauses, and his lips turn down into a frown, "tingles." I snort at the derision in that one word, knowing how much he despises Chloe's colorful language and descriptions. He has often commented that he doesn't require the use of sexual aids to divine what the Fates are telling him. Chloe usually just shrugs and implies maybe that's because he already has that stick lodged firmly in his clenched ass.

"Her warning?" I ask, gathering my things and striding towards the village.

He nods, falling in step beside me, shortening his stride to match mine. "She believes so."

"Are the guards on alert?"

"Yes, Aleph-Tav, they are following the vehicle as we speak, no reports of anyone else." We are a peaceful community, many having animal counterparts or the use of the mystics to defend themselves. However, for the safety of everyone, we do keep a small guard around the perimeter for advanced warning.

"Well, then, let's see who's come for dinner." I say with a smile, hoping to put Magnus, and myself, at ease. I highly doubt whatever is coming for us intending harm, would just drive up...in a minivan?

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“I’m seeing a minivan, right?” I ask when we’re closer, and the white vehicle comes into view.

“Uh, yeah, that’s a van.” Magnus sounds as confused as I do. He stands on his tip-toes and squints his eyes. “And I believe that’s an infant in the back.”

“How many dark entities bring their families?” He chuckles unexpectedly, and I share a smile with him.

“Not many, sir, I would think.”

“Tilly!” I shout at the top of my lungs, knowing that crazy old bat can hear me from anywhere in the village. Don’t be offended on her behalf, she’s literally a bat and she’s old and a damn fine chef.

“Yes, Aleph-Tav?” She pops up behind me and scares the shit out of me.

“What the hell, Tilly!”

“Shall I fetch you a clean pair of underwear, sir?” She drawls, her eyes alight with amusement.

“Shush it. I think I may have a few guests for dinner, can you adjust the menu properly? One is an infant if we aren’t mistaken.”

She nods immediately, smiles at Magnus, and then disappears. “She creeps me out. And I’m a warlock.” He shivers, then turns to me with wide eyes. “Damn if her

brisket isn't the best I've ever had."

"And don't forget her chocolate silk pie...better yet, do forget it, it's mine!"

"Yes, Rurik, I would never think to eat your precious dessert." He bows to me like a jackass.

"See that you don't." I sniff haughtily, turning my focus to the now parked vehicle and its inhabitants, a man driving, a woman in the passenger seat and an infant in the middle row. My breath catches when the driver's door opens, and a Native American demigod steps out to greet us. His golden yellow eyes are hard to look away from, but I manage to take in his broad nose, thick juicy lips, strong brow, and the glossy black hair feathered back from his forehead, cut short on the sides. Muscular neck, wide shoulders, and a thick torso of granite underneath a cobalt blue t-shirt have my mouth watering where I stand. He's taller than Magnus by at least a couple of inches, with long strong arms.

My body finally remembers to breathe and when I do, the most tantalizing scent tickles my nose before lighting my body up like the hanukkiah on the eighth day of Hannukah. My dick hardens painfully in my pants, my ass slickens, no doubt alerting everyone in a five-mile radius that I'm horny, and my hands itch to touch and explore every crest and valley of his magnificent body.

His almond eyes narrow on me with an intensity that only causes my ass to completely flood my pants before I watch his chest swell with his breath. A high-pitched sound builds low in his belly, and I find my feet moving in his direction without my permission. An answering shriek escapes my mouth and then I'm launching myself into his arms.

He catches me, inhaling my hair and clutching me tighter, his fingers digging like talons into my flesh beneath my shirt. Oh, he's a bird. I sniff his neck, that scent

stronger now, wrapping itself around my heart and invading my soul. A bald eagle. Well, isn't that strange.

My fated mate is a bald eagle, traveling with a woman and a baby? Fates, I hope they aren't his.

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Theo 4.

I clutch the tiny man in my arms, never wanting to let him go now that I have him. It takes me long moments to process what's happening. My fated mate.

I packed up the mom and the baby and hit the gas, wanting to put as many miles between us and the dybbuk as possible. Nadia fussed for quite a while in the car before falling asleep. Emilyn sat next to her and stared out the window for the first several hours of the trip. I let my eagle guide me, following his instincts to find safety. When I finally realized he was heading towards Bellevue, Nebraska, I breathed a sigh of relief. I've never personally been to the mystical mecca, but my convocation drilled into my head the locations of havens across the world where I could seek asylum.

We stopped briefly at a motel to catch some sleep and for Emilyn to tend to Nadia. Since we loaded back up this morning to finish the drive, both have been calm, Emilyn even engaging in conversation with me.

It was nice to see her smile when I asked about her mate. They were not fated, but they loved one another deeply. His name was Anthony, which garnered a big laugh out of both of us. Tony the Tiger. His parents must have had a wicked sense of humor.

"I promised him I would take care of you and Nadia. They were his last words; his last thoughts were of you and your child. I will see to it that you both enjoy a long, healthy life. And I will dance on the remains of the dybbuk when I kill him."

She turned to me with a glint in her eyes, shining bright despite the tears. “Fancy a dance partner?”

“It would be my honor, milady.” I bowed exaggeratedly in the driver’s seat as I took the last turn off for the Rybak Family village. I pointed out the big Ash in the distance. “That is the Etz Chaim, the Tree of Life. It connects us all and it will help us find our way.”

She nodded, her eyes intent on the tree. I clocked several guards as we approached, my heart ticking up slightly knowing we were being watched. I expected it, but as a bald eagle, I’m used to being the predator. As I put the minivan in park, I noticed a strong current buzzing through my blood, more than my eagle’s simple guidance, it was...an impulse, an urge I could not quell. And I found the longer I felt it, the less I wanted to.

Stepping out of the van, my eyes immediately trained on the diminutive man, almost a foot shorter than I, with a compact muscular body his clothing could not hide. He was beautiful, androgynous in a way I’ve never seen. Radiating power and strength, his features soft and feminine. Long, sharp nose, plump lips, delicate eyebrows, and an interesting mix of long brown and blonde hair, tucked behind his ear.

I inhaled my surroundings, parsing through the various scents, until I found his. Alluring and demanding, my body responded without permission, not that I would deny it anything when it came to this man. My eagle voiced his opinion on the matter which seemed to snap the man to action. He crossed the distance between us and threw himself into my arms. I caught him; I would always catch him.

I was brought here by the Fates. I was meant to rescue Emilyn and Nadia, I was meant to bring them to safety, I was meant to find this amazing little creature and spend my days by his side.

Raising my head skyward, I close my eyes and whisper, “Thank you, Fates.”. My mate chuckles, the sound vibrating through my body and centering in my cock. It hardens even more, painful in its insistence. My eagle urges me to mate with him, claim him, bond with him.

My mate and I sigh in unison. He wiggles to be let down, and I grudgingly obey. I cup his chiseled cheeks in my hands, looking into his near black eyes. Kissing his nose, I linger for a moment, before pulling back and putting much needed space between us, if we are to think clearly.

“Responsibility sucks.” He mutters, a snort escaping me at his candor. I nod in agreement. “I am Rurik Rybak, Aleph-Tav of the Rybak Family. We welcome you to our lands.” I smile at how put out he sounds.

“Theodore Adler. You can call me Theo.” A small woman about the size of Rurik rushes up to his side with a blindingly white smile. Her green eyes run the length of me once, twice, before she nudges Rurik’s shoulder.

“He’s gonna be screaming all kinds of things with you later, I highly doubt any of them will be your name. At least not coherently.” She winks at me, and I find it off putting and adorable at the same time.

I ignore her for the time being, focusing on the more pressing issues. “I have brought a tiger shifter and her daughter with me. I rescued them from an attack yesterday. Unfortunately, her mate was killed in the process. There is a dybbuk roaming free and I believe it is heading this way.”

“When darkness descends, the wings of the wind will show the way to bright prosperity.” Rurik and the little lady speak at the same time. Rurik’s eyes sharpen on me. “You are the wings of the wind. And the darkness is the dybbuk. And the bright prosperity—”

The woman cuts him off, “is you two boinking and popping out babies so the rest of us can finally get some.”

Rurik sighs heavily, pinching the bridge of his nose. “Yes, Chloe, as always, you’ve described a personal situation in the simplest and crudest of terms.”

“I told you. Someone needs to muzzle her.” A man about my height, slim, with chin length gray hair crosses his arms and glares at Chloe.

“I’d like to see you try, old man. Besides, Rurik likes my mouth.” She winks at Rurik whose eyes narrow and dart between her and I. Are they together? Fuck. I find my mate only he’s already in a relationship. Well, this is gonna be hella awkward.

“Chloe.” He grits her name like it’s a curse. She bats her eyelashes at him, swaying on her feet. “Can it.” She huffs but backs off. “Now, Theo.” He turns back to me, all business. “Please, let’s take the lady and her child inside. I was just about to meet with my personal council to discuss the recent murders in the shifter community. I believe you are just the person to shed some much-needed light on the situation.” He loops his arm through mine and leads me toward a large manor house.

I lean down close to his ear so as not to be overheard, “Are we gonna discuss—”

“Oh, mate of mine, we are going to do more than discuss. I promise. First, though, responsibilities.” Again, he sounds so upset at the notion I can’t help but laugh.

I pat his hand. “I understand, adulting is overrated.”

He looks up at me, his lips stretching into a grin, his eyes soft with...something. “The Fates never makes mistakes, ahhh! I am so excited to see what else we agree on.” He pauses for a moment at the threshold, “How do you feel about ice cream?”

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Rurik 5.

My fated mate, that's right, I have a fated mate, and I step into the council room. I note that all the members are present, including Magnus and Chloe, so we may begin promptly. I usually don't mind a little chit-chat before we start, but I have plans for after the meeting...intimate plans.

I am gonna have sexy sex with my fated mate. In case that wasn't clear. Or even if it was, it bore repeating.

"Esteemed council members, I'd like to introduce my fated mate, Theodore Adler." A few murmurs go around the room, before they break out in applause, shouting their congrats. To find one's fated mate is a gift beyond measure. To explain the connection would be to describe the color red to someone who cannot see, they are only able to grasp the concept in the vaguest sense. I bring Theo's hand to my mouth and kiss his knuckles, a proud smile stretching my lips. "Theo, these are the council members of the Rybak Family. From left to right, we have Magnus and Chloe who represent the coven, Senka the fae, Darya the water creatures, Rafe the carnivorous mammals, Javaid the vampires, Tanith the reptiles, Sorin the birds, Epona the herbivorous mammals, and Bronimir the Family guard."

My poor Theo is looking a little shell-shocked. Chloe breaks the silence, punching him in the arm. "Don't worry, the quiz isn't until tomorrow, plenty of time to memorize everyone who lives here, their designation, their job, and their Family lineage."

Thankfully, Magnus wraps his arm around her, his hand covering her mouth before I

have a chance to snap at her. “Ignore her, Aleph, she only had imaginary friends growing up, she hasn’t mastered the art of peopling yet.”

Theo offers a small smile to the room, “I’m sure in time, I will come to love her just as much as the rest of you. I came here seeking asylum for myself and the woman and child I brought with me, and to find assistance in eradicating the dybbuk. I did not expect to find my fated mate, my forever home. Please bear with me during the unavoidable growing pains.”

“Dybbuk?” Javaid asks with a concerned crease in his strong brow. “I...well, fuck.” He sits back in his seat, drawing everyone’s attention. Theo and I sit down, our hands still joined. I’m unable to let go of him, I need to touch him in some way. He doesn’t seem to mind. “I haven’t thought of one of those in decades.”

Theo nods solemnly. “My people and I have reason to believe this is the same dybbuk from over a century ago. My grandfather was unable to defeat it, however, he wounded it. The mystics he used were interrupted. We think it was recuperating somewhere remote, where its crimes would go unnoticed. At full strength now, it has wreaked havoc across the continents. The latest victim was Anthony, a tiger shifter in Sheboygan, yesterday. I bring his wife and daughter for protection, though I do not believe they are its intended targets.”

Magnus clears his throat, drawing a notepad from his pocket and a pen. “What mystics did your grandfather use?”

I squeeze Theo’s hand for encouragement, laying my head on his shoulder. “Something to bind it to this plane, then to secure it in a box until stronger mystics could be performed to kill it. It was during the binding that my grandfather was injured, an ingredient he used caused a small explosion, and the dybbuk was stunned and fled. While my grandfather recovered, our people searched for the dybbuk, ultimately unable to locate it again.”

“Is your grandfather still alive?” Chloe blurts out, the council groaning at her lack of tact.

Theo seems unfazed by her bluntness, “He is, he is unable to fly any longer, though.”

“Can he be reached by phone? Email?”

“Yes, I can give you his phone number.”

“Chloe, what are you thinking?” I ask, leaning one elbow on the table to peer around Theo to meet her eyes.

“I’m not sure. I just think Magnus and I might need to speak to him and see what ingredients he used, if nothing else, so we don’t blow ourselves up like he did. I’m too pretty to explode.”

Bronimir clears his throat, meeting my eyes. “Aleph-Tav, Aleph, is there anything I can do to ready the guard? To prepare for an attack. I assume, Aleph, that you came here not only for protection, but because you believe we are its next destination?”

Theo nods, “That is correct. The Etz Chaim is a mystical convergence most are unable to ignore, especially one that feeds off the souls of the Paranormal. Pardon me, but the Rybak Family is a veritable smorgasbord, ripe for the taking for something like the dybbuk.”

“No offense taken, Aleph, we are a tasty bunch.” Senka offers softly. She’s sweet as pie, and ethereally beautiful to boot.

“So, I ask again, is there anything the guard and I can do to protect the Family?” Bronimir glances between me and Theo. Before we can respond, Magnus chimes in.

“The coven will cast a net over the village and its inhabitants tonight. It should buy us time to come up with a more permanent solution. Theo, excuse me, Aleph, your grandfather’s number would be most helpful.”

Theo motions for Magnus to pass his paper and pen, jotting down the name and number of his grandfather. “I’ve also added the number for our shaman. We live in Alaska, so be aware they are four hours behind you.” He drops his golden eyes to me, crinkling at the corner as his mouth tips up. “I guess it isn’t ‘we’ anymore, now, is it? This is my home.”

I nod emphatically, not even trying to hide my excitement at his words. “Yup.”

“Aleph-Tav, Aleph.” Rafe says in his deep voice, always on the verge of a growl in its tone. “Might I suggest, Magnus look into corporealizing the dybbuk? If its body is solid, it can be killed, right?”

The room is silent for a beat before Sorin and Epona begin bowing to him, chanting “We’re not worthy.” Soon, the whole room has joined in and Rafe is growling for real now.

“Thank you, Rafe, that is an excellent idea and I think I know a few things we can try to make that happen.” Magnus then turns to me. “May Chloe and I be excused so we may begin on the net and our other tasks?”

“You have quite a bit to do, would you like help from anyone? Theo and I—”

Magnus holds up his hand to stop me. “Perhaps Senka could accompany us. Respectfully, Aleph-Tav, you two need...”

“To fuck.” Chloe finishes for him, earning her an eye roll and a huff of frustration.

“I was going to say time to bond properly.”

Chloe shrugs unfazed, “Like I said, fuck.” She and Magnus stand up and I’m momentarily relieved that she hasn’t crossed any lines yet. Of course, that’s when she pats Theo on the shoulder and grins mischievously. “Rurik really likes it when you pinch his nipples and be forewarned, he’s a screamer.”

“Meeting adjourned.” I mumble, dropping my head to the table like a gavel to dismiss everyone.

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Theo 6.

I'm silent as Rurik guides me through the Aleph House to his suite of rooms. It is an old building with so much character and creature comforts it immediately feels like home. Or maybe that's the tiny man grumbling to himself still holding my hand.

When he opens a set of double doors, I manage to put the brakes on and stop to take it in. If I could have designed a home for myself it would look exactly like this. Dark blues, bright yellows, and soothing grays cover the walls, couches, bedding. Large, polished wood furniture dot the rooms, adding to the sensual serenity of the space.

"Sit down, Theo, come sit here, I'll explain everything. Shit. I can't believe she...no, I can totally believe she did. Her mouth runs more than an Olympic track athlete. She couldn't just zip it and let me tell you in my own time, my own way. Of course not. She...fuck, I swear if she wasn't so helpful to the Family. Wait, that's not fair. She's my best friend. I love her. But not like I love you. Er...I mean, that is to say—"

His verbal diarrhea is adorable and charming. Honestly, it eases some of the tension cramping my stomach. Though, my eagle is still a bit miffed at the implications of Chloe's words. I pat the cushion beside me as I sink into the most comfortable couch I have ever sat on. It's like a firm but fluffy cloud that supports my tuchus and cradles my back. Well, shit. I may never get up.

"Rurik." He stops speaking, his eyes wide in alarm, however, I see the banked heat simmering. Gulping, he slowly creeps to the couch, then plops down as if the bones of his body have simultaneously disintegrated. I see my Aleph-Tav is a fan of the dramatics.

“Theo, I’m so sorry—”

“Tav, no need to apologize.” He settles in closer to me so I can wrap my arm around his slim shoulders and pull him into my side. Laying my cheek against his head, I breathe in his scent. It does more for my eagle and I than any words. Unfortunately, I still need some words. “Please explain your relationship with Chloe. And how you see us moving forward.”

Inhaling deeply, then drawing out his exhale, he speaks. “Chloe and I have been friends for years. She’s my best friend. When I became Aleph-Tav a few years ago, Chloe was my rock. The transition was hard, not because the Family disapproved, but my father, the previous Aleph, is such a good man. It took me some time to realize that I didn’t need to be him, I needed to be my own Aleph-Tav and lead the Family to the best of my abilities. No one expected me to be him.” I nod, pressing a kiss to the crown of his head. “Chloe is a witch, a strong one, that is why she and Magnus are both on my council. She also has precognition. Her visions occur during times of high emotion—”

Ok, that makes sense. “Like an orgasm?” I can’t see his face, but I feel his body heat at my question.

“Yes. Until I found my fated mate, the rest of the unmated Family members would remain as such.”

“I remember. We had several years where those of mating age were unable to find their mates because the new Alpha had not taken one himself.”

He sighs again, then throws a leg over my hips to straddle me. I enjoy this new position. I enjoy it immensely. Ignoring the hard lengths of our arousal between us, I wrap my hands around his neck loosely, my thumbs grazing his jawline. He closes his eyes, leaning into my touch.

His voice is quiet when he begins again, not much more than a whisper. “As you can imagine...we’ve become a horny bunch. Chloe and I began a physical relationship because it seemed easiest at the time. It is best that she blurts out her visions with me, rather than some random stranger. Also, we are both tav, so we knew this wasn’t more than release to pass the time.” He meets my eyes, tears welling. “I promise you, Theo, I love her because she is my Family and my best friend. I do not have romantic feelings for her, not now and not ever. I do not come to you a virgin, I am a man with a past, one that, unfortunately, will always be here. I hope that you can forgive me, my dear mate, and that in time you will learn to love Chloe as I do, like an annoying sister—”

“That you occasionally stick your dick in?” I raise an eyebrow in challenge, fighting the laugh bubbling up in my chest.

He drops his head to my shoulder, his body shaking and his breath hitching. Shit. I made him cry. When I urge his head back up to look at me, tears track down his contoured cheeks and it breaks my heart.

“Baby, no. Don’t cry.” Cupping his cheeks now, I dart my eyes between his, hoping he can see my sincerity. “I’m not mad, and there is nothing to forgive. I am not a virgin either. I have a past. Granted, mine won’t be joining us for Passover Seder. If you love Chloe because she is family, then she is my family too. You two were there for one another when you needed to be. I’m here now,” I narrow my eyes at him playfully, but with intent, “so her services won’t be required any longer.”

He shakes his head, “No, only you, Theo. She can pick a fight with Magnus if she needs an emotional high.” I chuckle, leaning forward on impulse, gently pressing my lips to his. “I’m so happy you found me.” He whispers into my mouth, before plunging his tongue between my teeth and tangling it with mine.

Kissing him, tasting him, fuck, holding him is a dream come true. And one, I never

gave much thought, given my line of work.

“There is more to discuss.” I break the kiss, gasping for breath. My eagle is squawking to claim him. But I want to make sure we do this right. Rurik grabs his shirt by the back of the neck and pulls it off, throwing it behind him. My eyes dance down his torso, past lightly defined pecs, dusky pink nipples, and a cute as fuck belly button. When his hands start fiddling with the button of his pants, my breath stalls in my lungs, waiting. He stops when the zipper is down, a flash of earth green colored boxer briefs causing my mouth to water. He’s smirking and the confidence is almost as alluring as his body.

“We have the rest of our lives to talk, hell, I’m happy to talk while we do it. But I need you, Aleph, I need to feel you inside me, taking me apart piece by piece, your thick cock—” I cut him off with a manic kiss, knowing the responsible thing to do would be to talk, but also knowing that neither of us will function well until we begin the bonding process.

He paws at my shirt like it’s personally offended him in some way, until it lay tattered on my body. My little otter partially shifts his hands to shred my pants in the same way. My neck, nipples, cock, and balls are exposed, and he seems mighty proud of his work.

“I don’t have any other clothing.” I murmur, kissing down his neck and across his collarbones.

“Sounds good to me.” He directs my mouth lower until I suck one of his nipples into my mouth. When I bite down on the turgid flesh, he hisses, bowing his back and using his hand on my head to hold me in place. My hands wander down his sides, around his back and down to cup his pert, perky, plump posterior. I snicker at my alliteration, my eagle grumbling about my lack of focus. Rocking him in my lap, my cock grows painfully hard, leaking like a sieve between us.

“Pants. Off.” I eloquently say, hoping he’ll get the hint. He does, his hands shifting again to shred his own pants, leaving his complete undercarriage exposed. I laugh, tipping my head back on the couch, he looks absurd and fuckable at the same time. The waistband of his jeans still around his waist, but the legs of jeans starting mid-thigh.

“It looks like you’re wearing leg warmers. Ineffective leg warmers.” He joins me, staring down at himself before shrugging. Up on his knees, he shuffles up my legs until his dripping hole is right above my cockstand.

“You’re about to wear a cockwarmer.” His slick is copious, his hole eager as he slides down my shaft, the moist tight heat engulfing me irrevocably.

“Theo.” “Rurik.” We breathe out the other’s name, cherishing this moment for what it is. The beginning. Our beginning.

Nuzzling his neck, letting my teeth drag across the thin skin, he shudders in my arms, his channel clenching around me. I place my hands on his slender hips, noting with awe how my hands almost touch. My whole world fits in my hands. Together, as if we’ve done this a thousand time, he lifts and, on his descent, I thrust up to meet him. A dance as old as time, instinctive to our survival, vital to our souls.

Again, and again. We kiss lazily, the rush of fusing together fading now that we are connected, allowing us the opportunity to relish such a connection, how rare it is, how blessed we are. No words are needed right now, our bodies speak for us, demonstrating the depths of our emotions.

As we near our peaks, my eagle can no longer be contained, I feel my mouth shift, contort, and elongate, sharpening into a beak. Rurik’s rhythm falters, erratic and desperate. His ass pulses, and my balls draw tight. When I feel the first splash of his release on my abdomen, I let my eagle loose. He wastes no time sinking into Rurik’s

neck, an elastic band snapping between us, our bond materializing. Rurik's teeth bite down, breaking my skin and completing our bond.

For who knows how long, we sit there, each of us licking and kissing our claiming bites. I can feel his pleasure as if it were my own. Our animals communicating to one another. I am...absolute. With Rurik, I am whole.

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Rurik 7.

“Do we really have to go?” I whine to Theo. We may have only met hours ago, but I think I’ve been abundantly clear how I feel about adulting. I run my fingertip down his chest, circling an erect nipple. Fates, he is gorgeous. And he’s mine. He moves quickly, grabbing my wrist and pulling it from his body.

“Yes, little one, we do.” His voice is commanding though his eyes are soft. “As soon as we’re done, we can come back here and reinforce our bond.”

“Yeah?” I ask breathily, stepping closer to him until the heat of his body envelops me. He nods, swallowing loudly, his Adam’s apple bobbing deliciously. “Wanna reinforce our bond so hard.”

Chuckling, Theo leans down, our mouths opening instantly as we share a passionate kiss. “Later, I promise.” He winks before stepping aside to dress in borrowed clothing. The loss of his body heat, the touch of his skin, is more painful than I anticipated. I can see him, he’s only a few feet from me, but it’s like a severed limb. Ok, that sounds dramatic...still, it’s rough.

Realizing he isn’t going to cave, and the weight as Aleph-Tav settling firmly on my shoulders once again, I dress and join Theo as we leave our rooms to find my parents. Holding hands, I lead him down the stairs and into the kitchen, where Tilly has set the dining table with four place settings.

“Tilly?” I stand beside the table, my hand on the back of the chair. Theo moves beside me, resting his large hand on the small of my back, his fingers teasing the

swell of my ass. I ignore the shiver of lust that races through my body, instead focusing on the sneaky ninja chef. “Why only four? Are our other guests not joining us?”

She shakes her head, setting a casserole on the table, before going back to the counter for a large bowl of salad. “No, Aleph-Tav, Emilyn begged off, needing sleep and some time alone for her and Nadia. Poor thing was practically falling asleep where she stood.”

I nod, meeting Theo’s concerned eyes. “That makes sense. Did you send up food for her and the baby?” Tilly scoffs, snapping a towel at me.

“Have I ever given you cause to question my ability to do my job?”

“No, ma’am.” I grin sheepishly.

“Then, I’d thank you not to start now.” She spins on her heel. Theo winks at me, clearing his throat.

“Wouldn’t it be best to lull him into a false sense of security, so he’s none the wiser when you do screw up? Or bamboozle him?” I jump where I stand, my hand to my heart when I hear the most disturbing sound on earth. Fuck, I think the neighboring planets and the sun scamper away from us when Tilly bends over double with laughter.

“Shit.” I mutter, burrowing into Theo’s side. “Make her stop. It’s frightening.”

“Don’t worry, vydra, I’ll protect you from the mean chef.” He wraps his arms around me protectively, turning a paltry growl on Tilly. Her laughter dies down, and she smiles at him. I think that might be more frightening. There’s no sound.

“You speak Russian, child?” She asks Theo.

I feel him shake his head, “No.” When I look up at him, his tanned face is slightly redder in the cheeks. Is he blushing?

“Then how did you know to call him otter in Russian?” Tilly pushes and Theo shifts from foot to foot, still holding me.

“Uh...”

I break into a gleeful grin, leaning back to meet his eyes. “Aw, did you look it up when I was pissing?”

“Rurik Rybak, Aleph-Tav or not, when your mate is sweet don’t ruin it with crass language!” I groan, slamming my eyes shut at my mother’s reprimand.

“I’m a grown adult.” I whisper to no one.

“Not really, you’re pint sized.” Theo says loudly, picking me up and placing me on his hip like a child. I pout, because society dictates, I should be mad, but I secretly like him holding me this way. I feel precious. Important. Cherished.

“Was my hole pint sized when you were impaling me earlier?” I sass back, my father chokes, my mother makes angry chirpy noises and Tilly rolls her eyes at me. Theo’s face contorts comically as several emotions pass his visage.

“I...well...uh...yes, it was.” He blusters. I kiss him on the lips quickly, then wiggle to be let down.

Mom glares at me, taking her seat at the table, my dad joining her. Theo pulls out my chair for me, and I’m nearly giddy at the gesture. Until he pulls it so far that I miss it

and plop down on the ground in an undignified manner.

“You deserved that.” Mom snarks, taking a dainty sip of her lemonade.

“You really did.” Dad says unhelpfully, leaning in to sniff the casserole still steaming on the table.

Before I can stand up on my own, Theo bends down and picks me up, dropping me into the chair and scooting me closer to the table. He kisses my temple tenderly, then takes his own seat.

My parents clasp their hands on the table, mom’s eyes glistening as they focus on Theo. “Dear, it’s so wonderful to meet you. I’m Anastasia and this is my husband, Gavril. When you feel comfortable, call us mom and dad or Stacy and Gav. We prayed for our son to find his fated mate.”

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“The Fates know we’re done taking care of him, it’s somebody else’s turn.” Dad jokes, winking at me.

Theo lays a heavy arm over my shoulder, bringing me into his side. I happily slide my chair closer to him and rest my head on his chest. “I’m overjoyed to pick up the mantle. I never gave mating much thought, to be honest, and now I’m happy I didn’t. I couldn’t have dreamed anyone better than Rurik.”

“I’m not a piece of furniture.” I smack his belly.

“A mantel is more trim than furniture.” Dad corrects me, I try to kick him under the table, but my legs aren’t long enough. “Not the point, Rurik. Let the adults speak.” My growl goes unacknowledged. “Where are you from?”

“Theodore Adler of Alaska, sir. I’m a bald eagle and come from a convocation of hunters. Others typically hunt food; we hunt mystical evil doers.”

“Noble profession. I heard rumblings earlier about a dybbuk. It’s been so long since...” Dad trails off, his expression saddening.

“It’s been quite a while, yes.” Theo says. “My grandfather faced this particular dybbuk decades ago and was unable to complete the cast to bind it. We believe it was injured in the fight and fled somewhere remote to recuperate. It’s been on a hell of murder spree, making up for lost time, I guess.” I cover my mate’s hand with mine where he’s clenching his fork idly. He meets my eyes briefly, some of the anger in his eyes diminishing. “I’ve tracked it over continents and oceans, and I believe it is heading here next. The energy of the Etz Chaim will be hard for it to ignore, as well

as such a large Paranormal community.”

“Your grandfather...” mom says, snapping her fingers as she thinks, “is his name Hans?” Theo jerks in his seat, dislodging me from his side.

“Yes, do you know him?” Theo leans into the table, eager for information.

“Gavril and I met him years ago. We traveled to Alaska...Rurik do we remember when we went on that cruise?” I nod, remembering them leaving for a two-week cruise in which I was left in Tilly’s militaristic care. “We stopped in Ketchikan and ate at this seafood restaurant right on the water. Met the loveliest man--”

“Oh.” My dad closes his eyes and grips the table, licking his lips. “Dungeness crab.” Fates, was that a moan? Is this my dad’s “o” face?

“Stop it. Stop it right now, dad.” I bark out, throwing my fork at him and hitting him square in the chin.

“Rurik!” Mom gasps. “Why would you do that?”

“He was groaning and licking and like when he...he...ugh.” I gag unable to complete my sentence.

She waves me off, “That’s a foodgasm. When he finishes it’s more like a guttural...ungharrhoohha.” Theo makes the noise of a choked whimper as Tilly stomps over to the table. She stabs the casserole with the serving spoon and hastily plops a healthy spoonful on Theo’s plate.

“Enjoy your dinner you filthy deviants!” She storms out of the kitchen as we sit in stunned silence. Theo snaps out of it first, snatching his phone out of his pocket.

“That reminds me, I need to order something from Amazon. What’s the best address for delivery?”

Theo 8.

“It’s so hot that you get along with my parents.” Rurik moans in my ear causing me to chuckle at the absurdity of his statement, especially in such a low sultry tone.

“Politeness does it for you?” I counter, bending my head to lick a stripe down his neck to his claiming bite. We’re naked and writhing on his, our, bed. Above me, he stills, pulling back to look me in the eye. His pupils are blown wide with arousal, his lips swollen from our kissing.

“You do it for me. Everything about you does it for me, Aleph.” Rurik pins my shoulders to the bed, then slides his petite frame down my body. He presses open mouth kisses to his bite on my neck, across my pecs, along the pleasure trail of black hair on my abs, each hip...Fates, he nuzzles the side of my sac, breathing deeply of my concentrated scent, a pleased hum vibrating against my skin. “Especially this big, thick, veiny, aleph cock.”

My body tenses, shudders, then relaxes as he engulfs the broad head of my cock, sucking me to the back of his throat, his tongue teasing my length. I keep my hands to my sides until the unmistakable scent of his slick permeates my nose. Knowing how I excite him has my eagle preening and my mouth watering for a taste.

Pushing at his shoulders, in a husky voice, I command, “On your back.” He yips around my cock, releases me, and drops to the bed. A dreamy smile stretching his shiny, wet lips. His dick stands up from his body, proud and eager, but it’s his hole I’m after.

I climb on top of him on all fours, my cock bouncing against his mouth. I lick his pretty dick, his cute little balls, then circle his hole. He draws his legs back to his chest, I use my arms to hold them in place, the position causing his butt to rise to my mouth. He suckles my tip, whimpers echoing in my ears. “You are going to cum for me, vydra, and you are going to do it without touching your dick.”

“Aleph...” he begs with that one word.

“Make me cum, little one, and I’ll return the favor.” I chuckle wickedly as I descend once more. I lap at the wrinkled flesh, reveling in the softening of it under my ministrations. His slick pours out of him, his dick jerking against my chest every time I pierce him with my tongue. He tastes like fresh air, freedom, and love. He tastes like forever.

He draws me deep into his throat, swallowing around the head. My hips move on their own, though I have enough presence of mind not to choke or suffocate my mate. His mouth is like an inferno, burning, consuming me. I move past rimming to completely devouring him, eating his ass like my life depended on it. I want to hear him cum, I want to feel his body give in to me.

I startle when he circles a wet finger around my ass. I’ve had a few acquaintances play around back there, but I’ve never been penetrated or fucked. I don’t have the mental capacity to think too much on it now, but I might be willing to let him top me someday.

Oh fuck, definitely sooner rather than later, I think, as his finger pushes inside. His hand is small, but after a few moments, he manages to find my prostate. Unless there’s another magic button inside my rectum that lights up every nerve ending in my body, stealing the breath from my lungs. No wonder tavs enjoy anal sex so much. Of course, they are lubricated, but with enough KY I can get behind it. Or rather, Rurik can get behind me.

“You like that, aleph?” I grunt, fucking him with my tongue, his slick coating my mouth, chin, cheeks, soul. “Cum for me, Theo, let me drink you down.” He coaxes me closer to the edge with just his words.

His dick pulses between us and I know he’s just as close as I am. Sitting up slightly, I bow my back, urging my cock down his throat, his fingers going deeper at this angle. I plunge three fingers into his wet channel, pumping into him as fast as I can go. In rapt fascination, I watch his dick erupt untouched.

I don’t hold back, roaring to the heavens as my release jettisons down his gullet. Holy fucking shit, I have never, ever, had an orgasm that intense, that powerful, that...life-affirming.

Shifting my hips, I withdraw from his throat. Down on my elbows, I suck up his jizz. When I rub my stubble on the tip of his dick, he chokes out a laugh and pushes me off of him. Sated and boneless, I fall to my side. He spins around and lays with me. We trade lazy kisses, our flavors combining into something intoxicating.

We must fall asleep. I’m not sure how long, but when I jerk awake, the moon and sun appear to be having breakfast together outside our window. It takes a moment for my body to remind me what woke me up, like *déjà vu*. I slide my arms from where they hold Rurik to me and clutch my stomach as it cramps again. Shit. The dybbuk.

“Aleph, what’s the matter?” Rurik mumbles sleepily, rolling over to look at me. His eyes widen in alarm when he gets a good look at my face and the fetal position, I’m currently in.

“Is it your stomach?” I nod, unable to speak for a moment. “Like food poisoning? Oh, my Fates, was my cum expired? Does it go bad? I mean it doesn’t necessarily taste that great to begin with so how can you tell, you know? Do you need to shit? Throw-up?”

“Dybbuk.” I manage to grit out, wanting to laugh at the absurdity of his train of thought. He jumps off the bed, crouched down ready to fight...naked.

“Where? Is it here?” He spins around surveilling the room before easing into a standing position.

I shake my head, stretching out as the cramp passes. Standing, on slightly shaky legs, I bend over to grab my pants. “It’s close, but not here. I have to find it.” I pull my shirt over my head. Soft hands cup my cheeks.

“I’ll notify Bronimir, stay here. Please.” I kiss his forehead, but step back to slip on my shoes. I’m not sure why I’m dressing because I have to shift, but I don’t want to traipse through the Aleph House naked, I guess.

“Tell Bronimir, then Magnus and Chloe, make sure the net is holding and the boundary casts. Alert the Family, I’m not sure how you do it, but everyone needs to be within the protection of the net immediately.”

I race out of the room, down the hall, the stairs and out the front door. Once outside I strip, throwing my clothes everywhere, before jumping off the front porch and shifting mid-air. I flap my expansive wings, lifting me higher into the air. My eagle and I both feel the pull to the dybbuk. It is a blessing to be connected in such a way that I can locate it, but useless if I can’t do anything to stop it. I prepare mentally for another dead shifter or Paranormal I am unable to help.

A wave of energy passes through my body as I fly overhead, leaving the Family behind me. I must be outside of the net now. For long minutes I fly south until a firm tug compels us to the ground. We land in the dark shadows behind a large building at the Offutt Air Force Base.

Carefully walking, my wings tucked tight, I listen for any noise to help me find the

dybbuk. I finally hear a groan in the distance and a couple of guys snickering outside a door.

“Must be fucking her right against the door. Couldn’t even get her to the bed.” One says quietly.

“All I hear is him, must not be anything special for her. She should give me a go when he’s done, I bet I can make her scream.” The other says thumping his chest. Fuckers.

“Make her scream for help!” They dissolve into childish giggles.

I’ve had enough, I use my left wing to knock over a garbage can. Both men jump to attention, before taking off towards the noise. I use the distraction to advance on the building. I can feel it on the other side of the door. I stay low, moving under the nearest window to look inside. Through the blinds, the dybbuk’s dark energy glows like one of those static electricity balls as he draws the soul from the uniformed airman.

The man slumps to the ground. I’m too late. His petrified body lays haphazardly, his face turned in my direction, the shriveled remains of his eyeballs mocking me for my ineptitude.

I glance up from my failure when the dybbuk moves. Drifting through the door, it encircles me where I stand, swirling around me, taunting me, reminding me that I cannot defeat it.

Not on my own. I can’t.

Only, I’m not alone anymore.

Ignoring the coldness that seeps below my feathers, chilling me to my core, I take off, bursting through the dybbuk's hazy aura until I reach an unhealthy height. Battling for control, my eagle brings us back to safety, soaring through the air, leading us home.

Rurik 9.

“Fucking Aleph!” I mumble to myself, my phone clutched tightly in my hand. He went off on his own, barking orders and looking sexy as fuck while he did it. Not fair.

“Aleph-Tav!” Chloe’s barking startles me, a manly chirp escaping my throat at her arrival. Magnus and Senka follow behind her, their small smiles pleasant, compared to Chloe who resembles The Joker.

“Don’t yell! I just about shit my pants.” I scold her, but she isn’t fazed in the least. She aims a sassy smirk at me.

“You probably could, being all stretched out by that big aleph cock!” Her winks and nudges are nauseating. And how right she is, boy is gifted.

I roll my eyes, directing my focus to Magnus and Senka. “We did as you asked, Aleph-Tav. The Family is under the protection of the net, Bronimir and the guards are preparing. Can you explain what Theo said?”

“Thank you, Magnus. Theo said the dybbuk was close, but it wasn’t to the village yet. He just took off to find it.” I say exasperatedly, my fingers running through my hair.

“Go on! Tell him, Maggie.” Chloe vibrates next to us with excitement.

“I hate when you call me that.” Magnus hisses. He takes a deep breath, but before he can speak, Chloe cuts him off. Apparently, she’s run out of patience.

“We did it! We found a way to make it human!” Luckily, I’m close to a wall, otherwise I would have been tackled to the ground by the force of her hug. Over her shoulder I catch Magnus’ eye.

“You did? Are you sure? It could be here anytime now; we have to be ready.”

He nods, sharing a quick glance with Senka. “We have, Aleph-Tav. We are sure of it. I spoke with Theo’s grandfather and the shaman of his convocation. Lovely fellows. We must get close to the dybbuk, in order to bind and corporealize, it needs to be feeding.” Closing his eyes on a wince, his implication washes over me painfully.

“Someone must die?” I can’t fathom risking the life of any member of our Family, let alone anyone else. “No, as Aleph-Tav, I cannot allow someone to take on that risk. It should be me.”

“Rurik!” Chloe shouts, nearly shattering my ear drum. “Don’t be fucking stupid! You are the Aleph-Tav, you cannot sacrifice yourself, our Family needs you.” She leans in close to me. “I need you. Theo needs you.”

Patting her back, I stand to my full height of not much and square my shoulders. “Chloe, it cannot be anyone else.”

“Chloe, Aleph-Tav is right.” She gasps and whirls on Magnus, fire burning in her eyes. No really, I see literal flames. He holds his hands up in a placating manner, “He is the strongest of us. Especially now that he is mated. No one else stands a chance of surviving the dybbuk while we cast. You know this.”

The fire in her eyes flame out, her body deflating. “Doesn’t mean I have to like it.” I chuckle at her grump, pulling her into my arms to comfort her.

“Chloe, I trust you, Senka and Maggie—” I ignore Magnus’ growl, “to take care of

me. I trust Theo to be my anchor.” I don’t feel half as confident as my words imply. My heart pounds erratically in my chest as I think about facing the dybbuk and possibly losing my soul. Having it sucked right from my body. Being left a husk, a mummified version of myself. Gah, how unattractive would that be? No open casket funeral for me.

“You have to fight Rurik; the Family needs you. You and Theo both.” She pleads, her eyes wide and imploring like a little girl.

I scoff, pushing her away. “Well, I’m not just going to roll over and take it. I only do that for Theo.”

“Is sex the only thing you two think about?” Magnus grumbles.

“They aren’t the only ones. You should think about letting Minus out to play every once in a while.” Senka says with a pointed glance to Magnus’ crotch.

He splutters indignantly, while Chloe and I laugh. “Did you just refer to my penis as ‘Minus’?”

Senka pats Magnus on the shoulder as she walks closer to me. “Glad your hearing isn’t failing you in your old age.”

“I’m not that old!” Magnus yells. We ignore him.

Meeting Senka’s gaze, I ask, “How do we get it here?”

“Open a small section of the net, it will be here soon.” I jump.

“Holy shit! Theo! How the hell did you sneak up on me?” Clutching my chest above my heart, I glare at him, even as he saunters up to me with a sexy smirk. I release my

chest to smack his. “And I’m mad at you! You just left, shouting orders. And it made me horny, seeing you embrace your role as Aleph.”

Theo wraps his arms around me, and I melt into his embrace. I can feel his pain, his sadness through our bond and it breaks my heart. “I was too late.” He murmurs in my ear. The anguish in his voice lances through me.

“Do you know what type of shifter the victim was?” Chloe questions softly from my side.

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Shaking his head, Theo answers, “No. He was an airman at the Offutt Air Force Base. He was in a building; I was unable to scent him properly.”

“Avot?” Magnus addresses Theo and I both, using the Hebrew word for “fathers”. “Chloe and I can create an opening in the protective net. Senka, send word to Bronimir for his men to stand ready. Also, we’ll need a several guards for the Aleph-Tav.”

Theo stiffens in my arms. “What? Why?” He looks between me and Magnus, worry evident in his golden eyes. His eagle is close to the surface. My otter reaches out, reassuring his eagle through our bond, but it does nothing to calm Theo.

“Aleph.” I cup his face, bringing his eyes to mine. “I am the most powerful here, it will come after me. And if it doesn’t, we need to make it. It’s the only way—”

“No!” Theo says vehemently, holding me by the shoulders and shaking me. “No, I forbid it!”

I snicker at him, “You forbid it? Baby cakes, I appreciate the loyalty, but if it isn’t me, then it is someone in our Family. As Aleph, even for only a short time, can you stomach sending one of our own to slaughter?”

He sighs, tugging me back into his hold. “No. I can’t. But I can’t send you either.”

I try to make light of it, I have to, or I’ll cry. “It’s our first real fight. How sweet.” Fighting back the tears threatening, I stand on my tiptoes to kiss my claiming bite on his neck. He nuzzles his on mine, clutching me just a bit tighter. “You will bring me

back should anything happen, Aleph. I trust in you. I trust in the Fates. But, even if I should perish, know that being your tav is my greatest gift. I love you, Theodore Adler, Aleph of the Rybak Family.”

“Rurik.” He crumbles, tears wetting my shirt, “I love you so much; every decision I’ve made, every step I’ve taken, has led me to you. To my home. I’m not done with you yet, tav.” He nips my bite with a growl. I fail to suppress the shiver it causes or the slickening of my ass.

“Oh honey, don’t get slick and horny now, you need to save all your bodily fluids, so you don’t become a mummy.”

Theo leans back, turning a ferocious glare on Chloe. “Can’t we sacrifice her instead?”

Magnus hums regretfully, “Believe me, that was the first thing I looked into.”

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Theo 10.

I don't like this plan. In fact, I would go far as to say I loathed it. Detested it. Abhor it. I am also not a fan of logic right now either. Because, logically, they are right. Rurik is the logical choice for the dybbuk. It's growing more powerful, and it needs an equally powerful food source. A newly mated Aleph-Tav is as high as it gets, especially in these parts.

Bronimir and 10 guards are here with us, circling Rurik and I. Magnus and Chloe have set up shop about 20 feet away, protected by their own net. It's imperative that they remain safe to cast the binding and corporeal spells. Another group of guards are in a net at the village hall, where the majority of the Family is sequestered.

A small opening has been created in the net, and Chloe amplified the scent of the Family, particularly Rurik's, to draw it to us. It's working, as the painful tug in my torso worsens.

"Stand guard!" I shout to be heard, Rurik flashing an uneasy smile over his shoulder. "It's found us." I fall to one knee as the tug burns my insides, threatening to liquify me.

"Theo!" Rurik cries, but I wave him off. He needs to focus.

"I'm ok, Rurik. I love you." Gritting my teeth, I push the words out.

"Love you too, Theo. I think after this, I deserve a blow job." I manage a small chuckle.

“That will be the least of what you deserve.”

The winds change, a cold chill accosting us out of nowhere. “It’s here.” I whisper just as the darkness descends. I am unable to look away as the dybbuk swirls menacingly around my mate before it takes hold of his soul. That’s my soul, dammit. He is my soul. Rurik screams, the agony shredding me to the bone. His back arches, his chest pushes forward, his arms dangle helpless at his sides. I can hear chanting, I think, but my focus is on Rurik.

“Fight, Rurik! Fight!” All I have are words and they feel woefully inadequate. His honey-colored skin darkens to a mud brown, once firm and supple now pitted and dry. I can’t watch him die; except I can’t look away. “Rurik!” I spin around to see Magnus and Chloe. Their lips are moving rapidly, their hands gesticulating in unknown patterns, a faint purple glow emanating from a bowl placed between them. “Do something! Chloe, bind the son of a bitch!”

Seconds later, they both push their hands out in front of them, the purple glow zipping across the field and into the dark haze of the dybbuk. It’s enough to stun it, releasing Rurik in the process. I run forward on shaky legs, draping myself over his motionless body.

An intense surge of energy travels through me. When I look around, I see that I’m not the only one left stunned in its wake. Magnus takes measured steps toward the dybbuk, a fierce expression taking over his usually congenial face.

“Ex aere in terram. Inde spiritus ad os. Huc nati sumus. Hic non morieris.”

A horrific shriek rattles the ground beneath us. A blinding light flashes like lightning, the smell of ozone burns my nose.

“Bronimir, guards! Now!” Magnus shouts and I turn my attention back to my mate.

“Chloe!” I yell for her, jerking when a soft touch lands on my arm from in front of me. I hadn’t even realized she was here. “Help him! Please!” Sitting back to give her room, I hold Rurik’s hard, dry hand, bringing it to my lips to kiss. She passes her hands over his body, her lips forming silent words.

Gavril, Rurik’s father, is suddenly at my side. “He must feed from you, Theo.” He urges me, but I don’t understand. I glance at Chloe and see she’s thinking it over. Eventually, she nods in agreement.

“How? He isn’t moving.” I’m desperate to heal him, I’ll do anything, but if he can’t drink what do I do?

“Bite your wrist and drop the blood into his mouth.” Gavril explains. Without a second thought, I puncture my wrist and lay it over Rurik’s slightly parted lips. Gavril massages Rurik’s throat as I continue to drip into his mouth.

“I think it’s working.” Chloe barely speaks above a whisper, no doubt afraid to jinx us.

“I can feel him trying to swallow on his own.” It’s taking so long, and I am not a patient man. Not when my mate is dying in my arms. I stand abruptly, ignoring the looks of surprise from Chloe and Gavril. Marching to Bronimir and his men, with laser focus I stalk the dybbuk like the prey he is. A frail, decrepit old man now made rotting flesh. No words are spoken, no orders issued, Bronimir steps back, his men following suit, leaving the dybbuk to barely stand on his own.

One hard push to his sternum and I knock him to his back, landing with an audible thump. I shift my foot into a razor-sharp talon and step on his chest. The snap of bone and cartilage give way to the squish of tissue until I grip his still beating heart and rip it from his thoracic cavity. I squeeze, and squeeze, the organ nothing more than mush by the time I’m done.

Chloe's burst of, "Holy shit!" has me spinning back to Rurik. Shifting my talon to my foot, I sprint back to my mate and drop to my knees. His skin...is rehydrating? Is that the right word? I've never seen anyone be de-mummified, but that's what's happening.

"Dude, no way!" Javaid, the vampire, stands above us, peering down at Rurik like he's some kind of science experiment. "I saw this episode of Bones once, where they used fabric softener to rehydrate a slightly decomposed finger to lift the prints. Just like this! His soul is like fabric softener, he's Downy fresh."

"I prefer Snuggles." Rurik mumbles hoarsely. I lean down and kiss him gently. He whines when I pull away, so I kiss him again. He slips his silky tongue between my lips and takes over. I happily submit.

"You scared the fuck out of me, tav." I speak against his lips, unwilling to separate.

"Better not. I like your fuck." He sasses, his eyes still closed. "Besides, you owe me a blow job." As tears cascade unchecked down my cheeks, I laugh the slightly maniacal laugh of a relieved man. I will never be able to unsee his body lying lifeless. I'll just have to hold him every day a little longer to reassure myself he's alive.

"Let's get you up to our rooms and washed." Finally, finally, he opens his eyes. The dark brown, almost black is the most beautiful sight I've ever seen.

"Why? Did the whole mummified corpse thing turn you off?" He pouts adorably earning another kiss.

I shrug. "Not exactly, it's just I'm not a fan of burnt sausage." Chuckles echo through the group still gathered around us. I kind of forgot they were here. Listening to our conversation. Shit.

Rurik's eyes widen comically in alarm as he thrusts one hand down his pants to cup his junk. He breathes out an exaggerated sigh of relief. "It's back to normal. Actually," He moves his hand around a bit more. "I think it's bigger."

Gavril chokes on his words, "Well, that was nice of the dybbuk to leave you with a parting gift."

Rurik 11.

“But...don’t you want to see if it’s bigger? Like a taste test? Lick it and determine if it takes longer to get to the other end? Maybe even how many to get to the creamy center?” I’m begging and I’m not ashamed. I have showered, alone. Been seen by the Family physician, alone. Had Magnus perform a thorough mystical exam, alone. And now, I want my mate to soothe me with his words, his touch, his exquisite aleph cock. I don’t think that’s too much to ask when you’ve almost died and been force fed your mate’s blood.

Theo regards me from the doorway to our bedroom, a crease of concern wrinkling his dark brow. Fates, he’s beautiful. Dammit! I want him inside me.

“Rurik, you almost died—”

“Exactly!” I scream, crossing my arms over my chest and pouting. “‘Almost’ being the operative word. I didn’t die completely because you brought me back to life. I’m like Buffy the Vampire Slayer.”

“With better fashion sense.” He says with a tiny grin.

I gasp dramatically, scowling at him. “How dare you! It was the nineties; nobody knew better then.”

“I love you; did you know that?” I nod, a happy smile stretching my lips. “Do you have any idea how much? The depth of emotion I feel for you? How uncontrollable my need is for you?” As he speaks, he stalks closer to me where I’m lying on the bed.

I palm my erection, unable to hide the effect his lusty words have on me.

“I have an idea, aleph.” I purr. He shudders as he takes in my hand working my shaft beneath the sheet.

“How did you feel when I flew off earlier to chase after the dybbuk?” His question draws me out of my horny haze. I frown when I remember the ache in my chest.

“Like my soul had abandoned me.” I reply softly. He closes his eyes at my confession, slowly opening them to pin me with an anguished stare.

“I covered your lifeless body. I held your withered corpse. I bled to save you. And it didn’t work. For a split second my entire world imploded in a fiery explosion of such indescribable pain.” Tears well in his eyes, the golden color glowing under the sheen. “I fervently pray that you never experience that level of agony. I want to bury myself inside you as far as I can go and stay there forever. I want to bind you to me, so I never have to be without you by my side again. I want to weep endlessly for the 15 souls the dybbuk claimed before he could be stopped and the countless others he took before he went into hiding. I feel guilty that it was your soul that finally brought about its end, because I get to keep you. I got you back and the others weren’t as fortunate. Their families know the burn of that fiery explosion and I can never extinguish it for them. But me, I only knew it for a few seconds, they will know it for an eternity.”

My erection flags the longer he purges the filth from his body. I get to my knees and crawl on the bed until I’m right in front of him. Wrapping my arms around his neck, I pull him down to the bed with me and clutch him as tightly as I dare while he fractures. I cry with him, for everyone we were unable to save, for everyone we spared by bringing about its demise, for each other and the future we are able to build together.

I'm such a selfish git. I didn't even think how any of this affected him. I died, I was mummified, I was brought back. Except he had to witness it all. He had to, however momentary, imagine a world without the other half of his soul. A life half-lived with painful regret.

"Theo, aleph, I'm so sorry." I sniffle, trying to collect myself enough to speak. "God and the Fates see the beginning and the end. We might not always agree with their methods, and most of the time we question the why's and how's, but eventually we see that their way was the way it had to happen. The victims of the dybbuk led you to me, led you to your destiny. I was the strongest chance available to end the dybbuk. And we did just that, with Magnus and Chloe and the whole Family, we ended that fucker. The way Fate planned it. And now, to honor those the world has lost, we must live the fuck out of this life. Make a difference in the Paranormal community. Spread the love. We must embrace our destiny, to do otherwise is to spit in the face of each and every victim."

He's quiet for several long moments. His warm breath ghosting across my neck, where he's buried his head.

"You're right, my wise Aleph-Tav." Theo licks my claiming bite, my chest warming with love for this man. "I'm still not blowing you."

I push him as hard as I can, giggling when he gracelessly falls off the bed and thumps to the floor.

"You ruined an absolutely wonderful moment! I was being all wise, and emotionally intelligent, and Aleph-Tav like and you sullied it with dirty denials." I can barely keep the laughter out of my voice. He's perfect for me, in every way imaginable. I, too, regret the loss of life on our journey to one another, the utter and complete joy at having found him is consolation.

He pops up next to the bed, a wicked grin on his face and a mischievous glint in his eyes. “You were thinking about it, though, weren’t you?”

I drape my arm over my eyes, unwilling to meet his and risk him seeing the truth. I clamp my mouth shut, but he tickles my sides. “Fine, yes, I was!” I scream, batting his hands away. “I thought maybe you would feel grateful for my words of encouragement and want to thank me with a blowie. Or a good pounding.”

I feel his body heat as he leans in close to my ear. “All in good time, tav. Right now, I want to hold you as you are, alive and whole and the best thing that has ever happened to me.”

“I love you, too, aleph. And that sounds wonderful.” He picks me up, gently situating me in the bed, curling behind me. His breathing evening out as we lay, the events of the last couple of days quickly draining what little energy we have left, I bring one of his hands to my lips and kiss his knuckles. “Perhaps just a quick rub and tug in the morning.”

I accept his sleepy moan as agreement.

Theo 12.

I remember Rurik's persistent demands of pleasure from the night before. I focus on those and not the harrowing nightmare we managed to survive. I also focus on my cock that's hard as a diamond and totally in agreement with Rurik's demands.

Thankful I stripped last night before we snuggled in bed, I leave a trail of butterfly kisses across his shoulders and down his spine, sliding my body until my mouth is even with his ass. Such a perky butt, jiggly in all the right ways, and plump despite his diminutive stature. Baby got back.

I nip at his sweet flesh, parting his cheeks with my hands to expose his glistening hole. He moans low in his sleep, shifting his top leg to bend at the knee and spread himself open for me. What a good mate. With a broad tongue, I swipe up and down his crease, rimming his opening in concentric circles until I feel him soften. His hips move, seeking more. Growling, I tense my tongue and gently fuck him with it. He's slowly waking up, his moans growing louder, his hand winding back to hold my head. He urges me closer, and I laugh because I can't get any closer than I am.

"Aleph, fuck me, please." He demands politely and I'm happy to oblige. My cock literally spitting mad at being neglected.

Gliding back up his body, I thrust through his cheeks, spreading his abundant slick along my shaft, before pulling back slightly and pushing through his tight ring of muscle. We groan as I slide to the hilt. No resistance, just decadent acceptance.

Our heavy breathing provides a symphony for our coupling. Like an undulating wave,

our bodies move in sync, a reciprocity of give and take, push and pull, love and devotion. He is everything to me, the center of my world and I am his. We are stronger together and together we will be unstoppable.

His hot, snug channel chokes my cock as he nears his release. Gripping his hip tighter, I push deeper with every thrust. I wasn't exaggerating yesterday when I said I wanted to stay inside him forever. He is my home, my sanctuary, my temple.

"Breed me, aleph. Give me your cum, make my belly swell with your child." Fuck, that's the most erotic thing I've ever heard.

"Touch yourself, tav, show me how much I please you, and I will fill your womb." He keens loudly, his hand a blur between his legs. I pull on his waist and angle his body so I can see his dick better. At the first volley of his spunk, I drive into his body hard and deep, biting his neck with my own teeth as I paint his receptive womb. Praying to the Fates that it takes hold. That with our love we create the next generation. That we are fortunate to leave a legacy that will change the world.

Rurik begins to shake violently and I'm unsure what's happened. I turn him in my arms and cup his face. His cheeks wet with tears, his lips quivering with emotion.

"Tav, Rurik, what is it? Did I hurt you?"

He shakes his head, "N-no. You could n-never hurt me." He cries harder as he tries valiantly to burrow into my chest.

"What's wrong, please tell me?" I plead, my eagle pushing me to fix what has upset our mate.

"Nothing is wrong, everything is perfect. You're perfect and I love you so much and I'm so grateful that you found me."

I smile despite his tears. Kissing his forehead, I murmur, “And that has made you cry?” He waves me off, scoffing.

“No, that’s all well and fine. I mean, it’s awesome, stupendous.”

“Then...why are you crying? I’m at a loss here, love.”

He arches his neck to meet my eyes. “You listened to me.”

“I’ll always listen to you, Rurik. We are partners and I love you.” He sniffles, wiping under his eyes, giving me a naughty smirk. Uh-oh.

“I asked for a rub and tug last night, and this morning you deliver transcendent orgasms. You listened to me, to what I needed, and went above and beyond.”

“You are an odd otter.” I deadpan.

“I am. And I’m your odd otter.” He sighs, dropping his eyes to my chest. “I’ve not been abstinent, as you know, but my experiences have always been lacking. I craved something that seemed elusive and unattainable. Until you.”

I roll my eyes. “Are you talking about my penis?”

He slowly lifts his gaze to mine, and I see sincerity in its depths. “Not entirely. I craved what only you could give me. Acceptance, understanding, unconditional love, a protected nest to rest and regroup and be myself.”

I kiss his pouty lips, tenderly, before resting my forehead against his. “You have done the same for me, my vydra.”

A firm knock on our door disturbs the moment. “Avot.” Tilly’s gruff voice sounds

from the other side.

“Yes, Tilly?” Rurik asks, sitting upright in bed. I join him, pulling the sheet over us in case she enters.

“There is a package for the Aleph, I’ll leave it outside your door.” I jump out of bed, hastily grabbing some pants to throw on, then rip the door open, nearly off the hinges. I pick up the medium box, shaking it as I close the door. Rurik is staring at me with his mouth agape and his eyes comically wide.

“What the hell, Theo? I didn’t know you could move that fast.”

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“It’s here, it’s finally here.” I toss it on the bed, finding a shirt and pulling it over my head as I enter the bathroom and brush my teeth. “Get dressed, Rurik! We have a delivery of our own to make!”

“What do you mean ‘it’s finally here’? You just got here a few days ago.”

“I chose Prime shipping. Come on, hurry up, you can’t go out there naked, I forbid it!” I say with the toothbrush still in my mouth. Spitting, I rinse my face and dry it off, rushing back into the bedroom to find socks and shoes. After a harsh glare and an angry muttering about Aleph’s and their notions of forbidding, Rurik throws his hands up and begins to dress.

With the box in hand, we walk down to the kitchen. I grab a banana and he a muffin, then I lead him outside.

“Where are we going?” He asks around a bite of muffin.

“To find Chloe.” I answer vaguely.

“And...why do we need to find Chloe?”

“The present is for her.”

“Aw, Theo, you bought Chloe a present? That’s so sweet. I’m so happy you two get along, I was worried.”

“Mmhmm.” I hum, my eyes darting side to side looking for the little witch. Because

she's short and a witch, I wasn't being mean.

"There she is!" He points at an old white stone building, built more than a hundred years ago at least, with green shutters and a broad porch. Sure enough, Chloe is sitting in a rocking chair, holding Nadia, while she and Emilyn sip lemonade. "Hello, ladies." Rurik says as we walk up the steps to join them.

"Well, hello there, Avot. You seem in a chipper mood. Sleep well?" Chloe wiggles her eyebrows suggestively. I shove the unopened box in her hands and step back. Emilyn steps up to take Nadia from Chloe.

"This is for you." She stares between me and the box, before giving me a sweet smile.

"Thank you." Chloe tears open the box, her head tilting to the side as she examines the contents. "Uh...you shouldn't have?" She pulls out a pack of socks. Oh, shoot.

"Sorry, those are mine, I didn't realize they shipped them together." I grab those and hold them behind my back, rocking on my heels anxiously. "There's more." I nod to the box.

Chloe looks back in the box and begins to cackle. Like an evil witch. It's terrifying and a little funny. Her face turns red, tears stream down her cheeks and she gasps for breath.

"What did you get her?" Rurik asks, his smile wide and excited.

Chloe throws the box to the ground, holding up the smaller box that was inside.

Emilyn gasps, her hand covering her mouth. Rurik snaps to me, scowling. "You bought her a vibrator!?!"

I nod, not sorry in the least. “I sure did.” Chloe is still laughing, so I explain, though I have a feeling she gets it. “You are my mate, no one touches you but me, and you touch no one but me. I bought Chloe a vibrator, which also has a suction setting to simulate oral, so she can use it to unclog her vision pipes without you.”

Chloe leaps to her feet and surprises me with a hug. “Thank you, Aleph. Thank you for being exactly what he needs, exactly what our Family needs. I look forward to serving beside both of you, and never in your bed.” I hug her back; grateful she isn’t mad and is respectful of my boundaries. I know Rurik and she were finished with their friends with benefits arrangement the second I arrived, but I thought I ought to be sure she had another outlet arranged for everyone’s sanity.

We break apart, Rurik attaching himself to my side like a barnacle, dragging my arm around his shoulders, his hand firmly on my chest. I see my little one has a jealous streak as well. I kiss his temple before whispering, “I bought a toy for you as well, it should arrive soon. I can’t wait to watch you squirm.”

“You should learn how to whisper better, Aleph. And on that note, y’all need to skedaddle because I’m going to break in my new best friend. Don’t mind the screams of pleasure, toodles!” Chloe waves over her shoulder, walking into the building and slamming the door.

Emilyn groans next to us, staring at the closed door. “Our room is right next to hers. We share a wall!” Nadia, unaware of her mother’s distress, claps her hands and presses a sloppy kiss to her mom’s cheek.

“Good luck with that!” Rurik says cheerfully, dragging me down the porch steps.

“What’s the rush, tav?” I say with all the seriousness I can muster. The smile I’m sporting gives me away.

“Home. I can think of a number of other things we can do to make me squirm while we wait for my gift!”

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Epilogue - Rurik

2 years later

I sit as still as possible in my recliner, afraid to move. It's finally quiet and I just want a moment of peace to myself. I'd love a shower, or better yet, a hot bath. Fuck, at this point I'd be happy to shit by myself. It's too much to ask for a good deep fucking, ain't nobody got time for that.

The door opens and I inhale the tantalizing scent of my mate. Until he slams the front door shut behind him and calls out my name. I will miss him after I kill him.

"Shhh!" My hands are wavering above the arm rests of the chair, waiting for the twins to wake up. He offers me a chagrined wince and mimes zipping his lips.

"Sorry, vydra." Scooping me up, he takes my seat and places me in his lap. All is still quiet. "I take it your day was interesting?" He asks quietly.

I nod with my eyes closed, still basking in the silence. "They do not have an 'off' button. I've checked. And they do not appreciate naptime. I don't think they're mine. I love naptime. How can we be related?" I lament, laying my head on his shoulder. His long arms wrap around me, and I melt into him. I've missed him so much.

He's been working with some of the council on a way to reach out to the Paranormal community surrounding us. To ensure that everyone knows we are welcoming and encourage those like us to seek us out. We want them to understand they may seek sanctuary within our borders should the need arise. After what happened with the

dybbuk, we realized that many shifters, vampires, witches, etc. were unaware of their allies, living life on their own without a pack, coven, or family. It was important we rectify that situation.

So, over the last two years, Theo has been in charge of the initiative to spread the word, my parents serving as eager ambassadors. We've paired up with other communities like ours to keep the lines of communication open and hopefully, save lives, should something like the dybbuk strike again. Paranormals have always tried to pass along pertinent information, hence the missives I received about the murders, but we are establishing a more uniformly cohesive system. I couldn't be prouder of my mate.

Unfortunately, I've been left to deal with the home front more of late. Which also means, our adorably rambunctious 22-month-old twins. Aldrick is our first born and an aleph. I pushed Allerick out 7 minutes later, our tav screaming his little head off until he was reunited with his big brother.

"I should be home for good now, little one. I'm sorry I've been away so often." Theo rests his cheek on the top of my head, and I grimace when I remember I can't remember the last time I washed my hair or showered. Carefully, I extract myself from his lap, much to his dismay.

"I desperately need to shower." I lift an arm and sniff, nearly passing out from the odor.

Theo wiggles his eyebrows, "Want some company?"

"No." I answer, flatly, not feeling sexy in the least. His smile drops and his eyes narrow in concern.

"Rurik, are you alright?" He stands up, stepping closer to cup my face.

“I am now that you’re home. What you were doing is important—”

“So is what you have been doing. Presiding over the Family, taking care of our children. You must be exhausted. Shower and take all the time you need. Are you hungry, I can make something for you? Or have Tilly send something up?”

“Right now, just a shower. I’m afraid if I take a bath, I may fall asleep.” I chuckle, he doesn’t.

“I love you, Rurik, with everything I am. You are such an amazing mate and partner and father.” He kisses my forehead, which is good, since I also can’t remember when I last brushed my teeth. It’s not that the kids are awful; I love them so much. However, they are energetic and by the time I get them down, after wrestling with them all day, I have just enough energy of my own to drop face first into bed. It’s only been a week since Theo left, yet it feels like months.

“I love you too.” I say through a long yawn. He pushes me towards the hall.

“Shower. Bed. I’ll rub your feet when you’re done.” I moan at the thought. That sounds nice.

“Yes, my aleph.” I mutter, walking like a zombie to the bathroom. I strip as I go, quietly shutting the door to our bedroom. I turn on the water in the shower and brush my teeth while it warms up. By the time I step in, the bathroom is foggy with steam. Fuck, it feels so good. I zone out as the water beats down on my tired body. My hands glide to my belly, maybe I’m pregnant again? Hmm, I’ll have to look into that.

When I reach for the shampoo, I can hear shouting, then my name is screamed to the heavens as Chloe barges into the bathroom. Completely ignoring the fact I’m naked and in the shower, she starts rambling.

“Blood of the innocent fill his belly, while the gelt of their sacrifice fill the coffers.”

“Chloe! I told you to wait! What the fuck!” Theo storms in, now it’s a party! Oh, and listen to that, the twins are awake to provide the music. I drop my head to the tile and close my eyes.

“It can’t wait, Aleph! And I’ve seen him naked, I was there first, remember?”

“We are Aleph and Aleph-Tav of this Family, Chloe, and you will treat us and our familial unit with respect, or so help me Fates I will make you regret your actions.” Theo grits out, his stance menacing as he looms over Chloe. I’ve never seen him so fierce before...my dick takes notice, rallying with great effort to twitch between my legs. That’s it, that’s all I have in me, a twitch.

Yup, I’m probably pregnant. The first couple of weeks are rough with fatigue and decreased sex drive, then the following six weeks is copulation city. I figure I’ve got a few days left before I reach that point.

“I apologize, Avot. I forgot my place; it won’t happen again.” She sounds sincere, showing her neck in submission to Theo.

“Theo, can you get the boys before Allerick takes flight and gets caught in the fan again?” I ask hoarsely. Theo nods before turning on his heel.

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Source Creation Date: May 27, 2025, 6:45 am

“Chloe?” He stops at the threshold, “Thank you for your apology.” I hear the door to the boys room open and my mate greeting our babies.

“Ok, tell me again?” I focus on Chloe, while I wash my hair and body.

“I was masturbating since I can’t find a suitable fuck buddy. Do you know, this is the second replacement vibrator I’ve had to buy since you and Theo shacked up?” I glare at her, and she wisely moves on. “Anyway, it came to me,” I ignore her snicker, “‘Blood of the innocent fill his belly, while the gelt of their sacrifice fill the coffers.’ I’m not entirely sure what it means, but it feels imminent. Something is coming to our doorstep.”

I nod while I process the information. “Alert Bronimir, please, have him increase security, and tell Magnus of what you’ve heard. I desperately need to sleep, I’m sorry. If evil should arrive, have someone wake me immediately.”

“Will do, Aleph-Tav. And...I really am sorry for angering Theo, it was rude and uncalled for, what I said.”

I stare at my best friend through the glass. Motioning to the towel rack, she hands me a towel. “I appreciate your apology. He is my aleph; he is protective and possessive of me. I know you do not quite understand yet, but when you find your mate, you will.”

“I pray to the Fates it’s soon. I’m a horny little witch.” I laugh with her, feeling better after my shower, even if it were less relaxing than I’d hoped. “I’ll leave you two alone now, I believe you have some celebrating to do.” She drops her eyes to my

belly, winks and flits off. I shake my head at her as I dry off, rehang the towel and crawl into bed.

Twins already. At least another on the way. Imminent danger. Boundary averse witches. All in a day's work as an Aleph-Tav, I suppose. Theo walks into our bedroom, closing the door behind him with a quiet snick. He strips as he comes closer to me. A tender smile aimed my direction.

"Hello, my aleph, are you joining me in bed?" I ask, sliding further under the covers, enjoying the soft sheets against my naked body.

"I'm going to give you a massage, or did you forget?" He practically purrs, on all fours, gliding up the bed, hovering above me.

"With your cock?"

He chuckles, "Not for another few days, I think. I know how early pregnancy dries you up." My lips part on a surprised gasp. He knows? He dips down to kiss my bite mark, "Did you really think I wouldn't notice? There isn't a centimeter of your body I'm not intimately familiar with my vydra. Any subtle change, in your scent, your behavior, your health, I see it all."

"Are...are you happy?" I know he is, but the worry is still there. We have our hands full already.

"Nothing gives me more joy than the fruits of our love. No matter their form. The Etz Chaim may be the Tree of Life to Paranormals worldwide, but you are what gives my life meaning, Rurik. Allerick and Aldrick are an extension of you, and so are the baby or babies you carry now. How could I not be happy to have more of you?"

No point in wiping away my tears, more will just take their place, his words a balm to my soul. I cup his cheek, "Something is coming."

He nods solemnly, “There will always be something to deal with, my tav, do not fret, we will handle it together.”