



# I Like Big Dragons and I Cannot Lie (I Like Big Dragons 1)

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**Category:** Erotic, Romance, Fantasy, Horror

**Description:** Keifer Vassago, The Prince of Dragons, has enough on his plate without adding a brunette with a bad attitude to the mix.

Fate has a way of screwing all his plans, though, whether he wants them screwed or not. One second he's fetching his brother from yet another situation that could possibly compromise the Vassago name, and the next that brunette is grabbing his assets.

Blythe isn't after anyone's assets, though. She's a good girl. All she wants is to graduate from nursing school, get a job, and move out of her hell hole apartment. What she does not have time to deal with is a sexy bearded man that accuses her of grabbing his junk.

She tries to forget about the encounter, but fate's a cruel bitch.

One second she's a normal college student barely living paycheck to paycheck, and the next she's setting her panties on fire with powers from an ancient immortal dragon.

To add insult to injury, she's hearing voices, and none of them are figments of her imagination. Blythe's life is turned upside down, and Keifer forces her to adapt even though she doesn't want to. She likes her life just the way it is.

Not to mention she wants nothing to do with that arrogant asshole. She doesn't care that he rides a dragon. She also could care less about his stupid beard, and his sexy eyes.

Yeah, who was she kidding? She wasn't convincing anybody.

**Total Pages (Source):** 65

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 10, 2025, 7:52 am*

## Chapter 1

Age is just a number. False, age is a word.

-Proven Fact

Keifer

“Farrow, you stupid fuck, where are you?” I growled into my phone.

Stupid fucking brother.

I wouldn't have had to use my phone if the stupid fuck would've answered the telepathic call I sent, but the fucker was blocking me with everything he had. Something he'd only be able to do for one goddamned week, because, well...he just wasn't me.

I was the oldest. I could do things that they all couldn't. I could do things that my father couldn't. Being the eldest, as well as having the gift of time, was helpful.

Not to mention the fact that I was prince of the dragons, for fuck's sake.

I could tell that he was alive, but nothing else was coming through.

“He's mad that you told him he couldn't bring his girlfriend here,” Nikolai explained.

My eyes turned to him and I glared.

Brother or not, he wasn't too old for a good ass kicking.

“What exactly did you want me to do? If I let him bring his girlfriend onto the grounds, then I'd have to let all of you bring your one-night-fucks, girlfriends, and boyfriends. Then it wouldn't be very secure anymore, since the shield we spent two fucking years working on would have to come down. Every fucking dragon, dragon rider, or enemy of ours within a thirty-mile radius will be able to spot the place,” I growled in frustration.

Though he'd heard it all before. This was our sanctuary for fuck's sake. There were other things besides them that I was thinking of!

I was beyond frustrated. It wasn't like I wanted to forbid it, but I just couldn't see any other way around it.

I looked at my brother, who was also the brains behind our operations.

Then I sighed. Maybe I was being unfair.

“If you can make it so the veil doesn't have to be brought down, I would permit it in a heartbeat. But, I have other things to consider here. Until that time comes, I have a moral obligation to keep them out,” I shook my head.

Nikolai nodded and brought his finger up to his upper lip, tapping in concentration. His tattooed biceps bulged with each minuscule movement of his finger.

“Let me brainstorm when we get back from patrol. I might be able to figure out something,” he rumbled before he stood to go.

I watched him walk away, my mind full of turmoil.

“When are you going?” Skylar, my sister, asked, not even bothering to look up from her hunched position over some papers in the corner of the room. The place we all inevitably migrated to despite the massiveness of the sanctuary.

Skylar, my sister, who was the closest in age to me, was the scholar of the group. My mother and her had no special powers like my brothers and I did. No female on Earth had powers. It was only the male population that was blessed with those abilities.

But somehow, she could come and go as she pleased, passing through the veil as we did. As could our mother.

So she made up for her ‘shortcomings’, as she saw it, and put all of her available time and ability into research and caring for other dragon riders. She felt that she could be of some help in that way, so she chose to become a doctor, and she researches the dragon riders’ physical makeup, seeing what made them tick.

Very rarely did I see her without her nose in some sort of book. That didn’t mean that she wasn’t fully aware of absolutely everything. Even the things I didn’t want her to be aware of.

She also knew me incredibly well. Knew that I wouldn’t leave my brother for long. Not when he was so close to the change.

It could happen anytime now, seeing as his birthday was only months away.

And when that time came, I sure as hell didn’t want him in the middle of a busy city.

I could see the headline in the news now. Boy Goes Crazy; Summons Dragon In Dallas, Texas

Standing up, I stretched my arms up high over my head. “I’m going out to find the

little peckerhead. Do you need anything while I'm gone?"

My sister didn't answer me, and I didn't really expect her to.

Your sister's thinking about that boy again. Declan, my dragon, communicated telepathically with me.

I blinked. What do you mean?

Zed. Or maybe Fred. The dragon rider who came in last week with the smashed in skull. The one who's in the faint.

I growled. That'd been a blow when Derek had gone down.

His name's Derek. And it's a coma...not a faint.

Close enough.

Not even, I thought with a roll of my eyes.

I felt a whisper of a laugh against my skin. The names of mortals other than you do not concern me.

Whatever you say. Meet me in the backyard.

10-4, homie.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 10, 2025, 7:52 am*

I barely resisted the urge to roll my eyes.

Declan's use of 'modern day slang', as he called it, was comical.

He liked to keep up with today's youth by listening to the radio and watching the television I'd set up in his cave—a cave that he still lived in despite offering him different living accommodations that were closer to the sanctuary.

He told me the music and shows gave him a good insight into the youthful population that they target.

I can still remember the first time Declan had heard a rap song.

He'd been so appalled that he'd broken every radio within a five-mile radius. To this day, it was still spoken about. It was also another reason that the surrounding town was scared shitless of Declan, and therefore me.

Apparently, the dragon's roar of outrage had been felt as well as heard.

I passed through the kitchen, waving at my mother as I went.

She didn't say anything, as usual.

Mom was a mute. She hadn't spoken a word since my father had died fourteen years ago.

My family thought it'd been because my mother was still mourning my father's

death. Of course, I did feel that it did play some part in her silence, but it wasn't the only reason, and I've never gotten a true answer out of my mother about it.

My mother waved back, mashing something sickening into a bowl on the counter. It was probably something for the little ones to snack on; I just wished she didn't cook it in our kitchen.

I made it out the back door and down the porch steps to the deck before I was tackled.

I went down, curling my body into a ball and rolling as I laughed at the tiny little terrors now crawling all over my body.

It was customary for the dragon to tell you what it wanted to be called, and normally, it was based off the era they were born in. These three rambunctious horrors weren't named as of yet and wouldn't be named for another four months, at least.

They were a little over eight months old and wouldn't be gaining their full telepathic communication abilities, like I had with Declan, until they were at least a year old.

They could, however, send pictures to me.

All three of them sent pictures of snow, ice and a pond.

I sighed. I should've known.

Gesturing with my hand, I moved all of the large things out of the middle of the yard. The chairs and table were the first things to move, followed shortly by the A-frame porch swing.

I focused my mind, centering on the air around the legs of the chair, and willed the air to harden around them. From there, it was just pushing with my mind, willing a small

amount of wind to carry them to the destination I wished them to be. The gazebo and the swing set were a little harder, but I managed it with a little more focus.

It was something that was so normal to me that it happened sometimes whether I wanted it to or not.

Often times when I was busy working on ledgers at the office or working at the shop, things sort of floated around me.

I had to be exceedingly careful when I was doing that. If the wrong person saw, a shit storm of epic proportions would be swirling around me within minutes.

Dragon riders were highly sought after and very popular.

It was also well known that the only people who could utilize the powers derived from the elements were dragon riders; and I most certainly didn't want to have my face plastered on billboards like Derek did.

Poor bastard.

I also borrowed power from one of my two brothers if the need ever arose.

Most of the time it wasn't a problem, but they'd send back a gentle push over our bonds if it wasn't a good time.

Which rarely ever happened.

My brothers could also do the same with me.

If I let them.

Something I almost always allowed.

The younglings swirling around my knees bumped me with their heads, their sharp horns poking me like large needles in my thighs in their excitement.

“Chill,” I reprimanded gently, pushing the one getting entirely too close to my dick away with a gentle push.

They all looked at me with their softly glowing golden gazes and sat.

Their blue and purple wings folded at their backs tightly, and their little butts quivered as they waited.

The younglings were ice dragons, as their coloring denoted. Most dragons could be identified by the shades of their hides.

They loved the cold, and would normally be at our northernmost safe area, but it’d been compromised a few weeks ago, which had contributed to Derek, one of the best dragon riders in the country, being injured.

These three were only a few of the ones saved, and our sanctuary was now nearly at full capacity.

“So, how cold do you want it? Cold, as in frozen solid, or cold like mostly frozen on the surface and cold water beneath?” I asked.

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Their wings quivered, and I blinked, somewhat unsurprised by their answer.

A picture of a slush from Sonic appeared in my mind, and I made a mental note to speak with Declan about letting them watch too much TV.

They wanted the water slushy. Got it.

Narrowing my eyes on the large inground pool, I focused my mind and withdrew the heat from the water.

The change was immediate; one second it was a cool, crystal blue, and the next it was a slushy gray, with a layer of thin ice thick enough to hold the three up if they so wished.

Cute roars of excitement left their mouths as they bound through the air. Their wings flapping faster than a butterfly's in their exuberance to get to the water.

They reached it in a matter of moments, diving into the water and breaking through the ice easily.

I smiled as I watched them play, wishing we had a way to keep it this cold for them all the time.

Sadly, it wouldn't be happening until we got the newest place in Anchorage up and running.

Which would take some time because not only did we have to set the place up, but

also it couldn't just disappear from sight without raising suspicion amongst those in the area surrounding it.

We had to slowly transition the site's disappearance from the area, a process that would take many months, if not years, to do without garnering the attention of others.

You're too nice to them, Declan said.

I shrugged. Yeah.

I shouldn't be wasting my time on things like this. Although the ice dragons preferred colder climates, they could survive just fine in warmer climates. They just didn't like to.

"What can I say?" I asked as I approached Declan. "I like keeping my charges happy."

What do you want to bet he's doing her instead of answering your call? He asked, an amused lilt in his tone.

"We'll see about that. Where is he?" I asked as I vaulted onto Declan's back.

The apartment near the American Airlines Center, he answered back quickly.

Fucking perfect, I thought.

## Chapter 2

Life was a lot better when naps were expected of me.-Blythe's secret thoughts

I walked out of the restaurant where I worked and hurried quickly to my apartment, thanking God that I was so close. I didn't think my legs could take much more.

My knees were killing me after being on my feet for the past eight hours straight. I'd gone the entire shift without a single break.

Thanks Macy, for not showing up for your shift and making me work both our sections. It was fucking awesome, I thought sourly.

The walk home wasn't bad. It was less than a mile. Normally, the walk was refreshing.

Today, however, it was not.

Thankfully the walk was easy, and I arrived at my apartment building no worse for wear.

I entered the building, forgoing the mail. Honestly, if I stopped, I wasn't sure I would make it any further.

I took the one flight of stairs up to my apartment, and walked quickly to the end of the hallway, not bothering to look at the shitty wallpaper that could've used a facelift six years ago. Nor did I look at the floor, though I probably should have since the crappy wood floors were separating from the subfloor underneath them.

I'd nearly reached my door when a large man came barreling out of the apartment next to mine. Macy's apartment.

He was a huge man.

Big, with beautiful brown hair, a strong jaw and gorgeous eyes. Whiskey-colored eyes that actually leaned more towards gold rather than brown.

Those eyes flicked up to me and away just as fast, focusing instead on the man he

was dragging out of the apartment with him, kicking and screaming.

A kicking and screaming nearly naked man.

I flattened myself against the wall, but the shoulders of the large man in his impeccable business suit still brushed my collarbone in the narrow hallway.

His bare hand brushed along the exposed skin of my thigh where the damn booty shorts my boss at the diner insisted we wear, ended. I mean really, it's a diner for Christ's sake, not Hooters.

An electric jolt surged through me, causing my spine to straighten and my eyes to find his as he passed. This shouldn't be so natural – even if my body did somehow yearn for the stranger.

His eyes were just as wide, and he was looking at me like I'd just grabbed his testicles in a one-handed grip... which I most certainly did not.

Not that it wasn't tempting, but I didn't think I could work up the energy to have sex with the handsome man, even if my body did yearn for his.

I started walking away on wobbly legs just as he passed me, ignoring the man he was dragging completely.

I'd seen nearly naked guy before, of course.

The apartment they came out of was Macy's. The man being dragged was Farrow, her boyfriend. He'd probably been the reason that Macy hadn't come into work today, the big bastard.

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The other man likely was Farrow's brother—a man that Macy continuously spoke nastily about due to the fact that he made Farrow be responsible. How dare he?

Although, now that I knew that the mere graze of his fingers along my leg could set my vagina on fire, I needed to avoid him at all costs.

Something I could easily do since it was more than obvious he'd never stoop down to my level. Slumming didn't even look like it was a word in that man's vocabulary.

As I got my door open, though, I looked over my shoulder to see the handsome, suit-wearing man's eyes on mine.

He was staring at me intently.

I didn't grab your balls, why are you staring at me like I did something inappropriate? I wondered.

His smile widened, almost as if he'd heard my thoughts.

My eyes narrowed on him, and he began to laugh as he started to pull his brother down the flight of stairs by his hair.

Farrow got to his feet. He stopped fighting the man and went willingly. Walking, because it appeared that he didn't want to be dragged down the stairs. He likely didn't want to scrape any tender parts, though I noticed that his nakedness didn't appear to affect him.

The suit-wearing man didn't look like the type of guy who would take no for an answer, anyway.

Closing and locking the door behind me, I headed right to the kitchen and grabbed a cold can from the fridge

Dr. Pepper in hand, I headed to my room, ignoring the large pile of clothes on the floor at the entrance to the hallway that I'd yet to pick up from where they'd fallen that morning.

I hated doing laundry. And it wouldn't matter if I did. My cat, Teller, a.k.a. Slimeball, would knock them down regardless of whether or not I'd taken the time to fold them.

My shoes were kicked off in the hallway, and my shorts soon followed, discarded at the entrance to my room.

My shirt was the last thing to go as I made it into my bedroom.

I stood by the open window, taking my jewelry off and placing it on the nightstand when I looked up and screamed.

A~ because there was a dragon sitting outside my window, and B~ because it was looking at me. A huge motherfucking dragon. Right there, outside my goddamned window.

His head was level with my open window, and his large face was turned and looking in on me curiously.

He was a beautiful gray beast. Not much larger than a cement truck, but he definitely created a presence with his size. He had large red horns glistening in the sunlight extending from the top of his head. His eyes gleamed golden picking up flecks of the

ruby of his horns. Following the scales of his concrete colored skin, his back was covered by the beautiful shades of red on his folded wings. They ranged from a red so deep it resembled blood to a purple on the tips, which were so bright they glowed with an inner fire.

His red tail flicked like a cat's, thick and strong. The end barbed with what resembled one of those medieval metal balls with spikes attached to a chain on a stick.

I reached out in awe, my hands only inches away from the dragon's nose.

Then I thought better of it and yanked my hand back.

I covered myself by pulling on a T-shirt off of the floor, even though he was only a dragon, and I was happy I'd done it a moment later when the suit-wearing man dragged his brother out the backdoor and straight up to the large dragon.

His eyes flicked up at me, and his lips curved into a sexy grin as he threw his brother at the dragon.

The dragon caught Farrow with a giant clawed hand, and then extended his tail to the other man.

The man climbed up onto the dragon's back.

His strong powerful thighs hugged the dragon's sides expertly as he reached for his sunglasses that were in his front suit pocket.

He slipped them on over his eyes, winked at me, and disappeared.

I gasped in disbelief.

I hadn't realized that they could do that.

My gaze darted to the sky, looking for the dragon and its rider. I scanned the area for them for long moments, but they were gone.

"Holy shit," I breathed.

I'd seen dragons, of course. Everyone had.

They were beautiful creatures, centuries old, and very popular around our area. It wasn't uncommon to look up and see one flying high above the city of Dallas. I didn't know of a time in my life where they weren't around. Unlike migrant animals, the dragons stayed year-round, filling our sky with their beauty.

My soul always found this soothing even though they had no interaction with people. Not normal people anyway.

Seeing one outside your window, well, that was highly unusual. They liked to settle in open areas. The tight alleyways and bustling of the city wasn't anything that appealed to the winged beasts, according to the many articles I had read over the years. They were simply too large, and the cramped city too small.

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Woodenly, I turned and surveyed my room, feeling strangely as if my life had just somehow been changed.

Why, I couldn't say. I just knew I felt different.

With nothing else to do, I went to bed, my thoughts consumed with the suit-wearing man and his dragon.

Mostly, though, I was thinking about the way that single brush of his fingers against my bare legs felt. How hot his touch was, and how the feeling had gone straight to my core.

A feeling that was still wracking my body.

I'd give just about anything to have his hands where I really wanted...

I squelched the thoughts in their tracks. I was not going there with that man. No ifs, ands or buts about it. He was bad news with a capital NO WAY!

He'd eat me up and spit me out.

Though, just because I couldn't have him didn't mean I couldn't think about him.

In my dreams we were made for each other. Reality could eat shit and die.

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I woke up to my lower half on fire.

At first, I thought it was just an aftereffect of my dreams, but when I finally peeled my eyes open, I could smell smoke.

When I opened my lids and looked down, it was to literally find my panties on fire.

I screamed and rolled; rolling so far in the bed that I hit the floor and kept going.

By the time the fire was finally out, my panties were burned to ash. However, my skin was perfectly fine. In fact, the hairs that I'd planned on having waxed later in the week were gone.

It'd given me a fire waxing...minus the wax.

"What the fuck?" I yelled, staring down at my now hair-free mound.

Blasphemy.

My eyes widened and I looked around. Was someone in the room with me?

I started reaching for the lamp but couldn't find it. There was a pile of things beside the bed that I'd knocked over in my haste to get up. I could only assume that the lamp was one of those things.

"Light, light, light," I chanted, shifting through the things on the floor.

My candles that I had interspersed around the room all lit at once, and I screamed.

"What the hell is going on?" I shrieked.

Macy started hammering on the wall, or her boyfriend. Whatever. Fuck her.

I narrowed my eyes at the wall.

That stupid heifer! I'm allowed to scream if I want to. She fucks day and night, and she's going to bang on my wall to get me to quiet down?

Master Farrow has always had excellent stamina with the ladies.

I froze, turning around and scanning the room.

"Who's there?" I asked nervously.

A deep, rumbling laugh filled my head and my eyes widened.

"Holy mother of God, get out of my head!" I yelled.

The voice in my head continued to chuckle. Oh, this is almost as good as when Prince Keifer came into his powers. He didn't shriek like you do, though.

I couldn't explain it, but I knew whatever was in my head wasn't human. He didn't sound human.

Or if you could say 'sound' at all. Was hearing something in your head 'hearing'?

My panic started to make my heart beat faster, and the worse the panic got, the more afraid I became.

Then things started...floating.

My brush on the dresser was the first thing that started to lift off the wooden surface.

Then my jewelry. Then...everything.

“Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God!” I whispered.

Calm down and it'll stop. You freaking out about it isn't helping. Go take a shower. Cool your tits, the voice said.

Cool my tits? For real?

“What are you?” I whispered, taking his advice and walking into the bathroom.

Jesus, I was taking the voice in my head's advice.

I was going crazy. There was no other alternative.

I am a dragon. What else would I be?

What else would he be? Right, a dragon.

“Umm,” I flipped on the hot water. “How is this possible? I thought I read that women couldn't communicate with dragons...Couldn't command them.”

Women can't, he agreed instantly.

“I'm a woman...just sayin',” I informed the voice in my head.

Pulling the tie out of my hair and ripping the shirt off my shoulders, I jumped into the shower, squealing when the ice cold water hit my skin.

Macy must've used all of the hot water again. Fucking perfect.

I closed my eyes and thought about warm things, letting the water roll over my shoulders and head.

For once, the meditation worked, and the water actually felt warm and luxurious.

I opened my eyes as I reached out for the shampoo when I saw the steam rising from the shower floor, coating the glass shower doors and covering the mirror over the sink.

The steam was everywhere, including wafting through the air and curling up over the top of the glass shower door.

It'd never been that hot before.

“Oh, my God. I'm in heaven,” I whispered. Chapter 3

All I want for Christmas is your soul.

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-Text from Blythe to BrooklynKeifer

My eyes opened, and I knew instantly something was different.

The lights.

The lights in the room weren't on.

Why were the lights not on?

I sent out a small pulse of energy, willing the lights to come on, but they stayed dark.

A sense of foreboding went through me.

Were we under attack? Why else wouldn't the lights turn on? Something had to be stopping me from turning them on.

I sat up, throwing my comforter off my body, and shivered when my feet hit the cold floor.

Declan, what's the status of the estate? I asked.

Unremarkable, Declan answered.

Would it kill the dragon to say 'nothing's happening?' Or possibly, 'all's clear?'

He answered, yes, but he didn't sound right. Almost as if he was answering me from

a long way away.

Where are you? I asked.

Watching a woman, he answered quickly.

What woman?

The pretty brunette that we met this afternoon. The one with the big tits.

I winced. You're not supposed to say things like that to women. And again...why are you there?

She's amusing, he drawled.

I sighed. Something's wrong with my powers. I can't do a goddamned thing. Not even light a candle.

I walked to the doors of my room that led outside and did something I hadn't had to do in over twenty years.

Twist the knob.

The feel of the knob on my hand felt foreign, and I couldn't believe that something as simple as turning a handle was so complex when I could move things with my mind.

The moment my feet met the cool wood of the deck that wrapped around the house, Declan touched down.

His large, muscled dragon body quivered as he shook slightly, trying to rid himself of the wetness he'd collected in the clouds.

“Do you know what’s going on?” I asked.

Yes, yes I do, he confirmed, surprising me.

I blinked. “You do? Is it everybody or just me?”

Young master, I think you need to go speak with your Mamen. Once you’ve done that, then I’ll take you where you need to go, he rumbled.

Annoyed with the cryptic words, as was Declan’s usual, I turned around and walked back through my room.

Then I promptly face-planted into the door since it didn’t open when I sent the gentle request for it to do so.

Wincing, I rubbed my head as I opened the door to my room, heading straight for my mother’s wing of the estate.

Declan’s devilish laughter followed in my wake.

Bastard.

Oh, Master. You never cease to amuse me, he teased before cutting off from me, releasing me to my own thoughts.

The estate we lived on was in the heart of Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas. Right on the outskirts of the actual city of Dallas where the energies of the Meridian ran underneath the city.

The heart was also known as The Meridian and was what gave dragons their life force. Gave them their nearly immortal abilities.

As long as they stayed within two hundred square miles of one of the six hearts of the Meridian, they'd continue to thrive. But if they moved too far away for too long of a period, then they'd slowly lose their immortality and age just like any other living being.

There were five more 'hearts' scattered across the United States, all in small towns, making it easy to conceal their presence.

Humans didn't know about the Meridian, and if I had anything to say about it, it'd stay that way.

By the time I made it to my mother's rooms, the sun was just starting to light the halls of Darcy Manor.

I'd lived in Darcy Manor my entire life and really had no plans of ever leaving.

Darcy Manor belonged to me now and always would. At least until I died, then it'd pass on to my first-born son, and if I didn't have a son, then to Nikolai.

Knocking softly on my mother's door, I waited long moments for her to answer it.

I must've woken her, because her hair was askew, and her eyes puffy with sleep.

She raised her eyes at me in question.

"I have a problem," I murmured, pushing into her room.

She moved to the side to allow me in, and I was struck, just like I always was, with the way her room seemed to be stuck in time.

It looked exactly like it always had.

My father's things were still exactly where they'd been the day he'd died. His glasses on the table beside the bed. His clothes still hung in the closet, and his belongings still spread throughout the room.

It was as if he'd just left twenty minutes ago rather than fourteen years.

"Mom," I cleared my throat, shaking off the pang in my heart that followed me remembering how my father had died. "I don't have my powers. They're all gone."

Her eyes widened as she stared at me.

With a decisive determination I'd never seen from her before, she ran to the closet in the back corner of her bedroom, and yanked the door open before disappearing inside.

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I waited several minutes while she rifled through it moments before she returned with a leather bound book with gold lettering etched into the front.

“What’s that?” I asked, nodding towards the book, temporarily sidelining my freak out while I tried to figure out why she was handing me a book at a time like this.

Instead of signing like she usually did when she wanted to relay something to one of her children, she held out the book.

“Read it,” she mouthed.

I blinked.

“Mom, I don’t have time to read anything. What if there’s something seriously wrong here? Who will protect the manor if something were to happen?” I growled in frustration.

I didn’t have time to read a godsdamned book.

She crossed her arms and started to tap her foot.

“Read it,” she mouthed again.

Growling in annoyance, I pulled the book open to the first page and began to read.

MATING.

That was what the first page said. One word. Mating.

“Mating?” I blinked. “What’s any of this got to do with mating?”

Of course, I’d heard about dragon riders mating.

It was an old wives’ tale. Something that I wasn’t even sure existed.

Dragon riders lived as long as their dragon did.

Which meant they could live indefinitely.

Their wives, however, did not.

They lived a normal lifespan, just like everyone else.

Which was why not many riders married. Nor ever had anyone to call their own. They’d just have to watch them die, so what would be the point?

At least that was my reasoning on never looking too hard for love.

Mating, though, was something entirely different from just being married. Mating was said to be a continuous share of power between the rider, the dragon, and the mate.

And in my thirty-five years of life, I’d never seen one single mating. Never even heard of one.

When I looked up at my mother, I could tell she wouldn’t allow me to get out of here without reading it.

So, ignoring the chaos in my head that was screaming out at me to figure out what was going on, I sat down and read.

For a very long time.

All dragon riders have a predestined mate.

Some riders may never find that mate, and they will forever stay single, never to marry or fall in love.

Others, though, will find their mate. And their mate will become immortal, matching in life spans with their dragon rider.

It took me a while to realize that all of this was written in my father's handwriting. Every single penned letter. I'd devoured the entire book in one sitting, not moving a muscle until I flipped to the very last page.

The words swirled around in my head, taking up residence in my thoughts. In my very being.

"What..." I croaked, turning my head to look at my mom.

But she was no longer standing beside me. She was gone.

And the light that had just started to peek up over the horizon was in full bloom.

I'd been reading for a very long time.

Then some things started to make sense. Like how and why my mother lost her voice.

A mate losing her voice is one of the aftereffects of being mated; you don't have the

ability to tell all of what happened. The dragon rider's last task is to allow his dragon to breathe his fire down his mate's throat; if they're able to. That will give them the 'powers' for the rest of their mortal lives, but also take away their ability to speak. If they don't get the dragon's breath, then they won't have the powers for the rest of their lives, nor will they remember what happened while they were with their mate. It's a fail-safe of sorts, meant to keep the secret of mating under close watch to enable future dragon riders and their mates the full abilities of their power.

Had my father instructed his bonded dragon to breath down my mother's throat? Was that why she no longer spoke?

Then other dots started to connect.

With the first touch of mates, skin to skin, the process begins. It takes up to three full days for the process to be complete, and the two mates will be forever bound. Unconditionally and irrevocably.

So what, neither one of us had a choice?

Would my 'mate' hate me because I took that choice away from her? Would she resent me? Dislike me immensely?

Then another passage that I'd read came back into crystal clear clarity.

The female is fed by the male's connection to the dragon. The two mates will forever have to be within the vicinity of the other, or they start to grow weak, and eventually die if the separation goes on too long. Never stay apart for more than twenty-four hours. Trust me, it doesn't go away. I know.

Had my father tried and had seen its results?

How did he know all of this without having experienced it on his own?

Surely, if it were common knowledge, I would've heard about it by now.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 10, 2025, 7:52 am*

Dragons weren't known to be gossips, per se, but they did share information. As did dragon riders. We had to share information in order to be able to stay alive.

Otherwise the fucking Purists, our enemies for lack of a better word, would get the upper hand, and God knew we couldn't give the Purists too much of a leg up; they'd run us into the ground and exterminate our entire race in a matter of days.

Over my dead body, would I ever allow that to happen.

Standing up and stretching stiff muscles, I connected to Declan.

Have you seen where my mother went? I asked him.

No. But your little firebug is getting restless, he answered. Come.

I have one more stop to make, I informed him.

Then I went to my brother's room, knocked loudly on the door, and explained where I was going.

Nikolai was in his usual attire of gym shorts and nothing else.

He had his glasses on top of his head, as if he'd forgotten them there when he'd gotten up, and his hair was a mess, almost as if he'd been running his fingers through it all night.

"You can't bring her here! I haven't figured out how to bypass the shield yet! You

could blow her head off when you pass through!” Nikolai started to panic slightly.

I snorted.

“You know you can do it. You’ve got less than an hour. If nothing else, bring the shield down when I get close, then we’ll figure out what to do from there. However, I don’t think we’ll have to do that. Just get it done. I have faith in you,” I said to him.

Then without another word, I turned on my heel and headed down the hall, being sure to tuck the book into a safe place, before heading outside to find out just who, exactly, ‘my firebug’ was.\*\*\*

I wound up at the same apartment building that I’d dragged Farrow out of not even twenty-four hours before.

“Are you sure this is the right place?” I asked Declan.

Yes, master. I’m more than sure. You’ll find her on the second floor. You’ll remember the minute you see her, I promise, he informed me, giving me a small push with his tail.

I fell forward, not able to catch myself, and face planted into the dirt.

Oops, Declan laughed lightly. I’ll have to remember you can’t take that anymore.

I snarled as I got up. “Thanks, I’ll remember you said that.”

Somehow I doubted he’d hold back. In fact, I fully expected him to push me again.

When Declan and I had first bonded, he’d been a right bastard.

Hell, I'd been nothing more than a punk myself, so I could see how it would be unappealing for him to be paired with a cocky, know-it-all young guy for the rest of his days.

But we prevailed, Declan and me. We had a lot of work to do to get where we are now, but after we got used to each other, and the fact that we would spend the rest of our lives as one, we more or less got over it.

That wasn't to say that he didn't try to push every once in a while, but then again, so did I. It now meant that we were able to let shit go when, in the beginning, we'd been too busy testing each other to see the irony of any situation.

Fine. Wish me luck. Then I stopped. Do you at least have a name?

Blythe.

Blythe? What kind of name was that?

Probably the same kind as Keifer, Declan sniped.

Wow, it seemed I'd hit on a sore spot. Declan liked the human. Which was surprising. Declan didn't like anybody. Dragon rider or human alike. Hell, he barely even tolerated me!

Funny, I growled, peeling myself up off the ground and heading in the direction of the apartment building.

Luckily the door was unlocked. Otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to get in without buzzing a tenant and asking them to let me in. I didn't think the girl, Blythe, would be willing to just open the door without a little bit of an explanation as to what I was doing there.

And I sure couldn't use my abilities to get in like I'd done yesterday afternoon.

Taking the stairs two at a time, I made it onto the second landing within seconds.

Just because I used magic didn't mean that I wasn't in shape, or that I couldn't fight.

In fact, I was a pretty skilled fighter. I had to be. Especially with the Purists making sure that I was constantly on guard by attacking all of my dragon sanctuaries.

The moment I found the woman's door, I knocked, wasting no time in getting this over with.

Then the door was set on fire, and I had to take a hasty step back.

"Shit!" A woman's frantic voice yelped. "Oh my God! I'm a menace to society!"

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 10, 2025, 7:52 am*

I couldn't contain my snort of laughter as I watched the door continue to burn.

Luckily, it was a metal door.

The frame, however, was not. Which was why, when I said what I said next, it was for both of our benefit.

"Concentrate on something cold!" I yelled.

That's how I mastered the power when I was younger, anyway. I had no idea whether it would work for her.

Different things worked for different people.

Different strokes for different folks, and all that fun shit.

My brother had a different way of doing it, but I was only running on instinct right then.

Just as quickly as the fire had appeared, it stopped and the door was suddenly covered in a layer of frost.

"Good!" I yelled. "Now open the door and let me help you."

"How do I know you're not a murderer?" The woman questioned nervously.

I smirked, thinking to myself, What if I am, little sheep? What will you do about it?

“I’m not a murderer,” I informed her hoping that would be enough to convince her to at least open the door.

“Who are you?” She asked.

I sighed, leaning my back against the door.

Something about the entire situation was just comical, but I wasn’t annoyed like I would’ve been with anyone else.

I wasn’t much of one for wasting time.

Every hour of the day was spoken for, at least for me, and the last thing I needed to be doing right then was fucking around when I should be sleeping.

Tell that to my dick, though.

I winced, turning off that direction of my thoughts as quickly as I could.

Definitely wouldn’t help right now.

“Keifer Vassago,” I sighed, knowing the reaction I was about to get.

There was a giant pause, and I started to fidget.

“Is that supposed to mean something to me?” She asked finally.

My eyes widened.

That wasn’t usually the reaction I got when I told someone my name.

Knowing I wouldn't accomplish anything like this, I picked out my trusty multipurpose tool, and then started to work on the lock. Chapter 4

I don't even need alcohol to make bad decisions.-Blythe's secret thoughts Blythe

Holy shit! Keifer fucking Vassago, the cities of DFW – Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas's most eligible bachelor, richest man in the city, and owner of over thirty automotive chains, was at my door—asking to come in!

What the fuck?

And how did he know what to do to make me stop burning the door?

And why was I burning the door?

I was dumbfounded and unable to form any response to him.

See, I'd been burning things, freezing things, and then moving them around unintentionally for the last thirty minutes.

Then, of all the people who could show up to help me, this man does. He tells me to 'concentrate on something cold' and, low and behold, it freakin' works!

I chanced a look through the peephole and got nothing but an eyeful of brown hair.

Familiar brown hair.

Just when I was about to back away from the door to open the lock, somehow knowing intuitively that the man on the other side of the door wasn't here to harm me, the door clicked open without me telling it to and smacked me right in the face.

“Owww,” I moaned, taking several steps back so I could focus on the pain in my brow.

The sound of the door closing had my eyes snapping open, and I looked up, straight at a chest covered in a gray cotton t-shirt. A very well defined chest, I might add.

I followed the gray t-shirt up until I met the long, thick column of a man’s throat leading to his strong jaw covered in about two days’ worth of growth that was also surrounding a set of luscious lips.

Lips that were plump and perfect. They practically screamed ‘taste me!’

Licking my own lips, I finally looked up into the brown gold eyes of the same man who acted as if I grabbed his balls earlier.

“You did grab my balls,” he countered instantly, making me jerk my head back.

“I did not!” I disagreed loudly. “You, in fact, were the one to touch me! My leg still has the marks!”

Brows furrowed in confusion, he looked down at my legs.

Even though it was dark, I had a feeling that he could see them. That he could see the marks just as well in the light as he would be able to in the dark.

How I knew this, I didn’t know. Honestly, I was barely hanging on by a thread right now. I didn’t have it in me to think about everything that was happening right now.

“Turn on the light,” he sighed, leaning his back against the door, effectively blocking me off from the only exit.

Why wasn't I freaking out?

Why was I not running away screaming, or diving for the knife block that was less than four feet away?

He raised his brow as he watched all of these thoughts flicker through my brain, one after the other.

## Page 10

*Source Creation Date: July 10, 2025, 7:52 am*

Again, I was struck with the feeling that he could somehow read the thoughts running through my brain.

“What are you doing here?” I wondered aloud, finally taking a step back to put as much distance between the two of us as I could.

He raised his brow and that was when I realized that I could see in the dark, too.

I hadn't turned on the light yet, and this entire conversation, from the moment it'd started five minutes ago, had taken place in the pitch blackness of my entryway.

Holy. Shit.

He smiled in amusement as the expression on my face changed yet again, probably in wonder, at my realization.

“My dragon sent me to you,” he finally answered.

That's when I finally came all the way back online.

“You disappeared earlier! You touched me. You did this!” I accused, poking him in the chest with my finger.

He snorted. “Hardly. I am just as much a victim to this as you are.”

I narrowed my eyes at him. “Fix me!”

He had the audacity to fucking laugh! At me!

“Why are you laughing?” I shrieked.

Then I set my hair on fire.

“Ahhhhh!” I squealed, running around in a mini circle waving my hands.

Then, just as suddenly as I’d started, I was stopped. Not by my own volition, though. By his.

Keifer’s.

Then, blessedly, it was all gone.

A sharp pain in my temple had me falling to my knees, my vision going black.

Yet, before I could hit the hardwood floor under my feet, I was swept up into a brawny set of arms and settled comfortably into that very well defined chest.

Lights out, Blythe.\*\*\*

My eyes opened a while later and I decided that maybe I was dead.

Why else would I feel like I was flying?

That’s because you are, little one.

I squeezed my eyes tightly shut at the annoying voice that decided to show up at the worst times.

I'm possessed by a demon, I thought.

The bed beneath me started to rumble like one of those cheap hotel beds that vibrated. I wasn't aware that they were even being made anymore, let alone used. And why would I be in a sleazy motel in the first place?

I've heard worse. Demon is better than a rodent, my tormentor agreed.

Moaning, I went to sit up just as the bed tilted to the side, and I went down.

The bottom dropped out of my stomach as I started to plummet in a free fall.

Opening my eyes, I was surprised to see that not a damn thing surrounded me.

I was falling to the ground, and I was going to die. I'd be impaled on a large spike at the top of a skyscraper, and I'd be the talk of the entire city.

"You're morbid," a man's deep voice growled as I was caught before I'd even made it a few feet.

I blinked, gasping for breath, as I looked up at the man that once again was holding me. This time with a much firmer grip.

Then I looked down, finally realizing that my bed wasn't even a bed, but a massive body of scales, muscles, and sinews.

"What...what...what..." I stuttered, unable to finish my sentence.

My thoughts, however, were racing.

There was wind blowing my hair all around me, and the pounding of my head had me

wanting to scream. Then there was the dragon underneath the man's body.

"Dragon," the man, Keifer, said instantly. "My dragon."

"Your...your...your....," I stuttered.

"Yes. Mine. And I guess half yours now, too," he answered my question without me finishing it.

"My...my...mine....," I really was like a broken record.

"Yes. Yours," he agreed, not waiting for my thoughts to be put to words.

"I've gone mad, haven't I? Or maybe I'm dead—was I killed?" I asked suddenly.

He shook his head, and I let my eyes drift out to the massive red wings pumping effortlessly through the still air.

Then I looked over the dragon's head to what was in front of us, gasping as I saw the city.

I'd never even been on a plane, but here I was gliding over the city of Dallas on a goddamn dragon.

"You're not dead. Not even close. Quite the opposite, really," Keifer explained, hands moving down my shoulders to cup my elbows.

Then he sat me up until I was straddling the massive beast, just as he was doing, holding onto the dragon's scaled horn that was directly in front of my splayed thighs.

"Convenient hand grip," I muttered to myself.

“It’s filed down so I can ride on him without having a horn up my ass,” Keifer explained readily.

A little bit scandalized to think about the man at my back having anything up his ass, I changed the subject. “Is my hair gone?”

The man’s hands took a handful of it and wrapped it around my shoulders to show me that I did, in fact, still have hair.

“Thank God,” I breathed a sigh of relief. Then got a good look at my hair. “I need a haircut.”

## Page 11

*Source Creation Date: July 10, 2025, 7:52 am*

He snorted.

“Yeah, ‘cause that’s definitely a priority here,” he muttered dryly. “Why aren’t you freaking out on me right now?”

I shrugged, looking down at the city below me in excitement.

My hands were absently smoothing over the snake-like feel of the dragon’s skin, back and forth, over and over again.

I had no clue why I wasn’t freaking out. I instinctively knew I should just enjoy it while I could, because there was no way that any of this could be real. Not at all.

I was Blythe Barrett. The boring, nerdy girl next door who never did anything and nothing exciting ever happened to. The introvert who’d rather read a book than go out to party with her friends.

“Some nerd,” he muttered.

I saw a hand move out of my peripheral vision, and then a large tanned hand spanned the bare skin of my thigh, bringing my attention to my lower half, and I finally realized that I was in my underwear and a t-shirt.

On a dragon. In broad daylight. With a strange, albeit very handsome, man at my back.

“Ummm,” I hesitated, looking down at my bare legs. “You could’ve at least gotten

me a pair of pants.”

He snorted. “I tried. You set them on fire.”

“Hmm,” I hummed, knowing that could very well be the truth. “I seem to have a problem with that. That’s why I was only wearing panties to begin with.”

“When I first came into my powers, I couldn’t wear shirts for three weeks,” he smiled fondly at the memory.

I blinked, thinking about him shirtless wouldn’t be a bad thing at all. The no pants on me was a bad thing, though.

A very bad thing.

“Where are you taking me to?” I asked.

“Darcy Manor,” he answered instantly.

“Where’s that?” I continued.

“The outskirts of Dallas,” he expounded.

Yet again, not helpful.

He’s obtuse, the voice said dryly. Ask him for longitudinal coordinates.

“I don’t know the longitudinal coordinates, Declan. I only know what the address used to be. All I can do is show her, you big fucker,” Keifer growled in frustration.

“Ummm,” I said slowly. “Can you hear my voice?”

He looked down at me oddly. “Of course I can hear your voice.”

“Can you tell me why you can hear my voice?” I licked my lips. “Are we both crazy?”

“Why would we be crazy because I can hear your voice?” He asked curiously.

“It’s not normal to hear voices, Keifer. Maybe you should take me back,” I looked around the area for an exit. Maybe like the emergency slides on an airplane, the one that unfurled in the event of a crash.

“You hear voices in your head...Oy! Declan, are you talking to Blythe?” Keifer yelled over the roar of the wind past our ears.

It was so loud!

Why?

Yes.

I blinked.

“You’re telling me, the entire night, I’ve been talking to the dragon?” I asked cautiously.

I felt him nod at my back. “Yeah, sounds like it.”

I slumped in relief, but it was short lived seeing as we were suddenly heading straight for a section of Dallas that I just knew we shouldn’t be going to.

“No! We have to turn back!” I patted his hands frantically.

I didn't understand the vicious reaction I was having.

There was just something about the patch of bare land that lay in front of us that set all the hairs on the back of my arm on end, and made the pit of my stomach roil in protest.

"It'll be okay," he soothed. "It's the shield. It won't harm you."

I blinked, surprised. "How do you know it won't harm you?"

"Because my brother's bringing it down if he hasn't found a way to allow you passage. Both of which mean you'll be fine, and I swear it, no harm will come to you," he replied easily, as if he had so much confidence in his brother's abilities.

I, on the other hand, had no clue who his fucking brother was. And every cell inside my body was telling me to turn around and not to come back.

Closing my eyes when the feeling started to get too much, I braced myself for whatever bad was going to happen...yet, it never came.

Then, opening my eyes for just a small peek, I gasped.

There were dragons.

Everywhere.Chapter 5

You had me at beard.-Blythe's secret thoughtsKeifer

I breathed my own sigh of relief when the shield held as we passed through it, and that Blythe didn't pass out. Nor did any of the other bad things I'd been imagining happen.

I was also happy that the entire thing hadn't had to come down.

That would've been unfortunate, and would've meant a lot more work for me later.

Declan's mate, Story, flew up to his side, and Blythe gasped.

I looked at the two dragons, trying to see it from the perspective of a normal human being, one who only saw the dragons from afar like the rest of the world.

Both of the dragons were large and beautiful. Powerful and strong. And the love between the two was clearly evident.

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They'd been mated for a really long time, much longer than I'd been alive, and I loved them both equally.

Story loved me right back, which was a miracle since she'd had to uproot her life the moment Declan felt my call.

Normally, dragon riders bond with unmated dragons since the bond was so special between rider and dragon. But Declan, Story, and I were different.

Would always be different.

It was unheard of to have a mated pair, yet I had it.

Not that I was bonded to Story like I was with Declan. But if anyone could do it, it'd be the prince of the dragon riders.

"She's beautiful," Blythe breathed, reaching out her hand slightly.

There was no possible way that she'd reach Story, but the dragon must've sensed her wanting to touch her, and turned her mouth to the side to slither her tongue out, touching Blythe's hand.

Blythe giggled and pulled back her hand, cradling it to her side as she surveyed the land before us.

Darcy Manor was built on over nine hundred acres of prime Texas land and was the most beautiful place in the world to me.

The Meridian kept the land strong and lush, with flowers in bloom year-round and stately trees, full and green, amply shading the grounds. Grass was a luscious, vibrant green, and the water was as pure as it was thousands of years ago before humans trashed the planet.

“Oh, wow,” Blythe breathed, catching sight of one of the lakes.

Instead of the muddy greenish/brown that most North Texas lakes resembled, this one was a pure, crystalline blue. You could see all the way to the bottom, clearly making out every single thing that made the lake its home.

“Where are we?” She gasped, her eyes darting every which way to take in all that she could see.

Pride filled my chest as I said, “Our home. Darcy Manor. The dragon sanctuary.”

She froze.

“How come you’re trusting me with this place?” She asked suddenly. “Aren’t you afraid that I’ll tell someone?”

No.

Before I’d read that book, I would’ve been. Yet, I knew my father wouldn’t lie about something so important. Also, I didn’t want to tell her all what I’d just read in that book.

She was being fairly calm about everything right now, and my need was high to get her back to my place and into my safety zone. I wasn’t sure, though, how long she’d continue to be calm once she learned the things that I knew she needed to know.

Something that I wouldn't be putting off seeing as I was more of a 'rip the Band-Aid off' kind of guy.

Procrastination was the bane of all evils.

I'd given her only the bare minimum in terms of information when I was talking to her about her powers and controlling them.

She didn't know she had my powers yet. Didn't know that we were pre-destined to be mates. Nor did she know that I was the Prince of the Dragon Riders, or that where we were currently touching down was the palace that we called home.

"Oh, holy shit!" She squealed when the three ice dragons that we were fostering scrambled up to Declan's feet and started trying to crawl up his legs.

Declan shook them off like annoying insects and held out his tail to allow us to step down with more ease.

Dragon scales were unique, but resembled a large snake's in some ways. They didn't shed their skin like a snake, but the texture of it felt nearly the same.

They had huge claws and a large barb on their tails that they used for protection.

Each dragon was different in the terms of magic they possessed.

Declan was unusual, though, with his ability to communicate telepathically, which afforded me the ability as well.

A dragon rider always gained the same powers or set of skills that his dragon had and vice versa.

Since I was able to control all of the elements—earth, wind, water, and fire—that indicated to all outsiders that Declan could as well.

My brother Nikolai's powers were nearly the same as mine, but much more muted in terms of strength. Though, he had some abilities that I didn't due to his dragon possessing different abilities that he could manipulate with those powers.

Speaking of Nikolai, I found him and Farrow standing on the deck that overlooked our back yard, about fifty feet from where Declan touched us down.

Farrow was obviously pissed, and Nikolai didn't look much happier.

"Who are they?" Blythe asked from her position on her knees.

I looked down at her, my eyes taking in her glossy brown hair and warm hazel eyes. "My brothers."

Her brows rose. "They don't look like you."

I shrugged. "My brothers and I all have the same coloring, but that's about it. Our sister's blonde. She really looks nothing like us."

She nodded. "I recognize the one on the right. He's the one you were dragging out of the apartment yesterday. He's also the one who makes Macy forget that she has responsibilities—like her job. Then she doesn't come in for her shift when she's supposed to, which means I have to work my ass off to cover both of our sections."

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“Typical,” I muttered. “Farrow doesn’t do anything he doesn’t want to either. He feels entitled to live off of our family’s money rather than contributing to it by making his own way in the world.”

She raised her brows at me. “Really? And you let him get away with it?”

I sighed. “I don’t really ‘let’ him get away with it, but he’s my brother, which means I have more tolerance for his bullshit than others.”

She shrugged. “So...what now?”

I snapped my mouth shut, trying to ignore the fact that I didn’t know what was next.

Instead of letting her see my reluctance to tell her anything, I took her hands, helping her disentangle herself from the terror triplets, and walked with her hand in mine to where my brothers waited.

Her hand felt good in mine.

A warm, pulsing heat passed between us where our palms were touching. It felt almost as if we were holding a hot rock between us.

Farrow’s eyes narrowed on Blythe the moment we hit the first step, and I would’ve shut him up had I had the ability.

Nikolai, of course, didn’t have such a problem.

Before Farrow could even open his mouth and start spewing his bullshit, Nikolai put an air field around him that effectively locked in everything that he had to say.

Oh, he could still talk, but thankfully none of us could hear what he was yelling.

I smiled my thanks at Nikolai, and he gave me a halfhearted shrug. “I’ve been listening to it all afternoon.”

“You told him what was going on?” I asked, surprised.

He nodded. “He asked. I don’t lie.”

Blythe snorted but otherwise kept her mouth shut, eyes studying Nikolai.

It was a normal thing.

Something that all women did.

Of the three of us, he was the one women referred to as ‘exotic.’

Jet black hair, bright green eyes, olive skin, great build.

All of those combined to make him the epitome of tall, dark and dangerous, according to my sister.

And he did tend to draw more attention to himself than either Farrow or I did.

“Are you sure y’all are related? Y’all really do look nothing alike, now that I am studying y’all side by side.” She wondered, eyes narrowing on me.

“Don’t let our mom hear you say that. She gets kind of touchy when people ask if

we're really related," Nikolai murmured.

Blythe nodded sagely. "Okay. But really. Even he looks different," she nodded her head, indicating Farrow.

Farrow was the baby, and he looked it.

He didn't have the solid muscle mass that Nikolai or I had, and his hair was long and shaggy rather than the short, cropped military cuts that we wore.

He was also dressed in ragged jeans and a threadbare t-shirt, something that seemed to be in with teens these days.

I had on a pair of dark washed blue jeans and a polo shirt, the same thing I always wore out when I might be seen in public.

I was the face of the Vassago Motors, one of the largest auto parts stores and vehicle restorations places in Texas. There was no way I'd go out in public looking less than presentable.

Farrow, though, didn't really care what anyone thought.

Including me.

That was also why I'd yet to allow him to participate in our business meetings or any decision-making processes.

"He's special," Nikolai explained, throwing a grin over his shoulder as he started to head back to the house. "You'll love him, I promise."Chapter 6

Men are like beer. Some go down better than others.-T-shirtBlythe

“Wow,” I breathed to the other brother, staring at the youngest brother in shock. “I didn’t realize he hated me so much. All I did was tell him to tone it down with Macy. I mean, they’re having loud sex against my bedroom wall. What did he expect from me? I listened to it for two to three hours before I even said anything.”

Literally, he hated me.

He even said so. Repeatedly over the course of the last couple of hours.

“You’re probably the one that calls the cops on us all the time, aren’t you?” Farrow hissed.

Where had Keifer gone?

Why was I in here with this little shit instead of wherever he went?

And where the hell was I anyway?

Not that the place wasn’t nice, because it was, but because I was in some foreign house without a fucking clue what the hell I should do.

“I did no such thing,” I denied. “When I’ve had a problem with you two, I’ve told you. Something I’ve done on a few occasions. I’ve never brought a cop into it, though. I don’t need them at my front door, either.”

Nikolai snorted. “Ain’t that the truth?”

I turned to Nikolai and stared at him.

He was cute. Like, really cute.

Hot even.

He's the type of man you see at a club dancing with the prettiest girl in the room.

I'm the girl that stands in the corner staring at the hot guy who's totally out of her league...drooling and wishing.

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But Nikolai still had nothing on his brother.

And man was Keifer big. He had to be at least six foot five, if not taller.

Speaking of the devil, he finally rounded the corner of the living room, coming to a dead stop directly in front of Farrow, who was still ranting and raving.

“Enough already, Farrow,” Keifer growled.

“How about you make me? Oh wait, you can’t,” he sneered.

Keifer lowered his brows, and I was sure would’ve beaten the hell out of him, if the beautiful older woman hadn’t walked up to Keifer’s side and placed her hand on his shoulder.

She looked to be around sixty or so, but despite her age, she was breathtakingly beautiful.

“Who’s that?” I asked in a sideways whisper, keeping my eyes on the newcomer.

Nikolai snorted as he kicked back in his recliner, elevating his feet and even closing his eyes in relaxation.

“That’s my momma,” Nikolai sighed. “She doesn’t speak verbally, but she will sign with us.”

Noted.

That would've been weird, had I not known.

"Blythe, I'd like you to meet my mother," Keifer indicated the woman to his right.  
"Mom, I'd like you to meet Blythe."

Something silent passed between the two. No actual words were exchanged, yet I just knew that some sort of communication had gone on.

"Hi!" I chirped, waving like the dork I was.

She grinned at me, returning my smile with one of her own, but wider. Happier.

"Blythe, I know you are wondering what's going on, and I thought it'd be easier for us three to talk somewhere private. If you have questions after I explain some things to you, then she can answer them," Keifer explained slowly.

I nodded and stood, curious to see what he was going to explain.

"Well, Farrow, I can't say that it's been pleasant, so peace out. Nikolai you, on the other hand, it has been a pleasure meeting. I hope you have a wonderful night," I said as I offered the man my hand.

He popped one eye open, looked at my outstretched hand, and moved his eyes to his brother before he offered me his hand.

The whole time he kept his eyes on his brother, gauging his reaction.

I moved my own eyes to Keifer, surprised when I saw his back to us. His fists were clenched into hard balls at his sides, and his shoulders looked bunched and knotted underneath his polo shirt.

I yanked my hand away from Nikolai, barely restraining the urge to knock him upside the head for taunting his brother.

His mother, however, did not.

She walked right up to Nikolai, and smacked him on top of the head with some rolled up papers I hadn't even noticed that she was holding.

"Owww!" Nikolai whined. "You're giving me paper cuts."

I highly doubted she injured him at all, which was why I started laughing softly underneath my breath at the two's interaction.

She frowned at her son, wagged her papers once again, and then backed away, gesturing at me to follow.

I did, looking over my shoulder at Keifer as we passed, but just as quickly looking away.

His eyes were closed, but I could tell the second he realized that I was looking at him.

I heard large, heavy boots step into place at my back and wasn't surprised when I looked over my shoulder again to find Keifer there, stalking me as I walked.

"This place is gorgeous," I breathed as we passed what looked to be a formal dining room.

Where I grew up, the dining room table wasn't used for dining. Everything took place at our dining room table but meals. It was used for laundry, games or, sometimes, both. In fact, my parents, to this day, still refused to eat at a dining room table, even during the holidays.

But this dining room was something else altogether. I highly doubted that laundry was folded in this room. In the center of the room, beneath a large, round, sparkling crystal chandelier, sat the largest table I'd ever seen. Made of a dark stained wood, possibly mahogany, it easily sat twenty-two people. The surface positively shone, reflecting the image of the candles in the center of the table.

But what made this room special was the intricate trim. In matching dark mahogany, the obviously hand-carved crown molding wrapped the room where the ceilings and walls met. Long stretches of gorgeous woodworking, carved to look like dragon skin, rounded out from each wall leading to every corner of the room where a cornice, carved in the likeness of a dragon's head, sat. The chair rail and base molding also matched the dragon skin crown molding. It was incredible, and I'd never seen anything like it.

"It was built in 1850. The entire place is still original, drafts and all," he chuckled, the sound slithering down my spine at the erotic smokiness.

"You'd never be able to tell," I murmured, trailing my fingers along a stone wall that we passed.

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“It’s been remodeled recently. Every twenty years or so, to preserve the integrity of the building and its structure,” Keifer explained as he led us into a bright room overlooking the backyard. “This is the sun room. It’s the perfect vantage point to observe the goings on outside while being protected from the elements.”

“Mmm,” I hummed, as I approached the windows to look out.

There were a lot of dragons outside, definitely more than there were when we arrived.

Keifer came up beside me and looked out right along with me; the more we stood there, the more nervous I got.

Which, in turn, triggered my newly acquired, yet still uncontrolled, powers to burst forth from me.

The windows, which had been clear and open, started to haze over as frost started to nip at the edges.

It almost reminded me of the fake snow that people used to decorate with over the holidays, except this ‘snow’ was most definitely real.

It started with the windows, but slowly began to fill the room around us and then beyond to the outside.

The fountain that was right outside the door slowly froze, becoming a beautiful work of ice and concrete before my eyes.

“Holy shit,” I breathed.

The three blue dragons I had met earlier, screeched in excitement and barreled straight towards the window.

I stepped back reflexively, but Keifer’s hand at my back had me stilling as we watched the three small dragons barrel into the ice, biting into the icicles.

“Wow,” I said in awe. “They’re eating the ice.”

Keifer laughed.

“They’re ice dragons. They’re from Alaska originally, but their home was destroyed by a horde of Purists who happened to stumble upon them. Those three were the only ones to survive the attack out of the entire pack of dragons that lived there. Their parents were among the first to go, but they managed to hide those three in a hidden cave on the property,” Keifer explained softly.

My heart broke.

Literally broke for them.

“That’s awful,” I swallowed. “Why would someone do that? From what I’ve been able to gather over my lifetime, dragons are harmless.”

Keifer moved to my back, warming me. “Think about something warm. Think about taking a hot shower. It’ll stop.”

I nodded, and thought about the way I was feeling right now with Keifer’s big, muscular body at my back, warming me in a way I’d never been warmed before.

It worked, allowing the ice to melt just as suddenly as it came over me.

Then it started to get really warm.

I'm talking seriously hot.

My mind was in hyper drive as I thought about what Keifer's body was doing to my own.

In fact, I was so entranced by thoughts of what Keifer could do to my body that I didn't realize that I was putting off so much heat.

"What are you thinking about, little Blythe? Surely a shower wouldn't get you this hot," he whispered seductively.

My face flushed, and I pulled away from him abruptly, turning to find us alone in the room, and his mother nowhere in sight.

"Your mom. I thought she was going to talk to me," I asked in confusion. The room was returning to a normal temperature but I was still at a loss as to what was going on with me.

He looked at me with those beautiful golden brown eyes and smiled.

"She went to get the book," he answered.

"What book? Why would I read any book right now when what I really want is answers as to why I'm here and what the hell is going on with me?" I asked, taking a step back when he moved to come toward me.

He grinned at the movement, but wisely chose to stay where he was.

“The answers you want are in the book...it’s going to change your life. It changed mine, and well...you need to read it first, and then I’ll do my best to get answers from my mother,” he answered.

I raised a brow at him. “Well then, where is this mysterious book?”

His mother entered the sun room at that moment, bringing with her a leather bound book that looked like one of those huge old dictionaries that you’d see in a library.

She held it out to Keifer, smiled at him, and walked outside, leaving us alone once again.

“Now,” Keifer handed me the book. “Sit down and read.”

Taking the book cautiously, I did just that.\*\*\*

My vision had blurred by the time I finished reading.

I’d been so riveted by what I was reading that I hadn’t moved a single muscle except for the ones in my hand that were needed to turn the page.

Keifer, as promised, was still directly in front of me, staring at me.

He watched as I flipped the last page, and closed the book, silently.

I cleared my throat and gathered the courage to look up at him.

“You’re...you’re my mate? Is that what you’re trying to get me to understand?” I asked, voice cracking with astonishment.

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He shrugged. “I don’t really know. I’m assuming so. The violent reaction I had to you yesterday, as I touched you in the hallway when I was dragging my brother out, would suggest so. And it all makes sense,” he cleared his throat. “I went to bed last night with my full powers, and I woke up to them gone. My bonded dragon, Declan, the one we rode here on, told me to talk to my mother, and the moment I explained what had happened, she handed me the book.”

I blinked. “So you’re not sure if it’s true?”

He shook his head. “I...don’t know.”

“And how are we supposed to test this theory?” I asked in confusion.

“The book says that if we’re truly mated, then my powers will return in three days. The powers that you now have, you will keep and gain control over, and, we’ll both share the powers I’ve obtained from Declan,” he sighed. “You’ll be able to communicate telepathically with me, as well as Declan. And when we first,” he licked those full lips, “mate, then our life forces will become one and a matching tattoo will appear somewhere on both of our bodies.”

I’d read that.

I knew that.

But I still didn’t see how this was going to work.

“So, say I can hear the dragon...and that I have your ‘powers.’ Now, all we have to

do is um...have sex and we'll be mated," I reiterated. "What happens if I don't want to be mated to you?"

He grimaced. "I don't think that we'll have a choice, or at least that's what I gathered from the book."

"What do you mean?" I leaned forward slightly.

He took the book from me, and flipped to the halfway point, before handing it back over. "Second passage, page 81."

I took the book from him and started to read once again.

The mated pair shall not be able to resist. This is the way of the dragon riders. A way to forward a thriving bloodline for the royal family. A way to ensure that dragonkind can have someone strong enough to fight if ever there shall be a need. The pull will start out small, but eventually, the pair will not be able to fight it any longer. The longer you wait, the stronger the mating will be.

I blinked.

"So we don't have a choice," I whispered.

He shook his head. "No. And it doesn't say how long, either. Then again, this could all be just ramblings. This could be just one man's experience. It may not happen to us."

I could tell he didn't believe the words he spoke.

Hell, I didn't believe it.

I'd read the book.

And too many things had been spot-on to not be true.

"What now?" I asked quietly.

"Now, we get our answers," he stood up and gestured to someone in the yard.

I looked over to see his mother drop one of the smaller dragons to the ground carefully before starting inside.

And I wasn't sure that I wanted her answers.

I was pretty sure that I wasn't going to like what she had to say. Chapter 7

Some people will only like you if you fit in their box. Don't be afraid to shove that box up their ass.-T-shirt Blythe

Later that night, as I got into the bed I'd been given, I realized I was in deep shit.

Last night, in my own apartment, I'd gotten into bed thinking about the hot man that had touched me in the hall, and tonight, in this—his—castle, I was getting into bed on the verge of being mated to him.

He'd walked me to my door a little over a half hour ago, kissed me softly on the forehead, and walked a door down to his own room before disappearing inside.

I'd closed the door only after I'd heard his close and then walked stiffly into the room.

A room that was magnificent. The bed was massive, with huge sage green pillows,

crisp white sheets, and about a hundred and fifty decorative pillows.

The walls were a rich shade of brown, making the room feel homey and soothing.

There was a huge wall of windows that overlooked the back yard, and I knew that as long as I lived, nothing would ever compare to the view of the dragons flying over the rolling hills of the estate.

Then there was the bathroom.

I'd never seen a bathroom so big—the large claw foot tub dominating the majority of the room.

After taking a quick shower, I dressed in a t-shirt that'd magically appeared on my bed after I'd gotten out, and climbed between the most decadent sheets I'd ever felt before in my life.

Sinking down until I practically melted into the mattress, I finally allowed my mind to wander to where it wanted to be.

The t-shirt smelled like him.

I assumed he dropped it off while I was in the shower.

I also didn't think he'd had anybody else do it, since I'd witnessed it myself when he'd told the head of staff to give the remaining workers the weekend off.

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Therefore, it was either him, his sister, his mother or one of his two brothers, and I just felt that he wouldn't allow anyone to intrude into my room with me in the shower.

That's about when the shaking started.

My mind went into overdrive as I thought about how my life would change if what I read in that book—what was already happening—was actually true.

If I was mated to him, then what?

Would I still be able to live in my apartment?

What about my cat?

My job?

Money?

Would I be allowed to do anything here?

In fact, I had myself in such a tizzy that I didn't realize that there was someone in my room with me until a large hand came down on either side of my head.

“Deep breath,” Keifer instructed, his face so close to mine I could feel his breath.

I gasped, taking in a lung full of air, and looked into his brown gold eyes.

When had he turned on the light?

“What...what...what’s going on?” I gasped for air.

“You’re freezing. You need to think about something else,” he decided.

I closed my eyes, and started thinking about the way his body heat made me feel.

The way it had felt when he’d stood at my back earlier.

The way my sex had clenched in anticipation.

The way he smelled like fresh air and clean man. The way I was surrounded by his scent.

My eyes opened on a gasp, and I knew he knew what I was thinking.

Because my panties were on fire. Literally.

Again.

“Gah!” I squeaked, kicking the covers off my body in agitation.

He didn’t move, though.

Only watched as my panties, yet again, disintegrated from my body.

My hands went down to cover my hairless sex, but not fast enough for him not to see.

His eyes were zeroed in on my hands.

It was almost as if he was willing them to move with the power of his mind alone.

“Why does this keep happening?” I gasped.

He grinned, and then maneuvered himself until he was lying beside me in the bed.

“Close your eyes and think about the light turning off,” he instructed me.

I did as I was told, thinking about how, if I were to use my hands and I wanted the light out, that I’d twist the tiny knob with my two fingers.

The click of the lamp had me opening my eyes to pitch blackness.

“Holy shit,” I breathed.

“When I was twenty-one and first came into my powers, I was masturbating in the shower,” he said without preamble.

I blinked into the darkness.

“W-what?” I gasped in surprise.

I felt him nod as he turned to his side, and let his hand rest on the crest of my hip.

“Yep,” he nodded. “Coming into your powers is usually accompanied by a sexual act.”

I blinked. “I wasn’t doing anything sexual when I got yours.”

“No,” he agreed. “At least, not that you’re aware of. But the act of mating is sexual, which is what is inevitably going to happen between us.”

I bit my lip as he started to run his fingers over my hip.

“Aren’t you worried that you’re going to accidentally catch on fire?” I whispered worriedly.

He snorted. “I may not have my powers, but I can still feel them there. You’re channeling them through me,” he explained. “And I can’t be hurt by my own powers.”

Which explained why he wasn’t worried about me setting fire to anything important that was attached to him.

“What...” I stopped when I felt his hand go lower down my stomach, coming to a rest at the top of my pubic bone.

He didn’t move it any further, but I sensed that he wanted to.

I respected that he didn’t, though. And respected it even more when he curled his big body into my side and sighed, “Go to sleep. We have all day tomorrow to talk.”

I nodded, closing my eyes, and took his advice.

Tomorrow would be soon enough.\*\*\*

Keifer

My cock was in heaven.

Literally.

I’d never felt anything so good in my life.

I'd had plenty of women since I'd turned sixteen, but holy shit, this was an all-new high.

I took stock of my surroundings without opening my eyes.

My bed smelled like peaches and cream.

My eyes slowly peeled open, and I was left with an eye full of hot, juicy pussy belonging to the woman that I knew in my heart was my mate, Blythe.

And that thing she was doing with her mouth was phenomenal.

She was working my cock with hot, wet pulls of her mouth, and I couldn't help but lift my hand to run along the inside of her thigh.

I started down low next to her knee, and slowly moved my hand up until it rested at the apex of her thigh. One long finger lay against the seam of her sex, not quite touching, but oh so close that she started to writhe her hips to coax me further.

I obliged.

Moving my other hand to span her waist, I urged her over until she was straddling my chest with her knees.

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Her pussy was in the perfect position for me to take a lick of her juicy lips, and I buried my face into her sex.

My eyes rolled back in my head as I got my first taste.

Sweet. Oh, so sweet.

I growled low in my throat, as I plunged my stiffened tongue deep into her cunt.

I was buried inside of her from chin to nose as I slowly started to fuck her with my tongue.

She ground down onto my face, gyrating her hips as she worked her swollen clit down onto my chin.

The prickly hair of my beard rasped along her inner thighs as she started to move faster and faster.

My hands came up to spread her ass cheeks apart, widening the lips of her sex with two thumbs, allowing me to bury my face even deeper.

Tilting her hips, I found her clit with my tongue and slowly sucked it inside of my mouth, pulling hard as I coaxed her orgasm to the surface.

While I was doing that, my left hand moved to her opening, and I plunged one thumb inside of her.

She screamed around my cock, inadvertently swallowing me even deeper inside her enchantingly beautiful mouth. Long, loud, and drawn out.

The vibrations around my cock had the come in my balls boiling as it rapidly started to rise to the surface.

Within moments, I was on the verge of coming, causing me to work her harder. Faster.

We came together.

Her pussy clamped down on my thumb as her tiny bud tightened. Juices poured from her sweet pussy into my waiting mouth, and she moaned.

The vibration, once again, did me in.

I came, pouring my come into her throat.

She swallowed convulsively around my cock, sucking hard until the last precious drop was pulled from my dick. Then she slid off my cock, releasing the tip with a soft pop, and slowly rolled to her side to fall haphazardly onto the pillow lying next to her.

I licked my lips, tasting her essence on my tongue, and didn't say a word.

What the hell had just happened?

I'd never had an orgasm that had taken my wits like that before.

My brains were mush, and an odd tingling was starting at the base of my cock, almost as if a second release waited in the wings.

“What...how...Jesus Christ that was amazing,” I finally managed to say.

I looked over at her to see her eyes glazed, and her face looking sheepish.

“I didn’t...uhhh...mean to.”

I laughed. “That’s okay, honey. You cannot mean to do that to me all day long. My body is yours for the taking.”

She smiled. “I woke up, and my mouth was already around your cock, but I wasn’t able to pull away. I...you...I just couldn’t.”

I nodded, my eyes closing.

My cock, however, was still just as hard as it had been when I’d woken up.

Not one iota smaller.

If anything, it was harder than it had been before.

It was pulsing with the beat of my heart, and the fact that I could still taste her on my lips wasn’t helping anything either.

“I think...I think I’m still really horny,” she admitted, closing her legs to rub them against the other.

The friction must’ve been what she was looking for, because she started to moan as her hand slipped down to her beautiful pussy.

I fisted my cock, working the beast in long, slow pulls as I watched her pleasure herself.

Licking my lips, and relishing in the taste of her, I worked myself to another orgasm before I was even aware of it.

Once again, we came at the same time, and I was left with my head pounding.

“There’s something wrong with me,” she gasped. “Jesus, I didn’t think the book was true. I thought I’d wake up, and it’d all be a dream.”

I understood her sentiments, but felt the magical strings tying us together. I may not have had much experience with a mate, but I was beginning to recognize her as a part of me.

I didn’t realize just how much my cock would want her.

And if I understood right, it could only get worse from here.

“Blythe,” I pushed up until I was on an elbow beside her.

“Yes?” she rose up on her own elbow, incidentally placing her heaving chest excruciatingly close to my mouth.

I licked my lips, and was about to tell her that I wanted to fuck her brains out when all the alarms throughout the entire manor started shrieking, and Declan was suddenly in my head.

Intruders.

One word. One single, terrifying word, and I knew this wouldn’t be a good day.

Meet me outside.

Looking over at my mate, who wasn't quite my mate yet, I said the only thing I could think of.

"I need you to go to the panic room. It's at the end of the bedroom wing. I'll have Nikolai watch for you to join my sister and mom there. You'll be safe," I told her urgently, helping her up and yanking her t-shirt down.

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She looked alarmed. “But...what about you?”

I smiled. “Don’t worry about me. I was born for this.”Chapter 8

They say unconditional love exists. It does...but only with dragons. Men are shitheads.-Blythe’s secret thoughtsBlythe

“Does this happen often?” I asked Keifer’s mother and sister.

I’d only met the sister, Skylar, as Nikolai shoved her into the room with us, and then sealed the opening off with a wave of his hand.

Much the same as I’d been ordered to do by Keifer.

My mind started to wander as I thought about him being out there without his powers. Defenseless.

He’s hardly defenseless, dear heart, the dragon’s smooth voice slithered through my subconscious.

I took a deep breath and said, take care of him.

“Do we go into lockdown and get shoved into holes?” Skylar clarified, raising her eyebrow at me in question.

At my nod, she shook her head. “No. This isn’t normal. Well...I take that back. It’s normal lately. But not here. Our havens all over the country have been coming under

attack, but no one can figure out just how they're being found. Not that I know what happened this time, but something major had to have happened if we're in the safe room. Keifer's not one to overreact."

Her admission didn't make my stomach stop rolling.

But with nothing else to do, I let my mouth speak. Something that I always found myself doing when I was nervous.

"When I turned eighteen, my mother died, and she said I would be special when I got to be older. I never believed her until this morning," I told them, staring into space as I relived this morning through my memories. "I know I don't know Keifer all that well, and I feel like I have a ton more to learn, but I sense a connection to him. Something deep."

Skylar smiled. "I've never seen Keifer act the way he has this past day with anyone in my entire life. Even during high school when he was the king of football. Trust me, I'm sure he feels much the same way."

I smiled. "I used to watch the dragons from my apartment window," I told her. "Used to daydream about riding one. Being in the clouds, feeling the wind in my hair," I sighed wistfully as I remembered yesterday's flight. "Keifer made one of my dreams come true within the first twenty-four hours of knowing him."

I felt a cool, dainty hand touch my forearm, and I turned to find Keifer's mother, Bella, staring at me. Then she touched my cheek, letting me know that she understood what I was going through.

Hell, I wished I did. I was so fucking lost it wasn't even funny.

The minute the door sealed off, my heart froze in my chest, and I felt like I hadn't

taken a deep breath since.

“Mom knows sign language, do you?” Skylar asked softly.

I turned to Skylar and shook my head. “I know the alphabet, but I’m really slow on the uptake. I can sign it quickly, but I can’t comprehend unless they go really, really slow.”

I smiled apologetically at Bella, and she patted my hand twice before removing a spiral bound notebook from her side.

She started scribbling words down, and I looked down to read them.

Do you have any questions? She wrote.

I shrugged.

“Probably a bazillion,” I admitted.

She smiled and made a come-on gesture with her hand, so I started to ask my questions.

“How long were you able to resist your husband?” I asked.

She didn’t even pretend that she misunderstood what I was asking her and instead just started to scribble away.

He and I were able to stay away from each other for a little over forty-eight hours. The third night we knew each other, our relationship became a little...explosive.

I smiled, remembering this morning, and how I really couldn’t stop myself from

taking him.

Hell, I'd practically woken up with him already in my mouth.

I was shameless!

"Is that how you lost your voice...did he breathe his dragon fire into you?" I asked carefully.

She nodded.

His father told my Dodd about what would happen. When we were blocked off from our family, the day before he died, he started to write in that book. For hours he wrote, and I lay against him, telling him what I thought should be in there. Then we were attacked, and Dodd dispensed the first wave of Purists. But they gutted him, and he died a very slow and painful death. He was able to breathe his dragon fire into me, and I willingly took it, knowing it was something he wanted me to have. To raise our sons like they should be raised. To be with them and help them carry on their legacy.

I watched as she wiped a lone tear that had escaped, despite her tight control, and I felt my own responding tears start to take over.

"I'm a mess," I muttered to myself.

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Skylar snorted. “Welcome to our show. We’re clan fucked up. Keifer’s our leader.”

I laughed out loud.

“Awesome,” I muttered.\*\*\*

Two hours later found Skylar, Bella and I playing Go Fish.

“Do you have any twos?” I asked Skylar.

She narrowed her eyes at me. “You know I do, you horrid woman.”

I snickered.

I liked Skylar. She was spunky, sassy, and was really good at keeping my mind off of the things that wouldn’t help us out.

Mainly whether Keifer was dead in a field somewhere, while I was laying on pillows in a climate controlled room that smelled like apples and had an unlimited supply of snacks and drinks.

Taking the twos, I placed all four of them down on the pillow in front of me and turned to Bella. “Do you have any Kings?”

She narrowed her eyes at me and handed her three over as well.

“You’re such a cheater,” Skylar whispered under her breath.

I'd also learned that the Vassago women were sore losers.

We'd played Clue, Monopoly, and Go Fish in the time we'd been cooped up in here, and I'd won every time.

I was about to reply to her comment when a shiver tore through me and suddenly a burning pain was tearing through my arm.

I cried out, dropping my hand of cards, and yanked my shirt from my body.

I looked down at my arm as a line appeared, hideous and red, starting at the top of my shoulder and running down to the base of my elbow.

The line was four inches thick, and its edges were jagged, almost as if a wound had appeared and then healed before I even had the chance to look at it.

Your hurts are your mate's hurts. When you are hurt, your mate will display the same wounds, albeit healed. You will be one, and she will forever know when you are hurting.

The paragraph slid through my head, reminding me, instantly, of what I'd read, and I knew that something had happened to Keifer.

Something that hurt so bad that he could barely breathe.

"Blythe," Skylar gasped, scooting forward on her knees to get a better look at my arm. "What the hell's going on? What is that? That wasn't there earlier."

I looked into Skylar's scared eyes and started to explain.

"In the book I read," I met Bella's eyes for encouragement. "It said that when one of

the mated pair gets hurt, the other will feel it. The wound will display on his or her body in exactly the same place as the mate who actually got wounded.”

Skylar drew in a breath, and Bella’s eyes filled with tears as she ran her hand down my arm.

It wasn’t tender at all.

Not even a little bit.

“He’s hurt,” she breathed. “We have to get out of here. I can help him.”

I nodded, in complete agreement with her.

Concentrating on opening the door, I was pulled up short by Bella’s cool hands on my cheek.

When I drew my eyes to hers, she shook her head slowly.

“Don’t,” she mouthed.

And, although it hurt me, practically gutted me to know that Keifer was out there hurting, I closed my eyes and nodded. “Okay.”

“Mom!” Skylar cried. “We can’t. I have to go. I can help!”

I shrugged my shirt back over my head, and looked down at my hands, keeping an eye on the other two in my peripheral vision.

Bella shook her head and Skylar slumped into her recently vacated seat, crossing her arms over her knees and resting her head on top of them.

“I have four more weeks until I graduate with my BSN in nursing,” I told them both.  
“Will I be able to finish?”

Maybe if I talked, I’d forget about how my heart hurt. How worried I was. How scared I was that there’d be nothing left to go back to when I finally left this room.

He’s fine, slithered through my brain, and I gasped, tears starting to fill my eyes.

Thank you, Declan, I replied.

“What was that?” Skylar questioned.

“What was what?” I asked in confusion.

“You made a face. The same one Keifer makes when he’s communicating with Declan.”

My brows rose.

“Really?” I asked, and then waved my hand in front of my face. “That was Declan. He was telling me that Keifer’s alright.”

They both slumped.

“Okay and okay are two different things. Freakin’ men. They’re all the same,” Skylar mumbled.

“We...” I stopped when a roll of magic poured through me, and the sealed door opened revealing Nikolai.

“Get up, we need you,” Nikolai pointed at Skylar.

When I went to stand, too, Nikolai shook his head. “Not you.”

I laughed. “Why don’t you try to stop me?”

He glared, but I noticed he got out of my way without trying to stop me. I followed the fleeing form of Skylar as she raced towards the back of Keifer’s ornate house.

I hadn’t seen that much of it, only a few of the rooms, but the ones I had seen weren’t these, so I had to stop and wait for Nikolai, who I could hear stomping along behind me when I lost sight of Skylar.

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“What’s wrong with him?” I whispered.

He looked at me. “How’d you know he was hurt?”

I lifted my sleeve and showed him, which made his eyes widen.

“Holy shit,” he breathed. “I read that in the book when Keifer gave it to me once you both were done reading it...but I didn’t think that was true.”

“Tell me,” I ordered.

He sighed and grabbed the back of my arm, pushing me in the direction of a long hallway as he started to talk. “A claw ripped through his arm. He’ll be okay, but he’s hurt enough that he has no feeling in his hand. That’s why I came and got Skylar.” Then he muttered, “Not that the fucker would stop fighting long enough for us to look at it. Dumbass.”

“Ohh,” I breathed as I saw Keifer standing up outside, yelling at a couple of young men. “Holy shit.”

His arm was wrapped up in what looked like the t-shirt he was wearing when we rushed out of the room that morning. Silver duct tape was wrapped around that holding it in place, and he was standing there shirtless, with a real life sword in his hand.

He had on a pair of black jeans that I felt was probably a really good thing seeing as he had what looked suspiciously like wet stains on his pants, and I could do without

the confirmation that it was indeed blood.

“Keifer, let me see your arm!” Skylar growled as Keifer turned once again and started to talk to the two men instead of listening to his sister.

“I want you two on the perimeter, along with Morales and Hughes. Make sure Jones is aware of what’s going on, and y’all please ask your dragons to be on the lookout for another breach. What we think is that they were just a scouting party, not a live party. So keep your eyes peeled, and run your patrols in eight-hour shifts so you don’t get tired and sloppy. I’ll inform the other men what’s going on, and if I have need, I’ll have Declan contact you, got it?” Keifer asked.

The two men nodded and hurried away towards two dragons that were lying on the lawn.

They were beautiful, of course, but they weren’t Declan and Story.

“Keifer, this is bad. If you can’t feel your hand, then that signals nerve damage to me. You need to come into the infirmary and let me take a look at it, at least. Okay?” Skylar tried again.

When he whistled and Declan, who’d been lying in the grass next to the other two dragons, roared, I knew it was time to intervene.

He wouldn’t be going anywhere until he was checked over.

“Keifer?” I called softly.

Keifer stiffened slightly and turned to look at me.

His front was covered in blood, but I assumed that was from his arm again, and not

any other injuries.

His expression was thunderous as he saw me standing outside.

“What are you doing out here?” He asked angrily.

I blinked, surprised that he’d used that tone of voice with me when he’d done nothing but speak softly to me in the day and a half that I’d known him.

Back straightening, I said, “Obviously, trying to make it so that my mate,” I spat the word, “doesn’t lose his arm because he’s being stupid.”

He frowned. “Go back to the room.”

I laughed. “How about you make me?”

He took a step forward, and I took a step back.

This continued until I was back in the house and backing up the hallway as he stalked forward.

“This would be more convenient if I knew which room was the infirmary,” I muttered to myself.

Declan, the ever helpful dragon, shot the information to my mind as if it was a picture, and I suddenly knew I needed to take the last hall on the right, which led straight to the infirmary.

“You’re going the wrong way,” he growled when he saw me take the turn.

I snorted. “You’re not my mother. I don’t have to listen to you.”

He narrowed his eyes. “You’re my mate, which means what I think should play a significant part in what you decide to do. Which, if you knew what was good for you, would be to go back to the safe room and stay there until I come get you.”

Once I was in the doorway, I turned and started walking forward, only to come up short two feet in with a large arm around my waist.

“Don’t turn your back on me,” he growled against my neck.

I shivered, leaning my head into his shoulder as his beard rasped against the back of my neck.

“I just wanted you to be checked out,” I whispered hesitantly.

Everything along my back felt hard.

His abs. His chest. His arms. His cock.

Everything.

He sighed and breathed against my neck, the hot, minty breath washing over me, making my nipples pebble.

“Okay,” he finally agreed, letting me go reluctantly before he went to the exam table his sister was standing next to and hopped on. “Nikolai, you know what to do.”

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I heard steps behind me start to retreat and knew Nikolai followed his orders without questioning them.

Skylar got to work, removing the bandages with a pair of wicked looking scissors, and I walked up to her, helping remove the tape and bandage as well.

“Jesus,” I whispered as the tape started to peel off. “Did you need so much tape?”

He snorted. “Wait till you see it, then tell me if you think I used enough tape.”

I understood what he meant when all the tape finally came off, and the only things that was left was the layers of gauze.

They were saturated with blood, and the moment the wound was revealed, I nearly lost it.

Although managing to stay on my feet, my head did get woozy, and my face was suddenly cool.

“Holy shit,” I breathed, utterly flabbergasted at what he was able to do with the way his arm was torn to shreds.

I could see muscle, bone, fat, and debris in the wound.

“Holy shit,” I repeated.

“It’s bad, don’t get me wrong, but I don’t see you not healing this. Especially with

Declan's abilities. You've probably got about two and a half to three days until it's fully healed," Skylar inspected the wound.

Keifer grunted. "Been worse."

I couldn't even imagine.

"Worse?" I whispered. "Days? What?"

Keifer looked at me and grabbed my hand, his eyes clear of any anger as he said, "I nearly had my entire leg bitten off four years ago. Declan has the ability to heal himself, as well as others. Something that's extended down to me. I don't heal anywhere near as fast as him, but it's definitely significantly faster than most humans."

I nodded, understanding what he meant completely.

"Kind of like this?" I asked, lifting my shirt sleeve and showing him my arm where the new scar was located.

He sucked in his breath, and it literally felt like all the air in the room was sucked out with it.

"Holy fuckin' shit," he breathed. "Oh, holy shit."

His uninjured hand lifted, and he gently trailed his finger over the large scar on my arm.

"Does it hurt?" His voice cracked.

I shook my head. "No."

I didn't think it was a good idea to tell him that, initially, it'd hurt like a motherfucker.

He didn't seem to like me having this mark and I was fairly sure it'd be bad for him to know he'd inadvertently caused me pain.

"God," he shook his head, leaning forward and pressing his lips to the scar. "I hoped that part in the book wasn't true. I can only imagine how many scars you'll have by the end of our relationship."

I winced. "Yeah, that might suck a little bit."

He smiled, and then winced when Skylar poured alcohol over his arm straight out of the bottle.

"Goddammit, Skylar. You could've warned me," he gritted through clenched teeth.

Skylar, with her long blonde hair and warm green eyes, flashed her straight white teeth at Keifer. "Oops."

I smothered a laugh, and dropped the hand that was holding my sleeve up, concealing it from Keifer's still searching eyes.

"What happened?" I asked quietly.

His eyes moved up from my shoulder to me, and he winced.

"A search party of Purists, stumbled through the veil. Normally all they do is bumble around looking, never to find a thing. Except today one of them found us. It was pure luck, and we dispatched them within seconds, but one of the younger dragons fell from a cross bow to the eye, and did this on the way down," he indicated his wound.

I frowned. “Well, they have to have some clue where you are, otherwise they would’ve never gotten so close to you in the first place.”

He nodded. “Yes and no. Really, all they do is follow the Meridian. That’s what feeds the dragons. Keeps them alive and healthy. They can follow the Meridian much the same way as any human can, which is by following the rich vegetation.”

I blinked.

“What?”

He closed his eyes and his face blanked as Skylar started to pick debris out of the wound.

“The flowers. Rolling meadows. Beautiful rich grass. It’s easy to find, especially here in Texas where the land is so dry that the vegetation not located along the meridian does not thrive. All you have to do is open your eyes. Flowers bloom all year long, deer eat copiously. I’ll have Declan take us down the line of the Meridian, and you’ll see,” he rumbled gruffly.

I thought back to our trip here, and tried to remember if I saw a difference in the vegetation, but couldn’t recall much. Mostly because every time I tried to recall what I’d seen, I could only remember studying the dragon I was riding on, as well as the one that had flown beside us.

“So other than the small group of Purists accidentally finding where you live, what’s the verdict? Will you tighten up security? What?” I asked, moving forward so my butt leaned on the padded bench Keifer was leaning against.

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His shoulders touched mine as he shrugged.

“We control burn. The shield we have conceals us pretty well for the most part, but the Meridian makes the grass and flowers grow past our shields. Those are the parts that we burn and make look like the surrounding area. Although we end up burning quite a bit of the land beyond ours so it all blends in,” he admitted.

“How do you control burn?” I asked. “That’s a lot of land to be burning.”

He opened his eyes, and they were swimming with mirth as he answered. “The dragons.”

I blinked.

“The dragons...ohhh! They breathe fire?” I gasped.

He snorted. “Of course. What kind of dragons would they be if they didn’t breathe fire? But that’s just the fire dragons. There are many kinds of dragons. The ones you saw yesterday afternoon, the small ones, those are ice dragons. They can breathe cold air and turn the surrounding area into ice. Then there are the lightnings. They cause thunderstorms. Big ones.”

I was fairly sure my eyebrows were somewhere in the vicinity of my hairline.

I had no idea there were different kinds!

“What’s your favorite kind?” I asked.

Now I was just trying to distract him, and it was working if the smile on his face was anything to go by.

He was enjoying telling me about his life and the dragons.

“They’re all special in their own way. I control all of the elements, because Declan can. He’s what you would call a Primordial Dragon—or a dragon that controls all elements. He can combine some of his abilities and make many things that you wouldn’t otherwise see with any specific dragon. My favorite thing he can do is make smoke. It’s less subtle than the other special powers, but we use it the most. Situations where we need a quick escape, we dispense smoke, and it’s like we disappear. We can do that to some extent, but mostly it’s just the smoke that he blends into that also aids in our disappearance,” he explained.

“Out in the alley that night,” understanding dawning. “There was smoke. That’s what you did?”

He nodded and smiled. “Yeah. Exactly what we did.”

A smile that went straight to my vagina, causing it to become wetter than it already was. Which also caused me to squirm.

“That’s pretty nifty, Mr. Vassago,” I confessed, hiding my emotions. “I’d thought that you’d disappeared. Whatever it is you do, it’s pretty amazing.”

“Alright, it’s stitched up,” Skylar sighed. “Don’t use it unless you absolutely have to. That means you’ll have to eat with your other hand and try to do without a shirt for the next two days. Or, at least, one that doesn’t touch it.”

I had to admit that seeing him without a shirt for the next two days was kind of heartbreaking. I mean my poor eyes, right?

## Ha!Chapter 9

I believe in love and peace, but I say fuck a lot.-Coffee CupBlythe

“I have four more weeks of school left. I don’t give one flying fuck if you don’t want me to go. I’ve worked my ass off for this, and I will finish!” I practically bellowed in Keifer’s face.

His eyes narrowed on me.

“Have you heard nothing I’ve said over the last hour?” He asked in disbelief.

I narrowed my eyes.

“You’re going to work!” I yelled.

He growled. “Yeah, I’m going to work. But my place of business also has protections and wards all the fuck over it! Your school doesn’t!”

I shook my head.

“Keifer,” I said softly. “This is a deal-breaker for me. I’ll quit my job. I’ll move out of my apartment. I will not, however, quit school. I’ve busted my ass for two and a half years to become a nurse, and I’m not quitting. I’ve already missed one clinical when you got hurt yesterday. I’m not missing one more.”

He sighed. “You’re not going to give me this, are you?”

I shook my head. “No.”

The closer his body got to mine, the more aware I became.

It'd been a day since he was hurt, and of course, he was already back to full strength. His arm had healed miraculously well, and he didn't show a single sign that he'd been hurt only twenty-four hours before.

And I hadn't seen him since last night.

I knew he'd slipped out of the bed we'd slept in sometime around midnight, and here it was six in the morning, and I had to go find him to tell him I'd be leaving to go to my clinicals whether he liked it or not.

Last night I'd been too scared of his injury to initiate anything physical between us, and he'd been too hurt.

Now here we stood, him healed, both of us angry, and he still had no shirt on.

That pull between us that started out as just a little tingle the first time he touched me was now a full blown, raging inferno inside of me that clawed at my stomach.

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He felt it too.

I could tell, not only because his eyes were telling me all that I needed to know, but his erection was tenting the front of his drawstring pants.

“I’ll take you. I’ll pick you up. You’ll not leave, and you’ll call me with hourly updates,” he reminded sternly.

I shook my head, my mind moving from the inspection of his beautiful abs, and that mouthwatering V of his lower stomach that led to the promise land.

“I can’t have my phone on me,” I told him. “Not that I have my phone. Oh, my God! My sister’s probably going nuts!”

That’s when I set my hair on fire.

I screamed.

Keifer sighed.

“Cool stuff, Blythe,” Keifer replied impatiently.

I glared at him, smelling the rubber band in my hair starting to burn.

Literally. Fucking on fire.

I didn’t feel the heat, amazingly.

I could see the fire swirling around my face, but when I touched it, I didn't feel it at all.

"Why don't I feel it?" I questioned.

He sighed, his anger evaporating the longer he watched me.

"It's a part of you. It'll burn anything that's not a part of you, but anything that is a part of you won't be hurt."

I closed my eyes, concentrating on the hot coffee on the table next to my hand, feeling the heat leave me and replacing it with the soothing cool that Keifer had taught me only a few hours before.

Channel it into something. Don't make yourself become it. Make the area around you become it. If you are to be off on your own, you have to be able to control it, or those around you could suffer.

So that's what I did.

I turned my iced coffee into a hot one.

"Good," Keifer muttered. "Very good."

I smiled, opening my eyes to see him watching me rapturously.

"Do you want to drive...or fly?" He asked.

I gave him a look.

One that said clearly, are you crazy.

Yes, yes he is.

I smiled at Declan's telepathic intrusion into our conversation, and Keifer's eyes narrowed.

"That really disturbs me," Keifer muttered.

I grinned. "Car, please."

He just shook his head. "Alright. You've got ten minutes before I'm ready to go. If you're not there, then I'll assume you came to your senses."

I snorted, and went to my bedroom to quickly change into the scrubs that Skylar had been kind enough to loan me. Though they didn't have the patch that the college uniform required, I knew that it'd have to be good enough for now. Otherwise I'd have to stop by my apartment for them, and that would take more time than I had.

Luckily, Brooklyn, my very good friend that I'd met on my first day of nursing school, promised to stop by my apartment for my name badge, stethoscope and paperwork. Fortunately, I was able to send her a message on the Internet.

Not to mention I needed my charger, laptop and the books that I'd need for class tomorrow afternoon—which she'd also informed me she'd pick up.

Oddly enough, in Keifer's haste to get me to his house three days ago, he'd not been able to bring anything of mine with him since I kept setting it all on fire.

I, on the other hand, had been passed out so I couldn't bring anything even if I had wanted to.

Hurrying through brushing my teeth, I rushed out the front door, waving to Bella as I

left.

She waved back and smiled happily as I moved out the door.

My heart light, I ran down the length of the walk, and let my fingers trail over the sleeping dragons that were curled up on the patio furniture outside the door, before coming to a sudden halt at what I saw before me.

Keifer was on a bike.

He had on a leather vest that declared him a member of the 'Dragon's Warriors MC.'

And he looked freakin' hot.

All of that sexual energy I'd done my damndest to ignore over the past twenty minutes came bubbling right back to the surface, burning right through me and nearly bringing me to my knees.

I'd always had a thing for bad boys.

And the fact that Keifer was the ultimate bad boy had my knees shaking, and my panties melting.

Luckily not in the bad way.

Keifer, at seeing me watching him, stiffened, and he looked down as the muscles in his chest swelled as he hung on to the handle bars with a harsh, unforgiving grip.

The muscles in his arms bulged causing the veins to stand out in stark relief.

And I couldn't help but pant over the perfect nurse porn he was offering to me.

I loved veins.

I had a fascination with veins.

I'd had it since I was a kid, and now it was only intensified.

"You getting on or not?" Keifer rasped, still not looking up.

I walked forward slowly, eyes on him as I went.

Once I reached his side, I placed both of my hands on his solid shoulders, and swung my leg over the back of the bike.

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When I would've place my hands gently around his middle, he laughed, and hauled me in tight.

"We're gonna go hard and fast, baby girl. You're gonna need to hold on tighter than that," Keifer growled, then threw his body into starting the bike.

It rumbled to life, and the vibrations the bike sent through my body had me humming in anticipation almost immediately.

The only thing that kept me from succumbing to my building orgasm was Keifer's yelled command.

He must've felt the same desire burning through him as I did, because he knew exactly what to say to get me to calm down.

He definitely knew how to control my desires

"Don't you dare come without me. The next time you come will be with me inside you, buried so deep you'll feel me in your throat," Keifer growled over the powerful engine.

I closed my eyes and attempted to reel in my wayward thoughts about seeing just what this bike could do...while sitting still...with him inside me.

Pounding deep.

I didn't hear his hiss, but I felt it.

It vibrated through him, and I felt it in my chest that was pressed up against his back.

“Twelve more hours, and you’re fucking mine,” he promised.

Then he roared out of the driveway.

I gasped in surprise, burying my face into the back of his leather vest, and held on for all I was worth.

My body became one with his.

We moved fluidly on the back of his bike. We leaned into the turns together, and when he’d lean forward, my body would automatically follow.

When he’d stop and place his feet down onto the ground to look both ways, my legs would become pliable, allowing him the movement he needed without thought.

I couldn’t hear him at all, though.

I could only hear the way the wind whipped through my hair and the rumble of the powerful machine between my thighs.

And by the time I arrived at the front entrance of the hospital, I was a panting mess.

My legs wouldn’t even work.

Not even when all of my friends in my class gaped at me.

“Your friends are waiting, baby girl,” Keifer drawled, twisting around and whispering into my ear.

It was then I realized that he'd shut the engine of the bike off, and was just sitting there, allowing me to hug the back of him.

I slowly let him go, regret in every movement I made while I disentangled myself from him.

If anything, I felt worse now about leaving him than I did earlier when we were standing there yelling in his entranceway.

"It'll be okay, baby girl," Keifer soothed, holding out his hand for me to stand.

I gave him a droll look. "And how will you know that?"

He smiled.

"Because I'll make it so."

And, surprisingly, I believed him.

"Alright," I agreed quietly, taking his hand and swinging my leg over the back of the bike.

I stumbled once my feet were on the ground, falling into him.

Whether on purpose or not, I was happy to have his arms around me from the front this time.

He looked up into my eyes, and I studied his face.

Both of us could feel the heat, the desire, the pure need, pulsating between us.

Sadly, both of us had duties, and we wouldn't be able to do anything about it until tonight.

He had some huge meeting with the small chains of Vassago Motors that were interspersed throughout the city, and I had a clinical to knock out.

But I didn't want to leave him.

"Go, before I neglect my duties and take you with me," he said gruffly, slapping me on the ass.

Reluctantly, I backed away from him enough to give him a small kiss on the scruff of his cheek, and started to turn away.

He smiled, started the bike up, and said two words over the roar of the engine.

"Be good."

With that, he was gone, and I was left watching him go.

Once I could no longer see him, I joined my gawking friends on the sidewalk, and we started our trek inside.

It wasn't until we were on the elevator that the dams burst open as they all started clattering at the same time.

"Holy cannoli," Merry whispered.

"Jesus Christ on a crutch, I need a sponge bath already," Justin fanned himself.

"Who was that?" Brooklyn hissed trying to get a word in edgewise.

I smiled. “That would be Keifer.”\*\*\*

By noon I was dying.

Not because I was literally dying, but because I was burning hot. Not overheated, sweaty, temperature hot. Oh no, I was horny hot as in squirming, throbbing and frustrated.

Every move I made had my pussy clenching, aching at its emptiness.

And I needed Keifer.

Badly.

Was he feeling the same way I was?

Or was it just me?

At least all the work Keifer had put into me this morning had my newfound abilities under check.

“I’m taking my lunch break,” I told my preceptor.

“Sure thing, honey. You looked wiped,” she said sorrowfully. “I’ll be here when you get back.”

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I agreed and started walking the maze of the hospital.

Although we all got to the hospital at the same time, the others in my class did not work on the same floor as me.

I was destined to have lunch all by my lonesome, and I was grateful.

They all knew me too well, and they'd see through my lies instantly, unlike my nurse preceptor that I'd spent the morning with.

I walked down the steps, and circled around the main floor before I finally came upon the cafeteria.

Lucky for me I was one of the first ones in, and the lunch crowd hadn't yet descended.

Otherwise I would've gone mad.

"What would you like to eat, honey?" The lunch aide wanted to know.

I looked at my options, and frowned. None of them looked appetizing.

However, knowing I had to eat whether I wanted to or not, I pointed at the red beans and rice.

She served up a large helping, and scooped it into a to-go box before handing it over to me.

I took it from her, thanked her, and grabbed a Coke on the way to the checkout.

“That’ll be four twenty-five,” the attendant said, sounding bored.

When I went to reach for my wallet, I found a large, muscular forearm handing the attendant a twenty.

I followed that forearm up, heart starting to race, as I recognized the tattoos, and then the shirt, before coming to a stop at Keifer’s face.

“Hey,” I breathed.

Keifer smiled. “Hey, baby girl.”

Shivers rocked down my spine as his words, and the rasp of his voice poured into me.

And all the pent up heat and need I’d been repressing for the last two hours burst free of me, and poured into him.

He visibly took a step back, and then closed his eyes as if to gain his composure.

“Here’s your change, sir,” the woman sounded much more upbeat this time.

I didn’t spare her a glance as Keifer took my hand and started to lead me down the hall.

He dumped my food into a trash receptacle as he went, and came to a stop at the elevator.

Once inside, he pressed the top floor, one that wasn’t even finished yet, and turned to stare at me.

“This was a bad, bad idea,” he murmured, eyes going dark and stormy.

I blinked.

“What?” I asked breathlessly.

We both stayed on opposite sides of the elevator car, both of us knowing that if either of us moved, we’d be doing something in the elevator that would singe the eyes of even the most sinful of people.

“Coming here. I couldn’t stop myself though. It’s like I can sense your need. Your body calls to me like a fucking fire I can’t put out,” he groaned, glancing up at the numbers, watching them as they went at a turtle’s pace.

I chose not to say anything, knowing he knew I felt the same way.

It was as if he were under my skin, permanently there for eternity.

He knew my wants, needs, and desires.

Finally, the elevator made it to the top, and the doors opened to emit us into a dark opening.

“What’s up here?” I asked. “And how’d you get it to come to this level? I thought it was under construction?”

I hadn’t even realized that we were able to get up here. Not that I would’ve tried.

I had no reason to be on this level, and I wasn’t one to break the rules, whether they were stated or not.

He smiled, sending another shiver racing down my spine.

“I got some powers back,” he hedged, holding his hand out at eye level.

Then formed what amounted to a fireball in the palm of his hand, lighting the way.

He turned, holding out his opposite hand for me, and we walked.

I took in our surroundings, eyes very aware of the fact that, wherever we were was a fire hazard, as well as a work in progress.

The hospital had run out of money, and had temporarily halted renovations on this floor.

Tools, trash, and building supplies lay discarded.

Saw horses periodically littered the middle of the floor, creating a cluttered maze that Keifer had to slowly maneuver us around, less I trip and break my face.

“How long’s your lunch break, Blythe?” Keifer asked into the darkness.

I closed my eyes and groaned. “Less than thirty more minutes, I’m sure.”

He growled low in his throat. “That’s enough...for now.”

Then I was whirled around and slammed into a concrete pillar before Keifer’s lips met mine.

It was completely dark, so dark that I couldn’t see a thing.

But oh, could I feel.

Keifer's hard, muscular body held me up against the pillar, and with his hands he started to shove my pants down.

They fell to my ankles, stopped by my shoes, with a soft clink as my hemostats and scissors hit the floor, causing me to gasp in surprise.

"Keifer," I groaned in disappointment. "We can't do this here."

"Oh, fuck yes, we can," he growled, his scratchy jaw going to my neck as he started to suck lightly.

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My eyes closed in bliss as he forced one of his legs in between my own, and slowly started to rock that large, hard thigh back and forth between my legs.

My clit ground against his leg and I no longer cared where we were.

All I cared about right then was fucking Keifer.

Feeling his hard cock pounding inside me, fulfilling that promise he made on his bike this morning to fill me so completely I'd feel him in my throat.

"I agree, honey. I'll fill you up so completely that you'll never forget the feel of me inside you," he growled against the V of my scrub top.

Spontaneous orgasms had to be a real thing...right?

"Keifer," I fidgeted nervously. "I have to tell you something."

He laughed, dragging that scratchy jaw of his along the sensitive skin of my breasts.

"I know, honey. I knew the minute I sunk my hands inside that sweet little pussy."

I closed my eyes in mortification.

"I never wanted to give it to anyone else...but for you...I want to give you everything I have. Everything," I panted as he went down to his knees and breathed in deeply when his face came into contact with my vagina.

I winced, feeling embarrassed at the intimacy of the position.

Keifer, though, if the rumbling of contentment in his chest was anything to go by, loved the feel and scent of me.

And when he buried his face into my pussy, licking the seam of my labia, I lost all conscious thought.

My hands went to the top of his head to steady myself as I tried to lift my shaking leg to allow him more room.

He chuckled when he heard my whine of need.

The vibration of his chuckles sent little shocks of pleasure along the lips of my sex.

“Oh, God. Oh, God,” I repeated over and over again.

“Not God. Just a man. But I’m guessing we’ll both be seeing heaven once I get you ready for me,” he rumbled against my skin.

I licked my lips, eyes closing in defeat as he speared his stiffened tongue through the lips of my sex, and straight into my entrance.

His nose ran along my clit as he slurped loudly, sucking my juices from me.

“You...I’m...Oh, God, I’m ready. I’m so ready it’s not even funny. I’ve been ready for days.” I told him urgently, tugging on his ears to get him to come up.

He chuckled, standing up.

But he did so at his own pace, not at my insistent urging.

“Well, we’ll see now won’t we, Blythe?” He murmured against my lips.

The flavor of myself burst onto my lips as his tongue delved into my mouth.

I could smell myself on his skin, and taste myself on his tongue.

And it turned me on beyond belief.

“Please,” I whispered once again.

He smiled, pulling back just far enough to allow him to slip his hands down between us. Where he then started to loosen the buttons of his jeans.

I’d never thought to be thankful for button fly jeans, but right then, at that moment, I was. Mostly because, if his other hand hadn’t been holding me up, my knees would’ve collapsed out from under me.

It didn’t take long before I felt the insistent prod of his cock at my belly.

Looking down, I wished that I could see what he was about to thrust inside of me.

Then, suddenly, I could.

Light burst around us, small balls of fire lit the ground surrounding us, lit in an intricate pattern in a circle at our feet.

“Holy shit,” I breathed.

First, because of what had happened, and secondly because I could now see Keifer’s cock that was poised to enter me, and I was suddenly much, much more nervous than I had been. Sure, I saw it the other morning up close and personal, but this was

different.

“It’s never going to fit,” I mused, looking at the monster with wide, scared eyes.

Keifer let his cock go, and brought his hand up to my chin.

Lifting it, he stared into my eyes for long moments before he nodded at what he saw there.

“I was made to fit inside you, and you were made to take me. The gods don’t make mistakes. We were meant to be, and I know you know it,” he rumbled softly.

I nodded, looking into his eyes for another long moment before I felt his cock move away, followed by his body.

“This first time,” he murmured. “Has to be done from behind. I don’t know why, but something inside of me is urging me to do it like that, and I can’t seem to find the will to fight it. Is that okay?”

I nodded. “Yes.”

He leaned forward and gave me a soft kiss on the forehead before he turned me around.

“Hold onto the pole,” he instructed.

I did as he said, moving both of my hands up to hug the pole that’d previously been at my back.

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Anticipation warred with nervousness as I felt his hand on my back, pressing down lightly to urge me down further.

I followed, bending at the waist.

I felt the lips of my sex part, and I knew his eyes were fastened to me.

I could practically feel the caress of them as he let his gaze trail over my sex.

“I can’t believe you’re giving me this gift,” he rasped, trailing the blunt edge of a finger down over my tailbone, past my anus, to come to a stop at my entrance.

Then, slowly, he eased that finger inside.

And I clenched as a moan escaped from my mouth.

“So wet,” he murmured.

My eyes closed as one finger became two, and then just as quickly two became three.

“I think I’m ready,” I pleaded hopefully.

He didn’t answer with his words. But he did answer it nonetheless.

By lining the head of his thick cock up with my pussy and then slowly sinking inside.

I don’t know what I was expecting, but pain was at the top of that list for sure.

But I didn't feel it. Not one twinge of it.

The one thing I felt, more than anything, was pure, unadulterated joy.

He was inside of me, and everything in my world felt right.

His hands on my hips. His lips at my ear. His breath playing over my skin.

The way his massive cock filled me up to capacity, and the way my heart seemed to gallop away the moment he was completely inside.

Nothing else mattered.

Not the way my palms dug into the concrete pillar. Not the way my legs started to cramp because of the odd angle. Not the way the air chilled my body.

Nothing.

All that mattered was Keifer.

The way his cock felt as it plunged and retreated inside of me.

My eyes rolled into my head as I straightened up and threw my head back in elation.

Keifer's finger snaked around my hip, fluttering lightly over my clit, and I started to come.

He didn't, though. Instead, focusing completely on me, and the orgasm that never quit.

When my head sagged back against his shoulder, and my body seemed to deflate, he

started to pound inside of me harder. Quick, short thrusts sent him over the edge in a matter of moments.

He growled as his orgasm tore through him.

I felt his stomach muscles tighten, and his hand that was still covering my mound also tightened, grabbing the flesh between my legs as he slammed into me.

I screamed as a second orgasm tore through me.

It was such a surprise that I didn't brace for it. Which also meant that my legs gave out, and the only thing holding me up was Keifer's hand between my legs, his palm still digging into my clit, and the hard length of him grinding inside of me.

He poured his seed into me in hot spurts, and my eyes crossed as each splash bathed my womb in molten fire.

It didn't burn me, but I felt the extreme heat.

Warming me from the inside out.

Just when I thought I was coming down from that orgasm, my wrists started to burn.

And I meant burn literally.

Crying out, I yanked my arms from around the pole, and stared at them in agony.

Brands encircled my wrists.

Spiral tribal symbols, about an inch and a half thick, on each arm.

“What...how...motherfucker that hurts!” I cried out.

Not even the pleasure of our coupling could take away from the pain of my hands.

And only when I went to grab Keifer’s for support did I realize that he was going through the same thing as I, yet suffering silently.

The branding didn’t last long, and by the time it was finished, it didn’t even hurt.

Yet the memory of the pain was still there, and I didn’t think I would forget that anytime soon.

I also wouldn’t forget the way his cock still filled me.

Nor the way his arms encircled my torso throughout the branding in a show of silent support.

“You okay?” He rumbled softly against my neck.

His whiskered jaw scrubbed softly against my neck, and a shiver tore through my body.

“Yes,” I whispered just as softly.

He hummed, and then withdrew his still hard cock from my pussy.

Come streaked out in his wake, bathing my inner thighs with his essence.

With no other recourse, I bent down and tugged my panties up my legs, grimacing slightly at the wet feeling.

“You know,” I said mildly. “Not that I mind having you come inside of me or anything, I’d just like to have a way to clean it up next time. I still have to be here another four hours.”

He leaned forward, after tucking his cock back inside of his jeans, and gave me a light kiss on the lips, followed by a longer one that had a lot of tongue, and not a little bit of groping.

“I kind of like the idea of me being inside of you for the rest of the day. For my scent to play along your skin while I’m thirty minutes away from you,” he whispered softly against my lips.

I snorted. “You would.”

He grinned unrepentantly and started to button up his jeans.

“You ready to get back?” He asked with a raised brow.

I nodded, then looked around us.

“You’ll need to do something with those,” I pointed at the balls of flame.

He grinned, winked, and then suddenly everything around us was plunged into darkness.

I gasped as I watched the fire travel from the balls on the floor, straight to Keifer’s hand. Then, as if in a special effect movie, the flame was absorbed into Keifer’s skin.

What looked to be the light from the fire traveled up Keifer’s arm, almost as if a light was shining out from the inside, and moved under his shirt until I couldn’t see it anymore.

“Holy shit!” I breathed, lurching forward and stopping only when I came into contact with Keifer’s body. “You have got to tell me how to do that!”

He laughed, dropped his mouth down to mine, and kissed me playfully.

He only pulled away when I was gasping for breath and barely standing once again.

“Ready to go now?” He rumbled happily.

I knew he was smiling, even though I couldn’t see him.

“Yeah,” I nodded, laying my head against his chest. “Now I’m ready.”

I felt the hard ridge of his cock against my thigh just before he turned me in his arms and let his arm travel down the length of my arm until he had my hand.

“Let’s go.”

I followed him blindly, thinking there was something profound there.

It took real trust to follow someone through the dark, and I had that with Keifer.

I trusted him with my life.

With my very soul.

And I was so glad to know that we’d be together forever.

Instinctually, my hand went down to the one connected with Keifer’s, and I let my hand trail over the skin of my wrist.

“The tattoos are raised,” I whispered in awe.

“Nowhere in my dad’s book did it say these markings would hurt like a bitch when they made their appearance.” Keifer grumbled.

I didn’t have any insight on that fact, so I stayed silent as I came to a stop at what I assumed was the elevator.

Then a thought occurred to me, and I narrowed my eyes.

“How are you able to see where we’re going?” I asked him.

He let my hand go, pressing the button to the elevator, proving my earlier guess true, before he answered.

“You could, too, I think. I...” he hesitated. “Borrow powers from Declan. For instance, there are times when I can move faster than any normal human should be able to. I can see in the dark, but not all the time. It’s like I have to ask permission first. Usually Declan has no problem sharing, and now it’s so ingrained that I just think the thought, and I have the ability to do so.”

I blinked. “Is borrowing powers normal?”

The doors to the elevator opened, and blessed light filled the darkened corridor. “Yes and no. I know for a fact that my brothers and I can. From each other and from our dragons. Actually, all of us can borrow from any dragon rider. That’s part of being in the royal family.”

“Royal family?” I asked in alarm. “What do you mean royal family?”

He turned his back on the elevator door as he crossed his arms.

His hair was slightly ruffled from my attentions earlier, and his mouth was wearing some of my glittery lip-gloss.

I smiled, looked down, and waited for him to answer me.

“I’m the Prince of Dragons. I’m the highest ranking official of the royal family. No one is higher ranked than me,” he told me softly.

I looked up from contemplating my shoes, eyes wide. “You’re what?”

Ok, I might have shrieked it.

But holy fuck! What did that make me? A princess?

Keifer smiled, revealing his beautifully straight white teeth to me.

“Yeah, I’m the prince. Which means you’re my princess. Princess Blythe of the Dragon Riders,” he grinned.

“What...how...what...how...” I stammered.

He walked forward, pinned me against the wall, and slammed his mouth onto mine.

Then the bell sounded that I was on my floor, and Keifer broke off.

Slowly.

Too slowly.

When the door started to close, I pushed at his chest, but he didn’t move.

“I’m gonna be late. The doors are gonna close,” I whispered.

I was in no way, shape, or form in a hurry to get out of his arms.

Not after the last thirty minutes we’d just spent together.

But he didn’t need to know that.

The doors that'd been closing at his back slammed back open and stayed that way.

Narrowing my eyes I asked, "Did you do that?"

He winked. "See you tonight."

With that, he let me go, and moved to the opposite side of the elevator, crossing his arms across his chest, and leaning his butt against the railing before crossing his feet out in front of him.

"You're late," he reminded me when I looked at him in stunned silence.

That worked.

Jumping forward like I'd been cattle prodded, I rushed out of the elevator car.

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I can proudly say that I only looked back at him twice before I made it to the nurses' station.

A very full nurses' station.

"Holy hell," one of the nurses breathed.

"You have sex hair," another one of them said.

I blushed and turned my face away.

"Honey child, don't let them tease you. When you find the right one, and he wants to come up to your work on your lunch break for a quickie, you do it. Because when you find that one that wants you that much, you hold onto them with both hands, both legs around their waist, and your hair if you need to. Trust me on this," an older woman continued sagely.

I smiled timidly at her.

And I took her advice to heart.

After all, she was right. Chapter 10

You call it nagging. I call it listen to what I said the first fucking time.-Keifer to Farrow  
Keifer

"What the fuck is that?" Nikolai asked when I got back to work.

I looked down to where his eyes were trained, and held up my arms for his inspection.

“It happened when I was with Blythe this afternoon,” I explained. “I’m thinking they’re the mating marks that the book was speaking about.”

Nikolai’s eyes went wide. “You fucked her at work?”

I grimaced.

“I couldn’t help it! It was like waves of agony and desire were pulsing through me. And the fucking hospital is over twenty miles from here, but the closer I got to her, the more I felt it. Then this happened,” I indicated my hands. “I think it was just time. I had no control over it at all.”

Before Nikolai could respond, a massive roar filled the air surrounding and inside the shop.

The roar was so loud that car alarms started to sound, as well as building alarms.

Windows shattered, and the metal building around us started to shake.

I dropped my tools that I’d just picked up and started running blindly toward the open door at the front of the bay.

Nikolai was not far behind me.

A few of the other riders that worked in the shop started running toward the front too, as they’d been trained, and I was thankful they were there.

Declan would’ve never roared like that had there not been something very wrong.

Our dragons tended to follow us around.

So even though I rode in today with Blythe, I knew he was close by.

The same went for the other dragon riders.

Most of them chose to drive since it brought less attention to them, seeing as not all of them could veil themselves like Declan and I could.

“Holy fucking shit,” I breathed as I made it outside. “Holy fucking shit.”

Declan’s mate was at Declan’s feet, laying deathly still.

But as I got closer, I could tell she was still breathing.

Which was also about the time I saw the metal ball sticking into her side.

“What the fuck is that?” Nikolai asked me, coming to a stop a few feet away from Story.

He would’ve come closer had Declan allowed him. But when a dragon’s mate was injured, the dragon only allowed the most trusted of allies close, and right then it was me.

I fell to my knees beside Story’s head, hands going to the scaled skin at her neck where the ball was attached.

I pressed down lightly around the ball, seeing the area surrounding the ball separate from the metal.

Lightly, I pulled on the ball, wincing when the skin pulled with it.

“It’s barbed,” I said. “Declan, let Nikolai in here to look. I need his help.”

Nikolai came slowly, watching Declan warily as he made it to Story’s side.

When he was where he wanted to be, he dropped down to his knees. “Pull it up slightly so I can take a look.”

I did, and Nikolai dropped down to look at the small gap that was there between the metal ball and Story’s skin.

He pulled out his pocketknife and said, “I think it’s spring loaded. If I can pull it in, I think it’ll loosen.”

Declan growled when he saw the knife, but he didn’t stop Nikolai when he fit the backside of the blade between the gap and pressed in.

The metal barb clicked inside, and I felt one side loosen.

“It worked,” I said hurriedly. “Do the rest.”

He did, working the last three loose before saying, “Okay, pull it back.”

I did.

As soon as I did it, Story’s eyes snapped open and she leapt off the ground, hovering ten feet above our heads.

Declan’s snout lifted, and he ran it along the underside of Story’s belly before dropping it down to Nikolai’s head, and blew out a puff of air, ruffling his hair.

“You’re welcome, big guy.” Nikolai patted Declan on the back.

They shot her, Declan thundered.

Sometimes, when dragons got overly emotional—mad, sad, happy or whatever other intense feelings they were experiencing—they had difficulty communicating their thoughts. Once they calmed down enough to concentrate, then they were able to send their thoughts to their human counterpart.

Who shot her? I asked him.

Purists. White van. They took off the moment she went down, Declan growled.

“It was as if the ball somehow cut off her link to the Meridian. When that link was severed, she instantly came out of her hover as if all of her powers were gone. She’s lucky she didn’t have a far fall and that she was here instead of somewhere we wouldn’t have gotten to her quickly enough,” Nikolai breathed, studying the ball.

I looked down, studying the ball myself.

“Declan says they shot her from a white van,” I told Nikolai.

“Perdita says the same.” Nikolai nodded his head.

Perdita was Nikolai’s dragon, and she was a beautiful white beast of a dragon who was only slightly smaller than Declan.

She practically made Story look like a dwarf.

She also had an attitude from hell.

“She followed the van,” I guessed.

Nikolai sighed. “Yep.”

“Where’d the van go?” I persisted.

“Parking garage on Texas Street,” Nikolai held the ball up.

Then my eyes widened, and I yanked the ball from Nikolai’s hands.

Hauling my arm back, I threw the ball as far as I could across the street.

So hard that my arm was sore and aching.

Luckily, there was a large abandoned building across the street from us, because had it been occupied, there would have been all kinds of casualties seeing as the motherfucking ball blew up.

Boom!

The building exploded. The blowback from the explosion forced all of us that were standing at the entrance of our building to be blown backwards. We were thrown through the air about ten feet back into the building beyond us.

My head smacked into the hard metal building, and my body screamed on impact.

I was alive, though.

“Should’ve probably seen that coming,” Nikolai groaned as he gained his feet further down from me.

I winced, climbing to my feet and surveying the damage.

Dragons did much the same around us, coming to their feet from where they’d gone down.

“So it has a timer,” I surmised.

The building was trashed.

Nothing viable remained.

Bricks were scattered about fifty to a hundred feet in a large arc surrounding the building.

“Boss,” Jose called from behind me.

I blinked, turning my face to Jose.

“Yeah?” I asked.

He pointed to a spot on the ground, and I looked down to see my phone on the stained concrete at my feet, buzzing.

I swooped down, picking it up from ground, and grimacing when I got a look at the cracked screen.

“I keep telling you not to leave it in your front pocket,” Nikolai chastised.

I flipped him off and opened the phone by sliding my thumb against the bottom of the screen, happy to see that it at least still worked mostly.

I winced when I saw that there’d been at least seven missed calls from Blythe.

Remembering what she’d said when I’d gotten hurt by the dragon’s claw ripping into my arm earlier in the week, I hit Go as I called her back.

“Why do you keep getting hurt?” She yelled worriedly.

I smiled. "I'm okay."

"You've hurt your head and your back. And I stabbed a patient with a tongue depressor," Blythe yelled.

I snorted. "I'm sure your patient will live."

She hissed, "What happened?"

I closed my eyes, broke down, and told her.

I knew she'd be worried.

Hell, I was worried.

If I wanted the same courtesy extended to me, then I'd have to do the same for her when I needed to.

And right now was one of those times.

So I explained the last fifteen minutes.

"Holy shit," she breathed. "That could've been very, very bad."

I nodded, even though she couldn't see me.

"That it could have," I agreed solemnly.

"Is Story okay?" She worried.

I looked over to Story and Declan, relieved to see that they were both okay, albeit a

little shaken up.

She's fine, Declan promised.

I assumed he projected that to the both of us, because in the next moment, Blythe said a very relieved, "Good!"

"Alright, baby. I've got to go. We have some things we need to figure out, but I'll still be there to pick you up after your shift, okay?" I promised.

"Yeah, honey. That's fine. I'll see you in a few," she whispered.

We both stayed silent, waiting for words that neither one of us had said, but both of us felt.

It went on so long that I finally said, "Bye, baby."

I'd say it eventually, though. I just needed to hear it from her, first.

"What do you want us to do?" Nikolai asked impatiently the moment I disconnected.

I looked at the men surrounding me. At Declan, who was still next to Story.

Murder rippling over the scales of his back and sparking in his eyes.

Nikolai and Perdita watching me with anticipation.

"We go hunting," I answered threateningly. "Nikolai, go to the parking garage, see what you can find. Jose, you and Sin go to the sanctuary with Story. Watch over her and let us know the minute you get home. Declan, you're with me."

“And where are you going?” Nikolai asked.

I smiled.

It wasn't a pretty smile, either.

It was one filled with promises of death and dismemberment.

“Declan and I are going to go have a chat with Father Joseph,” I smiled.

Declan shivered and watched closely as the others did my bidding.

Story got up into the air without any effort, flying away and disappearing before all our eyes.

Nikolai mounted Perdita's back and flew out, leaving four men at my back, and Declan at my front.

“Alright, boys,” I called, turning to the men left.

All of them were dragon riders.

I didn't bring anyone in to work for me that I didn't trust implicitly.

They worked with me day in and day out, hand in hand with me and my family.

Ford, Alaric, Jean Luc, and Dorian were four of my best men, and I knew they'd take

care of the shop for me while I was gone.

None of our properties were ever left unprotected.

Had something happened to the sanctuary, the shop would be the next best thing as a temporary headquarters for the dragons, due to its extensive warding and spells.

Not that they made a fucking difference today, seeing as Story was shot right outside the fucking ward.

“Take care of the place. Get the work done that needs to be done. I’ll be back later,” I told them, then I mounted Declan’s back, and we rode to Father Joseph’s house of worship.\*\*\*

“So, who was that man earlier? How’d you meet him?” Brooklyn asked as we rode down the elevator later that day.

I grimaced.

Brooklyn and I had been best friends for a really long time, so it was odd for me not to tell her something as important as this.

But how did you tell your best friend that you’re mated to a dragon rider? And that I could now set my vagina on fire to wax my hair?

“I met him when he came over to get his brother out of Macy’s apartment. He’s the one that makes her scream so loud,” I informed her.

“The brother, or the man you slept with?” Brooklyn asked in confusion.

I looked at her in outrage.

“The brother! Keifer’s mine!” I exclaimed in affront.

Brooklyn laughed.

“So you what...saw him and asked him to come jump in your pants?” She asked with a leer.

I narrowed my eyes at her.

“No. Yes. Well, maybe. I’ve only known him a few days,” I finally settled on.

That was okay, wasn’t it?

Then she wouldn’t think I was keeping anything from her because I hadn’t known him long enough, right?

Wrong.

She knew me.

When you start nursing school, you form a bond with your classmates.

A bond that lets the other know which role you’ll take.

Kind of like you spread the ass cheeks while I do the wiping kind of bond.

It was forged out of necessity, and we knew each other better than we knew ourselves.

Which was why she didn’t buy the whole, ‘I’ve only known him for a while’ spiel.

“Blythe,” she sighed tiredly. “If you’re not ready to talk about it yet, then just say that. Don’t lie to me, though.”

The elevator doors opened, and I settled on a little bit of truth.

“He’s a part of The Dragon’s Warriors MC,” I told her hastily as she walked quickly out of the elevator to allow a man in a wheelchair to come in.

I followed behind her as I told her that, and she whirled around.

“Do you know who they are?” she asked suddenly.

My brows furrowed.

“Yeah, why?” I asked.

I’d actually looked up the MC in my spare time today and was surprised that they actually had a website. They also had a riding schedule, a fundraising page for the community, and volunteer events that they’d be attending.

“They’re...they’re dragon riders. Like real ones!” She whispered frantically.

I blinked.

“Yeah,” I said slowly. “So?”

Her eyes widened. “So? Do you know how bad they are?”

I blinked.

“Bad?” I parroted.

She nodded fiercely. “My uncle Joseph goes on and on about how bad they are. How evil they are, and what they do to the world. They’re bad people and the dragons are bad, too.”

I was shaking my head before she’d even finished.

“They’re not bad people,” I denied, my stomach tightening in realization that my best friend didn’t understand. “They’re actually really good. I promise. I wouldn’t be with Keifer if he were bad.”

She worried her lip.

“I only know what my Uncle Joseph tells me, and I do trust your judgment. But please be careful before you get too far in and can’t get yourself back out again,” she whispered.

She was whispering now, because Keifer was on his bike directly in front of us, watching the two of us converse in low whispers.

He didn’t get up and come over, though, and I was thankful he gave me that.

Brooklyn was a good person, but she’d been raised in an Amish commune, of all places.

She’d been shunned after her Rumspringa when she didn’t return to her family and went to school to become a nurse instead. She hadn’t been back since.

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Her Uncle Joseph was the only family member to have any contact with her, and that was only because he himself had been shunned, and knew what it felt like.

But it was obvious that her uncle had been feeding her garbage and not being much of a friend in her time of need.

“Do you want to meet him?” I asked quietly.

Brooklyn’s brown eyes widened, and I could swear that she was trembling.

When she didn’t answer, I smiled and took hold of her hand.

“Come on, you’ll love him,” I urged, pulling her the rest of the way to Keifer.

Keifer’s eyes took everything in as we walked towards him, and he smiled once his eyes caught onto my new mating tattoo on my wrists.

Causing him to look down at his own with a small smile on his face before looking back up.

The entire time, I could feel Brooklyn dragging her feet.

Had she really not wanted to do it, though, I knew she would’ve said no. She was good at saying no.

I, on the other hand, wasn’t. Which hinted why I was here with Keifer in the first place, because it was obvious that most sane people wouldn’t have gone with a man

they didn't know who was telling her how to control her powers.

"Hey, baby," Keifer murmured softly once we were close enough.

He dismounted his bike, a different one than before, and stood up to his full height.

I felt Brooklyn tense, and her feet start to drag even more, but she made it to him and stopped slightly to the left of my right shoulder.

"Hey, Keifer," I whispered happily.

Keifer's eyes smiled down at me, and then moved to Brooklyn before going back to me.

One brow was raised in question, and shrugged. "I wanted you to meet Brooklyn Abernathy, my best friend in the entire world. Brooklyn, this is Keifer Vassago."

Brooklyn's mouth dropped open, and I had to smother the urge to laugh.

Yeah, if you're not getting it by now, Vassago was a huge name around Dallas, and hell, even in the entire Northern Hemisphere.

"Nice to meet you, Brooklyn Abernathy," Keifer nodded formally.

Brooklyn gave him a small smile. "Nice to meet you too, Mr. Vassago."

Keifer grinned, "Call me Keifer."

Brooklyn swallowed. "Call me Brooklyn."

"Brooklyn wanted to meet the man that I disappeared off the face of the Earth for," I

teased.

Brooklyn denied it, but I could tell it was only halfhearted. She really did want to meet Keifer.

She was protective over the few friends that she had, having known what it felt like to lose those she called hers.

“That would be me,” Keifer rumbled. “I’m sorry to have caused you undue worry. I’ll be sure to have Blythe call you, have I a need to kidnap her again.”

Brooklyn burst out laughing, and I knew Keifer had broken through.

I winked at him before pulling Brooklyn into my arms.

“I’ll see you tomorrow for the big test!” I called with false cheer.

Tomorrow was the final test of our entire nursing career before finals, and from what we’d heard, it was also the hardest.

Brooklyn was a fucking beast, though, and usually had no problem learning the material.

I, on the other hand, didn’t absorb it as easily as she did, and I was always forcing myself to sit down and study when I really, really didn’t want to.

“Make sure you make some notecards. And you need to make sure to bring your clinical notes for her to sign off on. Okay?” Brooklyn whispered into my shoulder.

I patted her back. “Yes, Mom.”

Brooklyn punched me in the leg before she sighed. “See you tomorrow. It was nice to meet you, Keifer. Make sure she studies.”

Brooklyn left, and Keifer wrapped his arm around me as he watched her go.

“You got a good friend, there,” Keifer promised with assurance. “I could tell she didn’t want to come over here, but I knew she’d do it for you. Take care of her. She’s sad.”

I blinked and turned into his arms. “How do you know she’s sad?”

He gestured to her as she walked away. “The way she walks. She feels sad when she talks. I don’t know. I just know.”

I blinked, and shook my head. “She’s Amish... well she was Amish. Hell, I don’t know what that is anymore. When she came of age, she went out on her Rumspringa—when all Amish youth go out to get some life experiences—except she didn’t want to go back after it was all said and done, and she lost her family. I think she’s upset about not being able to see her little sister most of all.”

Keifer made a sound of agreement. “Nobody deserves to lose their family, Drakina.”

I blinked. “Drakina?”

Keifer nodded and turned to mount his bike before answering.

“Drakina is what dragons call their mates. Seems fitting, doesn’t it?” He asked with a smile.

I nodded in understanding.

“Yeah, I guess it does,” I handed him my bag.

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He stowed it in the saddle bags, and offered me his hands.

“Hop on, Drakina,” he ordered with a wink.

I smiled, took his hand, and ‘hopped on.’

He started the bike up and yelled over his shoulder. “I have a few people I’d like you to meet!”

I leaned forward and gave him a kiss on his shoulder since it was the only thing I could reach.

“Sounds good, Dragon,” I teased.

His eyes were alight with humor as he looked at me over his shoulder.

“Seems fitting, too,” he murmured before he roared out of the parking lot. Chapter 11

95% of the time when I’m smiling, it’s over something I said, not over something you said.-Blythe to BrooklynBlythe

We arrived at an enormous warehouse off the Old East Side twenty minutes later.

Instead of stopping at the front door, like I’d assumed he was going to do, someone opened the massive front door a crack, and Keifer rode straight in.

Since it was daylight, we hadn’t had the light on.

Therefore, when we got inside the large garage, it was pitch black and I couldn't see a freakin' thing.

Squeezing Keifer a little more tightly, I waited with bated breath to see what we were going to do next.

When the engine turned off, the noise in the cavernous space was nonexistent, almost making my ears hurt with the lack thereof.

"What's going on?" I asked quietly.

Or at least tried to.

The whisper echoed off the walls of the garage, and I blinked as I heard a couple of deep chuckles.

Closing my eyes, I willed there to be light when I opened them again and was pleased to see that there was as my eyelids parted.

"Good girl," Keifer said, patting my leg.

I blinked.

"What?" I asked in confusion.

"I wanted you to light the way. So I told them not to," he muttered, easing off the bike.

Reluctantly, I let him go, and rose as well as I asked, "Them who?"

Then I saw 'them.'

Nikolai, I knew.

The other four gigantic men, I didn't.

All of them were really big guys, so when I say gigantic, I mean big.

All of them were nearly Keifer's height, and they were all quite muscular, also like Keifer.

What made them differ from Keifer was that they seemed almost meaner.

Less approachable.

And they were all wearing something similar to what Keifer had on.

They must've really been a bona fide motorcycle club.

I looked around, half expecting to see club whores like they had on Sons of Anarchy, but I didn't see a soul.

Five men were staring at me, as if I was an intruder into the space that should only be occupied by people with testicles.

Nikolai was the first to speak.

"Blythe."

That was it.

That was all he said. One single word, and it had zero inflection, so I couldn't tell if it was a 'Hi, Blythe, happy to see you' or rather a 'Blythe, I can't believe you're here.

You suck.'

So, settling for neutral. "Nikolai."

He didn't smile, per se, but I could see his eyes sparkle slightly.

The man at his side, a blonde behemoth with a smile that would make a killing on a toothpaste commercial, ordered, "Introduce us."

Keifer snorted. "From left to right you have Nikolai, Ford, Alaric, Jean Luc and Dorian."

That was it.

Just names.

And none of them said hi.

Fun shit right here!

So, like the stubborn ass I was, I didn't say anything either.

Instead, I crossed my arms across my chest, and widened my stance for comfort. Then stared right along with them.

We continued this for a few long moments before Keifer sighed.

"They're testing you, Blythe," Keifer explained.

"Hmmm," I surmised. "That's cool. Do you think I could go sit down somewhere and read? I have a new book that was delivered to my Kindle today, and since I can see

this isn't going to go any further than this, I'd like to do that now, please."

He rolled his eyes, and I heard a few deep chuckles from the men, causing me to turn back to them with a scowl.

The blonde that'd spoken earlier had a smirk on his face. "Running already?"

Wanting nothing more than to smack that smirk off his face, I did what any sane girl would do, I walked forward and poked him in the chest.

"Do you have a problem with me?" I snapped.

His eyes widened slightly.

"No," he said finally.

"Then why are you being so rude?" I asked.

He outright laughed. "I like her, Dragon. She'll do."

With that, he left, disappearing out into the back somewhere.

That's when I saw him.

A man in the shadows.

"Who's that?" I whispered to Keifer.

Keifer looked to where my eyes were pointing and grimaced.

"That's Ian. And you aren't ever to be alone with him, do you understand?" He stated

firmly.

I blinked. “Uhh, yeah.”

What the hell?

Was this Ian guy a psycho or something? And if he was, what the hell was he doing here?

“I’ll tell you about it tonight,” he mumbled, standing up tall and firmly at the same time grabbing my hand with his. “I just wanted you to meet the guys, and I needed to pick something up from my office here.”

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“What is this place?” I asked him, following behind him dutifully.

“The back of the shop where I do all my mechanic work and customization. This place isn’t on the map, and only a few people know where this place is,” he explained gruffly.

“Keifer,” Nikolai called from behind us. “Got a sec?”

Keifer nodded and turned to me. “Go have a seat at the desk. I’ll be there in a second, okay?”

I nodded. “Sure.”

He turned and left, and I found myself in a large office that looked more like a man cave than an office.

There was a bar towards the back of the room with bar stools lining it, and a freaking couch and recliner.

A small desk was in the very corner with a very large chair that looked like it could fit three of me very comfortably.

Then there was the bathroom and shower area that had no walls surrounding it.

“Wow,” I said, surprised.

Moving toward the one door in the entire place, I opened it to find a plain room with

a large table in the middle of it.

Large wooden chairs surrounded the table, and as I moved closer to it, I was surprised to see that in the beautifully spun wooden legs, there looked to be intricately carved dragon scales running along the entire length.

The table itself was beautiful, and so slick.

Running my hands over it, I admired the craftsmanship.

“Wow, this is freakin’ beautiful,” I murmured in awe.

“Thanks,” a man muttered, startling me.

I jumped and looked up to find the man from earlier, Ian, the one from the shadows, standing across from me, having come through a different entrance than I’d taken.

“You made this?” I asked in surprise, completely ignoring Keifer’s earlier warning in my admiration.

“Yeah,” he answered simply.

“You did amazing work. My grandfather was a woodworker. He used to make patterns for companies that would use them as molds for all kinds of things. He was fairly amazing,” I told him. “Woodworking takes some real talent.”

“Grandfather dead?” He asked bluntly.

I shook my head. “No. He has dementia. He’s at a senior care facility downtown. They let him work in their wood shop when he’s lucid.”

He blinked. “What’s his name?”

“Wendell Wyatt.”

“The Wendell Wyatt? As in Wendell Wyatt Patterns?” The man asked in awe.

I nodded. “That’s him. Do you know him?”

He nodded briskly. “Wendell Wyatt is what other woodworkers in the business strive to be. Everybody knows him.”

I smiled happily, remembering my grandfather’s earlier days, when he was happy and clear-headed.

“I’m glad he’s remembered,” I whispered.

“What are you doing in here, Blythe?” Keifer asked carefully from the doorway behind me.

I turned to find Keifer staring over my head at Ian with suspicion.

“I was just looking,” I told him worriedly.

Was I not allowed to do that?

“Come on. I got my papers. It’s time to go,” he said, not saying a word to Ian.

I gave Ian a small wave. “Nice to meet you.”

He nodded, his dark black hair bobbing with the movement.

And his beautiful, nearly translucent, blue eyes took me in as I nodded back.

“Same.”

Keifer slammed the door behind me, startling me.

“What?” I asked, crossing my arms.

“I told you to stay away from him,” he growled.

I shrugged.

“I can take care of myself,” I defended.

He narrowed his eyes.

“Oh yeah?” He stalked forward.

I nodded, taking steps back as he prowled ahead.

My knees met the back of his desk, and he stopped when our knees touched.

Then, without warning, he snapped his hands forward and captured my wrists, swinging me around and slamming my chest against the top of the desk.

“Eeek!” I squeaked in surprise.

He didn’t hurt me, but the suddenness of it all had me breathless.

“So tell me how you can take care of yourself,” he snarled.

I blinked in surprise at the ferociousness of his tone.

“Keifer, what’s going on?” I asked, worry starting to seep into my voice.

“You said you could take care of yourself. Show me. Nothing you can do, magic wise, can hurt him, though. He’s got the same powers as me. Fuck, I don’t even know what all he has. But I know for a damn fact you can’t defend yourself adequately against me or anybody else of my caliber. Trust me.”

That’s about when I started getting mad and began to struggle.

When I took in a deep inhalation to scream, I found myself suddenly unable.

Or, more like, I was screaming, but no sound was coming out.

“Impressive, huh, what one person can do?” Keifer asked suddenly, pushing his hard cock into me.

He was getting off on this!

What the ever-loving-fuck?

“What’s your fuckin’ deal?” I asked, pushing back against him.

My body, the shameless bitch that it was, was getting off on his show of power, too.

Which explained why, when I pushed back, I also ground myself into his cock, causing him to laugh, which only pissed me off all the more.

“Get off me,” I grunted, turning my hip sharply to the right and dropping my body weight to the opposite side.

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He grunted in surprise, caught off guard, and dropped me.

I fell hard, slipping in between the desk's legs and his, before sharply twisting and rolling over to my side and onto my back.

He looked down at me before smiling wickedly.

Then I couldn't move.

Literally.

Every part of my body was frozen, and I watched in horror as he straddled my body with his knees, then bent down to run his tongue down the length of my neck.

That's when I found that my voice still worked.

Mostly because I moaned.

"Jesus," I breathed. "What are you doing to me?"

He chuckled, running his fingers down my sides.

I could still feel everything, I just couldn't move.

"I have things I could teach you that would do the same, but then I'd be at your mercy instead of the other way around," he teased, moving his hands up the sides of my belly to hook at the hem of my scrub top.

Then he shoved the bra and scrub top upward, exposing my breasts to his hungry mouth.

And I made a promise to myself, right then, that I would learn all his secrets, and use them against him. One pleasurable inch at a time.

I forgot all about the promises to myself, to others, to anyone, because he sucked my nipple into his hot mouth, rendering me unable to think.

“Jesus,” I breathed, trying to arch up into his mouth and finding that I could.

I tested out the same theory with my hands, and found myself lifting them to tangle my fingers in his hair.

Followed by my legs lifting high around his waist as I arched up and into him.

His erection ground down into my pussy, hitting my clit through my thin scrub pants with every rock of his body.

“Please,” I breathed.

“Please what, princess?” He asked, releasing my nipple to switch to the other one.

“Fuck me,” I pleaded, shoving my pants down and kicking them off in once smooth move.

He chuckled, giving my nipple a final flick with the tip of his tongue before he jackknifed up and ripped the front of his pants open.

His throbbing, angry erection popped free, and I licked my lips in anticipation.

The tattoos at my wrist started to pulse, and I held my hands up in between us, flabbergasted. “They fucking move?”

An animalistic growl emerged from his throat, and I forgot all about my hands—and breathing—when his hard length surged inside my opening.

The massive cock of his filled me to overflowing, and I could feel my vagina burn as it tried to accommodate his size for a second time in six hours.

My poor vagina hadn’t ever seen this much action, let alone a cock of Keifer’s size.

Keifer growled as my cunt started to convulse around him, desperate to expel him.

I moaned and thrust my hips in the air, allowing him to sink just a smidge deeper.

When he still couldn’t get the depth he wanted, my legs went up in the air and over his shoulders, and I nearly passed out from the scream that left me.

Throwing back my head, I exhaled in excitement and fear as he hit a part of me I’d never known existed.

Keifer!

He growled against my lips as he licked the seam, running the tip of his tongue along the strawberry flavored lip gloss that coated my lips.

Take it, Drakina. Let me feel that sweet cunt of yours pulse around my cock until you and I are the only things that matter in this world.

His hard shaft started to tunnel in and out of me as he smashed my legs even further forward with his large torso.

My eyes closed, which I thought was a good thing because I was likely doing the whole eyes rolling into the back of your head thing while he fucked the ever loving hell out of me.

My hands moved down until I cupped my ass, helping hold in place so he would continue hitting that spot that had me climbing higher and higher.

He pummeled me, his hips slapping a steady staccato against the back of my thighs.

His balls were swinging hard as well, knocking against the pucker of my ass with each thrust, and sending a delicious little thrill coursing through me with each swing.

The slick sounds of my sex opening itself for his invading cock filled my ears as I tried to look down at where we were connected.

Disappointed that I couldn't see I said, "Lean back so I can see us."

His eyes, which had been on the bounce of my breasts, snapped up.

I saw the fire building there, and I smiled.

He leaned down, too, pushing my legs almost to the limit as he brushed his lips against my own before he went up to his knees and opened my legs wide, allowing me to see almost everything.

He started to fill me slowly then, allowing me to look my fill.

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Where his hands wrapped around my ankles, opening them wide, I was transfixed as I watched his tattoo pulse with his desire.

I followed his hand down, mystified by the show of veins that popped up all over his arms.

His chest was glistening with sweat from his exertion, and likely my own as well.

His abs bunched and relaxed with each thrust of his hips, and the happy trail of hair that led down to his cock was captivating.

It was his cock, though, that had me transfixed.

Each time he pulled his length from me it was glistening with my juices, and I had the crazy urge to have him in my mouth.

It was insane because of the way his cock felt as it entered me, but I couldn't shake the desire.

His wants, however, won out.

When I moved my hand between us to feel my opening, stretched wide to accommodate him, to feel his length as it disappeared inside of me, he went wild.

Moving his hands from my ankles to just behind my knees, he folded me like an accordion until my knees were resting just beside my ears, allowing my ass to point to the ceiling.

My ass and half my back was held off the ground by the position, and I suddenly felt Keifer's cock enter me and not stop until he was forced to by something deep inside of me.

Probably my spine.

But at that point, I was beyond caring because my orgasm knocked me out, stunning me with its arrival and intensity.

My hands met his thighs where my fingers dug in deep.

I could feel my nails puncturing his skin, but I was unable to stop myself. I literally had no control over my body. All of that belonged to Keifer. Every last bit.

Coming, to me, before Keifer, was just a release of some stress. It was a way to make myself feel good and get to sleep at night.

Coming with Keifer was something completely different.

Gone were my inhibitions.

For instance, I yelled so loud I didn't care whether his brothers, his neighbors or his dragon could hear me. Fuck, but I didn't care if his mother heard me all the way back at the sanctuary.

Gone was my breath.

I didn't care about that, either.

I knew Keifer wouldn't let me die by orgasm. He'd revive me later once he was done.

Gone was my pride. I'd do anything for him. Anything. Crawl. Beg. Steal. Die.

If he wanted me to, I'd do it.

But the thing about Keifer was, I knew that he wouldn't make me.

Looking up into his eyes as he looked down into my own, something passed between us.

It was as if I saw his soul, and he saw mine. Pieces of our separate lives melded into one whole life.

And I realized what it was to be a dragon rider's mate.

To be utterly and completely his.

Because that was what I was now, his. And that was what he was, too. Mine. Chapter 12

Due to unfortunate circumstances, I am awake.-Coffee CupBlythe

It was a month after I mated with Keifer, and in that month, I'd completed my last clinical. I'd taken my final test, and I'd finished my final nursing class.

Today was the day that I would be 'pinned,' after which I would walk across the stage to receive my diploma.

I lay in the grass with three sleeping dragons at my sides.

The blue beauties, as I'd started calling the three young dragons that persuaded me to play with them each time I stepped foot outside, were surrounding my prone form.

Juno, my teacher I'd acquired after pissing Kiefer off for the last time, sat at my side.

"Try again," he ordered.

I opened one eye and glared at him. "I've already done it four times. I'm tired of doing it."

Juno narrowed his eyes at me.

"The reason we're doing it over and over again is to help you prepare. You've begged Prince Keifer to go out by yourself, and the only way you can do that is if he's satisfied that you're the best that you can be. You're good, I'll give you that, but you wouldn't stand a chance against a man with a gun," Juno said patiently.

Groaning, but knowing it was inevitable, I sat up.

"What do you want me to do it on this time?" I asked impatiently.

"Try to reach out to your friend, what's her name," he ordered.

I rolled my eyes.

In the time Juno had been working with me, I'd also learned that I was pretty darn good at telepathy.

So good, in fact, that I was considered better than Keifer, which was impressive.

"What I want you to do is concentrate on her in your mind. The way she smells, the way she sounds when you're talking to her. And once you have the picture of her cemented in your mind, I want you to talk to her," he instructed.

Grimacing, because I knew it wouldn't even happen, like it hadn't the first four times I'd done this, I laid back down and closed my eyes.

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What was different about this time, though, was the dragons were at my sides.

Before, they'd been playing around me but not touching me.

This time they were all lying down at my sides, each one of them touching some part of my body.

Thing one, as I so affectionately called him, was the one I felt it come from first.

The knowledge of exactly how to do it.

It was similar to what Declan told me in words, but this dragon showed me.

I couldn't really explain it, but I just saw how to do it. And do it I did.

Images started filtering through my brain, and a tingling started in my hand, left knee, and right foot where the dragons were laying their heads on me.

Startled at the feeling, I forgot to focus on Brooklyn and instead focused on, well, everyone.

Can you hear me? I asked, eyes closed.

All I can say was that I sent out a massive message to not just Brooklyn, but Keifer, and well, everyone I knew.

My mind was fogged with everyone all at once. Not that I was aware that'd been

what I had done until I started getting words back.

What the fuck? That was my Brooklyn.

You okay, baby? Keifer.

Blythe?

What the hell, Blythe? Nikolai.

Get out of my fuckin' head! That was Farrow the Thundercloud, as I'd started calling him.

Uhh, Blythe? I think you fucked up. Juno.

Then there were others that I couldn't quite place.

I knew some of them were the members of the dragon riders.

Good, little one. Declan. I've been trying to teach that to the young prince for years.

I opened my eyes wide as more and more voices started to pour through my head.

So many that I couldn't distinguish who was who anymore.

I sensed that they were many, but I couldn't tell you how many.

"How do I turn it off?" I asked the dragons, trying my best not to freak out.

Then, like I was looking into a fucking FaceTime chat on my iPhone, I saw Keifer. Saw exactly what he was doing.

He was down on his knees beside Declan, and he was looking at Declan like something momentous just happened.

“Why are you on your knees?” I asked him.

He blinked, and then started looking around, and I realized I said that out loud.

And he’d still heard me.

“What the fuck,” I gasped breathily. “Why can’t I fucking see?”

I hadn’t meant to allow my voice to get so shrill, but all the voices in my head started talking at once, trying to soothe me, which only served to freak me out further.

Somewhere in the interim, I must’ve over exhausted my body, because the next thing I knew I didn’t have anybody in my head. Mostly because I was passed the hell out.\*\*\*

“Nikolai, get them the fuck away from her!” Keifer roared.

Declan joined in, and I squinted into the setting sun.

I could see from a distance that Keifer was standing next to Declan.

Nikolai was standing next to Perdita.

Behind them I could make out Ford, Alaric, Jean Luc, Dorian and Ian.

Somewhere beyond them I could hear Skylar and Bella.

Then I realized the terrible three were standing at my sides, roaring for all they were

worth every time one of them tried to come near.

Juno was on his side six feet away with scratches and bite marks all over him, and I looked at the dragon babies in stunned realization.

They'd attacked him!

Now that they weren't touching me, I also realized that I could no longer hear the voices.

"Keifer?" I asked, rolling up and immediately dropping back down and rolling to my side when my head started to pound.

The dragons roared once again when Keifer started to step forward, and I placed my hands on the three dragons.

They calmed instantly and became completely docile, watching me with so much affection that I could do nothing but smile.

"You can come closer now," I told Keifer.

Keifer was on his knees with both of his hands on either side of my head in a heartbeat.

"Are you okay? You scared the fuck out of me," he gritted out.

I nodded. "Yeah, I'm fine. I feel a little weak, but otherwise fine."

"What the hell happened?" Nikolai asked, rubbing his head slightly.

I shook my head. "I don't know. One second I was with Juno," I looked over to my

disheveled teacher to see Skylar at his side, checking his wounds out. “Trying to speak with Brooklyn, and the next I was speaking with everyone at once. The Terrible Three helped me.”

Keifer’s brows lowered. “How did they do that?”

Your princess has a photographic mind, where yours is learned by repetition. All she needed to do was see how it was done, something that the younglings are able to show her since they don’t speak in words yet. She then tapped into their powers and telepathically linked with everyone that you’re linked to, Declan informed, sliding through my mind.

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“Well then, how in the hell did she link to them? She shouldn’t be able to link to them...Ahhhhh...” Keifer said, looking from Declan’s eyes to me, and then moving his eyes down until his gaze settled on my belly. “Fuck me.”

“What? What is it?” I asked in growing concern.

I could feel a tingle in my brain that I usually felt when Declan and Keifer were mind speaking without me, and I looked in between the both of them before finally Keifer spoke.

“Everybody,” Keifer ordered crisply. “Give us a moment.”

I watched in surprise as every single one of them listened.

Not one of them complained that they’d just been ordered inside. Not even Ian or Farrow the Thundercloud.

“Keifer, what the ever loving...Eeek! What’re you doing?” I asked when his hands suddenly went under my shirt to settle on my lower belly.

“You’re pregnant,” he stated suddenly, moving as close as the dragons at my side would allow him to.

I opened and closed my mouth several times, finally settling on, “I most certainly am not!”

The outrage was even evident to the dragons, who looked up at me with stars in their

eyes.

“Declan smelled it on you...you are,” he explained.

“Well, his sniffer is wrong,” I crossed my arms accusingly. “You’re wrong!” I snapped to the big beast lying on his side, sunning his belly.

Am not, slithered through my brain.

Lying dragon.

If you don’t believe me, go pee on a rabbit.

I blinked quickly.

“Why would I pee on a rabbit?” I asked Keifer in confusion.

Keifer snorted.

“That’s how they used to tell if you were pregnant before pregnancy tests. Injecting a rabbit with a female’s urine. If she were pregnant, the rabbit would die,” Keifer explained, his hands going to my flat belly with the utmost care.

I slapped his hands, but he stayed where he was, closing his eyes like he was concentrating.

“What are you doing?” I asked frantically.

He smiled. “Looking for an energy trace.”

I blinked, startled.

“You can do that?” I asked.

He nodded. “Sometimes. I’ve got to borrow energy from my brother to do it, though.”

I tilted my head. “You can do that?”

He grinned.

“Yeah. Did I forget to tell you that?” He teased.

I shook my head.

The man had been toying with me, I could tell.

As if he wasn’t already strong enough, now I find out that, if he is in need of more power, all he has to do is call on his brothers and poof!

More power!

The sex we’d shared on the floor of his office had been wonderful, don’t get me wrong, but it was also a bone of contention with us.

I wasn’t really fond of feeling powerless, and I’d asked him to help me not be powerless.

Which was when he’d started teaching me all that he knew.

Except I’d found that Keifer wasn’t the best of teachers, and I wasn’t the best of students.

We were more like the popular kid and the nerd in high school.

One really wanted to learn, and the other was there to have fun.

Keifer proved to be more of the latter part.

Which was why he'd pulled Juno up from the Alabama sanctuary and designated him with the task of teaching me.

“Keifer, I'm on birth control, and have been for six years now. I've even been getting my period! I got it two weeks ago!” I told him. “That's not possible to know yet—even if I were to admit that there might be a possibility.”

His eyes found mine and he grinned.

Then I felt power wash through me.

Keifer's power.

But also a little bit of Nikolai as well.

How I knew it was some of Nikolai's, I didn't know.

It smelled like him mostly.

Or maybe felt like him.

I'd come to know Nikolai really well over the last month.

He'd joined in in teaching me the ropes, much less enthusiastically than Keifer, but he'd done it nonetheless.

“There it is,” Keifer breathed, eyes going wide in wonder.

And that feeling, the one telling me I was wrong and my argument no longer held ground, started to course through me.

There's not a worse feeling than to know you've lost the argument while still having the argument.

And the moment I saw Keifer's eyes, I knew.

I was pregnant.

Despite the fact that I'd been on the pill.

Despite the fact that I took it so religiously.

Despite the fact that I'd just had my period.

I was one hundred percent pregnant, and I had no one to blame but myself and my horniness.

Fuck.Chapter 13

Fuck the extra bedroom for people to stay in when they visit. I want a moat with water dragons that keeps those fuckers away.-Text from Blythe to BrooklynKeifer

She's fine.

I turned my scowl to Declan.

"How do you know?" I snapped snottily.

I was well aware that I was acting like a child.

Hell, I knew she'd be mad if she knew I was out here.

I was mad at myself.

It was just that it hurt if I wasn't near her.

My fingers ached to hold her.

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*Source Creation Date: July 10, 2025, 7:52 am*

My skin felt cold and clammy at the loss of her body heat.

And most of all, my dick missed her.

Missed her sweet mouth. Her hot, juicy...

Snap out of it! I berated myself.

I'm fine, was gently whispered through my head.

My head hung at the realization that I'd been caught.

Jesus. I'd been trying to be inconspicuous. Yet, here I was acting so worried that I couldn't tell when she was in my mind.

Hell, I'd probably summoned her there in the first place.

It'd been three weeks since Blythe and I found out she was pregnant.

Three weeks of crazy dreams. Three weeks of people talking inside our heads without intentionally contacting them.

If it wasn't obvious before, it was more than obvious now.

Our child that wasn't more than a blip on a screen, was seriously powerful.

Crazily powerful.

So powerful, in fact, that I knew it was about to turn bad.

Something as powerful as our child was bound to have enemies.

I didn't know whether it was some sort of a sixth sense or whether I was just a worried soon-to-be-father, but I just knew something was about to happen.

Something terrible.

Hence, why I was sitting on my bike with Declan flying through the air above me, cloaked in smoke.

Blythe was taking her nursing boards, and I'd been out here trying not to freak out since eight thirty this morning.

It was now eleven hundred hours, and I wasn't doing any better now than I was three and a half hours ago.

I'll be out soon. I just finished, she whispered, making my heart settle in my chest, and my breathing come a little easier.

Relaxing slightly, I swung my leg off my bike and took ten steps to the bench I was parked next to, and leaned against it, crossing my legs in front of me.

My phone rang about thirty seconds later, and I looked down at the display, surprised to see my sister's name.

"Hello?" I answered, watching the front doors to the building like a hawk.

"Derek's awake," my sister said quickly.

I sat forward until I was standing, staring blankly into space.

“Is he okay? How’s he doing?” I asked urgently.

Derek was one of the final members of my inner circle, and it’d been crippling not to have him with me over the last few months, advising me as he usually did when I needed my ass kicked into gear.

The Dragon’s Warriors MC was really just used as a convenience.

Nikolai, Ford, Alaric, Jean Luc, Ian, Derek and Dorian were all in my inner circle.

They were the men I trusted with everything, although, sometimes I questioned my judgment when it came to Ian.

Derek, though, was a huge loss. I’d spent the last few months finding myself calling him only to realize that he couldn’t answer two rings into the call.

When I’d first formed The Dragon’s Warriors MC, it’d been to act as a cover of sorts.

The eight of us spent quite a bit of time in public, and being who we were, as well as how we looked, it was hard to conceal ourselves from the public eye when we were trying to protect ourselves.

A lot of times we found ourselves at odds with the Purists, and with the technology as it was nowadays, it only got harder and harder to conceal ourselves from those that would harm us. Intentionally or unintentionally.

Hence why we’d formed the MC in the first place.

If we were going to be seen in public together, it was better to draw attention to the

fact that we were part of a motorcycle club rather than a secret horde of dragon riders that protected the Meridian and all of its hearts.

“He’s fine. Actually, he’s asking for you right now. He has some interesting stories, whether they are hallucinations from the brain damage he sustained or actually real. I’m not sure how long he’ll be awake, so I’d hurry if you want to hear it,” Skylar informed me.

I saw Blythe finally make her way through the front doors with Brooklyn at her side, and smiled. “I’ll be there...”

I froze.

But it wasn’t anything that Blythe did.

It was what she didn’t do.

She knew I was out here, yet she acted for all she was worth like I didn’t exist.

Brooklyn, I think, didn’t see me. She didn’t look at me, but she was animatedly speaking with Blythe like she was trying as hard as she could to convince her of something.

They walked straight past me on the sidewalk and kept walking, neither sparing me a glance.

I was partially hidden in the shade of a tall pine, so it was possible that Brooklyn didn’t notice, but I damn well knew Blythe did.

Declan.

I see, he growled.

Follow me, her sweet voice ordered.

Pfft. Like there was any other choice.

“Gotta go,” I murmured quickly, and then shoved the phone into my pocket before getting onto the sidewalk and walking behind Blythe and Brooklyn as if I was just out for a random stroll.

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The neighborhood we were in was more of a residential district rather than a commercialized area. The testing center was situated in a remodeled house.

Backup! I ordered.

On it.

That was Declan. Always on his game.

Although I couldn't see him, I knew he was there.

I knew he was fifteen feet over my head just like I knew I was wearing a watch.

Declan and I were one; I knew he would have my back just as I would have his.

I'd hung back slightly, leaving a little bit of distance between them and me.

And when they turned the corner into a small park and I saw Father Joseph, I about shit myself.

Derek had been visiting with the leader of the Alaskan heart, Josiah Jones, upon my request, when the sanctuary that occupied that particular heart of the Meridian was set upon by Purists.

We'd only had four eyewitness accounts as to what happened, and every one of them had Father Joseph in their stories. Described down to the fuckin' mole on the left corner of his lip, and the scar that curled around his right eye.

And I was scared shitless.

For Blythe and our child.

Did they know Father Joseph? Why would Father Joseph be meeting them?

It seems I was right to have a bad feeling.\*\*\*

Blythe

“Please, please, please?” Brooklyn pleaded, clutching her hands together like she was begging for her life.

I sighed.

Brooklyn had finished her test over an hour before me, so I was completely surprised to see her outside waiting for me to finish.

Once I stepped over the threshold, she started begging for me to go meet with her Uncle Joseph because he had some news that I ‘just had to hear.’

“It’s a matter of life or death, Blythe. I would never put you in jeopardy. I’m only looking out for your well-being, I promise!” Brooklyn continued to plead.

“Fine,” I sighed, knowing that it wouldn’t be that big of a deal.

Keifer was outside, after all. Even if he was acting like he wasn’t.

He was acting as if I was a piece of fine glass that would break in his hands at any moment.

I was pregnant, for Christ's sake, not an invalid.

But whatever.

If it made him feel better to sit outside the testing center for four hours, he could go for it.

"Come on," Brooklyn ordered, snatching my hand and hustling us outside.

My eyes immediately scanned for Keifer without being obvious.

I found him almost instantly the moment I stepped out the door and hurried along with Brooklyn.

Follow me, I told him.

He didn't reply back, but I knew he'd heard me.

The minutest of nods graced the tilt of his head as we passed him.

Brooklyn hadn't seen him, which I was sure was a good thing.

I had a feeling this thing with her uncle had to do with Keifer, and if she knew Keifer was here, she might change her mind about what her uncle had to say.

"What's going on, Brooklyn?" I asked her.

She looked at me worriedly, and then turned back to the path that led to a small park just beyond the parking lot we were in.

"My uncle, he wanted me to tell you that he really needed to talk to you. He said he

wanted you to meet someone,” she whispered as we cleared the trees.

I saw Father Joseph sitting on the edge of a picnic table.

He was alone, but I could sense he wasn’t truly ‘alone.’

I could tell I wasn’t truly ‘alone’ either.

Declan was somewhere above me, and Keifer was at my back about twenty yards into the trees.

I could also sense others coming our way.

Many others.

Something I’ve been able to tell the moment I’d connected with all of them that night a month ago.

“Ahh, Brooklyn, Blythe. I hope the tests went well?” He asked with a smile.

Brooklyn smiled. “Very well, Father Joseph. Very well.”

Father Joseph smiled. “Good, good. Blythe, my dear. And how are you doing?”

I resisted the urge to curl my lip at him.

I’d never really liked Father Joseph.

I couldn’t get over the fact that Brooklyn’s entire family had disowned her, and although Father Joseph hadn’t been a real part of it, he’d not treated her well either.

I only saw him on the rare occasion when Brooklyn and I ran into him at certain events for school.

“Father Joseph,” I said, smiling partially.

He grinned, reminding me of one of those Cheshire cats that grinned when they were about to bring the world down on your head.

“So, Brookie here tells me you’re dating a dragon rider,” he got right down to the specifics.

I nodded, not saying anything.

I didn’t want him to know anything.

Why was it his business who I was dating or mated to?

Although, Brooklyn still didn’t know I was mated to Keifer.

She only knew that I was seeing him.

“Do you know the story of the dragon riders?” He broached the subject carefully.

I squinted, but again, nodded.

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Of course I knew the story of the dragon riders! Everybody did!

“You know that they killed humans, feeling that dragon riders and those with powers were supreme to those without?” He asked in surprise.

I shrugged. “That’s not exactly the story that I heard.”

I’ve, of course, heard that version. But, I knew it wasn’t true.

Just like I knew that the sky was blue and flowers were pretty.

“And what, might I ask, have you heard?” He continued.

I could say that he asked it snottily, but he didn’t.

He managed to convey snottiness, but also have an air of aloofness to it.

“That they protect their own kind from those that would like for them all to be gone from the Earth,” I said simply.

I’d heard more, but there was really no reason for me to get into it with him.

I didn’t want to talk to him in the first place.

And I knew he wanted to tell me his version.

If I told him all that I knew about the dragon riders, then he’d know that I was a lost

cause and refuse to tell me anything more.

He didn't disappoint me, though.

He went right on into his spiel.

"They're killers. Baby murderers. Rapists. And they're out to take over the world," Joseph explained quickly, sounding like he'd repeated the same speech dozens and dozens of times before. "Years and years ago, before I was even born to this Earth, a war started between humans and dragon riders. Dragon riders wanted to be supreme, while we lowly people were to just jump at their every beck and call. Well, a group of people called the Purists were formed and have continued to fight the war with the dragon riders. Our main mission is to rid the world of the scum and make sure that no more humans, who can't defend themselves, are lost to this war."

My brows, I guessed, were likely in my hairline by now.

The more he spoke, the higher they went.

"You're joking," I said stiffly.

Joseph's brows rose at the disbelief in my tone.

"You don't believe me?" He asked incredulously.

I shook my head, trying my hardest not to laugh.

"No, I don't believe you. I think you're full of shit," I laughed, turning on my heel and walking quickly away.

Except I didn't get far.

Mere feet, to be honest.

I was just heading to the tree line when the sound of a gun cocking made me freeze.

“Don’t move,” he hissed.

Brooklyn, who’d frozen solid the moment I’d told Joseph I didn’t believe him, came unglued and started to freak out.

“Uncle Joseph, you said you just wanted to talk to her. Why do you have a gun?” She shrieked.

Keifer came out of the trees, as calm as could be.

But I knew he wasn’t calm.

I could tell by the way his tattoos pulsed.

The way they were bright red with his anger.

His body, though, looked like he could care less about what was going on.

“Joseph, Joseph, Joseph,” Keifer admonished. “I thought we’d talked about you trying to take my toys.”

Toys?

Toys?

Did he just call me a freakin’ toy?

Why that little shit!

I am most certainly not your toy! I yelled at him, despite the fact that I had a gun trained on my head.

Hush, Drakina. Get ready to move.

The gentle admonishment that washed over me cleared away every single ounce of nervousness from my body.

Now, instead of freaking out, I took in the area around us.

There were men in the trees.

Lots of them, in fact.

Joseph wasn't taking any chances with this.

He was ready for anything.

I could tell some of the men had what looked like arrows in huge pipe things.

I assumed those were for the dragons seeing as they'd be overkill for a human.

"I knew you'd be here," Joseph smiled nastily. "I just knew she'd make you come out."

Keifer opened his arms wide, making the muscles underneath the shirt he was wearing ripple.

"Here I am. What'd you want?" He asked calmly.

“You took out eight of my best men,” Joseph snarled. “How would you feel if I did the same?”

Keifer’s smile slowly died on his face.

“You did do the same. Does Alaska, Anchorage specifically, ring any bells?” Keifer hissed with a deadly tone that could’ve stripped bark from the trees around us.

A cold chill started around me, and I knew it was coming from Keifer.

Although he had to be doing it without trying to.

He would never let his emotions get out of control like that if there was any way to prevent it.

Keifer’s control was legendary.

He’d proved that to me over and over in the past two months.

His brother was good, I’d give him credit.

As were the other members of The Dragon’s Warriors MC.

But they weren’t Keifer.

And if he was inadvertently using his abilities, that only showed how truly angry he was.

Get ready.

Declan’s voice bled through my worry, and I held my hand out at my sides, ready to

jump or run if I needed to.

I didn't need to do either.

One second I was standing, and the next I was in Declan's massive claws.

Right alongside Keifer.

And he was pulling us away before I'd even realized we were gone.

"No!" Brooklyn screamed, jumping in front of her uncle who'd moved his gun from where I'd been standing to where I was now hanging from Declan's clutches.

Joseph shot her.

Her blood sprayed, and I watched in horror as he followed her body down, and shot her one more time.

Her body jerked, and that was the last thing I saw before I closed my eyes and screamed.

"Brooklyn!" I pleaded. "Get Brooklyn!"

Keifer and Declan didn't listen.

In fact, they only went faster and faster until all I could see was the copse of trees that I'd left behind.

Then, the further we went, the more my heart seemed to break.

My best friend had been killed by her own uncle.

And I'd witnessed it.

Jesus, no.

Please, don't let her be dead.

I'm sorry, Drakina. Chapter 14

Today I'm wearing a lovely shade of shut the fuck up. I didn't sleep well last night.-  
Blythe to Keifer Keifer

"What'd you find?" I asked my brother who'd just come home only moments before.

"Absolutely nothing," Nikolai dropped down into the couch beside me.

I clenched my fists.

"That fucker knew. How'd he know?" I growled in frustration.

"The friend. I think the friend knew more than she was letting on," Nikolai told me gently.

I shook my head.

"She was scared, yes, but she wasn't stupid. She'd protect Blythe even if she thought what she was doing was wrong. Blythe is the only family Brooklyn has left," I told him softly.

Nikolai shrugged. "I don't know. When we all got there, everyone was gone. It was

like they didn't care about us, they only wanted you."

I shook my head. "Why me? Why am I so special?"

"Because you're the prince," Blythe whispered gently from the doorway.

I looked up to find her watching me.

Her eyes were red and bruised from crying.

She was in nothing but my t-shirt, and I found that I liked that.

I did not, however, like that my brother was watching her in nothing but my t-shirt.

"Come here, Drakina," I ordered gently, holding out my hand to her.

She walked forward slowly, taking my hand once she was close enough, and folded into my lap.

"She wasn't there?" Blythe asked hopefully.

Nikolai shook his head.

"Blood. That's all that was left. She wasn't there. The Purists weren't there. It was just a wet spot in the middle of the park," Nikolai murmured tensely.

Blythe winced, and I wanted to smack my brother for being so inconsiderate.

"No."

One simple word was said from Blythe, and I felt it down deep into my heart. Like I

was stabbed, making me inhale sharply to breathe through the pain.

But it wasn't my pain.

It was Blythe's.

"I'm sorry, honey," I whispered to her, pulling her into the shelter of my arms.

The closeness of our bodies made our energies collide.

Mine. Hers. And our baby's.

Thank God I hadn't lost her.

"What now?" She whispered brokenly.

I shrugged.

And I could tell Nikolai was thinking much the same as me.

Was it worth it to risk more of our own to search for a woman that was most likely dead or on the brink of death?

I could tell instantly that Nikolai didn't think so.

Ultimately, though, it wasn't up to him.

It was up to me.

"Keifer?" Blythe called.

I looked down at her.

“Yeah?”

“Why aren’t you King?” She asked gently.

I froze solid.

“My dad’s the King, which made my mother Queen,” I told her.

“But your dad is dead, and it’s the men of your society that hold the power. Why is your mom still considered Queen when you should be the King?” She wondered aloud.

I ran my hand up the middle of her back, letting my hands smooth down the hair that fell down to her butt.

It was Nikolai that answered, though.

“Because he’s scared,” Nikolai laughed.

I shot him a glare.

“I’m not scared. It’s Mom’s. I’m Prince. And I can’t be King until there’s no longer the Queen,” I told him honestly.

A sound at the doorway had me looking up to find my mother there.

The moment she realized I had her attention, she started to sign.

Actually, honey, I think that may be what they’re trying to prevent from happening.

I shook my head, looking away. The stomped foot had me jerking my head up to find her standing with her arms crossed at her front, staring at the three of us with tears in her eyes.

It's time, she mouthed.

I shook my head.

"No."

"Yes," Blythe urged. "I think it is."

"We'll take a vote. How does that sound?" Nikolai suggested.

I turned my eyes to him. "How can you be okay with this? If Mom's not the queen, then she's nothing in this society and everyone will know it."

"She's not nothing, honey. She'll be the Dowager Queen. She'll still live here. She'll still take care of the sanctuary. Everything will be the same except she'll no longer have the title. She'll still be your mother," Blythe explained.

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I leaned my head forward until my forehead was leaning against her shoulder.

“Why would my being King change anything?” I tried a different tactic.

Nikolai and Blythe didn’t have an answer, but the man walking into the living room with crutches under his arm and my nagging sister behind him telling him to ‘sit the hell down,’ did.

“Because you’re going to change the world. There’ve been prophecies,” Derek gasped breathlessly.

Nikolai stood and offered his seat, which Derek gratefully accepted.

“What prophecies?” I asked.

He leaned his head against the back of the couch and lifted a notebook from the pocket of the generic robe we kept in the infirmary for such instances.

“I wrote it all down,” he offered me a spiral bound notebook.

“What all?” I asked, leaning forward and taking the book from his outstretched hands.

“It’s two pages’ worth. I wrote it all down as I sat beside a Purist as he was dying. He kept repeating this over and over while I tortured him to death,” Derek explained, calm, cool and collected.

As if he hadn't just said he'd tortured a man to death to get the prophecy.

"And when did you find time to do this?" I asked skeptically. "You've been in a coma for more than a month. You've been out of the coma for less than four hours."

Derek grinned. "My dragon kept it for me."

I was utterly surprised at that.

Dragons were usually very forthcoming with their information, and for Derek's paired dragon, Ulysses, to keep anything from us was huge.

"What's going on, Derek?" I asked finally, once the silence carried on too long.

He nodded to the paper.

"Read it."

Sighing in annoyance, I did just that.

A cold night in August, the king and the queen shall bring forth a powerful being the likes of which this Earth has never seen before.

It shall be of light and darkness.

Pureness by choice, but vicious by need.

The child of the light and dark will be the one to change the future of this world as we know it.

Dragon riders will prevail, because of one being only.

Reed.

“I like the name Reed,” Blythe interrupted my reading.

I raised my brows at her.

“Why?” I asked, stunned.

I didn’t like it.

Not at all.

“Because it’s different, like yours. We can’t name him Keifer again. I don’t do Juniors,” she informed me.

I shook my head. “You don’t do Juniors?”

She nodded. “Right.”

“What’s wrong with being a Junior?” Derek asked, offended.

Derek was named after his father. Derek Reedus Donaldson.

Which I guessed was maybe where Reed had come from. A shortening of Reedus.

“Read the rest of it,” Nikolai growled in frustration.

I continued reading, my skepticism fading the more I took in.

When the two moons rise, and on the eve of Prince Reed’s arrival there shall be only one faction. That faction will forever rule, trifle from the pure no longer.

I finished reading the paper and passed it over to Nikolai so he could read it as well.

“So, what does this mean?” I leaned my head back to rest against the couch.

“It means that whatever your child is, that he’s important, not just to the dragon riders, but to the whole world. It also means that he’s already in great danger. That they want you, and they want Reed, which I have to thank you for naming him after me, by the way,” Derek teased. Then he sobered. “You need to be on your game. You need bodyguards. You need to stay safe, vigilant, and aware. And you need to make peace with the knowledge and accept the fact that this child is about to change the world. Literally.”

I clenched my hand into a fist on the side of Blythe’s hip, feeling like shit that I’d damned this child, my child, to this future.

“And it also means the time has come for you to accept the title of king. There’s a reason they don’t want you to be the king. The prophecy is only half of a whole and can only be realized if you take your rightful place. You need to do this, Keifer, and you need to do it now,” Derek continued.

I closed my eyes, feeling like a large pile of shit for doing what I was about to do.

“Call the brothers. Get them here.”

That was directed at my brother.

“As for you,” I told Derek. “Get back to bed. Let your mind do its job, but stay in bed while you’re doing it.”

Derek saluted me.

“Yes, your Highness,” he conceded.

Then the bruised fucker got up and walked swiftly out of the room while the rest of the room was still holding their breath.

“King,” Nikolai laughed. “That’s got kind of a ring to it, doesn’t it?”

I flipped him off, causing Blythe to laugh softly against my chest where she was resting.

My mouth went involuntarily to the top of her head, and I brushed my lips over her hair.

“You ready for this?” I questioned her softly.

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She looked up at me and offered me her lips. “Ready when you are, Dragon.”

I slammed my mouth down on hers.

“Good. At least someone is.”Chapter 15

If I had a dollar for every time my siblings listened to what I said, I’d have to borrow a dollar.-Keifer to BlytheBlythe

I knew something was wrong.

He wouldn’t answer my calls. My summons. My pleas.

Nothing.

It’d been two weeks since he’d decided to take up the crown, and in that two weeks...he’d changed.

No longer was he the carefree prince.

Now he was the solemn King who made impressions on everyone just by breathing.

He had to watch his step.

He’d done this for two weeks now, and I knew it was wearing on him.

Badly.

He didn't joke anymore. He didn't work at his shop. He wasn't seen out in public. I wasn't seen out in public. He hadn't had sex with me. He'd been in closed door meetings with his mom and those of his inner circle every single free minute of the day—without me included.

Yet, here I was, confused, upset, and to be honest, hurt.

I was receiving no explanations.

None, zero, zilch.

I'd spoken to him for a total of ten minutes a day when he kissed me in the morning and told me he was leaving. Then once again when he curled around me at night.

Something had to give, and it was going to give right now.

Stomping toward the door to the library where all these 'secret' meetings were taking place, I blasted my way inside.

I'd gotten pretty good at doing that lately.

What else did I have to do?

That's right.

Fucking nothing.

Day in and day out, with daytime soap operas playing in the background, I honed my skills.

I'd found that moving objects was the easiest.

Cooling objects off came at a close second.

Something I'd gotten really good at doing, since the terrible trio made me freeze the backyard on an hourly basis.

The doors slammed open with a brutal slam, and Keifer, Ian, Nikolai, Derek (who, might I add, I wasn't very fond of since he seemed to be the leader of the men taking my man away from me), Ford and Alaric all looked up at the entertaining entrance.

Keifer raised a brow as he sat back in his seat.

It was a nice seat.

I'd sat in it a lot lately while he was out on patrols, trying my damndest to figure out just what the fuck they were plotting in here without any women around.

Yet, I'd never found anything.

They were good at cleaning up after themselves.

"Blythe," Keifer said with amusement. "Can I help you?"

I glared at him, then at the men at the table.

"Everybody out," I ordered.

Brows rose, but nobody moved.

"Tell them to get out," I told Keifer fiercely.

Keifer shook his head. "I can't. I'm bus..."

I cut him off when I started to undo the buttons of my shirt.

“Tell them to get the fuck out!” I snarled.

Keifer raised a single brow, calling my bluff.

So I ripped my fucking shirt open.

Buttons spewed across the floor of the library.

The little brass buttons tinkled along the wood floors as they scattered every which way.

I was wearing a bra underneath, of course, but you’d think I’d just exposed my breasts to the president of the United States on national television with the way he roared.

“Get out!”

They got out.

So fast, in fact, that I felt the wind of their bodies rushing out of the room, and the slam of the door following them out.

“What. The. Fuck,” Keifer snarled.

I smiled innocently.

“I’m tired of it,” I said sweetly. “It’s time for you to bring me into the fold.”

“What fold?” He hedged.

I narrowed my eyes at him. Then started stripping my yoga pants off.

Keifer watched me the entire time, staying statue still as he watched the cotton fabric shimmy over my hips to pool on the floor at my feet.

“The fold. The one where you tell me what the hell is going on so I don’t have to be worried all the time. The fold where you spend more time with me and make me feel like you lo-like me,” I told him.

Whoops.

Almost said love.

He hadn’t said that to me, yet.

Not that I’d done it either, but he hadn’t given me a chance to.

Every time the words were on the tip of my tongue, he’d shut me up really quickly.

For instance, if I was in bed with him at night, and I opened my mouth to say it, he’d place his hand over my mouth to still my words.

At first I’d thought it was always by accident, but the longer it went on, the more I realized that it wasn’t an accident.

He’d been doing it on purpose. Yet, I still hadn’t figured out why.

“What are you doing, Blythe? You know I’m busy,” Keifer growled, leaning down until his hands rested on the edge of the conference room table.

His knuckles turned white as he physically restrained himself from doing anything.

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Such as touching me.

I smiled inside, knowing I was getting to him.

“What does it look like I’m doing, Keifer?” I asked seductively, walking up to the table in front of us and leaning over.

My breasts hung heavily in my bra.

They’d gotten big.

Much bigger than what I was used to, and I found that I quite liked it.

My breasts were freakin’ awesome, but Keifer hadn’t even noticed.

He swallowed thickly as he got a good look at the lacy number.

It was see through.

Which he was just discovering.

“We can’t,” he tried now.

I smiled and crawled up onto the table.

He groaned.

“I have to leave in five minutes to meet with somebody,” he whispered roughly, his voice sounding like he was being strangled.

I shrugged.

“So you’re just going to leave me here like this?” I asked, running my finger down the lace that cupped my left breast.

He closed his eyes.

“Yeah, I can’t do this right now. You caught us right as we were about to leave,” he cleared his throat.

A knock at the door came, and I knew my tactic wasn’t going to work.

He was going to leave to his secret meeting.

One he never told me his reason for attending, nor who he was attending with.

“Don’t do it, Keifer,” I warned him.

His eyes flicked to the door, then back to me.

He did this four or five times until finally he took a step back. Then another. Then another.

He kept doing it until he was at the end of the conference room table, and I knew I’d lost.

The big bad Prince and soon to be King of Dragons was chickening out.

“You fucking pussy!” I roared, standing in the middle of the conference room table.

I knew I was acting crazy.

But who could blame me?

The fucker was leaving! Again!

I’d practically thrown myself at him, and here he was, yet again, running!

“You walk out that door, and you’ll regret it,” I told him.

His eyes narrowed.

“I’m doing this to protect us. That baby that you’re carrying,” he growled, opened the door, and started to walk out.

“Hey!” I said in indignation. “You’re not fucking serious!”

He looked back over his shoulder and grimaced before closing the door quietly behind his back.

I flipped him off and took a running leap off the table, landing lithely on two feet and stomping across the room to the conference room’s door.

By the time I made it out of the hallway, he was nearly at the foyer.

He stopped and looked back, freezing when he saw what I was still not dressed.

“Get back in there,” he announced through gritted teeth.

I flipped him the bird.

“Fuck off.”

Then I turned down a side hallway that led to the kitchens, and eventually to the backyard.

This way also led up to the second floor and our rooms, but I wouldn't be going there right then.

I was thinking that a swim would be good right about now.

If the rest of The Dragon's Warriors MC were out front waiting to ride out, then I could sneak out the back.

Yet, I made a miscalculation.

Apparently, they weren't riding their motorcycles today.

They were riding their dragons.

Something I couldn't know because my mate wouldn't freakin' talk to me!

So before I went out to the backyard and took my swim, I stopped in the kitchens, grabbed some decaffeinated coffee and a croissant that the cook had made at breakfast, and stepped right outside into hell.

I guess, maybe, I'd appeased Keifer because I thoroughly surprised him as I stepped out.

I really wasn't that indecent, to be honest.

I was wearing a black lace bra and black lace panties, but I guess I overestimated the amount of protection the covering offered when I was inside, without sunlight.

Because with sunlight, they became nearly sheer.

Which every man that was currently occupying the back lawn was able to see the moment my feet met the back porch.

“Get back inside!” Keifer roared.

I winced and took a step back.

Usually, I would’ve listened, but then he added on, “Or I’ll come take you inside and handcuff you to the bed. And there you’ll stay until you’re done growing my son. Because Lord knows it’d be easier than busting my ass for an ungrateful shit like you!”

I guess maybe I should’ve known it was going to be bad, having these hormones.

Or maybe the baby I was carrying inside of me didn’t take kindly to his mother being called an ‘ungrateful shit.’

I don’t know, but whatever the fuckin’ reason, I flipped out.

I flung the nearest thing I could pick up, which was the picnic table that was at my side, and hurled it at him.

I didn’t touch it with my hands, but with my mind.

I’d never been able to do that before, because I’d tried.

So it made more sense for my little hellion to be responsible for this action.

Whatever, or whomever, was responsible, I'd take it.

Because fuck him!

The man in front of me. Not the baby.

Because I loved the baby.

Even if it was the spawn of an asshole.

Keifer stopped the picnic table easily.

It was comical, though, seeing the looks on everyone's faces when they saw me do that. Even Juno, who was standing meekly beside Skylar.

All of the men looked at me incredulously, too.

"What are you looking at?" I asked, walking forward.

I was very aware of my near nakedness.

I just hoped that my goodies weren't quite as obvious as I was thinking they were.

"Hello my little babies," I cooed at my three dragon babies. "How are you today?"

Pictures of a pool filled with ice were sent to me through a mind-picture as I liked to call it, and I smiled down at them.

I ignored the men that moved out of my way as I made my way to the pool and looked at my three friends. The only three friends it felt like I had around here lately.

"Sorry babies, I'm going for a swim. If I make it cold, I can't get in it," I explained patiently to them.

Then a picture of the three of them swimming around at my feet underneath the water had me smiling.

“Of course you can come swim with me,” I told them as I passed a very seething Keifer.

I knocked him with my shoulder on the way past, and he hissed in a breath at the contact.

Oh, did I forget that I could now push my thoughts on other people? Make them see what I was mad about? Show them exactly what I wanted to do to them? Like an itty bitty picture show just for them.

That was courtesy of my little hellion, too.

Although nobody had witnessed it yet.

Well, now they had, but Keifer didn't count.

Because I was mad at him, and he could suck my nuts...or lack thereof.

I jumped—or cannon balled—into the pool's deep end, splashing Skylar, Nikolai, Ian and Kiefer in the process.

As I went under, I couldn't help the laugh that escaped me.

I'd learned to manipulate water, too.

See, I'd had a lot of nothing to do since Keifer had informed everyone he was going to be King.

A lot of nothing equaled lots of time to practice...and plot.

Holding my breath, I swam to the other side of the pool and flipped until I was floating on my back underneath the water.

Then closing my eyes to concentrate, I created a space in the water. An air bubble of sorts, and took a deep breath of air.

It was like when you were a kid and dragged the bucket upside down into the water, allowing a pocket of air to form. Then stuck your head into it to breathe, which was essentially what I'd done.

I smiled when I realized how much easier it'd been to do this time than when I'd done the same thing just yesterday.

I stayed under the water so long that the dragons started to tickle my feet with the little horns at the tops of their nose, and I finally came up for air to find everyone in the backyard gone except for Keifer.

Impressive.

I'd only been under the water for a couple of minutes.

"What was that that you just did?" He asked cautiously.

His tone came out neutrally, but I could tell he was genuinely interested in what I'd done.

"I created a bucket," I replied cryptically.

He raised a brow at me.

“What?” He moved forward.

I mimicked a bubble of water, and then started to explain when I realized I was mad at him.

“I’m not talking to you,” I said stubbornly, turning my back to him.

He growled in frustration.

“What the hell is your problem?” He barked, startling me slightly.

I ignored him, taking a deep breath, then submerged myself once again, playing a modified tag of sorts with the dragons swimming around me.

Then when I turned around to go for the surface to get a breath of air, my leg was suddenly dragged under even further, making all my remaining air leach out of me in a quick rush.

“Eeeee!” I screamed, panic coursing through my every synapse as I kicked and thrashed.

If I would’ve calmed down, I would’ve known it was only Keifer, but the panic had a hold of me and I fought for my life from an unknown source.

I twisted and kicked, punched and screamed.

That’s about when I realized I had air that was allowing me to scream.

And I opened my eyes to find my bubble back in place.

With the addition of Keifer.

“What the fuck,” he breathed, looking through the air.

I blinked. “You scared the hell out of me.”

“I’m sorry, I was about to let you go when I realized you didn’t have any air, but then this appeared and I forgot what I was doing.

“You forgot that you were drowning your wife? Mate?” I asked skeptically.

He shook his head.

“I wasn’t drowning you,” he gestured to the bubble of air. “How’d you figure out how to do this?”

“I had a lot of spare time,” I replied dryly.

He smiled sadly.

“I’m sorry. But it’s the only way I know how to protect you,” he answered. “I don’t know how else to do it without doing it like I am.”

I raised a brow at him. “And what...exactly...are you doing?”

He sighed and swam towards the side of the pool. Bubble broken, I moved to the surface as well, keeping my eye on him as I did. He tore off his shirt, and momentarily blinded me. By my own lust, that was. Not because he was really, really pale. Which he was that, too. But that didn’t bother me. He was my pale man.

He was beautiful.

His scar on his arm only added to his manliness.

And there was an air about him that’d changed.

He was different.

Something about him was off since the last time I’d inspected him, but I couldn’t tell exactly what.

The next thing to go were his pants.

I don't know when he'd shucked his boots, but the pants slipped all the way down until they were resting on the concrete that surrounded the pool.

"I'm making sure you're protected," he finally said, taking a seat in only his boxers, letting his feet dangle over the side of the pool.

The dragons immediately went to him, butting at his feet to garner his attention.

"How?" I asked stiffly.

He leaned down, allowing his hands to dangle in the water, and chilled the water around the swimming dragons.

What he didn't do, however, was make the water around me cold.

"Whoa," I said breathily, realizing what he was doing. "How are you doing that?"

"Practice," he teased, repeating my earlier words.

I narrowed my eyes at him.

"You didn't answer how you were protecting me," I told him stubbornly.

He leaned back, placing his hands directly behind him, displaying his stomach—and abs— to me.

I licked my lips, temporarily distracted once again.

I really needed to get a hold of these hormones. They were going to be the death of me.

Suddenly he stood, gesturing to me.

I made my way out of the water, walking to the side of the pool until I reached the stairs, and climbed out.

He was there waiting for me with a fluffy beach towel I'd made him purchase for me at the Wal-Mart on one of his secret missions.

The early ones where I wasn't quite so concerned about what he was doing while alone for hours on end.

I took the towel and slipped my feet into the flip-flops he had waiting for me, then took his hand that he had extended out to me.

"Where are you taking me?" I questioned, following behind him easily enough.

He walked me through the sanctuary and not one single time did I get a dirty look.

"Why aren't any of them looking at me?" I wondered.

He laughed.

"Because they can't see you," he offered.

I blinked, taking in the area surrounding me.

"Why'd you do that?" I questioned, sticking my hand out to touch a man's forearm.

He blinked and turned, but didn't see anything so he went back to the conversation he was having with one of the men from the stables.

Another place that I'd found that I adored going to over the past few weeks.

Keifer tugged my arm when he realized that I'd stopped, and I followed behind him once again.

"Because I don't want them to see your near nakedness, I think I've shared you enough for one day," he informed me.

I huffed out a laugh. "They didn't see anything important. Not to mention I'm completely covered in a towel. What are they going to see now? My shoulders?"

He pinched my ass through the towel, causing me to yelp in surprise.

People who'd been milling about turned to look for the person who'd made the sound, but quickly went back to their conversations or duties.

Darcy Manor and the sanctuary beyond it resembled a small city.

It took a lot of upkeep to keep the surrounding one hundred miles of the sanctuary in order.

So, at any given time, there were over two hundred people on-site maintaining the grounds, caring for the plant life, keeping the sanctuary mowed and weed free. There were stables, so there were people to keep the stables in working order.

There was an infirmary the size of a small county hospital also on the grounds, which was where I'd been spending more and more of my time.

There was a small restaurant and café.

A bank.

Staff living quarters.

And a bar.

Everything a small town needed.

All of it was packed into a small area that was always bustling with activity, and I'd learned that it'd all been because of Keifer.

Keifer made all of this possible for his people.

They needed a safe place, so he provided it, making sure it met all of their needs.

As long as they were willing to help out, he was happy to make sure they had everything they needed.

“How do you like working in the infirmary?” Keifer asked suddenly, interrupting my thoughts about his small city.

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I shrugged. “It’s a little low key for what I’m used to, but I think I can grow to like it.”

He studied his hands. “There’s about to be a lot more use for it, once we go to war.”

I turned to him suddenly.

“I’ve not heard anything about war!” I insisted.

He shrugged. “That’s what this is all about. During the day, we go hunting to find those Purists intent on destroying our cause.”

“And how exactly do you find them?” I questioned.

“That’s what we’ve been doing in the first part of the days. We locate them and then pay them a little visit. If we don’t like how those men and women conduct themselves, or if they try to explain away what they’ve been doing to plot against us, we take care of them,” he said simply.

I was a little taken aback.

“So what...you kill them?” I asked in alarm.

He shot me a reproving look. “You damn well know I don’t just kill them.”

“Yeah,” I shrugged. “But you have to do something with them.”

My observation fell on deaf ears when I walked around the corner of the hospital.

I'd never ventured that far.

I didn't know why.

Maybe a sense of self-preservation. I couldn't really tell you why, only that I just never did.

And now, with my eyes on the big purple behemoth in front of me, I knew why. Chapter 16

There be dragons.-T-shirt Blythe

"He's beautiful," I breathed, eyes wide in wonder as I got my first good look at the old dragon.

Keifer nodded. "He is."

His scales were the deepest hue of purple, edged with an iridescent silver, but when he took a breath, his scales would shimmer, and varying shades of purple would be revealed, nearly blinding you with their beauty.

"What's wrong with him?" I asked quietly.

Keifer shrugged. "He lost a wing, and after that, he kind of decided he no longer wanted to participate in life."

When I made to take a step forward, he caught my wrist and stilled me.

"How horrible. How does he live?" I gasped in outrage.

“He’s able to live just fine. He just can’t fly. At least not for the time being,” he explained. “Dragons can grow missing body parts back. It just takes a very, very long time. Years, sometimes decades. He’s also cantankerous,” Keifer continued. “Let him be. I don’t want him to hurt you.”

“I won’t get too close,” I ignored him and kept walking, Keifer at my back.

I came to a stop underneath a tree, gazing down on the massive beast who was dozing just down the hill, only feet away from the large pond that I’d only heard about, but had yet to find.

“Is he the reason no one will tell me where the pond is?” I asked with a smile.

Keifer came up to stand beside me, his shoulder brushing mine.

“Yeah, he’s it,” he confirmed. “He’s old, irritable and doesn’t like people much. He was my father’s bonded dragon, and he hasn’t been the same since my father was killed.”

“He’s heartbroken,” I murmured, tears threatening to spill.

Keifer shrugged. “Maybe. Maybe not. Who knows? He doesn’t talk to any of us either. The younger dragons,” he indicated a few of the dragons that were flying over our heads. “They bring him food so he doesn’t have to move. I don’t know if they do that to be nice, or because he makes them. Whatever the reason, he doesn’t have much reason to move.”

“Where does he poop?” I asked.

Keifer huffed out an amused snort of laughter. “I don’t know. I don’t really care as long as it’s not in the middle of the road where we have to walk.”

Such a man, not caring what happens as long as it doesn't affect him.

"What makes him so dangerous?" I questioned.

Keifer slung his arm around my shoulder.

"He bit a man's leg off a couple of years ago," he expounded. "He was only walking down to the pond to fish, but Angus counts the fish as his friends and took offense to him trying to catch them."

I laughed. "You're lying. I saw the one-legged man at the hospital. It happened because he was beating a woman and some dragon took offense."

He was trying to scare me off from the wounded soul down below, but I wouldn't be.

The dragon, Angus, needed a friend, and I'd be just the one to offer him one.

"So why are you showing me Angus?" I asked softly.

I knew he had something on his mind.

He wouldn't have brought me here if he hadn't had something to say.

"When I become King...there will be new duties. I'll be away more, expected to travel. I'll have to give up the club, because there are those of us that don't like the fact that the Dragon's Warriors MC is so hardcore looking," he sighed. "Which means I'll have to become someone who isn't, well, me."

"That's why you didn't want to be King. You don't want to be, period. You want to live your life, not have how you live your life dictated to you by others and their expectations," I surmised, awareness of the situation dawning.

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He nodded. “The dragon riders are a very old bunch. There are millions of us in this country, and even more outside of the country. We’re loyal to our own, sometimes to a point of snobbery. And I don’t want to be that. I want to be able to enjoy my life.” He ran his hands along his scalp, making the already unruly hair even worse. “I’m up to be King because that’s what dragon rider’s law dictates. The firstborn son of the King in the royal bloodline will take up the mantle once the old King is no more. That’s me. And that’s what our son will have waiting for him as well.”

He didn’t sound happy about that fact.

“Who says you have to give up your life to become King?” I worried.

“Derek is from the noble bloodline. His father was my father’s chief advisor. A trusted member of the dragon family hierarchy. He told my father what to do, how to act, what was acceptable, etcetera. And that’s what Derek will do for me. But...I just don’t want to do that. I like working at the shop on my cars. I like being in my club. Being home with you on weekends. This last couple of weeks has been torture. All day meetings lasting until night has fallen. Hunting the Purists once the sun sets.” He shook his head. “I don’t mind the hunting part. But they won’t let me do that for long. Once I’m officially King, I’m gone. I become too important to lose.”

I turned him by yanking on his hand.

“What makes you think any of your future followers want that for you?” I asked him.

His beautiful gold eyes, bored into me. “Thousands and thousands of years of tradition. Advisors. Brothers. My mother. My sister. You. I have to be that for you

all.”

I shook my head. “No. You do that for you...if that’s what you want to do. For us, you just be you. That’s all we ever want.”

He shook his head. “It’s not that easy. Trust me.”

I crossed my arms. “No, it probably is that easy. It’s you that’s making it that hard.”

He opened his mouth, and then shut it again just as quickly.

“We’ll see,” he muttered, turning to watch the dragon as he started to stand.

“If you leave your club, your friends that have been there for you when you weren’t King, then you’ll lose them. Do they know what you’re planning yet?” I asked carefully.

Keifer looked back down at me once again. “No.”

I smiled. “Then if you want my honest opinion, I’d say fuck ‘em. You’re not your father, and this isn’t fourteen years ago when he was King, or even two hundred years ago. This is a new era. You have to adapt to the time. Nobody wants a lazy King. They want one that they know they can count on to handle whatever lays ahead,”

“And Keifer,” I said, smiling, “that’s you.”

“That dragon right there. That’ll be me if I lose you,” he whispered.

I turned to survey the old dragon once again.

“Then we’ll make sure you don’t lose me.”\*\*\*

Keifer

Blythe's words ran through my mind over and over again.

That's you.

Maybe she was right.

I wasn't the type of person to sit inside and hear grievances all day.

I was an action man.

I liked to get my hands dirty working on cars.

I liked to run outside. I liked to fight with Declan. I liked to shoot skeet and hunt.

Which begged to wonder...why was I going along with the wishes of another when that's not what I wanted?

As I looked down at Blythe, her sleeping body cuddled close to mine, I knew I had a lot of decisions to make.

Starting right here.

And I would be the best father and, very soon, husband, I could be.

I opened up the box I'd kept in my pocket since two days after I'd met Blythe, and studied the diamond ring.

It was a simple band...from the outside.

On the inside, I'd had inscribed the dragon rider's code.

Free. Hard. Forever. Until the last breath.

And I felt that that described the love I felt for Blythe to a T.

"What are you doing on my back?" Blythe mumbled sleepily, not opening her eyes.

A smile tipped up the corner of my mouth as I looked at her face.

So peaceful.

The moonlight reflected off her face perfectly, allowing me to see the light dusting of freckles on the bridge of her nose. The delicate black lashes of her eyes resting on her smooth cheeks. The sweep of brown hair that surrounded her beautiful face and trailed along her shoulders. The black satin nightgown that'd ridden up over her butt, giving me just a teasing glimpse of her sweetness.

"Your ring," I murmured. "I was trying to decide whether to just put it onto your finger now or actually ask you."

"Ask me," she whispered huskily. "The answer may surprise you."

I grinned.

“Oh yeah?” I asked, running two fingers down the length of her spine.

She shivered slightly, tipping her ass up when my fingers traced along the curve of it.

I didn't give her what she wanted.

Instead, I circled my fingers back up and out to her left hand, pulling it back once I had it in my grasp, and gently slid the cool metal down onto her finger.

“Dragon riders, as a whole, don't have marriage ceremonies. We have what you would call bonding ceremonies. Marriage is a human tradition,” I whispered softly, twisting the ring around her finger as I spoke. “But it's a tradition that I want to give you, nonetheless.”

She smiled, still not opening her eyes.

“And this bonding ceremony, what does it entail?” She whispered pleadingly.

The pleading in her voice came because I was circling along the bottom of her ass, stopping right before I reached her pussy. “Similar to a marriage. More customs, less cake. No preacher, but it's said in the leader of the sanctuary's presence so he can bless the bonding,” I informed her, extending my fingers so they rested on the cheeks of her ass, not touching that juicy pussy, that radiated heat like an oven, at all.

“What about those leaders...who do they say their vows in front of?” She asked

curiously.

Always curious, my girl.

“Me. Or one of my brothers. My sister. My mother,” I told her, rolling her over and straddling her thighs.

I was naked, of course.

I was always naked when I joined Blythe in bed.

I was slowly working Blythe up to doing the same, but she still had to go to bed with something covering her breasts.

She said they were ‘in the way’ if she didn’t.

Her pussy, though, was mine for the taking.

And take it I did.

“Roll over and lift your ass for me, Drakina,” I ordered gruffly.

She obliged, tilting her hips up until her knees were under her.

Her head and chest rested on the mattress underneath us.

Her expression serene as I ran my hands up and down the outside of her thighs, letting my thumbs sweep the lips of her sex on each upward movement.

“You want me,” I purred softly, leaning forward and placing my nose against the cheek of her ass, smelling her essence as it wept from her entrance.

“Yes,” she hissed, pleasure filling her tone.

I leaned forward once again and let my tongue sweep out, licking her from clit to perineum.

She shivered in delight, making my mouth tilt up into the semblance of a smile once again before I dove into her pussy face first.

My tongue flicked her clit as I raised my hand and sank two fingers deep inside her sheath.

She gasped, clenching down hard on my fingers as I flicked the tiny bud with my tongue. “Oh, God,” she breathed.

I growled against her, causing the vibrations of my voice to pour into her sex, eliciting another groan from her lips.

“Stop teasing me,” she pleaded. “I want you.”

With one last flick and twist of my fingers, I rose up behind her and stared at the vision before me.

She looked like a goddess with her ass in the air, her face flat, eyes on the moon, it's light pouring in.

Her hair was surrounding her like a halo, and I couldn't help but be thankful that she was all mine.

My dick agreed, too.

When I reared backward, my cock had a mind of its own and lined itself up with her

entrance without any help from my hand, and all I had to do was lean forward and sink slowly inside of her.

I filled her to capacity, watching as her breathing started to quicken the moment I entered her.

“Feel good, Drakina?”

I knew it did.

I could feel her pleasure through our mating bonds.

My wrists pounded with her pleasure, the tattoos feeling alive as I slowly pulled out, then even slower, pushed back inside.

“Yes,” she agreed on an exhale.

I moved my hands up to rest on the curve of her hips.

I didn’t speed up my tempo, though.

This was going to be a slow, sweet loving.

I was going to savor her body, and give her what I should’ve been giving her these past couple of weeks.

Her cunt felt extra wet as I slid in and out of her, giving me the added glide that I usually felt only after I’d ridden her good, hard and long.

And I found that I quite liked it.

She felt different ever since I'd found out that she was pregnant, but tonight, with my cock being strangled to death by her pussy, I knew I'd keep her pregnant as much as she allowed.

"Go faster," she pleaded, her sheath tightening down more and more.

"No," I denied her.

"Please!"

I pulled my hand back and brought it down with a sound slap against her ass, causing her to rear back and moan, as I slid deeper into her with her jolting movements.

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“None of that,” I smacked her again.

She started panting, and with the way her pussy was quivering, I knew she wouldn’t be able to hold out for much longer.

Did I speed up?

Hell no.

I slowed down even more, drawing a whine of protest from her lips.

“God,” she cried. “Please, Keifer! I need it!”

I rubbed her ass soothingly, inadvertently drawing my thumb over her anus on a brief sweep, causing another moan to roll out of her.

“Did you like that?” I asked curiously, running my thumb back over her asshole for another sweep as I continued thrusting unhurriedly.

She tightened around my cock like a fist, nearly causing my eyes to roll back into my head.

I wasn’t normally an ass man.

But for Blythe, I’d be an ass man.

Dipping my thumb into the juices that were collecting on the length of my cock, I

coated it before bringing it back up to her anus and pushing slightly inside.

She moaned gutturally as her orgasm barreled through her.

The sudden intensity of it all yanked me right along with her, and I closed my eyes as my release shot out of the end of my cock, sucking every single bit of juice from my balls and depositing it inside her already wet pussy.

“Keifer!” She screamed.

I pushed my thumb all the way inside her, and we both cried out as she clamped down harder.

After long moments of catching our breath, I gently removed my thumb from her ass and pulled out, feeling our combined releases on the length of my dick as I moved off the bed and headed for the bathroom.

I washed my hands quickly and wet a towel, bringing it back to Blythe who was still in the exact same position as she’d been in when I’d left her.

“You broke me,” she whispered tiredly.

I cleaned her up, wiping our releases from her thighs and tossing the rag onto the floor before I climbed back into bed with her and gathered her into my arms.

We pressed tightly together, from head to feet, my body surrounding hers.

“I’ll put you back together again tomorrow. Tonight, we should sleep,” I murmured sleepily.

She laughed softly. “Yes sir, oh, Dragon King.”

I pinched her nipple lightly. “That’s how I expect you to address me from now on in front of our people.”

She snickered. “You wish, Dragon King.”

I kissed her bare shoulder and reached for the covers, pulling them up and over us.

“You’re right...I do.”Chapter 17

Not to brag, but I can make people angry just by existing.-Keifer to BlytheBlythe

“Are you sure you’re comfortable doing this?” Skylar asked one more time.

I narrowed my eyes at her.

“I said I’m fine. Stop babying me. You’re treating me just like your brother, and I know you know better,” I wagged my finger under her nose.

She swatted my hand away and turned to leave.

“I’m serious,” she said over her shoulder. “You feel any twinges, you let me know.”

I shooed her away with a dismissing hand and turned to the kids.

“Alright, who’s up for a little game time?” I asked, rubbing my hands together in excitement.

I was in the sanctuary’s daycare.

This was where all the workers’ children came while their parents were working on the property.

I'd been here to visit before, but today would be my first time to stay for any length of time.

"Blythe, where did Miss Melody go?" A little boy, Tanner I think he was named, asked.

I smiled at him sadly. "Miss Melody had to have her arm casted because she fell outside while playing with you. Once that's fixed she'll go home to rest for a few days before she's back with you."

Tanner nodded. "She fell hard."

"That's 'cause dodo brain pushed him," another little boy, Desmond, countered, pointing to a little boy in the back of the room.

The boy in the back of the room was named Jacob, and he had to be the cutest of the bunch with his curly blonde hair and his ice blue eyes.

All three of them were around the same age, I'd guess five or six, and played together often.

"Miss Blythe, I need to use the restroom," a little girl interrupted.

"What's your name, honey?" I asked her.

"Nadine," she whispered shyly.

"Alright, Nadine. Go ahead and go, and I'll wait in the hallway for you, sound good?" I asked her.

She nodded. "Yes."

So for the next three hours, I juggled six children, ranging in age from two and a half to six years, all alternating every ten minutes going to the bathroom.

Although it was fun at times, I decided that my children were going to be spaced at least five years apart.

I just had to hope that my kid would have some companions to play with like these children did.

“Miss Melody!” The children crowed. “We painted!”

Melody, a sweet woman around my age, hurried into the room, a hot pink cast taking up half of her left arm.

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“I’m back!” She cheered. “And I’ve got snacks!”

It was more than obvious that these children loved their teacher, and the feeling was reciprocated by Melody.

“Thank you so much,” Melody placed her papers on her desk and hurried to me.

I smiled.

“Not a problem. I’m just glad to see that you’re okay,” I told her honestly.

She held up her cast. “It wasn’t as bad as they thought it was. Just a hairline fracture that should take care of itself with me wearing this for another month. It was a good thing, too, because they brought a really, really bad case in as I was getting my cast fitted. I was glad I was leaving so that the girl could have their undivided attention.”

“What happened?” I asked worriedly.

Melody smiled sadly. “From what I heard, a young girl was beaten because they found out her father was a dragon rider. She was about sixteen or seventeen. She was hurt really bad, and as I was leaving, I overheard them say she probably wouldn’t make it.”

My heart hurt for the young girl’s parents.

Poor thing.

“I’ll go up there and see if I can be of any use. Don’t overdo it, Melody,” I ordered teasingly.

She held up her hands in surrender. “Yes, My Queen.”

Her eyes were shining with mirth, but at the mention of being ‘Queen,’ my heart started to pound.

It made me feel uncomfortable to think about being the Queen.

Hell, I was just a girl from Dallas, Texas. I wasn’t a freakin’ Queen.

I ate popcorn out of the bag. Wore flip-flops instead of heels. Wore panties from Wal-Mart rather than Victoria’s Secret. I didn’t own a single dress. Nor did I ever wear my hair down.

Weren’t queens supposed to be poised and elegant?

Because if so, I wasn’t it.

I was me. Blythe Diane Barrett.

The daughter of two ordinary people.

I attended public school, and I drank beer.

Clearly, I wasn’t Queen material.

“See ya, Melody,” I waved hastily as doubts started to creep into my thoughts.

Tears started to form in my eyes, but I willed them away by replacing the moisture at

my eyes with dry air.

That was something Keifer had taught me to do only last night, and I found that I loved it.

It was a good defense mechanism, of course.

“Whoa!” Dorian caught me as I ran directly into him when I rounded the corner of the building where the daycare was housed.

I’d had to have Skylar show me how to get here earlier, and I was actually thankful to see a familiar face.

“Hey,” I greeted him. “Can you show me to the exit?”

He must’ve been in a real hurry, because the moment I said it, he was pointing towards the hallway on the right and hurrying past me into the room I’d just exited.

Turning in curiosity, I found Dorian standing in front of Melody, her broken arm held gently between his two hands.

It was as if he was holding a baby bird with his fingers with how delicately he was treating her.

“Are you okay?” He asked softly.

Melody scowled at him and wrenched her hand away from him, which inevitably hurt her since her face crumpled the moment she did it.

“Fine,” she said in a pained whisper. “Perfectly fine, thanks.”

Dorian scowled at her and went to reach for her hand once again, but Melody stepped away from him.

“Why are you here?” She demanded.

That’s when I chose to leave.

I wasn’t one to spy, and this was clearly something personal between the two of them.

So, I turned and hurried down the hallway, readily finding the exit seeing as it had a large red EXIT sign hanging above the door. But the moment I pushed through it and let it slam closed behind me, I realized my mistake.

This wasn’t where I’d entered.

Far from it, in fact.

It was an exit...just not one I would’ve taken if I’d had the choice.

Because it practically dumped me out right in the middle of nowhere.

One way led around a lake...the other led to a sleeping dragon.

Talk about a rock and a hard place.

“Shit,” I said, turning around and trying the door.

Locked.

Of course it was.

I don't bite, little one.

I blinked and turned around slowly. Very slowly.

The big purple beast had raised his head, and he was now staring at me with dispassionate eyes.

Promise? I asked him hopefully.

Cross my heart. Come talk to me. I have things that I want to say to you.

I swallowed thickly, and then started walking.

Whatever it was about this dragon, it felt right. Something in me wanted me to walk that way. I knew he wouldn't hurt me. Not on his life.

But I wasn't stupid.

I told Keifer what I was doing.

I'm going in, I sent him through our link.

Going in where? He asked worriedly.

To the dragon's den. Chapter 18

The secret to a clean house is simple. Don't cook. Ever. Drink coffee instead. -Coffee CupKeifer

"Are you sure it's her?" I asked my brother.

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My brother nodded. “Yeah, as positive as I can be. She doesn’t look good, though. In fact, she looks like death’s knocking on her door.”

My stomach plummeted. I’d hoped that I’d have good news to give Blythe, but this didn’t sound like good news.

“How’d you find this place?” I asked, eyes scanning the small meadow that led to the cabin.

“Joseph’s good, I’ll give him that. It took me a long time, but I had to trace what I didn’t find that day in the park. Which wasn’t much. But then I started to notice how it was too clean. Too pure. And I started to follow that trail. It led me to a house in the suburbs. Although it was days too late. Went in and searched, there was nothing. No one in or out of it until last night. Last night, a young man dressed in Amish clothing with a long beard,” he gestured to his chest around nipple level before continuing, “came in and picked up a gym bag of what I can only guess was clothes. I followed him, expecting him to go back to his little village at the edge of the county, but he didn’t. Rode his horse and buggy to a house. This house.”

My brother hadn’t gone in.

He’d left that decision up to me.

It was more than obvious something was going on, according to the pictures.

A large steel frame of some sort was being erected on the back of an eighteen wheeler.

Further beyond that was a massive pole barn.

Hundreds of people milled about, fixing this, moving that, building there. Then, in the very middle of it all, was a single house surrounded by a large open meadow.

“What the fuck is that?” I asked, squinting at what looked like a pond, but I wasn’t quite sure.

“It’s a water tank. Or what they use as water. It’s fed by an underground spring that I followed out to the old Tankard place. They purify the water on site. Everything they eat or drink is made there,” Nikolai told me.

Before I could question that, though, my soon-to-be wife butted into my thoughts.

I’m going in, she sent me through our link.

Going in where? I asked worriedly.

To the dragon’s den.

I started screaming at her before she’d even disconnected from me for seconds.

But something shut me off.

Kept me out.

Refused to let me in, and I started to fucking freak.

Before I could even get a word out edgewise to my brother, an almighty rush of power poured through me, and I dropped down to my knees.

I tried in vain to regulate my breathing as more and more power rushed into me, so much that I felt my vision going black.

In and out it went as my body tried to find a place for the power but it was for naught.

With nothing else left to do, I started doling it out down the line.

Which was how and why I came to be.

Why there was a King in the first place.

He could share power with anyone he was bonded to.

Which meant that all my overload of energy and power went out to Nikolai first, since he was the closest, as well as my second.

I wanted to smirk when the rush brought Nikolai to his knees right along with me, but only managed a small huff of laughter.

The second to get it was Derek, followed shortly by Ian. Then Ford, Alaric, Jean Luc, and Dorian prospectively.

Long minutes passed as I tried to breathe through it.

My brain finally came back online once I could get a breath of air, which I gulped in like a drowning man does once he's on solid ground.

Deep, long pulls filled my lungs, and I fell to my back, eyes closing as I tried to make sense of my scattered thoughts.

“What the fuck,” Nikolai breathed. “I’ve never felt anything like that.”

I hadn't either.

It's because you've taken up the mantle of power. It'll get easier with time.

That wasn't Declan. It was Angus.

Angus? What's going on?

My voice sounded faint, but I couldn't help it. I still felt tingles racing through my body at so much pent up energy.

Come to me.

I opened my eyes and forced myself to sit up. Then even further to my knees.

Finally, to my feet, I offered my hand to my brother.

"What happened?" He gasped as we stumbled out of the trees where we were hiding.

A slow smile crept up over my mouth.

"My son has bonded."\*\*\*

"I thought babies couldn't bond!" Blythe screamed. "He's supposed to be twenty-one!"

I closed my eyes as Angus' words flowed through me.

Not true. Your child just has to come of 'age.' Which is a relative term. Once his power level is at a certain percentage, they'll bond with their dragon. Although most dragon riders don't reach it until they're around twenty-one. Your son is already at

that level.

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My head was pounding.

My heart was racing.

And my breathing was once again quick.

“How was he able to bond with you? I thought dragons only ever had one bond,” I rumbled, hands raised to my temples to help ward off the splitting headache I could feel roaring towards me.

I was standing in the middle of the lake.

Standing because all of my extra power had done that.

With nothing else to do with it, the excess started to leak out of me and into my environment.

It’s never happened in my lifetime, and I’m over a thousand years old. That’s not to say that I haven’t heard of it happening before. I just never thought it’d be with me. I was very loyal to your father.

My heart hurt slightly at the mention of my father.

But it felt right to have my son taking on Angus.

“And the power trip? Can you explain that?” I asked carefully.

You'll feel that with anyone that has a blood bond with you.

That was news to me.

I'd never felt it before, and I'd been around through quite a few bondings in my time.

"Why?" I asked.

Because you're King, he said simply.

"What's the difference if he's King or Prince? Either way it goes, he's still the same person. No ceremonies have been held. He's not told anyone. What's the freakin difference? He's the same!" Blythe growled in frustration.

She was right. I'd been wondering much the same thing.

You've taken the old King's place, if only by mouth. It could be just your state of mind. You weren't calling yourself King. Or it could be that those that follow you have accepted you as such. No matter the name in which it is called, something has changed. That's you. End of story.

"But it's not me. I'm not the King. Not yet anyway. The ceremony is set for two weeks from this Sunday," I denied. "Right before our wedding."

You're the King. Get over it.

I forgot how annoying Angus was. He always knew stuff that I didn't and still don't.

Declan was a little less than half of Angus' age, but that still wasn't anything to sneeze at.

Angus, though, was a smart cookie. And maybe I should just get over it like he said I should.

“Should I expect a bonding like the one that happened today with you and my son to be the new norm every time a dragon rider comes into power or was it just special because our son wasn’t born yet?” I asked.

“I really, really wish I could understand what is going on. I feel like I’ve only gotten half the story,” Nikolai grunted darkly.

Blythe crossed her arms across her chest, narrowed her eyes, and then Nikolai’s eyes went insanely wide before he dropped to his knees and started to gasp for breath.

“What’d you do to my brother?” I asked, interrupting Angus’ next explanation to look at

my soon to be wife with upraised brows.

“I was showing him what we were talking about...” I heard her mutter as she looked at her hands in surprise.

“How’d you know you could do that?” I asked carefully.

She finally gave me her eyes, and I could see that she was scared.

The powers she was manifesting were scary to her.

She was overwhelmed, as well.

Hell, I was overwhelmed and I’d been doing this magic business since I was old enough to ask my father questions.

And Angus, now that I thought about it.

“It’ll be okay, Drakina. I promise,” I whispered to her.

She gave me a sad smile. “I know. It doesn’t matter right now. There are so many things on our plate that I should...Keifer?”

I hadn’t realized that anything was wrong until Blythe vaulted forward and grabbed my hands up into hers right about the time that for the second time in less than twelve hours, I experienced the rush of power tearing through me.

Touch him.

That was said by Angus, and I felt the power that was building up at a breakneck pace slowly go back to manageable levels, until, finally, I could see again.

Hands touched me everywhere.

Well, not everywhere, but everywhere that wasn’t covered by clothing.

This time, the transformation of all that power was exponentially easier.

I could choose who got the power, and how much.

“Holy shit,” someone breathed.

I could even hand off some to both Declan and Angus, who were each touching me with the tips of their tails.

Declan having arrived sometime in the last few minutes as we were harnessing all that energy.

To answer your question, dear King, it won't be like your first time, every time. Not if you can hand off the power before it becomes too much. Your father used to carry around an energy channel. He used to channel it straight into a metal insulator that would harness the energy and store it for later use.

The vision of my father's cane, the one he used to carry with him everywhere, came to mind, and I finally understood.

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My father hadn't needed a cane. Far from it.

He'd always been an extremely fit man, and the memories I'd had of him carrying that cane had baffled me.

Until now.

"Holy shit," Nikolai said. "That's what he used to use that for. We always used to steal it!"

I remembered that, too.

And just the thought of having to go through the channeling of that power by myself was crippling.

"So what happened this time?" Skylar asked from somewhere beyond the wall of muscle that made up my club members.

"That," I panted, "was Farrow, bonding with his dragon."\*\*\*

"This is like that Godzilla movie where it shows up in the middle of New York and starts tearing down buildings," Blythe said at my side.

Blythe, Declan, and I had ridden to where I knew my baby brother was.

Which, of fucking course, was in the heart of Dallas.

He was visiting his girlfriend, Macy, and his dragon had landed on the fucking rooftop where the hospital allowed helicopters to land to bring in critical patients.

The dragon had already chased off two such helicopters as he waited for Farrow.

Farrow, the stupid fuck, was too busy doing his girlfriend to stop and think about the situation and who he was putting at risk.

The dragon, for instance, being the first such being.

The second would be all the other victims in the helicopters.

If Farrow didn't get his shit in order, he wouldn't have a dragon.

Mostly because I could see, right this very second, fifteen Purists driving up to the complex, with what looked suspiciously like a fucking cage on the back of it.

It looked like the truck I'd seen in Nikolai's pictures, but much more reinforced. And worthy of holding a dragon.

An alive dragon.

"Fuck," I hissed, awareness creeping into my mind at just what kind of predicament we were about to be in.

Nikolai, do you see this?

I'm going to kill him, my brother's voice growled through my subconscious.

Agreed. I get him first.

If you get him first, I won't be able to kill him. I get him first. You second.

Boys, my soon to be wife's voice purred. Let's find out what he's doing before we threaten to kill him.

Turns out, she was right.

Go get him.

My brother followed my order, and five minutes after he breached the building, I got a distress call.

His girlfriend has him tied to the bed. And she's holding a knife to his junk.

We let that hang in the air for a few long, stilted moments before I said, "Um, what?"

Blythe buried her face into my back, laughing so hard I feared she'd fall off Declan's back.

Declan, can you get me down there without putting yourself at risk?

I got a huff of amusement from the dragon that clearly said, 'You're joking, right?'

"Alright, well stop fucking around and do it then," I growled in annoyance.

"What about me?" Blythe asked.

"Stay with Declan," I ordered her as we landed in the same alley where it all began over three months ago.

Had it only been three months?

It felt like longer.

Seasons...if not years longer.

“Be careful,” she called once I had both feet planted on the ground.

“Always am, Drakina.”

I had no way of knowing those would be the last words I’d say to Blythe for a very long time.

Because if I had, I would’ve never gone into that building.

I would’ve never left her side.

Because had I known, I would’ve taken the hit that was meant for me and saved myself some heartache.

Chapter 19

I burn 2000 calories every time I put on fitted sheets.-Blythe to Keifer

“Let him go,” I ordered darkly, staring at the crazed woman like she was nothing more than lint on my shirt to be picked off and discarded as the lowest form of trash.

Her eyes fairly lit with fire.

“He used me!” She screamed.

“I did no such thing. I only told her that I couldn’t be with her anymore,” Farrow hissed through clenched teeth.

I would’ve, too, if I had my balls threatened with a knife.

Although, I never would've been in that position.

I had more brains than that.

"Farrow, you know what you have to do," I ordered him.

His eyes closed.

"I love her," he croaked.

It was only after I saw his mouth not move that I realized that he hadn't spoken aloud, but in my head.

Do it. You're about to have your dragon taken by the Purists before you've even had him, and my woman is unprotected out there.

He closed his eyes, grabbed the knife, and pushed her away from him in the same breath.

She went flying, and it was only the pocket of air that I used to cushion her fall that saved her from having her head bashed in by the wood paneling across the bedroom.

He swallowed thickly as he moved slowly from the bed, eyes stricken.

He gazed down at the unconscious woman for long moments before he grabbed his jeans off the floor of the bedroom, grabbed his boots, wallet and keys, and left the bedroom.

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We all stayed silent while we made our way down the stairs.

Not even Nikolai said a thing, which surprised me, seeing as he was the first one to say something at inappropriate times.

I'd nearly made it to the last step when pain at which I'd never felt before tore through me.

I gasped and fell to my knees, hands clutching my head at the sudden explosion of pain.

"Keifer!" Nikolai and Farrow cried at the same time.

The next thing to follow the pain was Declan's roar of outrage, followed by the very building shaking around us.

Glass broke. Stone crunched. Wood groaned.

All because of Declan's fury.

It was all contained in one roar.

One single moment of time had everyone within a square mile screaming in pain at the sheer power in that roar.

That's when I found my feet and started running.

With my brothers stumbling at my back, I ran outside to find the whole world in utter chaos.

The skies were filled with dragons that weren't supposed to be seen.

All of them fighting for their lives.

“What the hell,” Farrow breathed. “What the hell?”

I concurred.

I didn't know what the hell either.

But I'd sure as fuck find out.

As soon as I found my mate.

The moment I rounded the corner into the alley, I saw my worst nightmare.

Blythe was on the dirty, dank ground of the alleyway on her side, bleeding from a gash along the top of her head.

Declan was standing over her protectively, ropes and chains around his neck and wings, keeping him from going anywhere.

Purists in the very truck I'd seen in the photograph were shooting crossbows at Declan, focusing on him instead of the other dragons.

Not that they had a need to.

There were other trucks, too.

Tons of them.

All of the same caliber as the truck in front of me.

And in the center of it all was an armored vehicle, and at the helm was none other than Joseph himself.

And I could feel an ungodly amount of power and energy emanating from that truck.

“You feel that?” Nikolai asked as we both started sprinting down the alleyway.

“Yeah,” I panted, gathering as much energy as I could around me. “Take care of it.”

Nikolai leapt up and disappeared from my view.

He was fine, though.

I knew it like I knew I was about to cut the throats of every single one of the men threatening my woman.

Nikolai passed down in front of me sharply and cut every single one of the ropes and chains holding Declan down with a sword he’d produced from a scabbard on Perdita’s back.

And Declan went wild.

With nothing hindering him from protecting Blythe, he turned in the direction of those trying to kill him, took two running steps on huge, taloned feet and took to the air, knowing I was there now to protect Blythe.

Fire engulfed the area and men started to scream as the fire consumed them, burning

them until there was nothing left but bone and ash.

Smoke started to fill the alleyway, and I made it to Blythe's side in time for Farrow to land at my side, mounted on his newly bonded dragon's back.

"Let me take her home," he called to me.

I was torn.

But it was Farrow's honest words that swayed my mind.

"I know I have no right being here. I haven't trained nor fought in a battle like this, but you have. Your people need you," he said, holding his hands out for Blythe's limp form.

I looked down at Blythe's dirt streaked face and the gash that was healing on her head, and knew he was right.

"I want updates every three minutes, no exceptions, even when you get home. Do you understand?" I commanded.

Farrow nodded, and I handed him the most precious gift he would ever hold.

"Take her," I rasped.

He did, curling her into his arms, nodding once, and taking off into thin air.

Just like I'd taught him.

At least the boy retained something, I thought.

You taught him well enough, boy. Come on up, it's time for some fun.

Declan landed on wet concrete at my side, and I mounted him as I took one more long, good look at the blood staining the alley Blythe had very recently occupied.

And I roared.

“Dragon riders! Unite!”

Time seemed to stand still as those three words ripped through each of my blood bonded brothers.

Rage, pain, disappointment, hope, sacrifice, love, and encouragement filled me from each one of them, and I gave it back in kind, sharing my energy with them just as they'd done with me.

With all that on my mind, Declan surged off the ground and raced to where the only unoccupied truck hauling a cage sat, trying to shoot dragons out of the sky.

My brothers.

My friends.

Declan, go low and take out the tire, turn it on its side so he won't be able to use that large hook launcher anymore.

Declan's body tensed and suddenly we were plunging down towards the earth at an incredible rate of speed.

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The wind ripped through my hair, taking my ball cap with it as we surged forward, only to come to a sudden halt when Declan spread his wings, indicating that we were within striking distance.

The moment the truck flipped, I superheated the remaining gun that had a man stationed at it, shooting at anything that got close enough.

His hands ripped from the gun, leaving hunks of his skin behind.

The man shrieked in pain as the nerves in his hands started to convulse, and I smiled, heating the gun even more until there was nothing left of it but smoldering metal that soon ignited the bullets that were laying at his feet on the floor.

Declan pulled away just as the explosion filled the sky like a painting back drop of the setting sun.

BOOM!

The explosion rocked the two trucks beside it, and I turned to focus on the van that my brother was fighting.

Fighting and losing.

Whatever was in that van wouldn't be stopped by magic.

It'd have to be stopped by brute force.

Something my brother had already figured out.

Declan, let me off. Head towards the van from the opposite side but stay out of sight, I ordered.

I can't. Whatever he has isn't allowing us to cloak. I can stay high in the clouds, though. That should prove to be enough cover until you need me.

I nodded and took a running leap off into the street, weaving in between the stopped cars that had stunned drivers at the wheel.

This fighting wasn't done.

We never wanted to scare the population.

Sure, we employed the best hackers in the entire world, but no matter how hard we tried, this would never be undone, and Joseph knew it.

It had been his intention.

Because why else would he have come with so much force not caring who saw?

All previous battles had been fought in the shadows of the darkest of nights.

No one had been the wiser of the war between the Purists and Dragon Riders.

Now, though, it was over.

The rose glasses had been shattered, and tomorrow a new world would be sitting before us.

Tonight, though, all bets were off.

As I used the hood of a little Porsche Cayenne as a slip and slide, I arrowed in on the van, running up the side of it and launching myself at the top of the box.

I caught it easily, hefting myself up and over the back until I was standing on the roof.

What's the weakness? I asked my brother.

Bulletproof glass, reinforced metal sides. Something inside of it keeping me from doing anything structurally with the composition. It's like he's in a lead proof box.

I smiled. The problem with reinforcing the sides with steel was that where the two pieces of steel met, there was always a weakness.

And as I caught the axe that was tossed down to me from my brother who'd come up with the same response, I started to hammer into the weakness until there were the smallest of holes.

Now.

Declan swooped down and caught ahold of the gap with his talons, then promptly ripped the roof off the van like a sardine can.

"Hallo there, Joseph," I said in a faintly tinged English accent.

Joseph smiled, and then the little red dot I caught sight of on his chest suddenly exploded.

Everything shattered as I was thrown from the vehicle by the force of the explosion.

Time seemed to stand still as I felt myself moving through the air.

I watched as horror registered on Nikolai and Jean Luc's faces.

Watched as Declan turned, leaping from the road where he was thrown, trying to get to me.

But he didn't make it.

I felt the impact of the brick building hit me like a million pounds of iron.

My shoulders and head took the brunt of the collision, followed shortly by my back and hips.

I felt bones break.

Blood spurt.

The breath left me.

But nothing hurt.

Nothing.

And then I realized that nothing hurt because my body was in shock.

I watched as the ground rose up to meet me as I fell forward onto my face.

But then something weird happened. My angel spoke to me, and suddenly everything was okay.

You'll live because you're needed. I love you.

I started to get feeling back.

Bones started to heal.

Spurting wounds closed over.

And breath entered my lungs.

I was able to take my first full breath in long minutes, and it was glorious.

What wasn't glorious was the pain.

But the pain was manageable.

Pain meant I was alive.

"Keifer!" Nikolai screamed.

Something's wrong.

Farrow.

Why was Farrow here?

He was supposed to be taking care of Blythe.

What's wrong, I croaked.

She's convulsing.

She was fine, talking to me and everything. Then her entire body started to convulse and she screamed. Her back bowed up out of my arms, and I think she's stopped breathing. I'm not sure, but she feels like she has. And I'm still over a mile from the sanctuary.

My heart froze in my chest as I realized just what she'd done.

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*Source Creation Date: July 10, 2025, 7:52 am*

She'd given me her life.

All because I was about to die.

And I remembered what she'd said during the clouded haze of pain.

You'll live because you're needed. I love you.

NO! You can't leave me!

I hadn't realized I'd said that aloud until Nikolai's face was in front of mine.

"What is it, Keifer? Tell me! What do you see that I don't?" Nikolai asked urgently, looking around like there was a threat looming that nobody else could see.

My eyes took in my surroundings.

All the cages were gone.

Self-destructed with the van Joseph was in.

They were all back to normal.

The dragons were gone, and all that was left were my brothers. Blood and blood bound alike.

"Keifer!" Nikolai called once again. "I don't see it!"

That's because the threat wasn't here. It was in my heart.\*\*\*

Two hours laterThe Darcy ManorIt took me nearly two hours to get everyone back.

It would've taken me significantly longer had I not commandeered a tractor trailer to carry all of our wounded dragons.

I'd gotten word from my sister, within minutes of Blythe arriving at the hospital, that she was breathing and was, in fact, in excellent condition. And the baby had a strong heartbeat.

Blythe was in a coma, though.

They weren't sure if the coma was something reflexive from expending so much energy or what, but they'd know more in the coming days.

For now, though, I was bringing all my men home.

They wouldn't be going to their own homes.

Not anymore.

I'd be informing them of this later on this evening.

For now, I was just gathering all of my people in the same place so we could talk about what had just transpired.

And do some damage control.

"I don't think I've seen you drive an eighteen-wheeler before," Jean Luc said, laughing. "Common work and all that shit shouldn't be done by the King."

I flipped him off.

I was fairly sure he had a broken arm.

And possibly a broken leg.

Another thing we wouldn't know until we got our more significantly wounded taken care of.

Regular hospitals weren't an option right now.

Not with the media uproar, as well as the warrants on all of our heads.

We'd be arrested on sight, and that wasn't something that I was willing to go through as of right now.

It'd take a lot of time that I just didn't have right this moment.

"I used to drive a truck like this when I was eighteen. Used to drive them across the country. That's where I learned the value of the dollar, and then came back to work with my father when I turned twenty-one," I informed him.

Vassago Motors had been my father's. He'd started the company when we were little more than small children, needing a monetary outlet that wouldn't draw the attention of the Feds.

He'd done well with it, and it now was a huge conglomerate that supported us instead of just being an outlet for us to run our money through to make sure it came out clean and untraceable.

"That's cool. Can't believe it's never come up before, though," he whispered tiredly.

No, I couldn't either.

Jean Luc and the rest of The Dragon's Warriors were a huge part of my life, and I made it a point to let them into it. They knew quite a bit about me, as I did about them.

That was how you made a successful brotherhood.

You made sure that the people that would always have your back had a reason to have it. That they knew the person that they'd give their lives for, was worthy.

"Heard anything from your woman?" Jean Luc asked after a long moment.

I glanced over at him, and moved my eyes back to the road. "Not yet. But we'll be there in less than twenty minutes. I guess I'll know more then."

I'd been hoping for better news over the past two hours, but none had come.

In fact, any news had been scarce from Darcy Manor.

Everyone there was busy making sure that the wounded that were taken there were taken care of.

One of those being my mate.

Exactly twenty minutes later, I was walking into the infirmary, flabbergasted by what I saw.

Each and every bed was being utilized.

Conscious. Unconscious.

Minor injuries. Grave injuries.

They varied from person-to-person and bed-to-bed.

“Holy shit,” Nikolai breathed. “This is a nightmare.”

I agreed wholeheartedly.

Now what were we going to do about it?

“Where’s my mate?” I asked the first nurse I saw.

The nurse, I think her name was Alba, smiled and pointed to the room beyond the one we were in. “The less serious injuries are in there through that door. She’s in the very back corner behind a blue curtain.”

I was walking away before she’d even finished.

I realized it was rude, but I couldn’t help it.

The last memories I had of her were of Farrow taking her home and seeing her limp, unconscious body draped in his arms.

Then came his alarming update about her having a seizure, and I just couldn’t quite work out polite conversation at that moment in time.

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I passed my sister on the way, patting her shoulder as I went.

She gave me a fleeting smile and went back to the stitches she was sewing into Ian's arm.

Ian nodded at me, and I did the same back to him as I continued past.

I finally arrived at the curtained off area and opened it partially to pass through.

And my breath left my chest in a soft whoosh.

Not because she was hurt...or because there was anything gruesome showing...but because she looked so serene. So beautiful.

Blythe's hair was spread out on the sheet below her like a hair commercial. All soft, flowing, and bouncy.

There was no sight of blood or anything on her, which meant someone had cleaned her up...most likely my sister.

She was dressed as well, wearing one of my t-shirts, a Vassago Motors one in navy blue.

My sister was probably responsible for that as well, because that was only possible if someone had gone to my quarters to get it.

She had a white hospital blanket covering her lower half, and the soft swell of her

abdomen was evident, even now, making my heart turn.

Monitors beeped silently behind her, one for her heart, one for the baby's heartbeat and another for the IV line that was going into a vein at her wrist.

And there was a light on just above her head, giving her an ethereal look that almost made me think of jewelry display cases. The kind that shone just right to display the diamonds in the case to entice the customers to stop and study them.

I definitely stopped.

And she took my breath away.

"She's okay, as far as I can tell. I'm guessing she's in a very deep sleep, nothing more. The baby is fine, as well. We've done a complete blood work up on them both. Healthy and happy," my sister replied softly. "You need to just give her time. Not even a bump or scratch on her. The one Farrow said she sustained, the one that had all the blood caked around it, was healed as we got her here. I gave her a sponge bath and cleaned her up as best as I could. Now it's all up to her."

I nodded, walking to the bed and picking up Blythe's hand.

It was warm and so soft.

I kissed each finger individually before placing it gently back on the bed.

Leaning over, I brushed my lips over hers. "Rest, my beauty."\*\*\*

"This is exactly what I'm talking about," Derek growled. "You shouldn't have been there. The King of our people should be protected. The moment you realized that it was going to be bad, you should've turned around and gotten to safety."

I leaned back in my office chair, the one that used to belong to my father, and narrowed my eyes.

I hadn't even been in here for more than a minute when he started in on what a King should and shouldn't do.

And everything I'd done today was on the 'shouldn't do' list apparently.

Nikolai sat back in his own chair across the room, as did the rest of the men from my inner circle. My blood brothers.

Ian, though, was the one I was interested in.

His eyes were downcast, and he was looking at his hands as he tried his best to disappear.

Ian was weird on the best of days, but usually he didn't want to disappear.

Usually he was looking for a fight.

This wasn't like him.

"Ian," I called.

Ian, I could tell, was practically screaming 'FUCK' in his head.

Hell, I could practically read his mind.

"What's up, Ian," I repeated.

He sighed and looked up.

I could see the indecision in his eyes.

“You want my brutally honest opinion?” He asked bluntly.

I nodded. “I wouldn’t have asked your opinion if I expected anything but brutal honesty.”

Because Ian told it like it was. He didn’t pull any punches.

The man was a relief at times, even when it hurt to hear what he had to say.

Ian took a deep breath.

“On one hand, I want you to stay protected. That’s the way of a King...but not you, in particular. Sure, you’re ‘King,’” he made air quotes, “But you’re not that kind of one. You’re a badass motherfucker on the easy days. We want you, not some fuckin’ imposter that is you, but the real you.”

I raised my eyebrows at him.

Strangely, I understood that.

He wanted me.

He didn’t want the me that had to act differently to appease the masses.

“I also think that if you do that, you’d be making different decisions, because you won’t be as informed. Sure, none of us would tell you anything but the Gods honest truth. But it’s kind of like those generals who fight from the sidelines. You’re not a sideline fighter. You’re a right there in the thick of it kind of fighter. The one that shields us with your might. The one that gives us the courage to keep fighting even

when we can't fucking feel our legs. Like today. We were all blind and confused, but you were right there even after your woman got hurt. And that," he said, giving me the full force of his gaze for the first time, "is what we need."

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I felt his words like a punch to the gut.

“That’s what I want to give you. That’s what I’ll always give you. Because that’s who I am.”

It was a simple statement.

But one that was felt by us all.

“Motherfucker,” Derek breathed. “You’re not going to give in on this are you?”

I shook my head.

No.

I’d gotten the same advice from not just my mate, but Ian.

The one man, among them all, that was least likely to give a fuck about it all.

And I was going to take their advice.

Because that’s what I wanted to do.

“Alright, boys. Anything else we need to talk about so I can go back to my woman?”  
I asked tiredly.

“The house...with the friend,” Nikolai said.

I closed my eyes.

“We’ll do that after a few more nights of reconnaissance. I’m not sure what they have left there after their vehicles self-destructed, but I want to be sure before I send any more of our people in. We’ve already lost enough.”

Nikolai nodded.

“Anything else?”

They all shook their heads.

Except Derek.

“We need to have your crowning ceremony.”

I could tell he hadn’t wanted to say it.

But it had to be said.

It didn’t mean I had to listen to him.

“No.”

“Keifer…”

“I said no. Not without Blythe. When she wakes, we’ll do it. End of story.”

He sighed.

And with that, they all got up and left at the finality of my words.

And I was left a tired, wanting mess.

“Wake up soon, Blythe,” I ordered softly to the still air of my office. Epilogue

It’s been a long week. -Keifer in the middle of Monday Keifer

Seven days later “She had something in her stomach.”

I watched in horror as a USB drive was held out to me.

Taking it like it was a poisonous snake about to attack, I plugged it into the computer and winced when a file popped up.

“Fuck,” I hissed, clicking on it.

It was a sound file.

Short. Sweet. And to the point.

“I know you, Vassago. I know you better than you know me. I knew you’d come for her. You can’t resist helping the innocent,” he hissed. “Which was why I put a GPS tracker in her. You doomed yourself with your big old heart.”

Fear clogged my throat as I looked at the woman on the exam table.

The beaten and broken woman that would never have a normal life again.

“Find the GPS,” I ordered. “I’m going to be with my wife.”

I wasn’t as worried as I could have been.

Joseph was dead. I'd seen him die myself.

There was no coming back from a death like that.

But when you cut one head off a Hydra, another two spouted in its place...and that was what I was afraid of.

I just had to hope that maybe...just maybe...Joseph didn't share this information with anyone.

That it ended with him.

And then I laughed humorlessly...because Joseph was all about help...and he had help from damn near everyone. Including my own mother, at one point.

Not that she'd realized it at the time.

Mom had thought Joseph was her friend.

Joseph was using Mom to get in with the dragon riders.

Joseph had bided his time, getting to know my mom. Spending time at my father's business, shooting the shit.

That'd gone on for years.

And my mom being my father's secretary, while he'd built his business, she'd been there every day. Spent time with Joseph. Told Joseph some things she shouldn't have.

And that'd been what had gotten my father killed.

I thought back to the night my father was killed, and a cold chill washed over me.

My parents used to take night rides.

When life got to be too much for them, they'd chase the setting sun on Angus' back.

Something my mother had inadvertently divulged to Joseph during one of his visits to my father's garage.

That night my father had died was burned in my memory.

It'd been the night I came into my powers.

His death had set up a chain of events that led to me killing five men, and watching my father take his last breath.

So for the next fifteen years, although I couldn't prove it, I watched Joseph like a hawk.

What he did, who he did it with. Why he did it.

So it was easy to see all the 'friends' he had.

Congressmen. City officials. Police officers. Hell, even US Military.

So when he died, I felt no relief.

Someone wouldn't let it go.

And with a woman that we'd taken from Joseph's own home sitting in our infirmary, I had a good reason to be nervous.

Considerably so.

Because I had things on the horizon that I had no clue about...whether it'd be something minor or something huge.

Should I start packing up everyone now? Moving to a different sanctuary?

Darcy Manor had been the home of the King for seven generations...which made me reluctant to leave when I had a future son on the way myself.

“Stop thinking so much, you’re making my head hurt,” a groaning female voice came from in front of me.

I came up short when I saw my mate sitting up in bed.

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We'd moved her to my private rooms when she'd shown no outward signs of illness.

We'd needed the room for all the other wounded. There were quite a few of them.

Over forty dragon riders had responded to my call a week ago once I'd spotted that first cage truck, and twenty of them had fallen with serious injuries.

Another thing we needed to discuss soon...strategy.

"There you go thinking again," Blythe muttered tiredly, then yawned.

"Sorry," I apologized, walking to the bed and sitting down on the side gingerly.

The position put her within inches of my face, and I studied her eyes.

"What happened, Drakina?" I asked softly, placing my hand on the side of her face.

Blythe picked up her own hand and placed it on mine.

"Apparently, your son did not like when you got hurt...and he made me fix you."

I blinked.

"What?" I asked incredulously.

She nodded. "Yeah. It was bad. I felt it. Felt every single thing that happened to you. Before I'd been hurt, but I could still communicate through mindspeak. But then you

got hurt and your child went a little nuts. I felt this huge energy start in my belly, and then all of a sudden I was taking away every single bit of your pain into myself...and let me tell you something...that sucked.”

My stomach clenched when I realized all that she’d done.

“How?” I was confused.

Things like this just weren’t done.

Then again, I’d been the first ‘true’ mating since my parents, so what did I know what normal was?

I think I need to do a lot more research.

“I think we need to take a trip to Wyoming. Our archives are there at their sanctuary. And I really need some information about just what we are going through,” I informed her. “But only after you’re well.”

She pursed her lips. “I am well.”

I shook my head. “You’ve been in a coma for over a week.”

She blinked. “Really? I feel like I’ve just been asleep, like a dream.”

I nodded. “Really.”

Then her eyes trailed down my body.

She cataloged everything.

The new scar above my eye, which was her scar that I'd been given, too.

The deep, dark circles underneath my eyes. The way my face looked ashen.

My unkempt appearance.

I'd lost some weight over the last week.

She saw all of it and more.

"You haven't been taking care of yourself," she admonished, scooting forward on her knees until she was butted up against my side.

I half smiled. "That's because there's a lot of sick. We had two dragons die, and with that happening it took away the rider's ability to heal. We also have around twenty men in the infirmary," I hesitated telling her about her friend, but I knew I needed to. Just not yet. Soon. "And I've been busier this week than I have been in a very long time. Patrols have been ramped up. And with some riders down, I've had to pick up patrols. On top of trying to spend as much time as I could with you, it's been less than stellar."

She moved until she straddled my thighs, and my tiredness fled.

All that I cared about right then was the way she felt in my arms.

"What are you doing?" I asked softly.

She was running her fingers along my face, across the scruffy beard, and down my jaw to angle along the crook of my neck.

"I think a massage is in order," she whispered.

I didn't argue with her. I'd made the mistake earlier, and she'd set me straight nearly instantly—in front of the entire freakin' sanctuary, dragons and dragon riders alike.

I smiled and reached forward, taking the scrunched up shirt that was tucked underneath her and gently pulled it over her head.

She'd been wearing nothing but my shirt and panties for the last week.

I'd given her baths, of course, but as soon as I'd been done, I'd returned her to another clean shirt of mine and panties.

That'd been the special time together. The time where nobody bothered me.

The time where I shared with her my hopes and dreams, all the while praying she'd wake up for me and share hers with me.

She hadn't.

But right then, with her nearly naked in my lap, I found that it didn't hurt as much as it did then.

She hooked her own fingers in the hem of my shirt, and roughly pulled it off of me.

I blinked at the suddenness.

But then sighed when she pressed her naked chest up against mine.

Her small belly pressed against mine, reminding me once again of the life that grew there. That was already more powerful than I could ever hope to be.

And fear started to seep in, but Blythe expertly pushed it away with a sway of her

hips.

Her nipples pebbled and trailed along my chest, snagging against the patch of hair in the center as her hands explored lower.

When she came to the waistband of my sweats, she slowly yanked them down until my erection sprung free.

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It bounced between us a few times before she caught it and gave it a few gentle tugs.

“Keifer,” she murmured, looking up into my eyes with hers full of love.

“Yeah, baby?” I croaked.

She smiled.

“I want you to lay back, let me massage you.”

Groaning, I did what she asked, and she slowly slid off my lap.

“Get in the middle of the bed,” she ordered softly.

I put one heel into the bed and shoved, moving myself into the middle so my feet didn’t hang off the side and watched while she walked across the room and yanked one of her drawers open.

She unearthed a bottle of lotion and started to walk back to me.

My eyes were glued to her breasts.

They were bigger.

In just the week that she had been in the coma.

And her nipples were darker.

I reached upward and grasped the headboard with both hands, squeezing tightly to keep from launching myself at her.

If she wanted to give me a massage, I wasn't going to argue.

I licked my lips, causing her to smile.

She placed the bottle on the bed beside my upraised arms and reached for her panties, giving them a small shove and pushing them to the floor.

A breath hissed out of me, and my abdomen contracted with my body's reaction to her.

"Fuck," I breathed as I watched her place one knee onto the bed.

Her pretty pussy lips parted, giving me an unimpeded view of her clit, and I closed my eyes.

My cock was bobbing in need, pulsing with the rhythm of my beating-too-fast heart.

When I opened my eyes again, I was momentarily distracted by the way she was sitting.

Thighs parted, ass to heels, breasts heaving.

She stared at me for long moments before she smiled and straddled my hips.

My cock, the eager bastard, jumped hard, slapping against her clit the moment she got close enough.

We both hissed, and my eyes caught hers.

She smiled as she lifted up her hips, lined my ruddy head up with her entrance, and sank down, taking me fully inside of her.

We both groaned as her wet heat surrounded my cock.

But after a few short strokes, I was fully inside of her, and stopped.

She reached forward for the bottle of lotion, inadvertently moving my cock out of her channel briefly before she resumed her position and took me back inside.

“You’re going to kill me,” I groaned, neck straining as I leaned my head back as far as I could.

The evil, sadistic soon-to-be wife of mine, laughed.

“Oh, Keifer,” she rubbed her hands together to warm the lotion. “Do you know what it feels like to have you doing things with me while I’m asleep?”

Her words jolted me, and I looked up at her as she placed her lotion covered hands on my chest and started to rub.

“You remember?” I asked softly.

She nodded. “I felt like I was in a dream, but one where I remember every word. I remember the way you washed me. The way you held me for an hour while you bathed me. I remember the way your erection felt against my ass. The way your hand felt as it ran through my folds to clean them. You even brushed my teeth. I remember everything, and I only want to return that favor.”

I groaned.

Even the thought of her being aware of that was even hotter.

She leaned forward, and my overheated cock was met with cool air once again, chilling Blythe's juices on my dick before she went back down again.

I closed my eyes, straining to breathe.

Then she started doing something with her cunt.

"What are you doing?" I gasped, arching up as she worked her inner muscles around me.

"One of those books you read to me about childbirth. They said that you should start working your inner muscles the moment you realize you're pregnant. The exercise is called Kegels," she whispered, smiling down at me. "They keep the muscles tight and useful...ready for when you really need to use them."

"God," I groaned. "I remember reading that, too."

Then she abruptly got off me, making me groan in defeat as my heavy, wet cock slapped against my stomach.

I opened my eyes to see her turning around.

She straddled my thighs once again and lifted herself up and wiggled her ass.

"Put your dick back inside of me, I have lotion all over my hands," she whispered.

I let go of the metal bars of the headboard and took my cock in hand, lining it up with her entrance.

My other hand went to her pussy lips, spreading them so I could watch as she slowly sank back down.

“Oh, man,” I moaned, abs tightening as she took me in.

The erotic sight of her pussy swallowing my length nearly undid me. The only thing keeping me from coming right then was the fact that she hadn’t.

Yet.

So I started a little massaging of my own.

While she did my legs, I squirted some lotion on my own hands and started to massage her back.

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As I moved lower, she started to breathe faster and faster until she was doing more grinding on my cock than massaging.

That was because I was getting closer and closer to her ass.

I swept my thumb in an arc around her asshole, massaging the lotion into her perineum and upper globes of her ass until all I was doing was circling her back entrance, but not actually touching it.

Soon she was doing more than grinding.

She was pushing back against my hands, urging me on.

I smiled as I got another squirt of lotion, lubed up my thumb, and finally let it rest right against her backdoor.

She hissed, grinding down until my cock felt like it was about to exit out of her throat.

“Godsdammit,” I breathed, thumb pushing a little harder to slip past that ring of muscle.

It popped inside, and sank in to the webbing, causing us both to groan.

Her because it felt good, and me because she’d clamped down on my cock like a vise.

“Keifer,” she urged. “More.”

Soon, my one thumb became two thumbs.

I licked my lips, wanting so bad to fill that forbidden entrance with my cock.

She'd feel perfect. I just knew it.

And she must've sensed my inner desires, because her next move was to lift off my cock too far, allowing my dick to fall free.

She caught it with her hands and lubed my cock up with a few pumps of her hand as she pushed my cock back into place.

Except she missed her pussy and pushed it back until it was resting against my thumbs.

I licked my suddenly dry lips.

I'd never done this before.

Of course, every male that was sexually active had the thoughts.

But I'd never been one to put it into action.

Or hadn't...until now.

Removing my thumbs from her stretched asshole, I lined my lubed cock up with her back entrance, and about shot my load off into her before she'd even sank down.

The only thing stopping me was the stranglehold I had on my cock at the base.

And the visual stimulation of her tight asshole sinking down around my cock wasn't

helping any.

In fact, I was pretty sure it wasn't helping at all.

Then she started to moan.

“God, Keifer. It feels like a fucking lightning bolt to my clit,” she breathed as she sank further and further down, only coming to a stop when her ass cheeks met my hand where I was still trying to stop myself from coming.

“Fuck me,” I gasped, eyes crossing at the way she clenched and unclenched on my dick.

It was an entirely different feeling, being inside of her ass.

So different, in fact, that I wasn't sure which hole I liked better.

They both had their benefits, but the jury was still out.

“Ride me,” I croaked. “Gods, get yourself off. Rub your clit. Shove your fingers into your cunt. Just please, Gods, whatever you do, do it now because I can't hold off.”

She started to slam down onto me, and when I felt her fingers shove inside of her sopping pussy, running up and down the length of my cock, I took over.

Mostly because I had to or I'd die.

My hand left my sides and moved up to her hips, pulling her down while she pushed.

She screamed at the added length I gave her, and then sweet Lords above she started to come.

Because I was already coming, too.

Long, hot pulses of come shot from my over engorged cock into her tight back passage.

She screamed.

I screamed.

We all screamed for ice cream.

Or something like that.

Because she'd literally fried my brain cells.

"Fuck!" I roared.

She said something too, but I was still in the process of coming back from my out-of-body experience to realize that she'd said 'you're breaking my hips.'

"Shit," I flinched, letting go.

She'd have bruises in the morning, but I couldn't find it in me to care.

Right now.

Because my brain was mushy and I felt like I could probably sleep for a month or more.

I felt her pull herself off me, but I didn't move.

Even when I felt my come leak from her onto my ball sack.

I still didn't move when she got a towel and cleaned me up.

Wasn't I supposed to be doing that?

I was pretty sure I was, but couldn't find the strength to help.

She covered me up with the comforter that I'd been using on her for a week now, and kissed me softly on the cheek, saying the same thing I'd said to her night after night.

"I love you, my dragon. Sleep tight."

"Where are you going?" I muttered tiredly, not able to open my eyes.

I felt her smile against my lips before she gave me one final kiss.

"I'm going to see if I can help in the infirmary."

I knew there was a good reason she shouldn't, something I needed to tell her first, but I was too tired.

I'd think about it more tomorrow.

\*\*\*

Blythe

One hour later “Oh, my God,” I whispered, getting my first look at my best friend that I thought was dead.

“It looks pretty bad, but the wound is clean. She’s got a rocky road ahead of her, but I expect her to make a full recovery,” Skylar explained softly.

I took a deep breath, then let it out slowly before turning on my heel and stomping down the hallway.

Except I didn’t get far.

My mate was there, staring at me with soft eyes.

“You didn’t tell me!” I snapped forcefully.

He took a deep breath. “I meant to. But I was tired. You’d just woken up. It slipped my mind.”

I dropped my head and stared at my feet.

They were covered in a pair of Keifer’s huge socks.

They dwarfed my small feet.

“She’s going to be okay,” Keifer said.

I looked up at him.

“How do you know?”

He shook his head. “I don’t. I only have hope that she will. But we have some of the best technology money can buy. We have excellent care for her. She has people that love her here. Give her time.”

Keifer’s arms finally went around me, and I closed my eyes as the tears started to flow.

“But what if she doesn’t?” I cried.

“What if she does?”

I looked up at him, offering my lips, which he took.

“Give it time, honey. You don’t know anything yet. Let’s get some sleep.”

“But what if she wakes up and I’m not here?” I asked worriedly.

Keifer nodded his head, and I turned to find Nikolai across the room.

He was sitting in a chair at the wall of computers.

A makeshift security hub of sorts.

“She has a protector.”

Indeed, she did.

Nikolai's eyes never strayed from Brooklyn's form.

"What's going on there?" I asked, surprised.

Keifer smiled. "I have a feeling we're about to see a lot more than just one royal marriage in the future."

My mouth dropped open as I looked once again at Nikolai, but this time his eyes were narrowed on us.

I waved at him, but he didn't wave back.

His eyes took the two of us standing together in, before nodding once, and returning to his vigil.

Protector indeed.