



# Elven Oath

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**Category:** Romance, New Adult, Paranormal

**Description:** The Dragon Clan has been at war with the Elves for centuries. Neither side is willing to give up the old feud regardless of no one remembering what started it.

There's a new war brewing on the horizon. An enemy that is looking to destroy every Dragon shifter and Elf alike.

A marriage between the two clans will ensure that both sides fight beside each other.

That's if Prince Aodhan and Princess Vevina don't kill each other first.

Can the Prince and Princess put aside their differences to save both their clans?

**Total Pages (Source):** 41

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## Chapter 1

Aodhan

Sparks crackle from the fire in front of me, its light casting dancing shadows on the ground as my friends sit close to its warmth with me. My mind wanders, far from the laughter of Falkor and Drago.

Their voices tease, jabbing with the familiar barbs of friendship, but I don't have it in me to respond after arguing with the council for the past month.

It took so much out of me, arguing my side. Why should I take a wife that I do not want just because some old text says that I should?

"Hey, maybe she'll be the first ugly elf in all of history," Falkor snickers. "Imagine, our prince saddled with a round little boulder of an elf. Can you imagine the look on his face when he finally sees her?"

Drago chimes in with a deep chuckle. "And tiny! Far too small to handle the needs of a dragon. She won't know what to do when she sees what she's marrying." He says as he grabs himself.

More laughter explodes from them both, louder this time, but I barely react with more than a snort in their direction.

My eyes remain on the flames, watching them dance in the night, as my thoughts remember the war. The war that cost us everything, cost me everything. The entire

reason I'm sitting here in the middle of the woods with these two, bound to a fate I never wanted.

The war between the Dragons and the Elves has raged for centuries. Our ancestors, who were once allies, became sworn enemies.

Blood had soaked the earth for so long that neither side even remembered the cause. But we dragons, proud and strong, refused to bend. The skies once belonged to us, and we believed they always should.

But the elves... they were sneaky and cunning. We had underestimated them once, their magic, their persistence.

While we relied on brute strength, they used the land, the elements and their sorcery to slowly wear us down.

For every city we burned, they rebuilt just as quickly. For every battle we won, we lost three more. And so the council of Elders made the choice to end the war in the only way possible. Through marriage. Binding our two peoples in a way that swords and fire never could.

And that's where I come in. Aodhan, prince of the dragons, betrothed to an elf I've never seen.

I've rolled it all around in my head so many times these last few months trying to figure out why the elves gave in so easily to such a peace offering. Surely it's a ruse of some kind.

They're up to something, they have to be and I refuse to allow my people to pay the price.

“Bet she’s got the ears of a bat and the teeth of a—”

“I get it,” I say, my voice low but firm, cutting off Drago’s jest. They fall silent for a moment, surprised by my outburst.

I don’t usually break my silence when they’re on a roll. But I’m tired of hearing about the woman in question. The woman that I will be forced to live with for the rest of my life.

An elf bride that is nothing but a political pawn, sent to forge peace between two ancient enemies.

I’ve heard the stories of elven beauty my whole life. The ethereal grace of their women, how they move like whispers through the forest. I’ve always wondered just how much of it is true.

But what do I care about any of it? This marriage isn’t about love, or even desire. It’s about survival.

Our people are on the brink of extinction. The last dragon city fell years ago, and now most live like nomads, scattered across the wilds. The rest are all living in the mountains surrounding my home. The great Sky Castle.

Even here, in this moment of peace, I can feel the tension in the air. We’re not used to being the weaker side. My blood burns with the knowledge that we are the ones who had to concede. We’re the ones who need saving. From the very ones who have been killing us!

And this elf woman, whoever she is, is part of the solution. Her fate, like mine, was decided long before she ever had a say.

Even knowing that, I will find it extremely hard to look at her as anything but the enemy.

“Maybe you’ll get lucky, Aodhan,” Falkor tries again, his voice less mocking.”

Maybe.

I breathe deeply, feeling the weight of Falkor’s words settle onto my shoulders. “Maybe she’ll surprise you,” he says, as if beauty could undo generations of hatred. I seriously doubt it.

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My life has been shaped by decisions made in war rooms and on battlefields long before either of us were born.

Still, she is a mystery. Maybe she'll be nothing like the cold, sharp-edged memories I hold of her people.

The elves I've known were nothing like the legends that say they're graceful and wise. They were swift, ruthless killers that had no mercy.

I remember the night they swept through our stronghold like a wave of silver fire. I was only a boy, barely of age to join the fight.

My father stood tall with his wings spread wide, roaring commands as our warriors took to the skies blocking out the light of the sun. We were certain of victory. We always were. Too bad that we'd been wrong.

The elves had something new that night. Some dark magic or forgotten power that bound our wings, grounding us to our feet.

One moment we were soaring across the sky and the next we were falling. Crashing into the earth, completely helpless. They came with blades and with arrows that burned with a blue fire that we'd never seen before.

My father fell, not from the sky, but in the dirt with a resounding thud, surrounded by his warriors.

The memory of his roar echoes in my dreams, the sound of his last breath mingling

with the cries of our people as we retreated from the field.

That was the night everything changed. We never regained our strength after that. Some never regained their ability to take flight again.

The Elves' magic grew stronger, their influence spread, and my people became fewer, our numbers dwindling with each passing year. Less and less babies are being born. More and more dragons are becoming infertile.

That's why this marriage exists. To stop the bleeding. To bring an end to the centuries of violence and hatred.

To hopefully appease the Gods so they allow us to have children of our own again. But I wonder, even now, if such a union can truly change anything. What if me and this elf woman don't have any children?

I glance across the fire at Drago and Falkor, my oldest friends, their broad faces lit by the flames.

Falkor still has that easy smirk, as if everything in the world is a joke to be laughed at, while Drago's massive frame hunches forward, his golden eyes gleaming with unspoken thoughts.

I know them as well as I know myself. We've survived battles together, the loss of a huge amount of our homeland, the fall of our kin. Yet here we are, sitting around a fire, pretending this marriage will solve all our problems.

I know they don't believe it any more than I do. They know the war left scars too deep to be healed by a single treaty or a wedding between strangers.

They laugh and tease me about this elf bride, because what else is there? It's easier to

joke than to face the truth of what we've lost.

A distant sound pulls me from my thoughts and I scan the darkness around us, opening my dragon sight to see within the darkness but nothing moves.

This forest is ancient, and filled with creatures far older than either elves or dragons. I find some comfort in that. No matter how great our wars, how fierce our hatred, the world around us continues.

But as I sit here in the shadow of all that's been, I wonder what will be left for our people. I've been trained for war my entire life. I know no other way to live.

I've been told that our survival depends on our strength and on our willingness to fight for every scrap of land, every breath of air.

Yet, here I am, on my way to marry into the bloodline of those who sought to take that very breath away from us.

Will I hate her when I see her? Will I see the faces of the elves who killed my father, who burned our homes, and left our people scattered? Or will she be something else entirely—something beyond the war that has shaped us all?

The fire crackles again, louder this time as Drago tosses another log into the flames. He glances at me, his eyes searching mine, though neither of us says anything.

Maybe he sees the weight of my thoughts, or maybe he's lost on his own. I've never asked him how much he remembers of the war, of what we once were. Perhaps it's better that way. We all carry our ghosts differently.

I can't help but wonder what kind of ghosts this elf bride carries. What stories haunt her dreams? Does she fear the flames of my people like we do the cold magic of her



kin? Does she resent this union as much as I do? Or has she, too, been taught that this is the only way forward?

I'll find out soon enough. And when I do, I'll have to decide whether to embrace this future—or to continue carrying the fire of the past within me.

Falkor leans back, resting his hands behind his head. "So, Aodhan," he starts, dragging my name out in a way that makes Drago smirk, "why don't you tell us again about that ancient prophecy? You know, the one about dragons being bound to elves in the old days. I still can't wrap my head around that part where we supposedly needed them to have children."

I sigh, knowing full well he remembers. I've told them the story before, but Falkor loves to hear it. Mostly so he can make some crude joke at the end.

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I'll still tell him anyway. The story, after all, is part of our legacy, and it weighs on me as I prepare to fulfill its ancient promise.

"It's not a prophecy," I say quietly, my eyes still on the fire. "It's history."

"Yeah, yeah," Falkor waves a hand. "History, prophecy, whatever. Just tell me."

I shift my weight, leaning forward and clasping my hands together. The fire flickers between us, and for a moment, I feel the pull of the past, as if the story is already here, sitting with us by the fire.

"In the beginning," I start, "dragons and elves were not enemies. They lived together in harmony—two ancient races, each with their own gifts. The elves had their magic, their connection to the land, while we dragons had our strength, our flight, and our fire. But there was one thing dragons could not do on their own."

Falkor raises an eyebrow, always the skeptic. "Have children?"

I nod. "Yes. Back then, it was said that dragons could only reproduce with the help of the elves' magic. The bond between a dragon and an elf was sacred. It wasn't just a marriage; it was a merging of souls. Only when the two races were bound together could new life be created—half-dragon, half-elf offspring, children with the power of both races."

Drago shifts in his seat, his deep voice rumbling out. "So... without them, we would have died out?"

I nod again, my eyes fixed on the fire as it snaps and pops. "Exactly. The elves' magic made it possible for us to survive, to thrive. And so, for a time, there was peace between our people. Every dragon had an elf counterpart, a partner bound by more than just flesh, a partner bound by the soul."

Falkor, who had been unusually silent during this part, leans in. "But what happened? If we were all cozy with the elves back then, what changed?"

I look up at him, feeling the weight of the answer, the same answer that has haunted our people for generations.

"Greed. Power. The same things that always destroy peace. Some of the elves began to see the bond as an opportunity to control the dragons, to wield their power for themselves. They thought that by controlling the birth of dragons, they could control the dragons themselves. The council of Elders in the old world didn't take kindly to that. They broke the bonds. The dragons withdrew, severing their ties to the elves. And that was when the wars began."

Falkor whistles low, shaking his head. "So, we needed them to survive, but they tried to own us. Classic."

Drago lets out a long breath, his expression hard. "And now we're going back to the old ways, marrying them again, trying to bring about what? More half-breeds to save us from extinction?"

I shrug. "It's not exactly the same. We're not bound by magic anymore—at least, not the way we were. This marriage is a political arrangement, nothing more. But it's based on those ancient ties, on the hope that maybe, by reconnecting with the elves, we can find a way forward. Maybe even a way to restore our numbers. It's not magic, but it's the only chance we've got."

Falkor chuckles again, but it's softer this time. "Still, it's hard to believe we were ever bound to them like that. Elves and dragons, tied by the soul. Sounds like something out of a bard's song."

"Doesn't change that it's true," I mutter, my voice more distant now. "It's in the old books, Falkor. It's who we were. And now..." I trail off, staring into the fire again. "Now we have to decide who we're going to be."

The fire crackles in the silence that follows. Falkor and Drago seem content to let the story sink in, though I know the questions they won't ask aloud.

How much of that history is repeating? How much of what's happening now is just another cycle in our long, bloody history with the elves?

And when I meet my new bride, will we be bound in the same way? Bound by soul, by fate, by the legacy of our people? Or will we just be two strangers, thrown together by the decisions of those who came before us?

The ancient book says the soul bond is permanent, unbreakable once made until we die. But in all this time, I've never seen it. Not in my lifetime, not in anyone I know. Those old ways are long gone—aren't they?

I close my eyes for a moment, feeling the heat of the flames on my skin. Bound by soul, tied to an elf. It seems impossible.

And yet... Here I am.

"Just because it's in a book, doesn't make it true." Falkor says with a raised brow.

I don't comment as I turn my eyes back to the fire's glow. I've got to admit, the same thought has crossed my mind a million times. Honestly, I've never questioned it until

a few weeks ago when my mother said something about things never being exactly as they seem when I was on a rant about the elves starting the war over greed.

When I asked her what she meant all she'd say was our ancient texts were written by our own people. Not by someone who had no ties either way.

It's something to think about.

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### Chapter 2

#### Vevina

Everyone was acting strange, like they knew something I didn't, and it gnawed at me. The pitying looks, the soft murmurs when I walked by, the way people would turn away the moment they saw me coming—it was maddening. I couldn't figure it out. What had I done?

Did I smell bad? I'd check myself a hundred times a day in my chambers. Nothing. Not even a hint of anything off.

Maybe it was something else, some hidden gossip swirling around the court. But no one would tell me, no matter how many times I asked. They'd just give me that same sad, distant smile and scurry off as if being near me was suddenly dangerous.

Surely if I'd done something that I wasn't supposed to, my father would have yelled at me by now.

He had a way of always making me feel like an unwanted daughter. The burden he must endure because he was unable to sire a son before my beautiful mother passed away.

Somehow, I know that he blamed me for that as well. She was always sick after my birth, never fully recovering. While I lost her when I was young, I still remember little things about her.

Tired of the walls closing in, of the whispers and the tension as I walk along the hall, I slip out of the castle through a side door when no one is looking.

My guards had been particularly jumpy, but I was tired of their watchful eyes. I needed a moment of freedom, a breath of fresh air without being followed around like some fragile thing about to break.

They never watched closely enough, anyway. Not when I really wanted to be gone. They always assumed I went back to my room.

Idiots.

The apple orchard was where I'd escape. I'd been slipping out to play there with the servants' children for years. It was lonely being an only child.

They didn't look at me like a noble or give me those uncomfortable stares. They just laughed and treated me like one of them.

And in the orchard, I didn't have to worry about courtly expectations or whatever mystery was now making its way around the castle.

The children were already there, their voices rising in a chorus of giggles as they chased each other between the trees in a game of tag. Smiling, I join them, feeling lighter as the game continues.

The orchard was peaceful, filled with the sweet scent of ripe apples and the soft rustling of leaves in the breeze.

We played for what seemed like hours, laughing and running, feeling more alive than I had in days.

It was simple, pure, and free of the strange atmosphere that had seeped into the castle. Here, no one gave me those looks, no one whispered. It was just me, the children, and the wide-open sky.

But then we noticed the shadows.

At first, I thought it was just a cloud passing overhead, blocking the sun. But the shadows were too large, moving too quickly.

Glancing up, my heart freezes in my chest. Massive figures soar across the sky, dark and ominous against the pale blue. They were enormous with wings spread wide.



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Dragons.

I'd never seen one before, not in real life, only a picture in our oldest texts. But there was no mistaking them.

The sleek, powerful shapes, the way they moved so gracefully despite their size. They were dragons. And they were heading toward the castle.

My breath catches in my throat as panic surges through me, but I can't let the children see. I can't let them be afraid.

"Go," I say quickly, my voice steady even though my heart is racing. "Back to the servants' quarters, now. Run, and don't stop until you're inside."

The children look at me, wide-eyed and confused, but something in my tone must have convinced them to not argue.

Without another word, they turn and sprint back through the trees, their laughter replaced by the sound of quick, frightened footsteps.

I stand there for a moment, watching the dragons circle overhead, their wings beating slowly, almost lazily, as if they were in no hurry.

There were at least three of them, maybe more, but it was hard to tell from the ground. They weren't attacking and they didn't seem aggressive. But their presence sent a chill down my spine. Why were they here?

I didn't wait to find out. The children were safe, and now I needed to get back to the castle.

Running through the orchard, my feet pound against the earth as I make my way back toward the castle gates.

The guards would be furious that I'd slipped away, but that didn't matter now. There were dragons flying over our lands. Creatures we haven't seen in our lands in generations.

The war was over, wasn't it? The peace between our people and the Dragonkin had been fragile for years, but surely, surely, no one would be reckless enough to threaten it now?

I'm breathless by the time I reach the gate, my heart pounding in my chest. The guards are at the gate, their faces pale as they look to the skies.

They didn't even seem to notice me slipping back in, their attention focused entirely on the massive creatures overhead.

I hurry through the corridors, my mind racing with questions. I need answers.

There was something happening, something bigger than I'd realized. And I was right in the middle of it somehow, whether I liked it or not.

Dragons over the castle. What in the name of the stars was going on?

My emotions are a tangled mess of fear, curiosity, and frustration. What had brought the dragons here? Why now?

The halls were buzzing with nervous energy. Servants rush past me, their faces pale,

and no one spares me a glance.

The same tension that had been hanging in the air for days seemed thicker now. Something big was happening and it had to do with the dragons.

I make my way toward the main hall, where I know my father will be. He had been acting strange too, distracted and distant, brushing off my questions. But he couldn't avoid me now. Not with dragons flying over our heads.

I push open the heavy doors of the main hall without hesitation, stepping inside before anyone can stop me.

My father stands at the head of the room, surrounded by council members and advisors, all of them with grim expressions.

But what catches my eye isn't their faces. It's the three unfamiliar men standing near the table. Huge men that look as if they were sculpted from clay.

They were strangers to me, and something about them set my nerves on edge. They most definitely were not Elfkin.

"Vevina," my father says, his voice stern as soon as he sees me. "This is a delicate matter. You shouldn't be here."

I open my mouth to protest, to demand answers, but the hard look in his eyes stops me. There's no warmth there, no understanding. Just a firm, unyielding resolve.

"Go clean yourself up," he says, his tone sharp, as if I were still a child playing in the dirt. "You are needed elsewhere."

I want to argue, to ask about the dragons and the men in the room that I didn't know,

but something in the way he spoke told me it would be pointless.

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I was being dismissed, pushed away from whatever was happening in the room. Glancing at the strangers again, I feel their eyes on me, but they also say nothing.

With a slight bow to my father, I turn and leave the hall, my mind spinning yet again. Dragons flying over the castle, strangers in my home, and my father refusing to tell me anything. The air felt thick with secrets, and I was trapped in the middle of it.

As I walk back to my chambers, the questions gnaw at me. Why wouldn't my father explain what was going on? Who were those men, and what did they have to do with the dragons? And why was I being kept in the dark?

I catch sight of myself in the mirror along the hallway and realize I am still covered in dirt from the orchard.

My hair is wild, covered in leaves and my clothes rumpled. My father had been right about one thing, I did need to clean up. But that didn't change the fact that something was wrong.

My thoughts drift back to the main hall, to the tension in my father's voice, and those strangers standing near the table.

Three men I had never seen before, each of them imposing in their own way. But one stood out against the rest. One whose presence lingered in my mind even now, like an imprint I couldn't shake.

He was the tallest of the three, with sharp features that somehow seemed both regal and dangerous at the same time.

His skin was fair, though there was something more to it, a kind of warmth that glowed beneath the surface, like embers hidden beneath cool ash.

And his eyes... gods, his eyes.

Golden.

More vivid than any I had ever seen. They seemed to glow brighter than those of his companions, as though lit from within by some secret fire.

When he looked at me, just for a brief moment before I left the hall, it was like his gaze pierced right through me, as if he could see everything I was trying to hide.

It made my heart race, though I wasn't sure why and wasn't sure if I disliked it.

He was handsome in a way that felt almost unnatural, like a figure from ancient stories come to life.

His face was strong, angular, but with a kind of grace to it. Not soft, but refined. Even standing still, there was a power in the way he carried himself, a quiet confidence that made him seem more dangerous than anyone else in the room. His companions were intimidating, yes, but they faded into the background next to him.

I couldn't stop thinking about him.

Who was he? Why had he come to our castle with dragons circling the sky?

There was something about him that felt important, even though I had no idea what his role in all this could be.

A part of me wanted to go back to the hall, to demand answers, not just from my

father, but from him. Those golden eyes haunted me, burning into my memory.

And yet, even now, I couldn't shake the feeling that I had seen him before. Not in real life, but in the way you dream of something so vivid that it leaves a mark on you, even after you wake up.

I had never met him, and yet... It felt like he was someone I was meant to know.

Are the Gods playing a trick on me?

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### Chapter 3

#### Aodhan

As we descend into the courtyard, the familiar weight of the ground meets my claws, and I can feel the shift in the air around me.

The Elfkin below us scatter like leaves in the wind. Their wide, fearful eyes locked on us as though they were watching the approach of death itself. I'd grown used to this reaction over the years. The awe and terror we inspired in most creatures but it still grated on me.

The Elves and Dragons were not currently at war, yet here I was, a prince of the Dragonkin, and they cowered as if I had come to destroy them.

Maybe they were afraid that I'd breach the truce our two peoples had slowly put together. All bound together in the fate of a marriage.

It never occurred to me that perhaps one of both of us could refuse the marriage then the war would start all over again.

Falkor and Drago flank me as we land, their wings folding close to their bodies as we shift into our human forms.

The transformation was always disorienting for others to witness. One moment they're looking at a massive dragon, the next, a man.



Reaching down, I untie the bag that is on my legs as my companions do the same and we dress quickly.

Looking up a few minutes later, I catch sight of the guards as they hesitate, their hands tightening on their spears. Their fear is palpable, but they hold their ground, stepping forward cautiously.

"Welcome," the captain of the guard finally manages, his voice steady but lacking its usual authority. "His Majesty awaits you in the main hall."

I exchange a glance with Falkor, who raises an eyebrow, clearly sensing the same unease I do. Drago, always the most perceptive of us, nods almost imperceptibly. There was something wrong here, something more than the usual tension between our peoples.

We were here for diplomacy, to fulfill the terms of an ancient agreement, yet the air crackled with unspoken anxiety.

We're escorted through the castle a minute later, the elves' eyes following us like shadows. The guards remain stiff, their gazes flicking between us and the stone walls, as if they expect an attack at any moment.

I keep my own senses sharp, listening, watching, my dragon instincts attuned to the unease that seems to infect this place.

By the time we reach the main hall, the tension has wound itself tight in my chest. The King is waiting for us, his posture rigid as we're introduced.

His face is a mask of calm that doesn't match the undercurrent of fear running through his people. I'm about to address him when the door to the hall suddenly bursts open.

A woman rushes in, breathless and disheveled. Her dress is stained with dirt, and twigs stuck in her hair like she has just run through a forest.

It takes me a moment to fully register her presence, and for a second, all I can do is stare. She is nothing like the polished courtiers who usually surround royal halls. Nothing like the prim and proper women of the Elfkin court that I'd heard of.

Her bright blue eyes blaze with life, vibrant and untamed. Despite the dirt on her face and the wild state of her appearance, she was beautiful. Stunning, even. I can't seem to look away.

She doesn't bow. Doesn't even acknowledge the King in the way she should have. Instead, she marches right up to him, her chin held high, and takes her place at his side as if she has every right to stand beside the ruler of the Elfkin.

I watch, completely stunned. Who was this woman who dared such a breach of etiquette in front of her own King?

"Vevina," the King says, his voice tinged with frustration. "You're not supposed to be here. Go clean yourself up."

She doesn't argue even though I can clearly see in her eyes that she wants to. Instead, with a defiant look, one I almost admire, she turns on her heel and leaves the hall.

Leaving nothing but a trail of dirt behind her. As the door swings shut once again, I realize I still haven't looked away.

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"Forgive the interruption," the King says, waving off the incident as if it were nothing. "My daughter is... impulsive."

Daughter. That takes me off guard. She isn't some servant or forgotten noblewoman. She's the King's daughter. A princess.

But even so, he dismissed her as if she were no more than a child playing in the dirt. There was no explanation given, no attempt to involve her in whatever diplomatic matters were taking place here.

I supposed that was typical of the Elfkin. She was, after all, only a female in their eyes. And yet... there was something about her, something that stirred a strange curiosity in me.

As the King and my companions continue their formal introductions and begin discussing the matters that had brought us here, I find it hard to focus. My mind keeps wandering back to the girl.

Vevina.

There was something about her that had caught my attention and refused to let go. The fire in her eyes, the way she had stormed into the room without a care for the rigid decorum expected of her rank.

She was wild, unrefined, completely unlike the polished women of the court I was accustomed to. And even covered in dirt, she was beautiful. More so than anyone I'd ever seen.

Her blue eyes lingered in my thoughts, like the flicker of something untouchable, and I couldn't shake the feeling that there was more to her than met the eye. The way she moved, the confidence, the defiance. There was something about her that made her unforgettable.

I should've been focusing on the negotiations, on the task at hand, but instead, I kept thinking about her. Something about her had struck a chord deep within me, deep enough my dragon half took notice. Though I didn't understand why.

Maybe it was her spirit, her beauty, or maybe it was the way she didn't care for the roles or expectations of her station. Whatever it was, I couldn't ignore it.

And as the conversation with the king continued, one thought kept circling in my mind:

"You've not told her yet have you?" I interrupt suddenly.

The King pauses, mid-sentence, his brow furrowing. There's a brief silence in the hall as all eyes turn to me. His gaze flicking to mine, stern and measured, but I can see the tension behind it.

"Told her what, exactly?" he asks, though his voice carries an edge, as if he already knew what I was referring to but doesn't want to address it.

"About this agreement. About why we're here," I reply, my voice steady but pointed. "Your daughter. Vevina. She has no idea, does she?"

The King's jaw tightens and the weight of the room shifts. Falkor and Drago straighten, sensing the shift in tone as well. The guards along the walls seem to grow more rigid, but I don't care. I need an answer.

The King sighs, waving a hand dismissively, though there was an underlying tension in his movements. "She is not involved in these matters. There is no need for her to be burdened with such... details."

Details. The King speaks as if her future, our future, was nothing more than an inconvenience, an afterthought. I clench my fists at my sides, my frustration rising.

Vevina was not just some pawn to be moved in this game of politics and power. She deserves to know the truth, to be told about the ancient pact that had brought us here. About the betrothal that had been arranged without her knowledge.

"She's at the heart of this, and yet you've told her nothing," I say, unable to keep the edge out of my voice. "You can't expect this to go smoothly when you're keeping secrets from your own blood."

The King's eyes narrow, his expression hardening. "She is only a female. These are matters for Kings and Princes, not the whims of a young girl who plays in the dirt."

The dismissal hits harder than I expect it to. My chest tightens, anger simmering beneath my skin.

He doesn't understand her. Doesn't see her the way I had in that brief, electrifying moment. She wasn't just some naive princess to be kept in the dark.

She was a fierce woman with a flame that wanted to burn bright but tapped down by those around her.

And she was my betrothed, though she didn't even know it.

The King once again waves off my concern, quickly moving the conversation back to the formalities, but the bitterness lingers inside of me.

I couldn't shake the image of her, the way she had looked at him with such defiance, unaware that her entire future was being discussed behind closed doors.

I could still see those bright blue eyes, burning with a fire that couldn't be extinguished.

And something told me, despite the King's attempts to shield her from the truth, that fire wouldn't be kept in the dark for much longer.

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Finally joining the conversation to hurry along the so called details, we finish ironing out the marriage contract.

When we are all through with signing the documents, sealed with our blood, we are escorted from the hall by a servant that'll take us to our rooms.

The grand doors to our chambers creak open as the Elven servant motions for us to enter. It's a vast, elegant room, with tapestries hanging from the walls and a large window overlooking the castle grounds.

Everything here feels so cold, so calculated. My mind was still reeling from the conversation with the King. The way he so easily dismissed Vevina, as if she were no more than a piece in his political game. It left a bad taste in my mouth.

Falkor and Drago follow me inside, their usual banter quieted by the weight of the situation. Falkor tosses his cloak onto a nearby chair, his lips twisting into a faint smirk, though there was little amusement in his eyes.

"Well," he said, leaning back against the wall, "I have to admit, this wasn't exactly how I expected things to go. Can't say I'm surprised the king didn't tell her, though. Elves and their secrecy." He glances at me, his golden eyes sharp with curiosity. "You think she knows? That she's getting married later today?"

I shake my head, pacing toward the window. "No," I mutter. "She has no idea. The King made that painfully clear. He doesn't think she needs to know. Said she's 'only a female.'"

Falkor snorts, exchanging a glance with Drago. "Only a female," he repeats with sarcasm, rolling his eyes. "I saw her barge into the hall like she owned the place. Doesn't seem like the type to take kindly to being kept in the dark. Especially about something like this."

Drago, quieter than Falkor but always more insightful, folds his arms across his chest. "How do you think she'll react?" he asks, his voice low and thoughtful. "Once she finds out the truth."

I pause, considering the question. The image of Vevina, wild and untamed, flashes in my mind.

The dirt on her dress, the twigs in her hair, and those bright blue eyes filled with so much fire.

There was no way she would take this calmly. She was strong-willed and defiant. She would fight this, I was certain of it.

The idea of being married off without her consent, to a man she didn't even know... it would enrage her.

"I think she'll be furious," I admit, my gaze distant as I stare out at the courtyard below. "And she has every right to be. She's been kept in the dark about all of this. Her entire life is about to change, and no one's given her a choice."

Falkor shrugs, running a hand through his silver hair. "It's not like she has much of a choice now. The pact's already been made, the arrangements are set. Whether she likes it or not, by tonight, you'll be married."

His words are true, but they don't sit right with me. Vevina wasn't just some pawn to be manipulated.



I could still see her standing beside her father, strong and proud despite the King's obvious dismissal of her.

She isn't someone who would bend easily, and the thought of forcing this upon her without giving her a chance to even understand, gnawed at me.

"I don't like it," I say, finally turning back to face them. "It feels wrong. She deserves to know. She deserves to have a say in this."

Drago, who had been silent for most of the conversation, steps forward. "It's not just about her," he reminds me, his deep voice steady. "This union is more than a marriage—it's about the survival of our people. The bond between Elves and Dragons is the only way to ensure that. You said so yourself."

I knew he was right. The ancient pact was more than just an agreement; it was a lifeline. Our people, the Dragonkin, could not survive without the Elves, just as they could not survive without us.

The magic that tied us together was ancient and powerful. This marriage was a way to reignite that bond. But knowing the reasons behind it didn't make it any easier to accept the way it was being done.

"I'll have to face her sooner or later," I say, running a hand through my hair. "And I'm not looking forward to that conversation."

Falkor chuckles, shaking his head. "You're in for a hell of a day, my friend. She doesn't seem like the type to take bad news lying down."

"That's what worries me," I mutter. Because when Vevina finds out, there would be hell to pay and I wasn't sure if I was ready to be the one to break the news.

The marriage was happening, whether we wanted it or not. But how Vevina reacted... that would be the real storm.

### Chapter 4

#### Vevina

As I make my way back to my chambers, I can't help but feel irritated. No one was telling me anything, not even my father but I know something is going on.

Why was the entire castle brimming with unease, and why did it feel like I was being purposely kept in the dark?

The door to my chambers creaked open, and as expected, my maids were already there, waiting for me with a bath prepared in the middle of the room.

The scent of lavender and rosewater was calming, though it did nothing to ease the frustration gnawing at me.

I say nothing as I strip off my dirty dress, feeling the cool air against my skin. Walking over to the tub, I step in and sink into the warm water. The maids, Dorina and Agnis, immediately began their work, scrubbing away the dirt from the orchard. Their hands are gentle, though their chatter was anything but quiet. As usual.

They gossiped as they always did, their voices light and filled with the kind of inconsequential nonsense that usually went unnoticed by me. I'm only half-listening as I stare at the water, trying to sort through my own thoughts.

My father had been more irritable than usual lately, the tension around the castle thicker than ever. I wondered if it had to do with the visitors in the hall. The ones I

hadn't been introduced to which seemed extremely odd on my father's behalf.

"Did you see them? They were magnificent," Dorina's voice cut through my thoughts, her excitement clear.

I blinked, turning my attention back to her, though I didn't speak. She was always talking about something or someone, usually with that same swooning tone. But then I caught the one word that would pique my interest.

"Dragons."

Dragons? My ears perked up. Maybe if I stay quiet I can figure out what is going on around here.

"Magnificent?" Agnis muttered, her voice gruff with age as she scrubs my arms with a silk cloth. "You mean terrifying. They should have been kept far away from here. Bringing them into the courtyard..."

"But did you see them?" Dorina interrupted, ignoring Agnis's scolding tone. Her cheeks were flushed, clearly more excited than concerned. "They were beautiful. Especially the one with the golden eyes. So handsome. Like something out of a story."

I sat up a little straighter in the bath, the water sloshing around me. "Dragons?" I asked, my voice cutting through the idle chatter. "Why are there dragons here?"

Dorina's eyes widened as if she had forgotten I was even in the room. For a moment, she hesitated, biting her lip as if she'd said too much, but her excitement was too great to be contained. "Yes, my lady. Three of them. Didn't you see them?"

I shook my head. "I'm not sure. I've been in the orchards with the children."

She leaned in as if she were sharing a grand secret, excitement on her face. "They're from the Dragonkin, the ones our people used to have ties with in the old stories. And they were all so handsome, especially the one who stood in the middle, the tallest one with golden eyes that almost glowed."

Golden eyes. My mind flicks back to the Great Hall, to the brief glimpse I'd caught of one of the strangers before I had left. There had been something strange about the man standing before my father.

He had carried an air of power, something otherworldly. Could it be that he was one of the dragons Dorina was so eagerly gossiping about?

"Why are they here?" I asked again, more insistent this time.

Dorina glanced toward Agnis, who gave her a sharp look, as if silently warning her not to say too much. But Dorina was too caught up in her gushing. "I heard it has something to do with an old pact between our people. Something important."

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Agnis, sensing quickly where the conversation was headed, placed a hand on Dorina's shoulder, her grip firm, and pulled her away from me.

"Enough, Dorina," she said sternly. "It's not our place to gossip about such things in front of Lady Vevina. You should know better."

Dorina's excitement dims under Agnis's stern gaze, and with a small, guilty nod, she steps back from the tub, quieting herself. But my curiosity had already been stirred, and the vague mention of some ancient pact lingered in my thoughts. Something important? What could it be? And why was it being kept from me?

I glance at Agnis, who was now busily scrubbing my back with more vigor than necessary. The older maid was loyal to my family, always quick to hush any talk that might stir up trouble, but I could sense that there was more she wasn't saying.

Something was happening and the fact that dragons were involved made it all the more pressing.

But Agnis wasn't going to tell me anything, not if she could help it. The old woman would never go against an order from my father. And Dorina, though full of gossip, had already been silenced.

Leaning back in the bath, I stare up at the ceiling, frustration swirling in my chest. What was my father hiding? What were those dragons doing here? And why did I feel like this concerned me in ways no one had yet explained?

The water had cooled by the time Agnis finally finished scrubbing away the last

traces of dirt from my skin.

I felt a certain kind of detachment, letting the maids work over me while my thoughts spun, trying to piece together the fragments of conversation I'd overheard.

Dragons.

Pacts.

Why hadn't my father told me anything yet? My frustration simmered beneath the surface, but I knew better than to press the maids any further. Agnis wouldn't let any more details slip, and Dorina was too eager to please the older maid to risk defying her.

Stepping out, I allow them to wrap me in soft, perfumed towels. The scent of lavender clinging to my skin, doing little to calm the restless anxiety building inside me.

Without a word, they ushered me to the dressing chamber where my gown was already laid out, a shimmering piece of silk and gossamer in the colors of the high elves.

A deep emerald and gold, the colors of nobility. It was beautiful, but something about it felt... off.

"Let's get you dressed, my lady," Dorina said with an almost giddy excitement, a lightness in her voice that contrasted sharply with my growing unease.

I allow them to dress me, slipping into the layers of the gown without complaint. Their hands working quickly, tightening the laces at the back, adjusting the flowing sleeves, arranging the intricate embroidery that trailed down the bodice like vines.

It was an elegant dress, one fit for a royal occasion. But why such finery today? No one had mentioned any formal events. No council meeting, no royal visit... nothing to warrant this level of preparation.

As they worked, they chatted in soft tones, this time avoiding any mention of dragons, as though they had been warned not to speak too freely around me.

I remained silent, letting their conversation pass me by as my mind wandered back to the throne room, to the strangers standing before my father. Who were they? And why had they come?

Agnis steps forward with a collection of jewels, and I watch as they fasten the necklace around my throat.

My heart begins to race inside my chest.

Dorina carefully places rings on my fingers, gold and silver bands etched with elven runes, while Agnis threads fresh flowers into my hair, small, pale blossoms that smelled faintly of jasmine.

It wasn't until they began arranging my hair that I finally spoke. "What is all of this?" I ask, trying to keep my voice even.

Dorina's hands briefly still as she twists a lock of my hair into an elaborate braid. She exchanges a quick glance with Agnis before offering a weak smile.

"It's a special day, my lady," she says, though her words are evasive, as if she's afraid of the words.

Agnis, as usual, was more direct. "You'll understand soon enough, my lady. There's no need to worry."



Worry? The more they avoided answering me, the more worried I became. Something was happening, something important and it was clear I was being prepared for it. But no one had told me what.

Finally, they finished with my hair, adorning it with delicate silver pins shaped like leaves, before standing back to admire their work.

“You look beautiful, my lady,” Dorina says softly, her voice full of admiration.

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I turn toward the mirror, anticipation and unease knotting in my chest. When I looked at my reflection, my breath catches in my throat.

There I stand, dressed in the most exquisite gown I have ever worn. My hair styled in elaborate braids, adorned with flowers and jewels that sparkled in the soft light of the chamber.

The girl in the mirror didn't quite look like me. She looked like someone ready for a grand ceremony. Like someone prepared for...

A wedding.

"Oh, Gods!" I whisper.

My heart drops to my toes as realization washes over me like ice water. The dress, the jewels, the flowers in my hair: everything about my appearance screamed tradition. Not just any tradition, though. The garb I wore was unmistakably that of a bride.

A traditional Elven wedding gown, complete with the emeralds and diamonds that symbolizes unity and peace between families.

I take a step back from the mirror, my pulse quickening. "Why...?" My voice was barely a whisper. "Why...?"

Dorina avoided my eyes, fidgeting with a piece of fabric on my sleeve, and it was Agnis who stepped forward, her expression calm but firm.

“It’s not for us to explain, my lady,” she said, her voice low and measured. “Your father will speak to you when the time is right.”

“When the time is right?,” I echo, disbelief creeping into my tone. My hands tremble as I brush them over the fabric of the gown, the weight of what is happening slowly sinking in. This wasn’t just a formal event.

This was... my wedding.

But to whom? No one had said anything. Was I to be married off like some political token, without so much as a warning? My mind spins as I think back to the visitors in the Great Hall. Could it be them? Could it be...

The dragons?

I feel the walls closing in around me, the air thick with uncertainty and a growing sense of dread. My father hadn’t told me a thing, and yet here I was, dressed for a wedding I didn’t even know was happening.

My stomach twists with the realization that my life is about to change in a way I can’t control, and no one had thought to give me a choice. Not even the courtesy of an explanation.

Anger at my father begins to take hold of me and I feel my blood begin to run hot under the surface. He could have told me instead of moving me around like some chess piece for his amusement.

Agnis and Dorina stand there silently, waiting for my next move, but I can’t even speak. My heart is pounding wildly in my ears. A thousand questions racing through my mind all at the same time.

How had this all been arranged without my knowledge? And more importantly, who was I about to marry?

There was only one thing I knew for certain: by the end of the day, everything would be different. And it seems there was nothing I could do to stop it.

### Chapter 5

Aodhan

Falkor and Drago were both in their formal dragon attire. The deep reds and golds of their ceremonial robes catching the light from the windows in the room.

They stood by the door, engaged in hushed conversation. I could tell they were waiting for my signal to leave.

However, I stay seated on the edge of the bed, my mind far from the rituals I was expected to follow.

A wedding. An alliance between dragons and elves. It was the stuff of ancient legends, long before the war had torn us apart.

And now, here I was, about to bind myself to one of them. A woman I hadn't even been properly introduced to. A woman who, from all indications, had no idea yet what was about to happen.

Vevina.

Her name echoes in my mind as I think back to the great hall earlier. That brief moment when she'd stormed through the doors, completely disheveled, with twigs in her hair and dirt smudged all over her dress. It was like she'd been wandering through the forests.

She hadn't bowed to the king. Hadn't even acknowledged the strangers in the room. There had been something wild about her, something that didn't quite fit with the poised and controlled air I'd expected from an Elven princess.

And those bright blue eyes had been filled with life. She hadn't seemed like the type to sit still, let alone be trapped in the politics of a marriage she had no part in arranging. But that was exactly what was about to happen.

I sighed, running a hand through my hair. My fingers brushing the ceremonial circlet that had been placed on my head. It felt strange, uncomfortable, but that was the least of my concerns.

I had been told about this alliance in vague terms and promised that it would heal the rift between our people. That through this marriage, peace would once again reign. But no one had mentioned how abruptly it would all unfold.

"You're awfully quiet," Falkor says, breaking into my thoughts. He crosses the room to sit beside me on the bed. His crimson robes swinging around him. "Second thoughts about this whole marriage business?"

I look at him with a wry smile tugging at the corner of my mouth. "More like first thoughts. I still don't know why it's happening."

Drago, who had been leaning against the wall, chuckles softly. "We all know why. Political alliances, ancient pacts, all that nonsense. The bigger question is, how do you think the girl reacted when she found out that she is the bride?"

Falkor grins. "If she's anything like she was in the throne room earlier, I'd wager she's currently not too pleased. Not exactly the docile Elven bride the stories speak of from the looks of her, is she?"

"Far from it," I mutter, my thoughts wandering back to the moment Vevina had burst into the hall.

There had been defiance in her stride, an utter lack of concern for the formality of the situation. It was clear she hadn't known who I was, or what I represented. To her, I was just another visitor, someone of little importance to her life.

"Do you think her father actually told her before the ceremony?" Falkor asks, leaning back and stretching his arms.

I shake my head. "He probably thinks she doesn't need to know. My best guess is that she has figured it out from the maids by now."

Drago's expression darkens slightly. "I've heard the Elves can be like that. The women have little say in matters of state."

"Still," Falkor adds, "there's no telling how she'll react during the ceremony. And she will go through with it. There's no way around that."

I nod as a sense of unease begins to gnaw at me. I had no desire to marry a woman under false pretenses, nor to spring such life-altering news on her at the last possible moment.

But what choice did I have? This wasn't just about me or her, it was about the future of our two peoples. A peace we had fought for over generations, and the price of that peace was this marriage.

"I don't think she's the type to take this lying down," I said quietly, more to myself than to them. "She'll fight it. I can feel it."

"Maybe that's not such a bad thing," Drago says, his voice thoughtful. "A bit of fire

in her will do you some good. After all, you'll be spending the rest of your life with her."

"Assuming she doesn't try to kill me first," I mutter dryly.

The thought makes Falkor laugh, but my mind remains heavy with uncertainty. I had seen arranged marriages before.



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All of them were cold, formal affairs where neither party had any say in the matter. But there was something about Vevina, something that told me this wouldn't be like any other alliance.

A knock at the door interrupts my thoughts, and one of the Elven guards steps in. "The ceremony is about to begin, my lord. The King requests your presence."

Standing up, I smooth down my robes, feeling the weight of my decision pressing down on me. This was it. The moment I had been prepared for, but not fully ready to accept. I glance over at Falkor and Drago, who give me reassuring nods before I head for the door.

As we make our way to the main hall, my thoughts return to Vevina. Does she know yet? Would her father or anyone else have told her by now? Or would she walk into the ceremony as blindly as she had walked into the great hall earlier?

As we enter the great hall once again, we take a moment to look around us. The sight is nothing short of breathtaking. The high, vaulted ceilings are draped in shimmering banners of silver and green, the colors of the Elven royal house. Candles line the walls, flickering light across the stone floors. The room was filled with both Elf and Dragon nobility, gathered together for the first time in centuries, though there was an unmistakable tension in the air.

At the far end of the hall stood the altar, and there, beside her father, was Vevina.

She was absolutely stunning. The twigs and dirt from earlier had been replaced with elegance and grace. Her hair woven into intricate braids adorned with delicate

flowers. The emerald and silver gown she wore shimmered as she moved, the fabric flowing like water around her. Yet there was a stiffness in her posture, a look of unease in her eyes.

She was absolutely pissed.

My stomach tightened as I approach the King, my steps slow and deliberate. Her eyes meeting mine for a brief moment, and there was a flicker of something maybe. But no understanding. Not yet.

And then the King steps forward, his voice booming as he begins the ceremony, welcoming the union between our two people.

Vevina's eyes widen, and in that instant, I saw it. The moment she realized there was no getting out of this.

Her gaze snaps to her father with what looks to be hatred, then back to me before she schools her lovely face into a serene mask. A mask that remains in place through the entire ceremony.

## Chapter 6

Vevina

The door to our chambers shuts softly behind us, but the sound echoes loudly in my ears. My heart is pounding wildly in my chest as the weight of the entire day crashes down on me all at once. I stand there in the center of the room, my hands clenched tightly into fists at my sides. I try to steady my breathing.

Married.

I am married.

To the dragon prince. Gods!

The ceremony passed by like a blur. One moment I was being rushed through the halls in that ridiculous looking wedding gown, and the next I was standing before the entire court as my father announced my union to a man I didn't even know.

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Aodhan. His name still feels foreign on my tongue, though I'd whispered it to myself a dozen times since we'd exchanged vows.

Closing my eyes, I try to make sense of it all. How could this have happened? I had no say, no warning. I'd been dressed and prepared like a doll to be put on display, for a ceremony I didn't even know was happening until it was too late. And now, I was bound to this man for the rest of life.

I move toward the window, needing to fill my lungs with fresh air. The heavy gown that I'm still wearing swishes around my legs as I cross the room. The jewels at my neck and wrists weigh me down like shackles. Outside, the night sky is dark and endless. There was a cool breeze, but it did little to calm the fire burning in my chest.

Dragons.

The idea of being bound to a dragon, to Aodhan, still seemed unreal. I had grown up hearing stories of their people—some as ancient allies, others as fearsome enemies. And now, the dragon prince was my husband. My husband. Would I ever get used to calling him that?

Hearing soft footsteps behind me, I'm reminded that I'm not alone in the room. My pulse quickens as he draws closer. Turning slowly, I see Aodhan standing just a few feet away. Having discarded his ceremonial robes, he is now dressed in simpler attire, though his presence still fills the room with an intensity that makes my skin prickle. His golden eyes glow faintly in the candlelight as they lock onto mine.

For a moment, neither of us speak. The silence between us stretches thick with

tension.

“You don’t have to be afraid,” he says, breaking the silence.

Afraid? I wasn’t sure if fear was the right word. Angry, confused, betrayed; those were closer to what I was feeling. But fear? No. Lifting my chin slightly, I meet his gaze with all the defiance I have left to muster.

“I’m not afraid of you,” I reply, though my voice is quieter than I intended it to be.

He tilts his head slightly, narrowing his eyes as if he is trying to read me. Trying to understand what I’m feeling. I’m not even sure I understood what I’m feeling. There’s a fire inside me. Anger, yes, but something else too. Something I don’t yet want to acknowledge that seems to want to pull me in Aodhan’s direction.

“I know this wasn’t your choice,” he says after a long pause. “It wasn’t mine either.”

That catches me off guard. I had assumed he had wanted this as much as my father apparently did. But hearing him say it wasn’t his choice... it stirs something inside me. A small flicker of understanding, though I quickly push it away.

“So what now?” I ask, my voice sharp from frustration than anything else. “We’re just expected to... play our parts? Pretend this is what we wanted?”

He takes a step closer and I fight the overwhelming urge to take a step in his direction. “I don’t expect you to pretend anything, Vevina,” he says calmly, his voice almost a purr. My body once again fills with heat that now pools to one area. “But we are bound now. Our union is more than just a formality. It’s meant to bring peace between our people.”

I turn away from him, facing the window again. The breeze catching my hair, sends a

shiver down my spine. “You expect me to just accept this?” I ask, my voice barely above a whisper as I sweep my hand in the direction of the bed.

He doesn’t respond right away, and for a moment, I think he might leave. But then I feel him behind me, Close enough that I can sense his warmth even without touching. My heart races even faster.

“I don’t expect you to accept anything,” he says, his voice almost a rumble in the quiet room. “But I want you to know that I will not hurt you. I don’t want this to be a prison for either of us.”

His words surprise me. For a moment, the tightness in my chest eases but the heat within seems to burn stronger and a small gasp escapes my lips.

I turn to face him again, and his eyes meet mine, searching before a small smile turns the corners of his mouth. He doesn’t move closer. He just stands there, watching me with an intensity that makes it hard to think straight.

That’s when I notice how deeply he is breathing. As if he smells something so divine, he wants to eat it up before anyone else has a chance to do so.

“I’ve read about it but I wasn’t convinced it was possible. You can feel it too, can’t you?” He asks.

“What are you talking about?” I say, my voice barely above a whisper.

He leans in closer until I can feel his breath on my cheek. “The heat Vivina. The heat that’s pooling in your body, begging for me to touch you. To seal the mating ritual. I can smell it on you.”

My eyes widen at his words, still not understanding what he means.

“You don’t know about any of this, do you, my sweet?” He asks softly, looking deep into my eyes.

“The old texts talk about the soul mating bond between Elves and Dragons. The first step is the formal ritual in marriage.”

He stops talking as I get distracted by his tongue wetting his bottom lip. The thought of biting that lip myself overwhelms me. He chuckles softly and my eyes snap back to his.

“And the second step?” I demand.

He reaches out with his hand slowly, running his fingers down my cheek. I feel a fire burning to lay my head in his hand.

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“Where we mate, becoming one.” He says so softly that I almost don’t hear him.

“I barely know you.”

“That will change.” He says, moving in closer, his lips almost on my own. “The burning you feel will get worse the more you try to fight it. This is inevitable. Tonight, you will belong to me in all aspects. Mind, body and soul.”

As he talks, his lips barely touch mine and I realize that he is right. He currently holds a magic over me that I’ve never known to exist. No one ever told me there was something that could overtake an Elf, rendering them unable to fight.

“What are you waiting for?” I ask with heavy breaths.

“Your permission, my sweet. Once you submit to me, I will take you and mark you as mine alone.”

Squeezing my eyes tight, I try to block the images that are invading my mind of the both of us naked on the bed. I ask myself if that is really what I want and at this moment it truly is. I can’t fight whatever has a hold on me. I may regret it in the morning but for now I want it all.

Opening my eyes, I look into his and shake my head. His lips curl up in a grin.

“You have to say it.” He demands.

“I submit to you.” I breathe out.



“Good girl.” He purrs before taking my mouth in a kiss so deep, I gasp in surprise.

I’ve never been kissed before. It feels so foreign yet so right all at the same time. I didn’t realize he was moving us over to the bed until my legs bump into it.

Pulling out of the kiss, his hands work behind me to undo my dress. It plops to the floor as his hands begin to work on my laces. I’m completely naked in front of him in the fraction of a time that it took to get it all on.

My arm crosses over my chest as I try to hide but he moves it back to my side without a word. His golden eyes look his fill at my exposed body before him.

“Stay right there.” He demands, his hands making quick work of his own clothes.

As his last piece of clothing falls, I take my own time looking at his gorgeous body. I can’t deny that my new husband is absolutely handsome in all the ways Elven men are not. His muscles are sculpted and defined. I can tell just from looking at him that he’d be a devil on the battlefield.

His cock springs forward like cold hard steel. It’s bigger than what I’d thought one might be and I wonder if it’ll fit.

“It’ll fit.” He chuckles and my gaze snaps back to his face.

“What?” I ask, confused.

“In case you were wondering. It’ll fit.” He shrugs.

For a moment there I was afraid I’d spoken out loud. He moves closer to me until his hot skin is touching my own.

“I’m going to touch you now. To make sure that you are ready for me.” He whispers into my ear and all I can do is shake my head.

His hand reaches up, cupping my face, slowly running the tips of his fingers along my skin. He continues his slow soft stroke down my shoulder as his other hand also comes up to do the same.

“Vevina. Look at me.” He demands and my eyes fly open, not realizing I had closed them.

He looks at me for only a moment before his lips cover mine. I faintly hear a moan but get more distracted as his hands cup my bottom, pulling me firmly into his hardness.

It’s hot pressed between us against my stomach. His hands slide down my backside until I can feel the tips of his fingers close to where I’m on fire. My passage throbs with wanting as I feel myself becoming more wet that even my fantasies have conjured up in my room late at night.

He breaks the kiss with a growl and my lips feel bruised from his onslaught.

“I need to taste you now.” He declares in that same deep rumble, helping me to lay on the bed.

When he gets on the bed, spreading my legs wide, I open my mouth to protest just as his mouth covers my most private areas. Instead of a protest, I moan, throwing my head back onto the pillow.

“Oh, Gods!” I scream out and feel him chuckle between my thighs.

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My body is aflame as all my energy seems to pull from my limbs into the one spot his mouth is on me. I feel my body so close to that sharp edge. My insides begin to vibrate and he pulls away quickly.

I look at him wanting to demand that he continue but the look in his golden eyes as he crawls over my body renders me mute. His mouth takes mine again and I taste myself on his tongue. It's such a strange thing.

With his body laying against mine, he moves his hips and his thick cock glides through my wetness, coating him with it. He stops moving, pulling his mouth from mine when he positions himself at my entrance.

"This will sting. But only for a moment." His gaze bores into mine until I give a short nod.

Reaching down, he pulls my knees up as far as they will go. Swiftly he pushes himself in at the same time as he takes my scream into his mouth. Waiting for it to hurt more than the small bit of pain I just felt, I open one eye wondering what's next.

Instead he begins to slowly pump himself into me. At first it just feels strange but as his pace gets faster, the pleasure to my body ignites.

With each stroke, he hits something deep inside. My passage throbs with realization that something glorious is coming. He lifts his top half from me, taking most of his weight on his arms, staring back down at me.

His eyes change slightly. Becoming almost catlike and I wonder for only a second if I

am getting a glimpse of the dragon beneath the surface. I'm caught in the gaze as I gasp from the pleasure that is building even higher.

I'm about to explode from within when he speaks between hard pumps of his body into my own.

“I snáitheanna cinniúna, áit a bhfuil muid ceangailte go dlúth.

Tarraingt, tine, glaoch caoin,

A tharraingíonn sinn níos gaire trí ardú agus titim.

Arann ár n-anamacha le lámh na cinniúna,

Tríd an spéir agus an gaineamh ag sleamhnú.

Áit a bhuaileann lasair dragan le grásta sí,

I do shúile geala, faighim mo áit.

Tá na réaltaí mar fhinné, osnaíonn an ghealach,

Agus muid ceangailte, tú is mise.

Ceangal chomh domhain, ní thig le h-am ná oíche,

Solas ársa na gealaí a mhaolú.

Vevina, A Bhean Mhilis, tú mo threoir,

Ionat, a ghrá mo chroí.

Óir sa cheangal seo, scaoiltear sinn saor—

Le chéile go deo na ndeor.”

(Translation: In threads of fate where we both belong.

A pull, a fire, a whispered call,

That draws us closer through rise and fall.

Our souls entwined by destiny's hand,

Across realms of sky and shifting sand.

Where dragon's flame meets elven grace,

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In your bright eyes, I find my place.

The stars bear witness, the moon does sigh,

As we are bound, you and I.

A bond so deep, neither time nor night,

Could dim the glow of its ancient light.

Vevina, Sweet Lady, you are my guide,

In you, my love, my heart resides.

For in this bond, we are both set free—

Together for eternity.)

As soon as the last word is spoken, his mouth crashes to mine. The wind seems to whip up around us in a hiss and there's a bright glow to the room around us.

We both scream as we explode at the same time. I can feel the heat of his seed inside of me. We're both breathing heavily in the quietness of the room. He moves over next to me on the bed. His cock pulls free of me as he moves. I can feel where he's been from a slight soreness there.

We're quiet for several long moments before I open my mouth to speak.

“Did you see that?” I ask, my eyes glancing around the room wondering what just happened.

“What?” He asks.

“That light that took over the room.”

Propping himself on his elbow, he looks down at me and I feel the need to cover myself from his eyes.

“It’s part of the bond. At least, I think it is.”

“You don’t know?” I ask, my brows drawing together.

“No. I only know what I could find in our old archives back at Sky Castle.” He says, wrapping a hand around my middle and pulling me close.

“What are you doing?” I demand.

“Going to sleep. You should do the same. We have a long journey ahead of us tomorrow.”

“At least let me go clean up.” I protest.

He leans up to look directly at me again. “No. I think I like the idea of you leaking my essence as we ride tomorrow.” He whispers as he pushes his cock that has become hard again into my back.

I open my mouth ready to beg if need be as I am already slightly sore but he speaks before I do.

“Go to sleep.” He demands, laying back down, his arm a steel band around me.

I try to stay awake long enough to wait for him to be asleep so I can slip out of the bed but I lose the battle with my heavy eyes.



### Chapter 7

Aodhan

We should have been flying.

The weight of Vevina's belongings, her precious silks, family heirlooms, and the countless gifts bestowed by her people, forced us to remain grounded. I should have anticipated it, but even now, I felt the frustration stirring in my chest as we set off on horseback rather than in our true dragon forms.

Falkor and Drago shared my sentiments. I can see it in their tense postures and hear it in the quiet sighs they think I've not noticed.

But the reality was that we couldn't leave without her things. So here we were moving slowly along the road that stretched before us.

The elves were coming out of their homes and lining the streets as we ride through the kingdom. Their curious eyes trained on our procession. I could see in their eyes that they were hoping for a glimpse of a dragon. Perhaps to see the legendary creatures of old soar above them, breathing fire and fury. But they were met only with the sound of hooves on dirt.

Vevina sat tall on her horse with her back straight and head held high. I knew from her silence that she was as unsettled as we were. The stares of her people lingered on her, and I found myself watching them too. I wondered if they could feel the same strange tension that I did. These people had once fought against mine, their histories

filled with animosity, yet now they looked at us with something else. Something closer to fear.

I steal a glance at Vevina without her noticing. She hasn't spoken to me since last night, hadn't even acknowledged the depth of the bond that now tied us together. But I could feel it, like an invisible thread that pulled at the very core of me.

There was a strength in her, a quiet resilience, and I found myself wondering what thoughts raced through her mind as she left the only home she had ever known.

Talk to her. My inner dragon demanded but I refused to open my mind up for such a thing. Vevina may not take too kindly to knowing that we could talk to each other with only our minds if we wanted to.

That was one tidbit of information I'd stumbled upon in the historic archives on bond mates. She'd not only be able to speak to me but to any dragonkin she accepted as part of our family.

Looking ahead of us, the farmlands sprawl out in every direction, vast and golden under the late afternoon sun. The only noise being the slow, steady plod of our horses' hooves on the dirt path, and the sound of the wind whispering through the fields.

The sun begins to dip lower in the sky as we press on, the golden fields giving way to the dense, towering trees of the forest's edge. The shadows grow longer, stretching across the road ahead of us, and I know we will need to make camp soon. The air begins to grow cooler as we go further into the treeline.

Stealing another glance at my new wife, she looks a little stiff in the saddle. She's probably not used to riding a horse as much as she has today.

“We’ll stop here,” I call out to Falkor and Drago as we approach a small clearing.

They both nod in agreement, wordless but efficient as they begin to dismount and prepare the camp. Vevina still says nothing. Her expression is unreadable as she too slides off her horse. She moves with grace, but the stiffness I had seen is there.

I watch her for a moment, unsure of what to say. The day had been long, and the weight of everything seemed to press down on both of us. She was no ordinary bride, and this was no ordinary marriage.

As the fire begins to crackle, casting a warm glow over the gathering darkness, I find my gaze drawn to my wife once more. She had stepped away from the camp, standing at the edge of the forest, her eyes fixed on something distant, something I couldn’t see.

“She’s quiet,” Falkor murmurs as he joins me by the fire. He glances over at her, his brow furrowing slightly. “But strong. I can see why her people seem to admire her even if her father doesn’t.”

I nod, though my mind is elsewhere. I can feel the bond between us again, though faint, beginning to tug at me. The same pull that had drawn me to her on our wedding night still lingered, a whispering promise of something deeper, something I couldn’t yet understand.

“She didn’t even know,” I say quietly, more to myself than to Falkor.

He raises an eyebrow. “Know what?”

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“That we were to be married. Her father didn’t tell her. She walked into that hall completely unaware of what was about to happen.”

Falkor lets out a low whistle, shaking his head. “Not exactly the best start, is it?”

“No,” I mutter, my gaze fixed on Vevina’s silhouette in the distance. “It isn’t.”

Drago joins us then, dropping onto a log beside the fire. “She’ll have to accept it sooner or later,” he says, rubbing his hands together against the cool evening air. “The bond is sealed. Whether she likes it or not, she’s bound to you now. We felt it.”

I frown, my jaw tightening. “That doesn’t mean she has to like it.”

Drago shrugs. “True enough. But it also doesn’t mean she won’t.”

I don’t respond, my thoughts still tangled around the sight of Vevina standing alone at the edge of the camp. She hadn’t asked for this any more than I had. And yet here we were.

As the night deepens and the stars begin to scatter across the sky, I stand and make my way over to where she stands, her back still turned away. The firelight flickers behind us, but she remains still, her focus somewhere far beyond the present moment.

“Vevina,” I say softly, not wanting to startle her.

She turns her head slightly, just enough to acknowledge me. Her expression is calm, but there’s a depth in her eyes that speaks of uncertainty.

“I know this isn’t what you expected,” I begin, unsure of how to bridge the growing distance between us. “It wasn’t what I expected either.”

She doesn’t speak, but her gaze softens slightly, and I can see a hint of understanding there.

“We’ll take things one step at a time,” I say, my voice steady. “This journey isn’t just mine. It’s ours now.”

For a moment, she still remains silent, and I wonder if she will say anything at all. But then, slowly, she nods.

“I suppose we don’t have much choice,” she replies, her voice quiet but laced with resolve.

She still stares off into the trees although it’s so dark I don’t think she can see that far into them.

“What are you looking at?” I finally ask, opening my senses to scan the shadows in front of us.

“I’m not sure.” She sighs, rubbing her arms against the cool night air. “Someone should keep watch though.” She says, looking down at the goosebumps on her arms.

“We always do.” I answer, taking her arm. “Come warm up by the fire.”

As we walk back to the campsite, I wonder what just happened. What did she feel that I couldn’t see?

Vevina

I sit alone at the edge of the fire, wrapped in my thoughts as the flickering flames throw shadows across the clearing.

Aodhan and his friends seem to have settled in, though I can feel their presence even in the stillness. Falkor and Drago were muttering amongst themselves, while Aodhan is even more reserved, watching the fire with an intensity I can't seem to ignore.

The weight of everything still presses down on me. The whirlwind wedding, the hurried departure from my home, the knowledge that I was now bound to this stranger, to these dragons.

My mind was still reeling with the rapid changes, and though I had accepted it outwardly, my heart ached with uncertainty.

I had been raised with tales of dragons, of the fierce war between our people, and though I knew this union was meant to heal those wounds, it felt more like a chain binding me to a fate I hadn't chosen.

My father hadn't even told me. The memory stung, and I found myself twisting my fingers around the hem of my cloak, the fabric grounding me in the midst of my confusion.

The maidens had dressed me for a wedding I didn't know I was part of, and now here I was, on the road, leaving everything behind. And for what?

Although if I stop to think about it long enough, I can understand why my father kept quiet about it. He knows me well and knows that I'd have gone missing long enough for the dragons to have left our home.

A soft breeze rustles through the trees, and for a moment, I close my eyes, letting it wash over me. The air smells of pine and earth, reminding me of the orchard at home.

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I didn't trust Aodhan, not yet, but something in his eyes, the way he had looked at me, as though he was just as unsure as I was, gave me pause.

He wasn't what I expected. The stories told of dragons being cold and heartless, ruthless in their power. But Aodhan... there was something more to him, something I couldn't quite place.

Suddenly, a sharp crack echoes through the night, snapping me out of my thoughts. I turn, eyes scanning the dark edges of the camp.

Falkor and Drago are already on their feet, hands on their weapons, their eyes narrow as they look toward the trees. Aodhan rises more slowly, his stance tense, and for a moment, I think it was just a wild animal disturbing the peace.

But then, I see them.

From the shadows of the trees, figures emerge, silent and swift. Elves. At first, I think perhaps they were sent by my father, maybe even to check on me. But as they step closer, the glint of steel in their hands catches the firelight, and my heart sinks.

These weren't my father's men. These were rebels. Elves who still carried hatred in their hearts for dragons. Elves who despised the idea of peace. Elves who had no reservations about killing other elves, including their own princess.

I had heard rumors of them before, whispering of those who would never forgive the ancient war, who would believe this marriage to be a betrayal.

“Vevina, stay back,” Aodhan’s voice is firm, pulling me out of my shock.

He had already drawn his sword, and Falkor and Drago were beside him, their weapons gleaming in the firelight. The tension was palpable, the air thick with the threat of violence.

The elves move swiftly, their faces hidden beneath dark hoods, but I can feel the weight of their anger, their hatred, radiating toward us.

My heart pounds in my chest as I step back, instinctively reaching for the small dagger I keep hidden in my cloak. I had been trained in the basics of self-defense, but I had never faced an attack like this. An attack from my own people.

Without warning, the first of the rebels lunges forward, a blade flashing toward Aodhan. He moves quickly, deflecting the blow with a speed that takes me by surprise.

The clang of steel echoes through the clearing as Falkor and Drago engage the others. Their movements fluid and practiced. They are warriors, honed by years of battle, and it showed in every strike, every block.

But the rebels seem relentless. More of them pour out from the treeline, their numbers growing as they press the attack. I can hear their voices now, fierce, angry shouts in the ancient elven tongue.

They curse the dragons, curse the peace, and I realize with a sinking dread that they weren’t here to just kill Aodhan and his men. They were here for me too.

“Traitor!” one of them spits, his eyes burning with fury as he looks directly at me. “You’ve sold us to the dragons!”



I stumble back, my heart racing. “I didn’t choose this!” I shout, my voice trembling but strong. “I didn’t ask for this!”

But it doesn’t matter. To them, I am the symbol of everything they despise. A princess who has betrayed her own people, bound to their ancient enemies.

Suddenly, one of the rebels breaks through, slipping past Falkor and Drago. He comes straight for me, his blade raised high. Fear shoots through me like ice, threatening to freeze me in place. I can see the madness in his eyes, the determination to end me.

But before he can reach me, Aodhan is there.

He moves like a storm, a blur of motion as he intercepts the rebel’s attack. The clang of steel rings out as their blades meet, and in the blink of an eye, Aodhan disarms him, sending the elf crashing to the ground.

His golden eyes blaze with fury as he stands over the fallen rebel, his chest heaving with the effort of battle.

“Leave her alone,” Aodhan growled, his voice low and dangerous.

The rebel scrambles to his feet, retreating back toward the trees with a glare, but it was clear they were losing ground.

The dragons are stronger, faster, and the rebels hadn’t anticipated just how fierce their resistance would be.

Within minutes, the remaining rebels flee into the forest, their retreat swift and silent. The camp falls into an uneasy silence, broken only by the crackling of the fire and the heavy breathing of those who had fought.

I stand there, frozen, my heart still racing from the chaos. My dagger hangs limply in my hand, though I never had the chance to use it.

Aodhan turns toward me, his golden eyes still glowing with the remnants of battle, but beneath that fierce exterior, I see something else.

“Are you hurt?” he asks, his voice softer now.

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I shake my head, unable to find the words. The shock, the confusion, it all rushes over me in a wave, and I feel myself trembling.

I hadn't been prepared for this. I hadn't asked for any of this. But as I look at Aodhan, standing there with his sword still in his hand, protecting me with a fierceness I hadn't expected, I realize something.

We weren't just strangers anymore. We were bound by something more than duty now, something forged in the heat of battle.

And as I stand there, breathing heavily in the aftermath, I can't shake the feeling that this was just the beginning.

### Chapter 8

#### Vevina

The next morning I awake stiff all over from the tension the night before. I had a hard time settling in for sleep. The crisp morning air has me drawing my cloak close around me as the others packed up.

My eyes drift to the empty spot where my horse should have been tethered but we had discovered that one of the attackers had stolen her. I can only hope that she manages to break free of them at some point and goes back to my fathers castle.

Looking around, I find Aodhan near the fire. His movements are deliberate as he helps to pack up camp. He hasn't spoken to me since the attack, though I could feel

his eyes on me throughout the night as I tossed and turned.

It was strange being bound to him by a marriage I hadn't chosen, yet feeling an undeniable pull toward him. I could almost feel the invisible thread tying us together.

He had protected me last night as I stood there stunned, more from the fact that my own people were willing to run a blade through me.

"We need to get moving," Falkor says, glancing between Aodhan and me. He nods toward the clearing where the horses are tied. "Looks like we're one short."

Aodhan follows his gaze, and I see the realization flicker across his face. His eyes meet mine briefly before he finally speaks.

"You'll ride with me."

His tone is matter-of-fact, as though this is the only logical solution, but the statement sends a ripple through me.

I swallow hard, trying to keep my expression neutral. I wasn't about to argue, not after everything that had happened, but the idea of being so close to him set my nerves on edge.

Without a word, I nod, knowing I have little choice. I can feel the weight of the unspoken tension between us as he leads his horse over to me. The large, sleek beast snorts impatiently.

Aodhan moved with the quiet confidence of someone who had been in control his entire life, and for a moment, I felt small in comparison.

I had grown up in the safety of the elven court, shielded from most dangers, but here

the reality of the world seemed so much more dangerous.

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He mounts first, his movements smooth and effortless as he swings into the saddle. Then, he extends a hand down to me. For a second, I hesitate, staring at his outstretched hand with uncertainty. There was something about the way his eyes gleamed when he looked at me that made my heart beat faster.

But there was no time to dwell on it. I take his hand, and in one swift movement, he has me lifted up onto the horse behind him.

My body tenses as I settle in place, my hands instinctively reaching for something to steady myself. Aodhan's back is solid, his presence even more overwhelming, and I can feel the warmth radiating from him through his tunic.

It felt strange to be this close to him despite our wedding night. My father's court had been full of formality and distance between people. Physical closeness, especially with someone like Aodhan was entirely foreign to me. My hands hover awkwardly in the air, unsure of where to rest them.

"Hold on," he says, his voice low but firm, as if sensing my hesitation.

I let out a slow breath, trying to calm the flurry of emotions swirling inside me, and I place my hands lightly on his sides, feeling the ripple of muscle beneath his clothes.

The moment I touch him, a strange awareness washes over me. As if I can sense the power coiled beneath the surface, a dragon lying just beneath his human skin.

We set off, the horse's hooves crunching softly over the dirt road as we leave the camp behind.

The other two fall in line behind us, Falkor and Drago exchanging quiet words as we ride. I barely hear them, my mind too focused on the steady rhythm of the horse under me and the feel of Aodhan's body brushing into mine.

I can feel the rise and fall of his breath, the solid warmth of him beneath my hands, and it was beginning to unnerve me. My thoughts circle around the absurdity of this entire situation and now I'm forced to cling to his back like a helpless maiden.

I wasn't helpless.

Determined to regain some semblance of control, I shift slightly in the saddle, leaning back in an attempt to give myself some more space.

It isn't long before I realize just how uncomfortable this whole arrangement is going to be. The saddle was built for one rider, and no matter how I move, it feels awkward and confining.

But the more I shift, the more Aodhan seems entirely unaffected. He is calm, completely unfazed by my squirming attempts to create distance between us.

I can feel a stubborn defiance bubbling up inside me, and before I can stop myself, I deliberately lean forward, brushing against him in a way that was less than subtle.

If I make it annoying enough, maybe he'll offer to ride with one of the others. Aodhan shifts slightly after a moment, glancing back at me with an unreadable expression.

"I didn't realize my presence was so uncomfortable for you, Princess," he says, his voice holding a hint of amusement.

I ignore the tone in his voice, opting instead to push further. Maybe a little discomfort

would make him reconsider his offer.

I adjust my position again, this time making it more obvious, letting my hand slide “accidentally” over his side, lingering just long enough to make my intentions clear.

But instead of pulling away or showing any irritation, Aodhan’s lips curved into a slow smirk.

“Careful, Vevina,” he murmurs, his voice taking on a low, teasing note. “If I didn’t know better, I’d think you were trying to seduce me.”

The heat that rushes to my face is immediate. I freeze, my hand still resting awkwardly on his waist, the words he’d just said sinking in.

Seduce him? My heart hammers in my chest as a mixture of shock and embarrassment burns through me.

“I—what?” I sputter, trying to regain my composure, but Aodhan doesn’t seem to be interested in letting me off so easily.

“Oh, you’re bold, Princess.” His voice is even smoother than before, a low rumble that sends a shiver down my spine. “But if you’re going to touch me like that, you might want to be more careful where your hands go.”

I can feel my cheeks heating up as his meaning becomes crystal clear. My earlier attempts at making the ride difficult for him had backfired spectacularly.

Instead of frustrating him into giving up the horse, I had given him all the ammunition he needed to turn the situation into something far more suggestive.

And now, here I was, stuck riding with him. Every shift of his body suddenly seems



more intimate, every movement magnified by the tension that now crackles between us.

“I wasn’t...” I started, but before I can finish, Aodhan shifts slightly in the saddle, his hand brushing against my leg, just lightly enough to send a shock through my system.

“Of course not,” he says, his tone playful, but I can hear the edge beneath it. He isn’t mocking me, but he certainly isn’t letting me off the hook either. “But if you want to make this ride more interesting, all you had to do was ask.”

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My breath catches in my throat at his words, and I can feel the heat in my face spreading down my neck.

He can't be serious. But when I look at him, the way his golden eyes gleam with amusement and something else—something far more dangerous— it makes my heart race even faster in my chest.

He wasn't entirely joking.

"I'd prefer it if you kept your hands to yourself," I shoot back, finally finding my voice again, though it sounds far less confident than I intended. I shift back as far as I can on the horse, trying to create some distance between us.

Aodhan chuckles. His deep, rumbling laugh vibrates through his back and into me. "As you wish, Princess. But don't blame me if you fall off."

My jaw clenches, and I bite back a retort, realizing that anything I say will likely only give him more reason to toy with me.

So I hold my tongue, determined to endure the rest of this ride in silence, no matter how uncomfortable it becomes.

But the problem is, now that I was so acutely aware of him, every little movement seems magnified. His broad shoulders shift slightly as he guides the horse down the road.

And the worst part of all is that I can't stop noticing it.

I curse silently to myself, gripping the saddle tighter as the ride stretches on. I'm not sure what irritates me more.

The fact that Aodhan seems completely unaffected by our closeness, or the fact that part of me can't help but wonder what it would be like if he wasn't.

The forest loomed ahead of us, dark and quiet, and I try to focus on that instead. Trying to push thoughts of Aodhan's teasing out of my mind.

This was just a journey, nothing more. And as soon as we reached wherever it was we were going, I'd have my own space, my own room, and my own horse.

I just had to make it through this ride.

Without letting him get under my skin.

Aodhan

Our second night camping is turning out to be far less comfortable than the last. The air is colder with a biting chill that has settled deep into my bones. It reminds me just how exposed we are out here.

We decided against lighting a fire. It was far too risky. After the attack last night, we shouldn't draw attention to our location within the forest.

Not with those still lurking out there somewhere who weren't happy about the peace our union was supposed to represent.

I glance across the small clearing to where Vevina has settled herself, stubbornly keeping her distance. She hasn't said much to me since our little conversation during our ride.

Probably still smarting from her failed attempt to wrest control of the situation earlier. I'd noticed the frustration in her eyes, the embarrassment when I'd teased her, but she hadn't tried anything else since then.

Now, though, she was making a point of staying as far away from me as possible. Wrapped up in her own cloak, her back turned toward the rest of us in some silent protest.

I smirk to myself, shaking my head slightly. She was a stubborn one. But as the night wears on, that resolve of hers won't hold against the creeping cold.

I'd already noticed how she shivered from time to time, her body tensing beneath her cloak as she tries—and fails—to sleep.

It wasn't surprising; the temperatures were dropping fast, and without the warmth of a fire, the cold could be unforgiving.

Falkor and Drago were on the opposite side of the camp, well within sight but far enough away to give us some semblance of privacy.

The forest around us was eerily silent, save for the occasional rustle of leaves in the wind or the distant hoot of an owl.

I lay back, resting my head against the saddle I'd placed on the ground, keeping one eye on Vevina.

The pale moonlight filters through the trees, casting shadows across the ground, and in that faint light, I can see her shifting again.

She was trying to sleep, but it was clear she was uncomfortable, curled up tightly in an effort to conserve heat.

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It wasn't going to work.

Another hour passes, and I can see the tension in her form worsening.

Her body trembles slightly now, her shoulders hunched as she fights to keep the cold at bay.

I sigh quietly to myself. This was going to be interesting.

Pushing myself up onto my elbows, I glance at Falkor and Drago, making sure they are still in their places.

Then, without saying a word, I stand and cross the short distance to where Vevina lays.

She is barely aware of me, her body too focused on the cold to notice my approach.

It isn't until I am right next to her that she stirs, blinking up at me in surprise.

"What are you...?" she started, her voice hoarse from the cold.

"You're freezing," I say flatly, not bothering to give her the chance to protest. "You can't sleep like this."

She frowns, pulling her cloak tighter around her as if to prove me wrong. "I'm fine."

"You're not," I say, crouching down beside her. "You're shivering so hard I can hear

it from where I was sitting.”

Her defiance flickers in her eyes, that stubborn pride rearing its head again.

But she doesn’t argue further because she knows as well as I do that she won’t make it through the night like this.

“Come here,” I say, my tone softening just a little. “It’s too cold to be sleeping alone. You won’t get any rest like this.”

She hesitates, her gaze darting to my face, then to the ground between us as if she were weighing her options.

I can see the war going on in her mind. Her desire to prove she doesn’t need my help battling with the undeniable reality of the cold.

Finally, she lets out a frustrated sigh and mutters something under her breath before shifting slightly.

“I don’t need your help,” she says, but even as she says it, she scoots closer, the barest hint of reluctance in her movements.

I raise an eyebrow, but don’t press her further. Instead, I settle back down on the ground, pulling my own cloak over us both.

She shifts awkwardly beside me, her back still turned as she tries to keep some semblance of distance, but I’m not about to let her freeze in her pride.

I reach out, wrapping an arm around her waist and pulling her flush against me.

She stiffens immediately, her body going rigid in my arms.

“This isn’t...” she starts, but I cut her off, my voice low.

“It’s just warmth, Sweet,” I murmur. “You can hate me all you want, but you’re not going to freeze tonight.”

She is silent for a long moment, her breathing shallow as she lays there, pressed against my chest.

I can still feel the tension in her frame, the way she is clearly trying not to react to our closeness. It’s almost amusing how hard she’s fighting it.

Slowly, though, I feel her start to relax. The warmth spreading between us and her shivering finally subsiding as the heat from my body begins to seep into hers.

She still isn’t comfortable, that much was clear, but at least she isn’t trembling anymore.

After a while, she shifts slightly, her back pressing more fully against me as she gets used to being against me.

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I keep my arm draped loosely around her, careful not to push too far. The last thing I want is for her to think I'm taking advantage of the situation.

But the truth was, despite the cold and the awkwardness, having her this close wasn't something I entirely minded.

In fact, it was... nice.

I close my eyes, listening to the sound of her breathing, the rhythmic rise and fall of her chest as she finally begins to drift off.

She smelled faintly of the forest, of earth and leaves, and something uniquely hers that I couldn't quite place.

It was a simple thing, really, but there was something calming about it.

A few hours ago, she had been doing everything in her power to irritate me, to create distance.

Now we were wrapped together in the cold, our bodies tangled up in a way that was far more intimate than either of us had probably anticipated for the night.

I smirk slightly to myself, feeling her small movements as she shifts in her sleep.

She was strong, in her own way. Stubborn as hell, but strong. I admire that about her, even if she didn't see it herself.



The sounds of the forest around us fade into the background as we lay there. And though I know there were still dangers out there in the forest, for the first time since this journey began, I felt something close to peace.

Wrapped up with Vevina, her body soft and warm against mine, I find it difficult to think about anything else.

It was just the two of us and I was going to make sure we slept like this every night.

## Chapter 9

Aodhan

We hadn't exchanged many words the first two days, but today has turned out to be different.

At first, our conversation had started with simple things, like how far we had left to travel or whether we would be safe tonight.

But soon, it gave way to other things. Her curiosity started to show, and mine too, though I tried not to let it seem too obvious.

She wasn't the delicate, sheltered princess I had assumed her to be. Her wit was sharp, and she had no problem voicing her opinions. Especially when it came to me.

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I found myself enjoying our conversation, despite how they'd often end with her frustrated or giving me that stubborn, defiant look she seems to have mastered.

She was fiery, that much was clear, and I respected that about her more than I wanted to admit.

By the time the sun began to dip lower in the sky, we'd covered a lot of ground. I could feel the weight of the journey in my bones, but I knew it was harder on her.

She hadn't complained much, but I could see the fatigue in her eyes, the way her posture had slouched by the time we decided to stop for the night.

"We should be safe enough to start a fire," I said, breaking the silence as I swung down from the horse.

She got down right after me, stretching out her stiff legs as soon as she hit the ground. "Finally," she mutters, glancing around the clearing where we would make camp. "I'm beginning to think I'll never feel warm again."

I chuckle, watching her for a moment before turning to Falkor and Drago. They had already begun gathering wood for the fire.

"I'll make sure we have something better than dried rations tonight," I call out to them.

I turn back to Vevina to see her brushing leaves and dirt from her cloak, her gaze drifting toward the edge of the clearing. It was quieter now, with just the two of us

left. The trees rustled in the evening breeze, and I could hear the faint sound of running water.

“We passed a stream not far back,” I say, stepping toward her. “You should take the chance to bathe while we have the time. I’ll take you.”

Her eyes narrow slightly as if she is assessing whether there is some hidden motive behind the offer. “I’ll go alone,” she replies, her chin tilting up defiantly.

I shake my head. “Not a chance. I’m not letting you wander off by yourself out here.”

“I can take care of myself,” she shoots back, folding her arms across her chest.

“I have no doubt,” I say, giving her a half-smile. “But we both know it’s not just wolves we’re worried about.”

Her expression softens slightly, but I can see that fire in her eyes still smoldering. After a long pause, she lets out a small sigh, clearly resigning herself to the fact that she wouldn’t win this argument.

“Fine,” she mutters, though her tone holds less bite than usual.

Grabbing my sword, I strap it across my back before motioning for her to follow. The stream wasn’t far, just a short walk from the camp, hidden behind a cluster of trees. The water flowed clear and steady, glistening in the fading light.

She hesitates as we reach the water’s edge, casting a glance at me. Her discomfort is obvious, and for a moment, I almost regret offering to bring her here. Almost.

“I’ll give you some privacy,” I say, turning my back to her before she can object. “But don’t take too long.”

I can hear the rustle of fabric behind me as she begins to undress and the soft splash of water as she steps into the stream. My gaze remains on the trees ahead, but my senses are sharp, on high alert for any sign of danger.

Despite the cold professionalism I try to maintain, I can't help but be aware of her presence behind me. The sound of the water rippling around her, the quiet splashes as she moves, it all sends an odd tension through me.

I shake my head, trying to clear my thoughts. Now wasn't the time for distractions.

"I still don't understand why this is happening," Vevina's voice breaks through the silence, softer than before.

I turn my head slightly, enough to catch a glimpse of her out of the corner of my eye. She is half-submerged in the stream, her long hair wet and clinging to her skin.

My entire body grows hard from the sight that she makes. My skin remembering the feel of her softness around me on our wedding night.

"What do you mean?" I ask, my voice low.

"This... union," she replies. "It doesn't make sense to me. My father's kept me in the dark about it, and I'm supposed to just accept it."

I stay quiet for a moment, considering my words. "I wasn't given much of a choice either," I admit. "Our union is meant to bridge the divide between our people. But I know it feels... forced."

She turns her head slightly, looking at me with those piercing blue eyes that seem to see through any façade. "Do you really believe that peace will come from this?"

I exhale, shaking my head slightly. “I don’t know. But I hope so.”

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We are both caught in a web of politics and old grudges that we had no control over.

When she finally emerged from the water, wrapping herself in her cloak, I turn to look at her fully and again my body heats from within.

Mate. I hear from deep inside.

“What was that?” She turns to me quickly with a raised brow.

“I didn’t hear anything.” I answer too quickly but I can tell she isn’t about to let it go.

“Did I hear you in my head?” She demands, taking a step closer.

Yes. “No”. I answer at the same time that my dragon does.

She stares with wide eyes for several long moments before she begins to giggle.

“How do you know it’s my dragon?” I demand even as a deep purr resonates from my chest.

I watch as her eyes glaze over and her face transforms into the same one that I watched as I made her cum all over my cock.

The heat inside of me burns hotter as I am no longer able to control my instincts to step closer to her. She reaches out with one hand, grabbing hold of my arm with a gasp.

“What’s happening to me?” She whispers as her own skin begins to glow like a bright light.

I watch with fascination as her nipples become hard nubs under her clothes and I can now smell her arousal.

“It’s the mate bond. It will always pull us together but especially at any moment either of us...wants the other.” I answer honestly.

“You want me?” She asks with surprise.

“Of course I do. Can’t you feel it?” I ask, grabbing her other hand and bringing it to my chest.

“Yes.” She says.

“If you don’t want this, Vevina, I need you to say so now while I can still make myself stop.” I manage through gritted teeth as a new wave of arousal courses through my own body. Crossing over into dragon lands seems to be making it all stronger.

I open my eyes to look at her, waiting for her to answer all the unspoken questions. I’m about to make myself turn away without an answer when she gives me a slight grin.

“I want you too.”

With her admission, my mouth slams down over hers just as I pull her tightly against me. She works at pulling my clothes off and I push her cloak off her shoulders, exposing her nakedness to the cool air.

Pulling back for only a moment, I throw both out cloaks on the ground and lay her down on it. Climbing over her, I take each of her hardened nipples into my mouth, taking turns to suckle each one.

She moans and bucks under me. Her pussy trying to get some traction exactly where she craves it most. Moving one hand down her stomach, I reach her little nub between her legs, rubbing it lightly.

She gasps from the sensation and I feel her body readying itself for me. Reaching up with my mouth, I once again take her in a deep kiss, moving both my hands to her silky hair. I buck into her, running my cock through her wet folds, coating myself.

Feeling that she is more than ready, I line my cock up with her entrance and slide fully in to the hilt. She's still so tight, I wonder if I'll be able to make it last for her.

"Gods! You feel so good, Sweet." I groan into her mouth.

"Please, Aodhan!" She begs, trying to move herself on my cock.

Pulling out slowly, I slam back into her in one fast swoop.

"Yes." She gasps, meeting my thrust.

I do it again until I work us up to a fast, powerful rhythm until I feel her walls starting to vibrate around me. I squeeze my eyes from the pleasure shooting through me, trying to hold back my release until she has gotten her own.



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Pulling back to look into her hooded eyes, I grunt, “Cum for me, Sweet.”

Two more powerful pumps and she explodes, triggering my release as well. I swallow her scream with my mouth just as a blinding white light explodes around us once again.

Vevina

“Will it always be like that?” I ask as we make our way back to camp.

“Like what?” He asks, taking my hand with his own.

It feels weird to be holding his hand but at the same time, it feels exactly right. It’s like he’s an extension of me in some way.

“The light. It seemed even more powerful than last time.” I state, my face turning hot from remembering.

“I’m not sure. There’s not much I have found yet in the archives about mate bonds between our two peoples.” He answers. “Did you ever read anything about a bond in your own archives?”

“No. I was limited on what I was allowed to have access to. We all were. My father’s advisors kept everything hidden away from the rest of us. I’m not even sure if my own father knows what is in those books.”

“Really? Don’t you think that’s a little strange?” He asks.

“Yes, I do. It’s always felt like the advisors have some kind of strange hold on him.”

“If they control what the King does, I’m surprised they allowed him to marry you off to me.” He says and I raise my brows as I remember something.

“How fast was our wedding put together? Before you came to get me?” I ask quickly.

“Only a few weeks. It was kind of rushed in my opinion. Why?”

“My father’s main advisors have been gone for almost a month. They are due back next week.” I answer, rolling it all around in my head as I try to figure out what exactly is going on.

“So they may not even know about our marriage then.” He stops to look at me, his own questions twirling behind his eyes.

We stare at each other for several long moments until a twig snaps somewhere in the distance. We both turn, looking around us for any possible threat.

“Let’s get back to camp.” He says quietly and we turn to hurry in that direction.

When we return, Falkor and Drago have already started the fire with a hare roasting over it.

“Figured you might be too busy for hunting.” Falkor grins when we notice the roasting hare.

My face burns hot but I keep my head held high as we take a seat around the fire.

### Chapter 10

#### Vevina

Aodhan is speaking quietly with Falkor, their voices low as they discuss our route for the day. I keep myself busy tying the last of my things to our horse.

The moments before dawn are always the most tranquil, but they also have a way of making me feel exposed.

That feeling proves to be right when I hear movement. Just a faint sound at first, so subtle that I almost think I imagined it. But then I hear it again. The soft crunch of footsteps moving through the brush.

I spin around just in time to see the first man emerge from the treeline, his sword raised high as he runs toward Aodhan and his men.

My heart thuds in my chest, but there's no time to shout a warning. Instinct takes over as I yank my dagger from its hidden sheath beneath my dress. My fingers tighten around the hilt as the cold steel presses against my palm.

They attack quickly. There seems to be more of them this time. A lot more than the night before. Their swords gleam in the early morning light. I can hear the clanging of metal as Aodhan and his friends meet them in battle.

But these men are different than before. They're more skilled, coordinated, and they fight with a brutality I've never seen before.

For a moment, I hesitate. A princess wasn't supposed to fight. But something inside me rebels against that thought. I'm not going to stand by and watch as they cut down the only allies I currently have.

With a deep breath, I rush forward, my dagger gripped tightly in my hand. The man closest to me doesn't expect me to join the fray. Shock registers on his face when I duck beneath his swinging blade and slash at him with the dagger.

But something strange happens as the dagger cuts through the air, it begins to glow. A sudden flash of light surrounds it, and before I know what is happening, it transforms.

The simple dagger I had been holding moments ago had extended, the hilt shifting in my hand as it becomes a light and perfectly balanced sword.

I don't have time to question it. The man I'd struck stumbles backward, clutching his side. My muscles move on instinct, my body reacting as if I had always known how to fight.

I step into the battle, my sword slicing through the chaos with a precision I had never known I'd possessed.

I fight alongside Falkor and Drago, but my eyes keep drifting toward Aodhan. He's at the center of the fight, his movements swift and brutal. Even in the midst of chaos, there was something graceful about the way he moves. Like the battle is an extension of who he is.

But then I see it. A glint of steel, too close to him, aimed at his side.

"Aodhan!" I shout, my voice hoarse as I fight my way toward him, but I'm too late.

The sword slashed through his side, and he staggers back, clutching the wound. The man who had struck him seemed to hesitate, his eyes wide with fear. I realize then that they had known he was a dragon all along. But their swords are coated with something. Something lethal.

Poison. My Elven senses picking up on it automatically.

I grit my teeth, my heart pounding as I rush to his side. I fight off the remaining attackers with renewed fury, my sword a blur of light and steel, but my focus completely on him. He is down on one knee, his hand pressed to his wound.

When the last of the attackers flee into the trees, the clearing falls into a heavy silence. My breath comes in ragged gasps as I drop to my knees next to him.

His breathing is shallow, and his golden eyes, usually so bright and full of fire, seem more dim.

“You’re... hurt,” I say with a shaky voice, though I’m trying to steady it.

He looks at me, his jaw clenched in pain. “It’s... nothing. I’ll heal,” he rasps, but his voice doesn’t carry the usual confidence it usually holds.

I reach for his hand, pulling it away from the wound to inspect it. My stomach twists at the sight of the dark blood oozing from the gash. It’s not going to heal without help. My help.

My mind races as the reality of the situation hits me hard. He is a dragon, yes. His wounds technically should have closed by now. But the poison...they must have known. They had come prepared.

“Your healing isn’t working,” I say, panic creeping into my voice.

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Aodhan's eyes flicker with understanding, though he says nothing. His breathing is more labored now, his face pale.

I look around the clearing, searching for anything, any way I can help. But I don't immediately see what I'm looking for. I feel helpless suddenly. The surge of adrenaline from the battle fading and leaving me raw.

My gaze falls on the sword I still hold in my hand. The one that had transformed from a dagger into something more. There was something strange about it, something ancient, powerful. I can feel its magic under my palm.

"Aodhan," I say, my voice firmer now. "Stay with me. We'll figure this out."

His eyes meet mine, and for the first time since the attack, I see a flicker of fear in them. He was strong, unshakable, but even he couldn't fight against the poison.

"I'm not letting you die," I whisper, gripping the sword tighter as I stand, determination flooding through me.

Panic claws at me as I sit beside him, his breathing shallow and his skin growing colder beneath my touch. The wound isn't closing. The poison is beginning to spread, and with every passing second, he's slipping further away.

"Falkor, Drago!" I call out, my voice tight with urgency.

Falkor was already by Aodhan's side, his face grim as he took in the severity of the situation. Drago, on the other hand, looks ready to tear through the woods in search of

any remaining attackers.

"It's poison but I know the cure," I say, my voice steady despite the chaos swirling inside me. "There's a plant—the Eldara root. It glows bright purple, and it only grows in hollowed trees, away from light." I turn to Drago. "You have to find it, quickly."

Drago doesn't waste time questioning me. With a determined nod, he vanishes into the woods, moving with the swift, lethal grace of a predator on the hunt.

I turn back to Falkor. "You stand guard. If anyone comes back, you fight them off."

He nods, his usual playful demeanor gone, replaced by the serious, focused expression of a warrior ready to protect his own. He positions himself on the edge of the clearing, sword in hand, scanning the treeline in the direction our attackers left.

I can't focus on anything else but Aodhan. He is slipping away too fast. His golden eyes, the ones that had seemed so full of life and fire just yesterday, now barely flickered. His breaths were shallow, his chest barely moving with the effort to stay alive.

"Stay with me," I whisper yet again, my voice trembling as I press my hands to his wound, as if I could stop the poison from spreading with sheer willpower alone. But it was hopeless.

Then something inside me cracked. Maybe it was desperation, maybe it was some ancient magic stirring within me that I didn't fully understand, but I could feel it.

The bond, the connection that linked us. It wasn't just the marriage vows. It was deeper, something raw and primal, something that connected his dragon soul to me.

Without realizing it, I speak. Not aloud, but directly to his dragon.

Aodhan. Please, stay with me.

I freeze at the realization of what I'd just done. I can feel him. His consciousness, his dragon senses, lingering just beyond the edge of darkness. He's still there, but weak.

Aodhan, I need you to fight. You can't leave me. Not now.

The words pour out, unbidden. My thoughts, raw and unfiltered, reach for him, hoping he can hear me.

For a moment, nothing happens. He's so still, and I can feel the cold dread sinking into my bones. But then, there's a flicker. A faint pulse of awareness from him, like a spark catching flame.

Vevina...

His voice is faint, but it's there, inside my mind.

You're... in my thoughts...

Tears well in my eyes, but I fight them back, refusing to let the fear overtake me.

Yes, and you're not allowed to give up now. I won't let you.

His golden eyes flutter open, just a fraction, but enough to show that spark of life. He looks at me, his gaze heavy with pain but full of something else too. Something that mirrors the strange connection I feel between us.

His lips twitch, the faintest hint of a smile, though it was weighed down by pain.



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You're stubborn...

I swallow hard, holding his gaze.

You haven't seen stubborn yet.

The bond between us pulses again, stronger this time. It wasn't just words in his mind. It was something more, a sense of shared strength, as if I was lending him mine.

I could feel the weight of his dragon soul, ancient and powerful, and in that moment, I wasn't afraid of it. I welcomed it, embraced it.

Time stretched on, every second feeling like an eternity.

Finally, after what felt like a lifetime, Drago reappeared, a glowing purple plant cupped gently in his hands.

"I found it!" he shouts, rushing toward us.

I breathe a shaky sigh of relief, my grip on Aodhan tightening as I whisper into his mind one last time.

Hold on, help is here.

I'm trying...But the poison... it's strong...He says.

So are you. I whisper as I move to take the plant from Drago and get busy boiling it over the fire.

This is something that I am most definitely good at. My teacher always said I was the best pupil she'd ever taught the ancient ways of plants to.

## Chapter 11

Aodhan

The pain had dulled to a constant throb in my side, a reminder that I had been closer to death than I cared to admit. I shifted in my saddle, testing my strength. I was still weak, but I could finish this journey.

Drago's quick retrieval of the Eldara root had saved me, and for that, I was grateful, though I hadn't been able to shake the strange sense of what had happened back there. Something had tugged me back, something more than just my willpower.

I glanced at Vevina, riding behind me. She was quiet, but the way her blue eyes darted around, told me her mind was busy, racing with thoughts.

I hadn't forgotten the way I'd heard her voice in my mind during the fight for my life. At the time, I had been so deep in the haze of pain and poison that I thought I'd imagined it. But now? Now I wasn't so sure.

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Could it be possible that she... No. It had to be the feverish delirium from the poison. Dragon senses didn't work like that. Not without a fully established bond, and certainly not so soon.

Still, the memory lingered like a shadow just out of reach and my dragon was unnaturally quiet today. Most likely sleeping off the effects of what tried to kill us.

Falkor's voice breaks through my thoughts. "That attack yesterday," he says, his tone thoughtful, "didn't it feel... different?"

I frown, turning my attention to him. He was right. Something about the attack had unsettled me, though I hadn't been able to place it in the chaos of battle.

Drago nodded in agreement. "Yeah, it wasn't like the first one. They were more organized, and their tactics were strange."

Vevina, who had been listening quietly, suddenly straightened in her saddle, her brow furrowing. "I recognize one of the swords they used," she says softly, her voice thoughtful but laced with unease. "It was an Elf sword, the kind given to males when they come of age. Each one is designed especially for its owner."

I feel a chill creep down my spine at her words. "An Elf sword?"

She nods, her lips pressing into a thin line. "But the sword I saw... It didn't belong to the man who was using it. I know whose sword that is, and the one wielding it wasn't the rightful owner."

Drago curses under his breath, his sharp gaze flicking over to me. “You think it was stolen?”

"Or worse," Falkor adds, his voice dark with suspicion.

Vevina looks troubled, her eyes narrowing as she thinks back to the skirmish. “There was something else off about them too,” she says slowly. “They didn’t move like trained Elves. Their stances, the way they handled their weapons... it was rough, unrefined.”

She was right. The attackers hadn’t fought like Elves. I had thought maybe they were rebels, but now I wasn’t so sure. “One of the men I fought spoke a language I didn’t recognize,” I add, my voice low. “It wasn’t Elvish, and it sure as Hades wasn’t Draconic.”

Drago nodded in agreement, his expression grim. “Now that you mention it, there was something strange about the way they communicated with each other. It wasn’t just Elves.”

We all fall silent for a moment, the realization settling over us like a heavy weight. These weren’t just Elven rebels dissatisfied with the peace the marriage was supposed to bring. There was something else at play here. Something far more dangerous.

“They weren’t Elves, at least not all of them,” Vevina says, her voice filled with certainty. “There’s no way they could have been.”

I clench my jaw, anger simmering just beneath the surface. “Then who are they? And why are they trying to stop us?” The uneasy tension in the air grew thicker as the truth became clearer. Whoever was behind these attacks, they weren’t just against this marriage. They were something bigger. A threat none of us had anticipated.

“We need to stay alert,” I say, my voice steely. “If these aren’t Elves, then we have no idea what we’re really up against.”

Falkor gives me a nod, his hand resting on the hilt of his sword. “Agreed. Whatever this is, it’s not over.”

We ride in silence for a while, each of us lost in our thoughts. What we thought was a simple rebellion from the Elves might have been something much darker, something lurking in the shadows of this fragile peace.

And in the midst of it all, there was Vevina. A woman I had only just begun to know, but already she had proven herself more than just a symbol of peace.

She had fought beside us, saved me when I was on the brink of death, and now she was tangled in the same dangers that threatened to unravel everything we’d been trying to achieve.

I couldn’t shake the feeling that this bond was going to test us both in ways neither of us had imagined.

Vevina

We ride in silence for a while longer, the trees thickening around us as the forest swallows the path behind us.

Aodhan rides in front of me, his back straight despite the fact that I know he’s still weak. Every so often, I catch him wincing when he thinks no one is looking.

I knew I had to say something, needed to tell them about what had happened with my dagger. It wasn’t normal, and if they didn’t already suspect that something strange was going on with me, they would soon. I wasn’t sure I understood it myself, but

maybe together we could figure it out.

I take a deep breath, steeling myself, before speaking up. “There’s something I need to tell you.”

Aodhan turns slightly in his saddle, glancing back at me with those sharp golden eyes. Falkor and Drago slow their horses too, curious. The three of them ride even closer, forming a tight group as we move slowly through the trees.

“What is it?” Aodhan asks, his voice calm but laced with concern.

I bite my lip, trying to find the right words. “During the attack yesterday... my dagger... it changed.”

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Drago raises an eyebrow, his face full of curiosity. “Changed? What do you mean?”

I take another breath, feeling the weight of their attention on me. “It wasn’t just a dagger anymore. When I pulled it out, there was this flash of light, and it... extended. It became a sword. A sword light enough for me to use.”

Aodhan’s eyes narrow, and he glances at Falkor and Drago, who both look as stunned as I feel. “That doesn’t sound like any magic I’ve ever heard of,” Drago says slowly, scratching his chin. “And trust me, I’ve heard of a lot.”

Falkor, for once, doesn’t have a joke or a quip ready. He looks serious, thoughtful even. “Are you sure it wasn’t some kind of trick or illusion? Sometimes in the heat of battle, things can seem different.”

“No,” I say firmly, shaking my head. “It wasn’t an illusion. I felt it in my hands. The weight, the power. It was real.”

Aodhan was silent, his expression unreadable. He was thinking, I could tell, but he wasn’t dismissing me. He believed me, or at least he was considering the possibility that what I was saying could be true.

“Tell me exactly what happened,” he says, his voice softer now, more coaxing.

I swallow hard, trying to recall every detail. “When I pulled the dagger out, I felt this... surge. Like something inside me woke up. Then there was a flash, and the blade just... grew. It became this long, slender sword, but it felt light in my hands, as if it was made for me.”

Aodhan exchanges another look with Falkor and Drago, the three of them clearly thinking through what I'd said. "And this sword... you've never seen it before?" Aodhan asks.

"No, never," I reply. "It was just a simple dagger, a ceremonial one. Nothing special really."

Falkor frowns, his brow furrowing. "It doesn't sound like ordinary Elf magic. Elf blades are crafted with intent, but they don't just change form like that."

Drago nods. "And it wasn't the magic of dragons either. We can forge weapons with magic, yes, but they don't shift in battle without some kind of specific enchantment. That's ancient magic you're talking about."

Ancient magic. The words echo in my mind, sending a chill through me. I had never thought of myself as having any special power.

I wasn't trained in the magic arts like the scholars back in the castle. I didn't have the strength of a dragon or the natural-born prowess of warriors like Aodhan and his friends.

"I don't know why it happened," I admit, feeling a strange mixture of vulnerability and frustration. "But it did. I wasn't imagining it."

Aodhan's eyes meet mine, and for a moment, I see curiosity, but also concern. He wasn't afraid, but he seemed cautious. "I believe you," he says quietly. "But we need to understand what this means."

I nod, though I wasn't sure what to think myself. What did this mean? Was there something more to me than I had ever known? Some ancient magic tied to my bloodline, my people?



Then Falkor speaks, breaking the tension in the air. “Well, if you’re going to wield a magical, self-extending sword, I suppose it’s better it happened while saving our hides, eh?” He grins, but there was a seriousness behind his usual humor.

Aodhan didn’t smile, though I could see a faint twitch of amusement in his eyes. “If there’s something deeper at work here, we’ll figure it out. But for now, Vevina, be cautious. Magic like this doesn’t just appear without reason.”

I nod, a weight settling in my chest. He was right. This wasn’t normal, and I couldn’t shake the feeling that whatever was happening, it wasn’t just coincidence.

### Chapter 12

Aodhan

We were so close to home, yet something gnawed at me, an instinct deep in my bones. My wound still ached, but it was nothing compared to the weight of unease pressing down on my shoulders.

Falkor was riding silently beside me with Vevina at my back. Both sensing the same shift in the atmosphere. The river marked the edge of my homeland, and once we crossed, we'd be on the way back to the mountains. Back to safety.

Drago, who had ridden ahead to scout the path, came galloping back, his face grim. "The bridge is blocked," he says without preamble, pulling his horse up next to mine. "A group of men are waiting on the other side, armed to the teeth."

I curse the Gods under my breath. Of course. It couldn't just be easy. "How many?" I ask.

"Enough to give us trouble," Drago replies.

My mind raced, weighing our options. We could try to find another crossing, but that would take too much time. We had to deal with this head-on.

"We go forward," I decided. "Let's find out who these bastards are."

Falkor grins, his hand already on the hilt of his sword. "I like the sound of that."

As we ride cautiously toward the bridge, my senses sharpen, scanning for any hint of danger. The landscape was still, unnaturally so. No birds sang, and even the wind seemed to hold its breath.

When we finally approached the bridge, I could see them clearly. A group of men stood on the far side, dressed in dark, mismatched armor, their weapons drawn.

But what caught my attention was the man standing at the center of them. He wasn't an Elf, and he didn't carry himself like one. He was tall, lean, and his eyes glinted with an unsettling kind of intelligence.

As we drew closer, the man stepped forward, a slow, confident smile spreading across his face. "Prince Aodhan," he called, his voice smooth and sharp, cutting through the silence. "And the beautiful Vevina. I've been expecting you."

I bristle at the way he says her name, but I keep my expression impassive. "Who are you?" I demand, keeping my voice steady. "What do you want?"

The man's smile widens. "Who I am is not important. What matters is what I represent. I come bearing a message and a mission. You both need to die before you leave Elf lands."

My grip tightens on the reins. "And why is that?"

He chuckles darkly. "Because a bond between an Elf and a dragon could create a child. A child that would save your dying race."

My blood runs cold. He knew. Somehow, he knew about the ancient bond, the one that had been buried in legend. But how?

"And why would that concern you?" I ask, trying to keep my voice calm.

“Because,” the man says, stepping closer to the edge of the bridge, “your survival threatens everything we’ve worked for. Dragons must go extinct, and magic must die with them.”

A flicker of movement behind him catches my eye, and I see the others. His men, shifting uncomfortably, as if waiting for a signal.

“And who exactly is ‘we’?” Falkor growls, his sword already halfway out of its scabbard.

The man’s smile never falters. “Wizards. We’ve made an alliance with a new race. Humans. They have a fresh perspective, and they understand what must be done. They’re ambitious, you see. They believe the world will be theirs, free from magic. Together, we will destroy all the magical races. The dragons, the Elves, and anyone else who stands in our way.”

Wizards. Of course. It made sense. They had always sought to control magic, to manipulate it for their own ends. And now they had found a new race. Humans, with their greed and hunger for power.

“Enough of this,” I say, my voice low and dangerous. “If you think we’re going to let you stand in our way, you’re mistaken.”

The man’s smile fades, replaced by a cold, calculating expression. “Very well,” he says, raising his hand. “Kill them.”

The battle explodes into chaos. Drago, Falkor, and I shift into our dragon forms as soon as we jump from our horses. The transformation takes only seconds. The rush of power surged through my veins as I feel my wings stretch, my scales harden, and the fire ignite in my chest.

But the moment we take to the skies, the enemy launches their attack. Arrows whiz past us, some tipped with strange, dark magic that I could feel pulsing in the air. The wizards had come prepared.

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I swoop down, unleashing a torrent of fire, scorching the ground beneath us. Falkor and Drago do the same, their roars shaking the earth. But the enemy was relentless, and more wizards appeared, their dark spells slamming into us, trying to force us down.

Then, out of nowhere, I heard her voice. Aodhan, to your left! Behind the trees!

I hesitate, confused. It wasn't just any voice, it was Vevina's voice. In my head. But how?

Before I can process it, I glance left, just in time to see an ambush of men and wizards hiding in the shadows, preparing to launch another volley of magic. I veer sharply, dodging the incoming spells and retaliating with a blast of fire.

Above you! Her voice came again, clear and strong.

I look up and see two wizards perched on the ridge, their hands glowing with magic aimed straight for Falkor. I roar a warning, and Falkor dodges just in time, sending a stream of fire in their direction.

My mind was spinning, caught between the battle and the impossible fact that Vevina was speaking to me. How are you doing this? I ask, though I wasn't sure if she could even hear me in return.

I don't know, she replies, her voice strained but focused. But I can sense them. I can feel where they are, and I can warn you. Just trust me!

I had no choice but to trust her. Every time she called out a direction or a warning, it saved us from a potential blow. And every time, I marveled at the strange connection between us.

Vevina

The air was thick with the scent of smoke and magic, crackling like a storm about to break. My heart pounded in my chest, each beat echoing with fear, adrenaline, and something I couldn't quite name.

As I called out warnings to Aodhan and the others, guiding them away from danger, I felt a strange, warm energy stirring inside me. It was like a pulse, an awareness beyond my senses, tethering me to Aodhan's movements in the sky above.

This shouldn't be happening, I thought. I shouldn't be able to do this.

But there was no time to question it. I could feel the enemy everywhere, creeping in the shadows, hiding in the trees, waiting to strike again. My mind was racing, keeping track of every movement, every flicker of magic in the air. And then I saw it. A blast of dark magic aimed directly at Aodhan.

"No!" I screamed, my voice lost in the chaos.

Instinctively, my hands shot out toward him, though I knew it was useless. He was too far, and I had no way to stop the blast. But as my fingers stretched forward, I felt a surge of power unlike anything I had ever known, rushing up from deep within me. It built in my chest, spiraling through my arms, and before I even realized what was happening, a burst of light exploded from my palms.

It formed a shimmering, glowing barrier that erupted between Aodhan and the incoming spell. Blocking the dark magic from reaching him.

The spell slammed into the shield with a resounding crack, sending shockwaves through the air, but it held tight. I watched in disbelief as the energy dissipated, my hands still trembling, glowing with the remnants of power.

“What... what did I just do?” I whisper, half to myself.

Aodhan swoops down, his massive dragon form casting a shadow over me, and for a split second, our eyes meet. I could see the shock mirrored in his golden eyes, the same disbelief that gripped me.

But there wasn't time to dwell on it. Another volley of attacks came, and I gritted my teeth, focusing on the strange new power coursing through me.

I could feel it now, pulsing beneath my skin like a river of light. I didn't know where it came from, but I could direct it.

I raised my hands again, willing the shield to form once more, and it did, shimmering brighter than before. I blocked another incoming spell, then another, my hands moving with a grace I had never known.

With Aodhan and his friends fighting fiercely in their dragon forms, and me protecting them from the wizards' magic, we were finally turning the tide of the battle. Falkor roars, sending a blast of fire toward a cluster of enemies hiding behind the rocks. Drago follows him, his flame sweeping through the forest, cutting off the wizards' retreat.

I grab the dagger at my waist, the one that had turned into a sword during our last attack, and braced myself.

One of the wizards hurls another spell at me, dark tendrils of magic snaking through the air, and I instinctively summon the shield again, blocking the attack just before it



reaches me.

It was then that I realize something terrifying: I was meant for this. This magic, this power. It had always been inside me, waiting for the right moment to emerge. And now, in the midst of battle, it had found its purpose.

Suddenly, the tide shifts. The men fighting alongside the wizards begin to falter, their movements sluggish as they realize they are losing.

Aodhan and his friends pressed their advantage, cutting down the remaining attackers with swift, brutal precision. With every blast of dragon fire, with every swing of a sword, the enemy lines broke.

The last of the wizards tried to retreat, but Aodhan wasn't letting them escape easily. He dove from the sky, flames trailing behind him like a comet, and with a final roar, he sent a wall of fire across the river, chasing the rest into the trees.

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The world around us falls silent, the air thick with smoke and the acrid scent of burnt earth. My hands slowly lower, the glow fading from my fingers as the last of the enemy that hadn't fallen, disappears into the forest.

I stand there, breathless, staring at my hands in disbelief. How had I done that? My entire body was trembling, not just from exhaustion, but from the weight of what had just happened.

Aodhan landed beside me, shifting back into his human form, his golden eyes still wide with wonder. For a moment, neither of us speak. We just stand there, the silence between us heavy with questions.

But even as the battle ended, I knew this was far from over. Whoever these wizards were, they weren't going to stop until they had destroyed everything we were fighting for.

Aodhan looks at me, his gaze intense. "How did you do that?" he asks, his voice rough with exhaustion.

"I... I don't know," I admit, still staring at my hands. "I didn't even know I could."

He steps closer, his expression softening as he pulls me in for a kiss and I become very aware of the fact that he is completely naked. All three of them are so I keep my eyes glued to Aodhan.

"Please tell me you all have more clothes with you." I whisper as I hear Falkor and Drago walking behind me.

They must hear what I'm saying as all of them start laughing.

"After you two get dressed and save my sweet wife's gentle eyes, search the wounded for any we can take with us. Maybe we can get more answers from them." Aodhan says to his friends who both immediately do as he tells them.

"I should get dressed." He says just as I feel his cock hardening against my belly.

Arousal surges through me instantly and I feel a deep vibration in his chest.

"Are you purring?" I ask with a grin as he shakes his head at me and moves over to his horse from some fresh clothes.

"I'll clear the bridge if you grab our horses and bring them across." He says, ignoring my question. I giggle as he walks away, mumbling to himself and all I catch is: "I'll show her purring later."

## Chapter 13

Aodhan

Some of the tension in my shoulders seems to lift as we fully cross over into my homeland. The sight of Sky Castle in the distance, its stone walls reflecting the last light of the setting sun, brings with it a sense of home and familiarity that I'd missed.

I glance behind me at Vevina as we cross the final stretch. She looked exhausted but her gaze was sharp and observant despite everything we'd all been through.

I couldn't stop thinking about the way she had saved me during the fight with the wizards, and how she had wielded that strange power that she hadn't even known she possessed.

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It made me see her in a different light. Strong, fierce, and unexpectedly tied to my world in ways neither of us fully understood yet.

The gates opened to welcome us, and as we rode into the courtyard, the familiar scent of stone and earth greeted me. But it wasn't just the place that felt different. I felt different because of my new wife. I felt an odd sense of possessiveness watching her dismount, as if some instinct within me recognized her as more than just my bride. She was mine in a way that couldn't be described with words.

My mother, the Queen, was already waiting for us. Regal and calm as always, she stood tall, her dark hair cascading over her shoulders like a waterfall. Her golden eyes sparkled with warmth as she looked at me, but they quickly shifted to Vevina.

For a moment, I see the briefest raise of an eyebrow as she observes the way Vevina smiles at me as I help her down from our mount. But then, her lips curve into a knowing smile.

"Welcome, my son," she says, her voice rich and commanding. "And you must be Lady Vevina. I am Queen Eira."

Vevina bowed her head slightly, clearly still uncertain of her place here. I watch as my mother's gaze softens as she pulls Vevina in for a small hug. There was no hesitation in her warmth toward my new wife. Perhaps she could see what I had started to see.

"Take her to rest," my mother says, waving her hand toward the waiting attendants. "She must be exhausted. We'll talk more later, dear."

I watch her go and immediately feel a strange sense of longing. I wanted her by my side, not separated by walls. It was a ridiculous thought, one I quickly pushed aside as Falkor, Drago, and I made our way to the council chamber.

My advisors had already gathered, waiting for updates. As we recounted everything that had happened; the attacks, the wizards, the revelations about the bond between Dragons and Elves, I could see the worry on their faces.

The mention of wizards especially caused a stir, but none of them could remember the last time the Dragons had encountered that kind of magic. It had been long before even my mother's time.

After our meeting, Falkor suggested we check the library for more information. "There's something we're missing," he says, his brow furrowed. "This can't be the first time wizards have meddled with us."

Our library was a vast, ancient place filled with dusty tomes and forgotten knowledge. The archivist, Eldrin, greeted us with a nod, and when we told him what we were looking for, he disappeared into the depths of the old stacks. Moments later, he returned with a leather-bound journal, worn from centuries of handling.

"This belonged to your ancestor," Eldrin says, handing the journal to me. "Your great-grandfather several generations back. He wrote about the war with the Elves."

Taking the journal from him, I feel the weight of history in my hands. As I flip through the pages, the words seem to jump out at me, recounting all of the events of the war. How it had all started, the tension that had built over the years, and finally, the moment that had sparked the conflict.

There, in my ancestor's handwriting, was the story of a mysterious man who had kidnapped the last Dragon Princess born of a mate bond. The Dragons had assumed

the man was an Elf.

After all, who else could have had the power to challenge them? The Elves had denied it multiple times but war had erupted between our peoples. A war that had nearly wiped out both races.

As I read further, something clicks in my mind. The way my ancestor describes the kidnapper. The way he fought, the strange magic he used. It wasn't Elven magic at all. It was something darker.

"Wizards," I say aloud, my voice grim. "It was wizards who took her. Not Elves."

Falkor and Drago exchange glances. "Are you sure?" Drago asks, his voice tense.

I nod, my mind racing as I piece it together. "It matches everything we've seen. The magic, the attacks. These aren't Elves. The wizards have been manipulating us all this time, turning us against each other."

The realization sends a chill through me. The war that had torn our races apart had been based on a lie. And now, the wizards were back, trying to finish what they had started.

"We need to warn everyone," Falkor says, his voice urgent. "If the wizards are working with this new race, the humans, they could wipe us all out."

But as the weight of our discovery settles in, my thoughts keep drifting back to my wife. She had wielded magic during the battle, magic that even she hadn't known she possessed. And now, with this new knowledge, I couldn't help but wonder if there was something more to her. Something deeper, tied to the ancient bond between Dragons and Elves.

I close the journal, my resolve hardening. We had more enemies than we had ever realized.

“We need to confirm it.” Drago says, breaking our silence.

“How do we do that?” Falkor asks.

“The prisoner we brought back with us. I watched him closely as we made our way to the castle. He’s definitely not an Elf nor a Wizard.” Drago says.

“Human.” I say through gritted teeth and Drago nods.

With a nod to Eldrin, we make our way to the dungeon. The dimly lit corridors wind beneath the castle like a serpent. Falkor and Drago flank me, their expressions grim.

The heavy iron door creaks open, revealing the stone chamber where the prisoner is held. He is shackled to the wall, his face pale and drawn, yet his eyes still hold a defiance that makes me wary. There’s very little we know about humans.

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"Talk," Falkor demands, stepping forward, his voice hard as steel. "Tell us everything."

The man sneers, his lips curling into a mocking smile. "You think you've already won? You have no idea how deep this goes, dragon."

Drago's hand twitches toward his sword, but I motion for him to hold back. This man was the key to unraveling everything. "Why did you attack us? What do you want with the dragons?" I ask, keeping my voice calm, though inside, fury simmered.

He chuckles darkly. "This isn't just about you. This began centuries ago, with the kidnapping of your precious Dragon Princess. The last one, so I heard."

My jaw tenses. I had read about it in the journal. How the Dragons had believed an Elf was responsible, how that single event had sparked the war that nearly ended both our races. But hearing it confirmed in person made my blood boil.

"The Princess was meant to end it all," he continues, his tone dripping with malice. "Killing her was supposed to end your kind. The mate bonds were severed. No more Dragon children, no more magic to pass on. We thought it would be a slow death, but... you didn't die off as quickly as we'd hoped."

I felt a surge of anger rise in my chest. So, this had been their plan all along. To drive us to extinction by breaking the most sacred bond we had, the one that allowed our kind to thrive.

Drago speaks, his voice low and dangerous. "You underestimated us."



The man's eyes gleamed. "Perhaps. What we didn't account for was the residual magic. The bond still exists in your bloodline. It's weaker, yes, but it's there, lying dormant. Every Dragon born since the war has carried a shadow of that power."

Residual magic. The bond, even though broken, still had remnants. Could that explain Vevina's sudden abilities? The way she had spoken to me in my mind, the magic she had wielded during the battle?

Falkor narrows his eyes. "What does this mean for us now? What are you planning?"

The human grins. "The wizards have been waiting, watching. We've allied with them to make sure your kind never rises again. But you and your Elf bride—" he spits the word "bride" as if it were venom in his mouth, "you are a threat. If a child is born of your bond, it could restore the old magic. The Dragons would rise again."

A silence settles over the room as the weight of his words sink in. Vevina and I were at the center of this ancient conflict, a conflict that had been orchestrated long before either of us was born. The wizards as well as the humans wanted us dead. Not just because of who we were, but because of what we could become together.

The implications of this revelation hit hard. If what the man said was true, Vevina and I were the key to the Dragons' survival. But that also meant we were targets. A child born of our bond could be the salvation of my people, and that made us dangerous in the eyes of our enemies.

The man's grin fades as he realizes the gravity of his current situation. "Kill me if you want," he says, his voice more hollow now. "It won't change anything. Others will come. And when they do, they'll finish what we started."

I step closer, my voice low and filled with cold determination. "We'll be ready."

Turning to Falkor and Drago, I nod. "We've heard enough."

As we turn to leave, the man's strained voice halts me in my tracks.

"Wait," he rasps, barely lifting his head, but there was a twisted satisfaction in his tone. "The Elf... the princess. Haven't you wondered why she could wield magic like that? She's no ordinary Elf."

I turn back slowly, fixing him with a hard stare. Falkor and Drago remain tense, but curiosity keeps us all rooted to the spot. "What do you mean?" I ask.

"You really don't know, do you? You don't know much of anything, do you?" He shakes his head. "That bond between you and her... it's not just any bond. Her magic—her abilities—they come from something much older, something tied to your kind."

I feel my chest tighten. Vevina had always been different, that much I could sense even before her powers manifested. But what was he implying?

Falkor steps forward, clearly losing patience. "Speak plainly, or you'll never leave this dungeon alive."

"You think the Elves were ever capable of such power? No. Their magic, the magic your bride possesses, has been enhanced by something far greater than Elven tradition. It's draconic in nature."

I freeze, the weight of his words crashing into me. Draconic magic? Inside Vevina? "That makes no sense. She's an Elf, not a Dragon. How could she hold draconic magic?"

His lips curl into a sly smile. "Because of the ancient bonds between your races."

Before the war, before the divide, dragons and Elves weren't just allies. They were intertwined, bound by bloodlines, by mate bonds. And when those bonds were severed, a fragment of your magic... stayed with them."

Drago crosses his arms, his brow furrowed in thought. "You mean Elves with Dragon blood?"

"Not exactly. But certain Elves, those born from lines that were once bonded to Dragons, still carry the echoes of that power. It lies dormant, hidden. Until they bond with one of your kind."

I swallow hard, the pieces finally falling into place. Vevina's strange powers, the way she had protected me with that shield of magic. It all began after we were bound together. It wasn't a coincidence.

"She awakened because of the bond with me," I murmur, more to myself than anyone else.

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He nods weakly, watching me with a sick fascination. “Yes. She’s far more powerful than she knows, but that power comes with a price. If the bond between you deepens...if it results in a child...well... that child could have the strength of both the Dragon and the Elf, enough to restore what was lost to your kind.”

The air suddenly feels heavy around me. Vevina wasn’t just my bride, our bond was more significant than I could have ever imagined. The wizards had feared the return of such a union because of what it represented. A child born from our bond could possess the power to unite Dragon and Elf magic once again. Something that could turn the tide against our enemy’s plot to destroy us.

Falkor’s voice breaks through the tension. “And that’s why you want her dead. Not just Aodhan, but her too. Because together, they’re dangerous to you.”

The man’s silence is all the confirmation we need. I clench my fists, anger boiling beneath my skin. They hadn’t just been trying to stop our bond. They’d been trying to prevent the return of draconic magic in its most potent form.

But Vevina had already started to awaken. Her powers were only the beginning, and if the human was right, those powers would grow. They feared her potential, but they hadn’t counted on how strong she already was.

I moved closer to the prisoner, my voice cold as I speak. “You’ve made a fatal mistake. Vevina is stronger than you could ever understand. And now that we know what she’s capable of, you’ll never get close enough to finish what you started.”

Turning on my heel, I gesture to Drago and Falkor. “We’ve heard enough. Let him

rot.”

As we walked away, my mind was spinning. Vevina had no idea what she truly was, what her magic meant. But I did. And now, more than ever, I knew I had to protect her. Not just because she was my wife, but because she was the key to our future; mine, hers, and our entire race.

## Chapter 14

### Vevina

Aodhan’s voice was steady as he finished telling me everything they’d uncovered. It felt surreal, as if I’d fallen into a nightmare that I couldn’t wake from.

“They kidnapped the last Dragon Princess,” he says, his golden eyes locked onto mine, concern shadowing their usual warmth. “It wasn’t the Elves. It was the wizards all along.”

I nod slowly. All the hatred, all the bloodshed between our races... based on a lie. I felt an overwhelming surge of anger, not just at the wizards, but at the long, bitter years of loss and war that could have been avoided. “So, the war started because of a misunderstanding,” I say softly, my voice trembling slightly. “All that death...”

Aodhan’s jaw tightens. “Yes. And they’ve been using it ever since to keep us divided.”

Before I can reply, there’s a knock at the door. One of the guards enters, a younger dragon with nervous energy. “A messenger has arrived, Princess,” he announces, handing me a sealed scroll.

The moment I see the familiar seal, my heart clenches. It’s from my father. I hadn’t

heard from him since I was married off to Aodhan, not in any personal way, and now, of all times, he decides to reach out? I swallow hard, feeling Aodhan's curious gaze on me as I broke the seal open.

The scroll was old, worn; clearly it had been delayed for some time. The parchment felt fragile between my fingers as I unrolled it and began to read. My father's handwriting was unmistakable, though it was messier than usual, as if he had written it in haste.

"My dearest Vevina,

I hope this message reaches you safely, though by the time it does, much will have already unfolded. I can only ask for your understanding and forgiveness for what I am about to reveal..."

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My breath catches as I read on, my heart pounding in my chest. He knew. My father had known all along, about everything.

"I now understand who our true enemies are, but I could not act earlier without risking your life. My advisor, the one I trusted most, was a traitor. He was working for the enemy, keeping me in the dark and manipulating events to serve their plans. Only now can I begin to unravel the damage that has been done."

I pause as my hands tremble slightly. The traitor... it made sense now, why everything had felt so rushed, so chaotic before my marriage.

"I'm sorry, my sweet Vevina, for the role you were forced to play without understanding why. Marrying you to the Dragon Prince was my only way to ensure your safety, as well as the safety of our people. I knew that, with the dragons at your side, you would stand a better chance against the enemies that would soon reveal themselves."

The words blur as tears gather in my eyes. So, my father had known about Aodhan and me, about the bond that could form between us. He had sent me into this marriage not just for politics, but for survival. He hadn't abandoned me like I thought he had. He had been playing a dangerous game, one where he couldn't let me in on the truth until now.

"There are darker forces at work than even the wizards. They've allied with a race called the Humans, a people with no magic who seek to dominate the world and rid it of all who wield power beyond their control. They wish to see the dragons extinct and the elves enslaved—or worse."

I gasp softly, the shock of his words hitting me like a cold wind. Humans? I had heard stories of them, but to think they were working with the wizards, planning the destruction of everything we knew... it was terrifying. Aodhan, who had been reading my expressions silently, tensed at the mention of the humans.

"I could not tell you any of this before, for fear it would put you in even greater danger. But now that you are with Aodhan, I trust you are safer than you would ever have been in our kingdom. Together, you two are stronger than you know. The bond between an elf and a dragon is a rare and powerful thing, and it may be the key to saving us all."

I lower the letter, my chest tight with the weight of my father's words. The bond between Aodhan and me... my father had known. He had understood the significance of it even before I did. But there was more. I glance at the final lines, dreading what else he might say.

"Prepare, Vevina, for there is a great battle ahead. We must join forces with the dragons to defeat our common enemy. I will come to you as soon as I can secure the kingdom, and we will fight together. But know this—you are more important than you realize. And when the time comes, if you are to become a mother, send word to me immediately. I long to meet my grandchild."

A grandchild. My father... he was already thinking of the future. My cheeks flush.

"Is everything alright?" he asks, his voice filled with concern. His golden eyes searching my face, and I can see the worry about what my father's letter might contain.

I hesitate, then nod. "Yes," I say, though my voice is a little shaky. "It's... it's a lot to take in. My father knew more than we thought he did. He's asking for our help, and he plans to join forces with the dragons against the wizards and humans."



Aodhan's gaze softens as he steps closer, placing a hand on my shoulder. "We'll fight together," he says quietly. "I'd never let anything happen to you." He pulls my palm up to his lips, giving me a soft kiss.

I meet his gaze, and for the first time, I feel the full weight of what lays ahead. It wasn't just about us anymore, or even our people. It was about the future; our future, and the future of the world we both wanted to protect.

"We'll see this through to the end, no matter how long it takes. In the meantime, I'd like to fall more in love with my wife." He whispers as my heart speeds up at his words. "That okay with you, Sweet?"

With a grin spreading across my face, I throw my arms around his neck. "Yes." I answer with a giggle.

As he takes my lips with his own, I realize just how intertwined our destinies had been woven by the Gods above.

Whatever trials the future holds, we are stronger together.

The End...For Now...