



Met My Dragon And Went Into Labor (Reborn In Another World #3)

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Category: LGBT+

Description: I was hit by a train and woke up in another world—one where I was famous!

I thought I hit the jackpot with my wolf mate. He is kind, protective, and exactly who I need in my life. And then one day—poof, I run into my bear mate, and the three of us make it work. I'm happier than I ever dreamed possible.

My life is exactly how it should be.

Fate disagrees and sends me Seymour, just in time to help deliver my baby. Now I have to balance my life as a father of a newborn while I begin my life with my new dragon mate, and keep the life I have with my wolf and bear from falling apart. Easy peasy... or more likely, the most difficult thing I've ever done.

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Chapter 1

Kai

“I can’t have the baby here.”

Why did I leave the safety of my home to follow a scent? Not any old scent, but so tantalizing, so intoxicating that at nine months pregnant I decided to galavant around the city.

But though the pain of the contraction was everything, blocking other thoughts, the scent was all around me, tickling my body and teasing me as a man took hold of me. He drew me into his arms, just as his scent wrapped itself around me.

“You’re pregnant.”

“Ya think?” Yikes! As soon as the words left my mouth I regretted them. I’d been carrying the baby around for nine months, but this guy had just entered my life.

“Sorry...” I mumbled, the rest of my apology cut off by a contraction.

“Come inside.”

I bit off another snarky response. Gods, that wasn’t me. Even through the chaos of living in Tarrin, I’d never snapped at Dante especially or Gideon. Or had I? Eek! I hoped not.

“Thank you, but I need to be with my mates.” I grunted as my body prepared my baby for the world.

“Mates?”

Geez, the conversation with his new guy was slow-going. Damn, I was being an asshat again. He had a lot of catching up to do. New guy wasn’t just any old dude. He was the owner of that scent. The alluring one that brought me here in the dead of night.

“I have two.” I added, “Maybe three,” not wanting him to feel bad, because whether he liked it or not, he was number three. And though I wasn’t a shifter, I’d been around enough shifters—and had them in me and on me—to recognize a shifter scent.

“Seymour.”

I grunted in response, but I was in labor and I was miles from home and my mates. My baby wanted out, and Dante and Gideon, who’d been with me through all of my pregnancy—or much of it as my bear shifter mate had—deserved to be at my side when our baby came into the world.

“Where are they?”

I took a deep breath. What did they say in those videos? A cleansing breath. Yeah, that. Seymour knew nothing about me so I needed to be patient until he caught up. But, and there was a big but... I was in labor and in no mood to consider anyone else’s feelings, not even my newest mate.

Not that he’d confirmed he was my mate. But I was his.

“At home.”

“I don’t have a car.”

Great. Public transport in Martslock was kinda lacking in the early hours of the morning.

“Still here.”

Ohhh, he waited, my cab driver. But I didn’t want my baby born in the back of a cab. I imagined our little one’s birth certificate in the place to write “location.” There’d be one three-letter word: cab. Or worse, “Back seat of cab, location unknown.”

I paid off the driver and waved him off. Possibly a ridiculous choice because now I was alone with my new mate, who I was sure was a great guy. It was dark and quiet, and I was in a strange neighborhood, far from my mates.

“Maybe not a sensible decision.”

“What’s that?” Seymour asked. He hadn’t dropped his embrace, and now that I was familiar with his scent, it kissed my skin, and I almost swooned but another contraction stopped the nearly swooning.

“Oh, nothing.” While Seymour had eyes and it wasn’t a surprise, pointing it out would draw more attention to us being alone, though the baby made three. It occurred to me I should have thought of our little one and had put them at risk by skedaddling from home.

I sighed as the list of my mistakes became longer. But my belly cramped, and I almost thanked it because it diverted my attention. Leaning my head on Seymour’s chest, I studied his bare feet. Where were the man’s shoes? I was pleased my mate apparently had a “no shoes in the house” policy, but did he ever wear any?

My thoughts were zigging and zagging, trying to distance myself from the pain of the contractions.

When I lifted my head, the moonlight illuminated us, and Seymour gave me what I took to be a look of love. He put a hand under my chin and moved my head to the right and left. I grinned because he was memorizing my face, including every freckle and line.

“I know you.”

Yay. His beast was telling him I was his mate. I’d been a teensie-weensie bit worried that he was just being a concerned citizen helping a pregnant omega wandering around a quiet neighborhood in the early hours of the morning.

“You’re Kai from The Secret Lives of Pinedale.” He squeed. Did adults do that? Squee? I did, but I was kinda different to everyone else in Tarrin.

Seymour let go of me and put his hands to his mouth as he jiggled up and down. I was tempted to yell and say my labor and baby were the focus and he needed to stop with the damned queeing.

He didn’t.

“I cried when you died, and like so many of your fans, I thought you’d asked for a raise and gotten bumped off the show.” Now my newest mate was raising his hands to the moon and doing a little jig. Who did that?

He gripped my shoulders. “I’m so glad you’re still around. So many actors get kicked off a serial and the fans never hear from them again until someone sees them bagging groceries, their career in tatters.”

Wow! This guy was something else. He was a fan extraordinaire. Or maybe a super fan. What did they call them in Tarrin? He sure was invested in my career.

Except I wasn't an actor, I didn't have an acting career.

"I have to tell everyone." He fumbled for what I assumed was his phone but he didn't have it. "Shoot, it's inside."

He took in my bump. "And the pregnancy? How did that happen?"

I gritted my teeth, ready to give him my best wolf or bear impression.

"Is this a sequel?" He did a 360 turn. "Where are the cameras?"

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Chapter 2

Seymour

When I first met Kai, my beast had been pushing me to be near him. I didn't understand it. He never acted that way. But then I recognized him, and things started to fall into place. Or so I thought.

My beast was so excited that he had met a real-life celebrity. And less that it was a celebrity than the fact that I felt like I knew the omega. My dragon would of course feel the same way. I mean, I had faithfully watched that show every single time it aired, so it made sense. Right?

But then, when I went inside to grab my phone, everything began to make sense. My head cleared just enough to realize that none of that had anything to do with the reasons my dragon was so intense. Not even close.

My dragon was acting the way he was because this pregnant omega, Kai, was ours. And with that realization came an avalanche of thoughts as I tried to figure out if he understood who I was. I went over the conversation again and again and how he'd said, "Maybe three."

Was I the third? Could I be the third? I was the third, right?

A groan from the deck brought me back to where I should've been, where I needed to be, where I currently wasn't present—helping my mate. He was getting ready to give birth.

I ran out, unsure of how long I had been stuck in that frozen state of mind. It couldn't have been more than a minute, but he was in labor. A minute was too long for him to be faring this alone.

They always said that if you had multiple mates, emotions would work themselves out. I never understood that before. Not really. I assumed they meant there was enough love to go around or some other cliché. But seeing my new mate pregnant and about to have a baby, I finally got it.

There wasn't a lick of jealousy about him being with child, or his other mates, or how he came to carry the sweet babe. All that was there was a desire to help him, to make sure this delivery was the way he longed for it to be. My only fear was that I'd be unable to arrange that in a timely enough manner.

"I'm sorry, I... I got... I'm here now." I sat beside him. "I shouldn't have gone inside."

"No, it's fine. I was... I was taken aback that you knew who I was."

Personally, I'd have been more surprised if he told me he ran into anyone who didn't. He was on one of the most popular shows there was. Of course I knew who he was. Me, on the other hand, I was surprised I ran into him, the Kai, the one everyone loved, the one who broke my heart when he died.

Only he didn't die. It was television. Didn't make that past hurt any less real.

"Yeah, I was surprised it was you, too," I forced a chuckle, "but I've moved past that. And I hope that you can too."

He didn't need to think I was a celebrity chaser. Kai needed to see me as the man, the dragon, the mate that I could and would be. He didn't need a fanboy, even if that had

been my gut reaction initially. He deserved better. He deserved everything.

Kai clenched his stomach, bending over again. I didn't know a lot about omegas and having babies, but I knew enough to notice that the contractions were pretty close together. And the closer they got, the sooner the baby was coming.

Being a dragon wasn't doing me any favors. Dragons were egg layers, making this completely new territory for me. Why didn't I pay better attention in health class? I could use that information right about now.

"Do you want to come ho... inside?"

Technically, I was house-sitting because this place was "the house that wouldn't sell," and my cousin needed somebody who could watch and take care of the place, but also be ready to move on a moment's notice if and when it ever did sell. It worked well for me, but it meant it wasn't my home. Not really.

I was 100% counting on the fact that my cousin wouldn't mind if I let a virtual stranger come in and have a baby. Not that I cared much if he did mind. If this was what my mate needed, this was going to be exactly what he got.

But in the end, it didn't matter if my cousin would or wouldn't give a rat's ass, because Kai shook his head in a polite decline of my offer.

"No, no. I don't want to make any decisions about anything baby related. Not until my mates get here. I need them before I make any decisions about the baby and where I'm going to... We need to call them, which should have been the first thing we did." He was talking a mile a minute, his urgency having me second-guess how close this baby truly was to making their arrival.

I wasn't usually this spacey-brained, but between his scent wrapping around me, the

pregnancy, my dragon being a fool, and then recognizing him—I was all but useless. And that was the last thing Kai needed. He needed me to be strong, to be there for him, to help him get through this, help him until his mates were here. His mates. Our mates? My guess was we were going to find out soon enough.

I didn't know which mate answered the phone, but Kai was initially very forceful about where he was, like they would instinctively know the place. I could hear the fear in his mate's voice from the other side of the phone, my dragon being a nosy nellie. For once I was glad.

As soon as Kai said he was okay and repeated that he was at "the house," they said they were both on their way. They offered to stay on the phone with him the entire time, but he declined, saying, "No, it's fine. I have Seymour here."

It wasn't the same as "I have my mate here," but it might as well have been. Because in this moment, he was giving me his trust. Please let me be deserving of it.

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Chapter 3

Kai

I was dreading my mates' arrival.

No, I wasn't. Yeah, I kinda was. They'd be annoyed, and rightfully so, that I took me and bump out for an evening when most people, including them, were sound asleep.

But I needed them for me and the baby. Maybe if I told them to hold off on giving me a telling-off and we could do that next week, month, or year?

Dante pulled up where the taxi had been. A rush of affection ripped through me, and I could have bounded over to the car if it hadn't been for... the belly and the contractions.

"Kai." Gideon jumped out of the moving vehicle before Dante had killed the engine, and he raced onto the deck, holding out his arms for me to fall into. I grunted in response and bent forward, digging my nails into his hands.

"The baby's coming."

I adored my bear shifter mate, but everyone was annoying me, saying the obvious.

Dante flung himself onto the deck. My first mate, the man who'd guided me through the confusion of maybe dying and arriving in Tarrin. The before time of how I got here was still a chaotic mess, but I would never have survived without the love and

support of Mate Number One.

Gideon moved aside, and Dante whispered in my ear how he couldn't wait to meet our baby.

"How did you get here?" Gideon asked, giving Seymour the once-over.

"Cab," I said innocently, as though sneaking out of our bed after midnight when I was so close to giving birth was the norm.

"Where'd the taxi disappear to?"

I inspected my nails, not wanting to look my bear and wolf shifter mates in the eye. That was kinda weird 'cause I was bracing myself for another contraction.

"I paid the guy and told him to leave," I said in a small voice.

"Oh." For the first time since he arrived, Dante looked at Seymour. He didn't grimace or growl, nor did he shove him out of the way and lead me off the deck to the car.

The focus had to be on the baby, not whether my current mates would be dicks about the newest one. Not that they were showing any signs of being dicks. Oh shoot, even though the contractions were coming at shorter intervals, thinking of dicks and my mates sent my heart racing.

I told my length to cool it 'cause this body was about to give birth.

"I want to have my baby outside." Why did I say that? Was it because I had a little shifter inside me? While the baby would be a wolf, if it took after their wolf dad, Gideon had embraced fatherhood, and he was already as much of a parent as Dante and me.

“And I need everyone there.”

“Everyone?” Gideon’s raised brows suggested he might not be on board with the plan. “As in people in the neighborhood?”

A giggle escaped my lips which became a groan, and Gideon supported me from behind while I squatted, and Dante got on his haunches in front and panted with me.

When I was done, I answered my bear mate. “No, my mates. All of you.”

“I know a place that’s calm and peaceful, no noise from city traffic, and it’s private.” He added an extra tidbit that this location was close to the nearest hospital.

Seymour hadn’t declared himself, but I wasn’t waiting for Mr. Slow to yell, “I’m your mate.” He hadn’t run away and appeared to be willing to stay during the birth. Or perhaps he was just being helpful.

But I needed him there, along with Dante and Gideon, when my baby entered the world.

“I can tell you how to get there.”

While my old truck at home, in Pinedale, didn’t have GPS, all new and newish cars did. But like blogs and no apps, Tarrin was a tad behind the technology front compared to... the before time. But if Seymour was going to scribble a map on a notepad, he was mistaken. Being present when a human gave birth might not have been in his plans for the night, but it was happening.

“Thanks.” The four of us stood on the deck, no one saying anything until my belly cramped again, and Dante took over, holding and encouraging me.

“You have to come too,” I told Seymour when I’d recovered from the contraction.

“Of course.” He glanced at my mates, and they nodded, so everyone was in agreement. If they’d caused a ruckus, saying we’d only just met Seymour, I’d have quashed their objections. The belly ruled, and I was in charge. Or maybe it was the baby, but I pretended I was.

“We need supplies,” Seymour announced.

“I’m not hungry, if that’s what you’re thinking.”

“No, towels, baby blankets, ice cubes, an air mattress, and cushions.” Seymour reeled off a list, almost as if he kept one in his head in case a pregnant human who just happened to be his mate stumbled into his life.

“I’ll help.” Gideon pushed Seymour into the house while Dante helped me to the car.

“What do you think?” I asked Mate Number One.

“About becoming a dad?” He grinned and kissed my brow. “We’ve talked about this many times. You know how excited I am.”

Tonight everyone was being a little... oblivious, and I stifled my irritation.

“No, silly. Seymour.”

“I’m grateful he looked after you until we arrived, and he was very helpful.” He sat me in the back of the car and kneeled on the grass. “Is that what you were asking?”

I kissed him, savoring his familiar taste, the one that kept me safe when life was so confusing. “Yeah, that’s exactly what I wanted to know.”

With the baby's birth imminent, this wasn't the moment to pummel Dante with questions about how we'd work as a foursome and was he willing to accept Seymour into our life.

And the most important question: How big a bed would we need for four adults?

Chapter 4

Seymour

I ran into the house to grab what we'd need. Or at least what I guessed we would need. This was my first baby-delivery packing and my knowledge was gleaned mostly from movies, which were hardly reality. Or maybe they were. I had no idea. All I did know was that I couldn't even count how many of them had the alphas boiling water as if they were getting ready to make a huge-ass pasta dinner, and there was no way that was helpful.

Gideon followed behind me as Dante stayed with Kai. As he stepped into the kitchen, I saw his features clearly for the first time. Instantly, I had recognized how attractive he was, but now that I could see him fully, he was stunning. If it had been any other time or place, I'd have been leaning in and shooting my shot. But we didn't have time for that now, even if he was amenable; it wasn't time to talk about their relationship dynamic. We had an omega to tend to.

"I'm thinking blankets and pillows?" He wouldn't want to be on the grass, but I wasn't sure if that was enough.

"And towels."

"Right." My first stop was the linen closet. My cousin had a love of all things cozy and warm, and there were plenty of blankets to choose from. I ended up grabbing four in different thicknesses, along with a bunch of towels.

The possibility that I was going overboard was very real, but I figured it was better to be safe than sorry. I put them in a clean laundry basket and grabbed pillows from each of the spare bedrooms, tossing them in as well. It was already pretty full, but light.

“Tell me how to help,” Gideon asked.

“Oh, sorry, I was...” forgetting that this wasn’t a solo project and taking over.
“Kitchen. Food.”

My central focus had been on making him comfortable, and I nearly forgot about the food. The kitchen was hardly what anyone would call fully stocked, but there was enough there that we could keep him satisfied. Wait. Were omegas even supposed to eat while in labor? I didn’t even know. He would, though. Kai was the type of guy to have looked into that ahead of time.

And it was weird that I knew that about him—that I knew so much about him, really. But did I? Kai on the screen and Kai in reality were hardly the same person. It was a television show. It was going to be a challenge for me to keep that in perspective, but I was going to do my best. Kai deserved that from me.

“Why doesn’t this place feel like yours?” Gideon placed a box of cereal on the counter.

It took me a minute to figure out what he meant.

“Oh, because it’s not mine.” Which was embarrassing to admit. I was an alpha. Basically couch surfing at my cousin’s house wasn’t the best sign of success. Normally it was no big deal, but with these men, I wanted them to think the best of me.

“It’s my cousin’s. I’m just house-sitting while they try to sell it.”

“Ahh.” Which was the most non-committal response ever, but I refused to think too hard on it.

“If you look in the cupboard over there, there’s a bunch of crackers. I’ll grab some jugs of water.”

“He’s gonna want protein.” Gideon was already digging through the cabinet.

“There should be some jerky in there too.”

A couple of minutes later we were ready to go, two overflowing laundry baskets of food and supplies. We weren’t going particularly far, and if need be, one of us could run and get more. That was far from ideal, though. I was glad we probably overdid it.

Kai, on the other hand, rolled his eyes as he took in the overflowing baskets. “Is there going to be room for me in the vehicle too?”

“Oh, we were just gonna strap you to the top,” Dante teased and was rewarded with some serious side-eye.

“Where are we going again?” Dante directed his question at me.

“It’s where I like to go and fly.” I always thought of it as my place. I could be free to take to the skies, but also, I could see so much of the area while sitting on the grass. It was a place both my beast and I enjoyed.

All three pairs of eyes turned and looked straight at me.

“Oh, sorry. I thought you could probably sense me... I’m... um, dragon, hi.”

Kai had told me about their animals, but I had sensed them immediately when they arrived, so it was more of a nicety than anything else. It was one of the things my dragon was pretty good at, and from the looks of things, their bear and wolf were not.

They nodded and didn't say anything else, Kai's next contraction choosing then to make its appearance.

Once it subsided, we put the supplies in the back, helped Kai get into the vehicle, and drove the short distance. As the car came to a stop, Kai went into a contraction that was harder than the past ones. At least his reaction was more visceral, and I guessed that was why.

I hated seeing him in such agony. I was wise enough to know that it was only going to get worse, but I very much did not like it.

Gideon and I set up the blankets and pillows the best we could and put the basket of food beside it. It was hardly a fancy birthing experience, but it felt safe and welcoming in its own way, and my dragon approved.

"Those lights down there," Kai pointed. "That's the hospital?"

"Yeah, that's the hospital.

"I thought this was perfect because not only was it a place with privacy, but you could see where medical help was if needed. Worst-case scenario, I could... you know, fly him there."

Kai shook his head. "No. Two feet on the ground."

Noted.

“Okay. No flying.” I was hoping that one day he would trust me enough to let me take him flying. But, fair enough. No one wanted their first flight to be out of necessity, especially not a necessity that revolved around childbirth.

Chapter 5

Kai

This was the perfect place to bring our child into the world.

My baby agreed. Maybe that was fanciful, but hey, I'd been transported to another world and met and mated alphas who had animals inside them. Who was to say the baby wasn't giving me the thumbs-up?

And I was surrounded by not one, not two, but three mates. While I was concentrating on listening to my body, I did side-eye Seymour for not declaring himself my mate. Not that I expected him to get on one knee and make a big deal about it. Though I kinda did.

My grunting and groaning might have been a little off-putting, but as my mate and one of our baby's fathers, he'd be dealing with poop explosions—lots of them—so he'd better get used to life with Kai. That sounded like the title of a TV serial.

I paced over the grass in my bare feet, enjoying the connection with the earth. If the baby was a shifter, they'd have a relationship with the earth and the world around us that I would never experience. So it was appropriate I gave birth here and not in some sterile hospital room, hooked up to beeping machines.

“Why are they not closer together?” The cramps were a couple of minutes apart, and while my body told me it wasn't time, my head was more than ready.

“Slow your breathing, Kai.” Dante took my hand and kicked off his shoes, clawing his toes into the damp earth.

I matched him, breath in and breath out, and while the interval between contractions didn’t shorten, having him at my side calmed me.

“You know what might help?” I sensed our little one needed to be with their dads. Not in human form but after taking their fur. Hmmm, did Seymour have fur? Dragons were huge scaly beasts. Not fur or hair but scales.

The idea of having a real live dragon beside me was a tad scary, but a dragon could fend off any bad guys, so we’d never have to worry about anyone harming us. Though bears and wolves were pretty terrifying too.

“Shifting.” That was how I got around the fur/scales issue.

Dante ripped off his clothes and didn’t consult the other two. He was exercising his authority as Mate Number One. Nah, not really. Both Gideon and Dante considered themselves equal in our relationship, and if either had pulled a stunt and lorded it over the other, I’d have told them to get over themselves.

Despite being in the throes of labor, I admired Dante’s cock. That man had one gorgeous dick. But it vanished along with the rest of him and his wolf appeared, nuzzling my big belly.

With the lights of the city below us, I paced with my wolf at my side. I was slower than before, my body conserving energy for when I had to push. Dante’s beast’s firm footing as we walked, or he walked and I waddled, my hand on his back, ensured I didn’t stumble. The belly affected my sense of gravity, and I’d been prone to teetering and almost toppling over, only saved by my mates’ shifter reflexes.

Me clutching the wolf's glossy fur reassured me my mates' beasts loved me and the baby as much as their human forms. And the wolf sensed when it was time for Gideon's bear to take his place.

Dante shifted and stood back while the bear lumbered back and forth, touching my bump with his snout.

"Thank you, my love."

Dante blew me a kiss, saying he'd do anything for me and our little one. My eyes were awash in tears as I thanked the universe for placing me in the café that day when I met my wolf mate.

Concentrating on the beasts and how they were helping me through labor put aside my anxiety of how I'd react when the dragon appeared. I couldn't hold his hand or run my fingers through his fur.

But Gideon shifted back, and he squeezed my hand, telling me I was doing great.

Now the moment was upon me when I'd meet a real live dragon. I rubbed my belly in the aftermath of the latest contraction and stood back. We all did. Dragons were enormous.

I did take a peek at Seymour's cock before he shifted, and I wasn't disappointed. Wowza!

Scales and veined wings, spikes, and a hint of fire on his breath accompanied the dragon. He wasn't as huge as I'd imagined, but my impression of dragons had come from human story books, and no human had ever seen a dragon. Maybe I was the only one.

Seymour's beast was a smaller package, though he did tower over me. The lights from the hospital illuminated the purple and silver streaks on his wings and swept over the tips of the spikes. Ouch! I wouldn't want to prick my finger on those.

The dragon tucked a wing around me and enveloped me in his and Seymour's scent. We toddled rather than walked as I guessed he was more accustomed to being in the air than tramping around a patch of grass.

"That was amazing. I can't wait to spend more time with your dragon."

"He loves you as much as I do."

My mates and their beasts rotated, each spending time with me, reassuring me the baby was doing well and would soon be here.

The night wore on, and I hoped the baby would be born before the noise level rose and people went to work. Not wanting to give birth in the middle of rush hour, I urged our little one to hurry up.

But babies had their own schedule, and it was close to dawn when the contractions got closer together. I sensed a shift in my body. Not that sort of shift, but a human one. Something was different, something had changed.

My mates picked up on it, and they formed a semi-circle around me.

It was time!

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Chapter 6

Seymour

There was no denying it.

It was time.

The baby was coming.

Sure, the baby had been coming since I met Kai, but now there was a change in the air. You could just feel it. It was like the world shifted in preparation for this moment. My mate was about to give birth to our child.

And that was a weird thing to think... that this baby, the one he was growing, was mine, too—that I was somehow a father to this baby. But the protective paternal side of me was shining brightly, and I couldn't force the notion down. It was fair to say that the four of us needed to have a really serious conversation in the not-so-distant future. But not now.

Now was baby time.

Kai let out a wail, a deep visceral cry, but this one was different than all that had come before. It wasn't in agony, though pain was there. This was a combination of victory and perseverance. I couldn't fully understand the power of it, but I could feel it as it wrapped around the three of us while we supported him through this last stage of his pregnancy.

After trying a few positions, Kai decided he wanted to have the baby on his hands and knees. Dante and I helped set up pillows for him to lean on, to keep him comfortable—as comfortable as one could be when pushing out an entire being.

A couple of times, I stepped back a little, trying to give him time with his mates, to let them have their moments with each other. But he called me back each and every time. He insisted he needed us all there.

Kai felt it too, there was no denying that now. He felt that I was his mate and he was mine. He might not fully grasp that yet, but his actions made it rather clear, and my dragon couldn't be more thrilled.

Dante kneeled behind him, and Gideon and I sat in front of him, me patting his brow to keep the sweat from dripping into his eyes, while Gideon encouraged him, telling him how great he was doing, giving him sweet forehead kisses.

“It’s burning! It’s burning!” He broke through the patterned breathing he’d been struggling to keep.

“I know, my love,” Gideon said, pressing his cheek against his mate’s. “Remember what that means. It means it’s time to push.”

“I don’t know if I can do this.” His uncertainty nearly broke me. He was so strong. I wished that he could see that. And maybe he did in normal situations, because this definitely wasn’t one of those.

“I may have only known you for less than a day, but I 100% know that you’ve got this. I can feel it. I can feel the power of your fatherhood.”

He looked at me quizzically and then nodded, his face turning very serious and resolved. The next contraction came almost instantly, and this time he pushed, and he

pushed, and he pushed. When Dante told him he could see the baby's head crowning, Kai persevered, more determined than ever.

A few minutes later, the air filled with a sound that I would never forget for as long as I was on this earth—the sound of my baby crying.

I helped Kai onto his side, then onto his back, propping him up with pillows so that he was mostly sitting.

Gideon covered him to prevent a chill while Dante wrapped the baby in the softest towel I'd packed and placed the baby on Kai's chest.

"Hello, Albie." Kai's voice cracked with emotion.

I hadn't been there when they decided on the name, but it for sure suited the little guy.

Kai was beyond exhausted, and still, he carefully brought the baby into position and helped him latch onto his chest for his first meal. Albie was hungry, his little hand kneading against Kai's body as he suckled contentedly.

All three of us alphas watched in wonder, tears in our eyes as we took in the little miracle their love had brought into this world. I'd always known babies were special and had a way of winning hearts, but the intensity of emotions surrounding his birth were so beyond that.

We stayed there in the clearing, helping Kai rest and enjoy this bonding time with his son. But eventually, it was time to go. As wonderful as this place was, it wasn't somewhere we could stay forever.

"Okay, we're gonna get ready to take the baby home," Dante said.

Kai nodded and handed the baby to me to hold while the other alphas helped him get up and put on enough clothes to avoid getting arrested.

“Hey, sweet boy,” I whispered.

He was so precious, and my dragon wanted to partially shift and cover him with his wings, keeping him safe from everything. But that wasn’t how it worked. If only it was.

We packed up the car and got Kai settled inside.

“I’m just gonna go home. I have to work anyway,” I said, though the walk would be long. For the first time, I felt kind of awkward, like maybe I didn’t really belong.

“No, come with us. Really,” Gideon said, his sincerity shining through.

I did have to work. And maybe I could call in, but also, it was important for them to have some time together, just them, right?

“Please,” Kai said. “We want you here.”

“We do.” Dante added, and I saw that this wasn’t an argument I was going to be able to win. And the truth was, I didn’t want to.

“Okay,” I agreed. “I’d like that.” I’d like it a lot.

My dragon beamed at their acceptance of us.

I did too.

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Chapter 7

Kai

The four of us stood round Albie's crib, admiring our adorable baby boy.

"I could make breakfast." Dante made no move to the kitchen as he bent over and studied the little guy that was an exact replica of himself. "Is it my imagination, or does he look a tad like me?"

Gideon rolled his eyes and elbowed our mate. "I think he has my nose."

Technically that wasn't possible, but Mate Number One laughed at Gideon's teasing.

"Hilarious." Dante blew Albie a kiss, even though our little boy was asleep, having had his first feed and diaper change.

"His eyes remind me of m-my dragon's. D-Dark with a hint of m-mystery." Seymour stumbled over his words, his gaze darting from me to my mates.

I giggled and shoulder bumped him, wanting him to feel as though he belonged in this family.

"Oh yes, I can see it." Dante nodded.

"Identical," Gideon agreed.

How did I get so lucky to find my first two mates who were so kind to the new guy and were doing their best to make him fit in.

“What was that about breakfast?” I asked. Giving birth and feeding was a hungry business, and my belly was complaining.

“Hmmm, that would require me to leave the nursery and go into the kitchen.” Dante rubbed his chin.

“Yes,” we all agreed. No one else volunteered to leave Albie.

“But how hungry are we?” Dante asked. “Do we need food?”

“Yes,” the rest of us said in unison.

“Fine!” His tone suggested he was anything but fine, but he took off and was back in twenty seconds with a loaf of bread and sliced ham. We each took two slices of bread and slapped the meat between them.

“Enjoy!” Gideon raised his sandwich as we did the same and “toasted” our delicious breakfast.

I gobbled mine and took more bread and ham, not mentioning to my mates I’d need feeding again in an hour.

Much as I wanted to stay with Albie, I was exhausted, so we pulled the crib to the side of the bed and I lay down, my hand dangling inside the crib and touching our son.

Seymour had to leave the room to take a call, and Gideon whispered that we should do something to make the dragon shifter feel welcome. “A grand gesture.”

“Like what?” Dante asked, but Gideon had no idea.

None of us had huge savings, so we couldn’t give the guy a car. Not that a dragon shifter needed one. Nor could we all go on holiday and stay in an upmarket resort. Not that I was aware if Tarrin had such places.

There was still so much I didn’t know about my newish home.

Whatever we did had to be cheap, easy, quick, and could be done near the nursery so we could all stay close to Albie.

“What about a cake?” In the before time, we made cakes to celebrate births, anniversaries, and weddings. Welcome to the family was a thing. Cake we could do, and everyone loved cake.

When I suggested it, the other two shared a glance. “Just as you did in Pineville.”

“Exactly.” Maybe cake wasn’t a part of celebrations in Tarrin. Well, it would be in this family.

Albie woke and I fed him, while Dante and Gideon searched online for cake recipes. I could have reeled one off from my memories. Butter, sugar, eggs, flour, milk, and whatever else they wanted, whether it was lemon, orange, chocolate, or something we didn’t have in the cupboard.

“Chocolate sounds yummy.”

“I get to lick the spoon.”

My mates’ faces lit up as they said, “Just like in Pineville.”

Gideon offered to change Albie's diaper, and we all inspected his technique. Dante rated it eight out of ten, but when Seymour returned, he said it was perfect. I suspected the guy was trying to fit in and didn't want to criticize Gideon.

"Do you like chocolate?" Dante asked Seymour as I put Albie over my shoulder, and he gave a loud burp. We all gave tiny indoor claps so as not to frighten our son.

"I adore it, and my dragon is partial to it."

Hmmm, how big would the cake have to be to sustain a dragon's sweet tooth?

"But he has a stash in a mountain cave outside the city. He likes it when it's old and has that grayish sheen of stale chocolate."

Gross. Dante plastered a smile on his face while Gideon put a hand over his mouth. I buried my face in Albie's tummy, while I imagined my mate's dragon hovering over his chocolate and flaming anyone who came near it.

"Guess what?" I said to my dragon shifter mate.

Seymour's brow furrowed. "Is this a Pineville game?"

"Sorry." I patted his arm. "We're going to make a cake to celebrate you joining our family." But I clarified with, "We being these two." I jerked my head at Mates Numbers One and Two.

"That's so kind of you," Seymour gushed and shook hands with Dante and Gideon.

Were dragons excessively polite? I had the impression they were growly and prone to bursts of frustration where they burned stuff. But once again, I was allowing my human ideas about mythical beasts to interfere with my new reality.

With the tablet in front of them and each shifter taking turns to read out a step in the recipe, my mates beat, folded, and stirred. One of them would rush into the bedroom and give me a taste at each stage.

“Don’t forget the frosting,” I told them when they put the cake in the oven.

There was a flurry of activity as they found a recipe, and there was more beating and tasting. I had fond memories of being with my grandparents while the aroma of baking cake filled the kitchen.

“How’s it going?” I was eager for a slice but too tired to leave the comfort of my bed.

“Not sure,” Gideon said.

That didn’t sound good.

“Show me.”

Dante brought the cake in, flanked by my other mates. The cake was kinda lopsided, like the leaning tower I’d seen on TV in the before time.

I tilted my head to the side and my mates did the same.

“Is it supposed to look like that?” Dante asked.

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Chapter 8

Seymour

I grabbed a duffel bag out of the closet and started throwing in enough clothes for a week. The last time I was at the house, my life had been flipped upside down in the very best of ways. This time? I felt like a visitor. It had never been mine-mine, but it sure had felt more like home than this.

And that was because this wasn't my home. Not anymore. Kai, Dante, and Gideon were. They were mine and I was theirs.

I still didn't know what was going to happen between all of us—not really—but they wanted me at their place, and I wanted to be there. That was enough for now.

Earlier, I'd called my cousin to let them know that I'd still be keeping an eye on this place, checking in on it daily, mowing the lawn, all that good stuff. But for the most part, it looked like I was going to be staying elsewhere. They pushed for more information, because of course they did. Part of me wanted to tell them everything, but a huge part of me wasn't ready just yet. I opted to keep things very surface level. There would be time to have the conversation later.

We chatted briefly, but I kept steering the conversation to boring topics like work. I knew that once we scratched the surface, there was so much I didn't know, and I didn't need my cousin waving red flags at me that weren't there. And they would—that was kind of their thing.

Packing didn't take long, and on my way back to the others, I stopped at the clearing where Albie was born for a quick shift. My dragon had wanted to get out and fly around, and I didn't blame him. He'd been feeling trapped, and I'd been keeping him at bay, which was not the norm for us. Usually, if he wanted out, I made sure it happened pretty quickly. But leaving Kai, Albie, Dante, and Gideon had not been an easy thing to do for him, and he was extra antsy. He already considered them his flight. And in a way, they were.

Since I was already out, I might as well take advantage of the nice day and give him what he needed.

I fell back and let my dragon take over. He took his wings, but to my surprise, he didn't fly to our normal spots like I assumed he would. He didn't even burn shit. Nope. He wanted to be where Albie was born.

He circled all around the area where we had been that magical moment, then landed, curling up in the sun and taking a nap. I could've woken him up, pushed him back, and taken over, but if this was what he needed, that was what he was going to get. He was a thousand percent better after his nap, and I was glad that I'd listened to him, despite my desire to be home with my mates.

I felt bad coming in close to dinner time, but the way my mates' faces lit up when I walked in had me feeling less awful about it.

"I stopped to let my dragon take a nap in the sun."

"That's what I did today too—only no dragon—all human," Kai said, "only by 'in the sun' I mean with the curtains open."

I was glad he'd been able to get some sleep. It was a lot of work growing another being, birthing another person. And there was no solid sleeping with a newborn.

“You’ll be proud of me though, Seymour,” Kai said. “I saved you the last piece of cake.”

I had to admit, the cake was the sweetest thing ever. It made me feel so much more welcome than I had earlier—not that they had ever made me feel excluded. It was me who instilled the feelings of doubt.

“You saved it for me?”

“That’s what mates do.” Kai’s words meant more to me than he could possibly know. He probably hadn’t even said it with that intention.

And just like that, there was my open door.

“That’s what we are,” I said, like it was fact, and it was. Just because we hadn’t made a big point of it, didn’t mean it wasn’t so.

Dante put his arm around me. “It is indeed,” he said, welcoming me further.

And Gideon? Gideon being Gideon winked.

It hadn’t been the big, in-depth conversation I thought we’d have when the time finally came, but it was enough. They all saw me as theirs, which worked perfectly for me because I saw them as mine.

What our relationship would look like from here, none of us knew, but it would look like something, and that was enough. There was no need to force things into place or make things happen now . There was time for all of that, but what there wouldn’t be was time for us to recapture these first few weeks with Albie. He had to be our priority.

“So, am I sharing the cake?” I teased.

“If you want to,” Kai said, pushing himself up from the chair he was in. We’d set up a bassinet that had wheels so Albie could be with us in every room. He’d eventually need his own space and to have less clingy parents, but that time wasn’t now.

Kai bent down to check on our sleeping baby before he came over and gave me a hug, and not just any hug, a full-on bear hug. I wrapped my arms around him, and he sank into me. My dragon purred. I didn’t even know that was possible, but there he was doing it. I’d never seen him so content.

“I needed this,” he whispered against my chest.

A few seconds later, four more arms circled us. We held each other, taking in our combined scents and just being together. It was beautiful. It was everything.

This was my flight.

My family.

My home.

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Chapter 9

Kai

Albie was finally in a routine which made life easier than the first month and a half post birth.

And the four of us were muddling along together.

One problem, though.

No sex. Not even a hint of sex. No blow jobs, no tongue jobs, no jerking off, and no finger fucking.

I was so ready, and I dreamed each night of Dante and Gideon's dicks shoved in my hole making me scream quietly so I didn't wake Albie.

But even worse than no cocks in holes or my hole was Seymour and I hadn't officially mated. No marking and his length hadn't been anywhere near my aching hole.

There has been so much wasted slick, I'd had to change my PJs two or three times a night. I'd made excuses to my mates saying I was sweating profusely, as I did when I was pregnant.

So many dicks and only one hole to fill, but there was nada on the fucking front.

Gods, I wanted them all so badly. And once it was go time, could we speed up the process? I could do two lengths in one hole but not three. Besides, my first time with Seymour had to be special and not competing for space with other dicks.

“Hungry, Kai?” Dante yelled from the kitchen where he and my mates were preparing dinner.

“Always.” That was true whether he was talking about food or sex or both.

“What do you want?”

What a question. I could go for frosting on one cock, honey on another, and for the third? Mayo? Nah. Maple syrup? Nope, not after the honey. Maybe melted chocolate. But not too hot. Burned dick wasn’t on the menu.

“Can’t you decide what to eat?” Gideon poked his head in the nursery as I put Albie in his crib and kissed him good night.

“Mmmm,” I replied as images of cocks floated in my head. “It’s hard.” Me too. My dick was rock hard.

“Would you like us to surprise you?” He grinned.

“Definitely.” Now I pictured the three of them naked, each with a sign. One saying, “Fuck,” a second with “Blow job,” and a third containing the words “Two in one.”

Choices, choices.

Gideon disappeared, still clothed, and I was no closer to having a cock in me than I had been these past six weeks.

Later as we sat around the table, eating strands of spaghetti and mouthfuls of yummy fresh-made marinara sauce, I deliberately left one spaghetti strand hanging from my mouth and I sucked it, making a kinda gross slurping sound. My three mates glanced up and fixed their gazes on my mouth as the spaghetti slithered between my lips.

Their mouths gaped, and I dropped my napkin on the floor, making no pretense that I hadn't done it deliberately. I bent down and checked out their crotches. They were aroused, their dicks so swollen there was little space in their pants. Must have been uncomfortable.

Me too. But I'd been hard all week.

"See anything interesting?" Dante asked. He twirled a mouthful of pasta in his spoon, before lifting the fork to his mouth.

He knew exactly what he was doing, and he was succeeding. I groaned, wanting to release my cock from the confines of my pants.

"Nope, nothing at all." I dipped my head and studied my food, hiding my smile.

"What's for dessert?" Seymour asked. He'd arrived home after my mates had made dessert.

"Something soft and creamy that melts in your mouth," Gideon told him.

Dante swallowed and coughed, while Seymour giggle-snorted.

Were they all fucking with me, messing with my head and my dick?

"I went to the doctor today," I announced. "For my post-natal check-up."

“And?” Three heads bobbed up.

I was enjoying the tension, letting the silence fill the space between us.

“Everything’s fine,” I finally told them.

“What does that mean exactly?” Gideon asked, and all three of my mates leaned toward me.

“There are no restrictions.”

Dante cleared his throat and dabbed his mouth with a napkin. “Is that like water restrictions? We had a drought in Martslock a few years ago. People couldn’t water their garden, and the water supply was turned off for hours during the day.”

“Yes, that was bad. I could only flush the toilet once a day,” Seymour added.

Okay, ewww. We were veering away from the subject, and I refused to have toilets and hoses interfere with my plan to have sex.

“Mates,” I said a little too loudly. “My body has recovered from Albie’s birth.”

“Excellent.” My mates clapped.

“Should we bake a cake to celebrate, Pineville style?” Dante asked.

Gods. My mates were the sweetest, but they were also irritating. When this omega wanted cock and my three mates were discussing baking, I was going to get loud. Or as loud as I could with Albie asleep.

I banged my fork on the table. “Guys, I’m able to have sex. Lots and lots of sex.”

Three mouths fell open and three sets of cutlery clattered onto the table, splattering red sauce over the cloth and ourselves. I was prepared to lick it off each one of the mates if we could get naked.

“When you say sex, are you talking?—”

I cut off Dante by forming a circle with my index finger and thumb and shoving the fingers of my other hand into the circle.

“It’s been so long. We were worried you’d never be ready.” Gideon patted the sweat on his brow with his napkin. “We didn’t want to push you.”

Awww, my angels. Seymour wasn’t saying much, probably because we hadn’t done it yet. I wanted our first time to be perfect, just as it had been for me and Dante and me and Gideon.

“You can push and prod and finger and slide in all you want. Me and my hole are so ready.”

“That’s such good news, Kai.” Dante stood up and the others did the same. “But where do we begin, or should I say, who do we begin with?”

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Chapter 10

Seymour

Kai wanted us, all three of us. And of course he wanted Dante and Gideon. That was a given. But hearing him say that he wanted me too—it meant the world to me. We had found this nice routine, but as time ticked on, I began to wonder if that part of our relationship wasn't meant to be.

From reading up on postnatal care I learned a lot, not only about the right nutrition for our mate, but how his body was healing. Giving birth wasn't a no-big-deal kind of thing. In passing it mentioned that some omegas lose their desire for their mates while their hormones balance out and their body is focused on more important things, like making milk for their babies. I didn't know if that played into it also, but if he never wanted that part of a relationship with me, I would be fine with that.

Okay, maybe not fine so much as I would make it work. But then tonight, he'd completely opened up the discussion, and now all I could think about was getting him naked, and best of all, he was thinking the same about us.

My hands fidgeted at my sides. Kai's confessions should've been a dream come true, but they left me feeling as though I were fumbling in the dark, reaching for something just beyond my grasp, unsure of what to do next. So I did what I always did when this feeling of not quite feeling like I belonged hit; I became quiet and watched the scene unfold.

“Hey, Seymour, you've been awfully quiet.” Dante took my hand. “Everything

alright?”

There it was—the gentle nudge I needed. Cognitively I knew I needed to not be so worried about speaking up, that I was one of them. But until I marked Kai, I had a feeling that wasn’t going to happen.

My throat felt tight, but I pushed past it. “Yeah, it’s just... I’m a bit over my head here,” I managed to say, my voice a half-whisper that sounded more like a plea for understanding than the confession it was meant to be.

I turned to Kai. “I mean, Kai... we haven’t even kissed yet.”

Admitting it and seeing the warm smile he gave back to me released the tension in my shoulders. Why had I allowed myself to be so worried? There was no need. Kai was my mate, and fate didn’t make mistakes.

Kai’s hand, outstretched and inviting, sent a jolt of anticipation through me. Our eyes locked, and he held my entire attention.

“Let’s not worry about the dishes.”

Not that they’d even crossed my mind.

“Bedroom?”

I nodded, feeling like I was floating as I placed my hand in his.

Halfway to the bedroom, Kai stopped abruptly, his grip tightening around my hand. “Fuck this,” he muttered under his breath before turning and pulling me into him. My back hit the wall with a soft thud, and then his lips were on mine. Tentative at first, as if he were asking a question, one he must’ve found the answer to because his kiss

deepened.

I melted into him, turned on by the way he took what he wanted. My hands found their way to his hair, weaving through it and holding him to me. Kai pressed closer, his need palpable, and I felt myself respond with need that mirrored his own, his cock hard and ready.

But then it ended, leaving me gasping for air, my lips tingling from the intensity of the kiss, body already missing him.

“Damn,” Dante’s voice broke the silence that had enveloped us. He looked from Kai to me, an eyebrow raised in playful curiosity. “How was it?”

The corners of Kai’s mouth lifted in a smirk. “There’s only one way to find out.” He beckoned Dante closer with a crooked finger.

Dante stepped forward, closing the gap between us and taking the spot that Kai had once occupied. I found myself caught in another magnetic pull. This time, Dante’s lips claimed mine. His kiss was a different kind of amazing—confident, commanding, yet tender. He explored my mouth until my knees nearly gave and stepped aside, a knowing smile on his face.

That was two, but there was one more hottie in the room. Was I brave enough? I turned to Gideon, my voice barely a whisper but laced with an unmistakable desire. “Gideon, may I... Can we...”

My words might not have formed complete thoughts, but Gideon heard them loud and clear. He stepped closer, tilted my chin up, and his lips found mine.

Like with the other two men, this kiss was different, almost like a blend of the two. Gideon’s mouth moved against mine with a reverence and raw need. My body

responded instinctively, my cock begging to be set free as the kiss deepened.

When we finally parted, the air between us was electric, and my heart raced. The last remnants of my awkwardness dissipated.

“Shall we continue this somewhere more comfortable?” Kai’s voice, thick with lust, wrapped around me.

But just as we turned toward the bedroom, a soft stir from Albie’s crib snagged my attention. “Wait,” I said, suddenly feeling the pull of responsibility amidst the haze of passion. “I’ll check on him. You guys go ahead, and when I get there, I expect you naked.”

Kai, Gideon, and Dante exchanged a look that was equal parts amusement and arousal before they disappeared into the bedroom.

I gave myself a few seconds to catch my breath and went over to Albie’s crib, where the little one had settled back into slumber, his chest rising and falling in the steady rhythm that I’d spent hours watching, unable to take them off the wonder that was new life. He must’ve been caught in the tail of a dream, a fleeting whimper all there was.

Wanting to be sure, I watched over him for a minute longer, and when he didn’t so much as stir again, I tiptoed away from him and toward where the others awaited. I made my way to the bedroom, my pulse quickening with each step.

As I entered, the sight that greeted me, gods, it was magnificent—Kai, Gideon, and Dante, skin bare and bodies ready for more, were climbing into bed.

Their eyes lifted to meet mine, heavy with desire and invitation, as I stood there, momentarily arrested by the tableau before me.

“Looks like it’s my turn to strip.”

“Your turn... yes.” Kai licked his lips.

Starting with my shirt, I unbuttoned each fastening achingly slow, exaggerating every motion. If they were going to watch, I wanted them to enjoy it. The fabric parted to reveal my chest, and I let the shirt hang from my fingers before giving it a little twirl and tossing it aside.

My movements were more awkward than those of a seasoned performer, but the chuckles from my men told me they were entertained, their eyes never strayed from me, encouraging me to continue with my impromptu show.

Next came my belt, which was more fumbling than sexy, but when I attempted to hide it with a wiggle of my hips, Dante bit his lip to stifle a laugh, and it no longer mattered that I wasn’t well trained or stage worthy. He was enjoying himself. They all were.

Piece by piece, I rid myself of my garments until there was nothing left to remove.

“Come here.” Dante patted the bed. “Join us.”

He didn’t need to ask me twice. I jogged over and fell into bed with them, lips and hands finding my body as the mattress sank beneath my weight.

Chapter 11

Kai

We were in the bed, all of us naked.

Dante and Gideon were on either side of me, stroking my skin, alternately kissing me and fondling my cock. My skin pebbled with goosebumps while Seymour nibbled his way from my ankle, behind my knee, and over my thigh.

Waves of pleasure washed over me, battering my body while desire surged through my veins. The kissing, stroking, fondling, and sucking had me teetering on the edge, wanting to fall and yet longing to prolong the ecstasy.

I stuck my tongue in Dante's mouth before biting hard on his lower lip. He grunted, and I pulled away, putting a hand over Gideon's as he pumped my dick. Seymour was making his way to my hole, and I spread my legs further, giving him access. I wanted fingers, tongue, and cock in my hole while my other mates put their mouth or hands on my dick.

Seymour lifted his head, his lips glistening with the slick that coated my thighs.

“Show me what you can do, dragon shifter.”

He stuck out his tongue, and Dante gasped, his hand going to his cock while Seymour tapped around my puckered entrance. My head fell back, but Gideon's fingers brushed over my side as he pumped his length.

Two fingers slid inside me and fucked me hard. Desire weighed heavy on my eyelids, but I had to witness the moment Seymour penetrated me.

“Gods, that’s hot,” Dante whispered.

A hand wrapped around my cock and tugged. Oh shit, I’d come before Seymour got inside me. A quick glance revealed one of Dante’s hands on my dick while he jerked himself off with the other.

His eyes were locked on Seymour’s cock, bigger than his or Gideon’s. Shit. I braced myself as my dragon mate nudged my hole.

I grabbed his cock, and there was a sharp intake of breath from Seymour.

“I want you in me.” I eased him in a little, and he panted while placing a hand on either side of me.

“Push his dick in more,” Gideon urged as he licked around his mouth. “I want to see him fuck you.”

“Me too,” Dante murmured.

Gripping Seymour’s enormous cock, I pulled him into me, his girth filling and stretching my channel. Our eyes locked on one another, and his mouth gaped while I adjusted to him inside me.

“You’re so tight.” He bent over and tugged at my bottom lip while I squeezed his cock, and he panted, ramming into me until he was sheathed deep inside.

“He is,” my other mates echoed.

Seymour grunted as he kissed the goosebumps cascading over my skin. He pulled out and slammed into me, and we both moaned. Draping one hand over his neck, I lifted my legs and wrapped them around him, allowing him to penetrate deeper.

His eyes widened and beads of sweat appeared on his upper lip. He nuzzled my ear, and I pressed my legs on his sides, urging him to fuck me harder.

My dragon mate reared back, allowing Dante to release his grip on my dick and replace it with his mouth. I yelped, as he swallowed my cock and flicked the tip.

Seymour plowed into me, and I arched my back, wanting all of him, needing him to go deeper, to possess me. He paused, and I gulped in air while trailing a finger over his lips. He parted them and bit it.

“Ouch!” But it was part pleasure and part pain; a delicious emotion that had my body tingling. “More, please.”

“More of this?” He thrust into me, and I tangled my fingers in his hair and yanked, hoping he’d react as I did. His eyes grew dark, and he drew in deep breaths.

“Oh yeah.”

I peered between us when Gideon shoved Dante off my dick and gripped me, sliding his hand back and forth over the shaft.

“Go slowly. I want to make this last.”

He pulled out, inch by glorious inch before entering me, agonizing slowly.

“My turn.” Seymour nudged Gideon’s hand away and he took hold of my cock. My head fell back as my Mates One and Two jerked off.

The aroma of sex circled in the air, mingling with the potent scent of slick and sweat, while the only sounds were grunts and whimpers and flesh pounding against flesh.

I placed my hands on Seymour's chest as he thrust into me and tweaked a nipple. His nostrils flared, and he pounded into my channel. He loosened his grip on my cock, and I clutched the sheets, bracing myself for the orgasm that was hurtling toward me.

Now there was fucking, hard and fast, and sweat spraying over us. Seymour's feral expression as he took possession of me again and again ignited a fire inside me.

"Seymour," I yelled. "I love your cock, and I'm going to come."

I angled my hips so he could go deeper once and twice more, and then I shattered, warmth spreading over my body. Cum erupted from my cock while I locked my legs round my dragon mate.

Gideon groaned and came, followed by Dante, and the pair collapsed at my sides, but I tried to keep my eyes open, wanting to see Seymour as he came. He thrust deep inside me, mumbled my name and tensed, his cum spurting into my channel.

His knot expanded, and he lay on top of me, our bodies fused while we panted and kissed.

"I want... to... to mate you." Seymour was still catching his breath.

"Do it." I had two mating marks and would wear the third proudly.

His dragon talons extended. They were much longer than Dante's wolf's claws and Gideon's bears. I prepared myself for intense pain, but his beast just scratched the surface of my chest. Blood trickled into my belly button, and Dante mopped it up with a towel.

“I wanna be on top,” I told Seymour.

He flipped us over, still inside me, and I bit the sensitive skin just above his nipple, barely breaking the skin. But I was proud of my mark.

My two other mates snuggled beside us, and Gideon asked if there’d be more sex.

“Lots more,” Seymour told him as he took hold of Gideon’s cock.

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Chapter 12

Seymour

The room was thick with the mingling of our scents. I lay there, cocooned within Dante's arms, feeling his chest rise and fall against my back as I woke from my nap.

"Never been topped before," I murmured, halfway between being awake and in dreamland. It felt like a confession, and I supposed that it was, but it probably wasn't shocking to him. They already knew that I was new to this.

Dante chuckled softly, his breath hot on my neck. "I volunteer as tribute."

"Definitely haven't gotten that far," I admitted, rolling over to face him. I wasn't opposed, but that was jumping a few steps ahead. "I wouldn't know where to begin." But gods, now I wanted to.

"Then I suppose it's up to me to show you the ropes," Kai chimed in, with a grin.

"Ropes?" It wasn't my thing, but the way Kai giggled, I knew he saw my comment for what it was—being silly and having fun.

But my teasing only egged them on. Gideon started by telling me all the things he would do, and when he was done, Kai added his plans. Dante, he was busy stroking himself slowly and nodding in agreement to everything they said. And me? I was soaking it all in and trying to picture each action in my mind to see if it was possible.

We didn't speak much after that. Words were no longer necessary as Kai's slick fingers began their delicate dance, coaxing responses from my body that I'd never known I could give. I thought I'd be apprehensive as my entrance was teased for the first time. I wasn't. It was an entirely new level of arousal, and I was there for it. Gideon and Dante were too, both of them watching and praising both Kai and me.

"Probably enough for now." Kai kissed my left cheek. "Duty is going to call in a little bit, and we should not start anything until after that."

He was right. Albie still only slept a couple hours at a time and that time was almost up.

"Shower?" Gideon suggested.

"Sounds perfect," I agreed, already standing.

The mattress dipped slightly as Kai slipped back into the bed, his movements gentle so as not to disturb the quiet peace that had wrapped around us. After we'd showered, we piled back into bed, and I slipped back into sleep.

He smiled at me, a softness in his eyes that always seemed to appear after he'd spent time with the little one.

"Back asleep," he whispered, brushing a stray lock of hair from my forehead. "Albie's taken care of."

In response, I nestled closer to the warmth Dante provided, his arms a secure fortress around me.

I was dozing off again when Gideon emerged, carrying a tray laden with cut fruit, cheese, and a bottle of wine with glasses. His grin was infectious as he set the snack

down within reach.

“Thought we could use some sustenance,” Gideon said, handing out the glasses.

“Thanks,” I mumbled, propping myself on an elbow to accept the drink. The first sip was crisp, refreshing, and it cleared the fog from my mind, sharpening my senses for what was yet to come.

We nibbled and sipped in a comfortable silence, the energy in the room slowly shifting. Each shared glance and lingering touch reminded me of the sweet teasing I’d had earlier, and my skin tingled in anticipation.

“Hey, Seymour,” Kai began, his tone casual but eyes gleaming with mischief. “What are you thinking about for next time?”

“Next time?” I echoed, buying a moment to let my brain catch up. “I just... I want to make you happy.”

Kai rolled his eyes so dramatically it was comical. “No, love. That’s not what I mean.”

Dante’s chuckle vibrated against my back. “He wants the dirty details, Seymour. Pretend you’re giving a play-by-play of a porno—like a sports announcer. That’s what our sexy mate is curious about.”

A hot blush crept up my neck. Giving voice to the fantasies that danced through my head felt more intimate than any act we’d shared before. I could hardly wait.

It had been easy enough to share earlier, to confess that I’d never been topped and to have Kai tease my ass as the others watched. How would this be any different? It wouldn’t be, unless it was somehow, possibly better.

The heat of their gazes pressed against me, anticipation shimmering in the thick bedroom air.

“Well, as you know, I’ve never been topped before, and... I think I’d like to try being knotted.” It was a huge leap from a little fingering, and my cock was already thick with anticipation.

“Ah!” Dante’s hand shot up, his eyes alight with eagerness. “I volunteer as tribute... again!”

“Yes, please.” I sounded far too formal to my ears, but Dante gave no indication that he felt the same.

Dante’s playful grin soon turned sly, and he leaned in, whispering near my ear, “If I’m taking you from behind, what are your plans for that eager cock of yours?”

“Uh,” I stammered, caught off guard. “I haven’t really thought that far ahead.”

“Allow me,” Gideon interjected smoothly, with a confidence that made my heart race and my cock get harder. “You can fuck my mouth while Dante has his way with you.”

Fuck, yeah.

Kai chimed in, a devilish spark in his eyes. “And if Gideon is on his back, head hanging off the edge, I can ride him. That way we all get to cross the finish line together.”

“Keep talking like that,” I teased, breathless with the possibilities, “and we might just hit that finish line before the race even starts.”

We didn't waste another moment after that.

Kai's fingers, slick with his own juices, explored and stretched me, getting me ready for what was to come. Each press of his digits drew sounds from me I didn't know I had.

Kai directed me to stand on the edge of the bed and bend over to give Dante access. I did, and as he lined himself up with my entrance, a quick flash of worry was pushed aside for the feeling that could only be described as completeness took over. Slowly he began to slide in and out of me, his hands holding my hips.

Gideon and Kai watched me, but were also having some fun on their own. Gideon was lying down, his head so close to my cock, while at the same time not being close enough, and Kai? Kai was lowering himself onto the alpha's thick cock.

Kai watched Dante's every move and mimicked them with Gideon. Unsure where to focus, I opted not to, instead allowing myself to simply feel everything. And it was in that happy place of just taking it all in that I somehow missed getting moved into a position where Gideon could use his mouth on my cock.

Gideon's mouth was in an awkward position for what he was doing, but gods, he made it work. And Kai? Kai rode him with a fierce grace that stole my breath. If I woke up now to discover this was a dream, I wouldn't be surprised. How was this my life?

Dante filled me completely, movements deliberate and powerful, yet when the end neared, he pulled back. "It's probably too much for your first time," he said, a hint of concern beneath the satisfaction.

And before I could say anything, I felt his cum on my ass.

“Besides, you look hot wearing my cum.” He gave my ass a playful smack and the loss of his cock no longer mattered; this, this moment with these three men did.

Kai called out Gideon’s name as his cum shot out and landed on the alpha’s chest which had me exploding in the man’s mouth, Dante holding me up as I rode out my orgasm.

“Whoa.” It was all I could manage to get out.

“Whoa indeed, my sexy dragon.” Kai pulled me onto the bed. “Whoa, indeed.”

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Chapter 13

Kai

Curled up between Gideon and Dante in our enormous bed, that was specially made and had cost a lot, I was half awake when Albie cried out.

He was teething, and my little boy had had a rough night. Me too, but I was an adult, and my gums weren't owie and I didn't have a fever. This was parenthood, and I could catch up on sleep when he was older. Maybe after he had his eighteenth birthday.

But before I'd paced over the floor with my little boy and my mates had taken turns, we'd had sex. All four of us. Gods, the memories and my aching hole reminded me of how often and how many cocks had penetrated it.

I rubbed my ass against Dante who stirred and clapped a hand on my thigh. Wishing we could have another marathon session, I pulled myself out of bed because Albie needed me.

I froze. My little boy had stopped crying, and I shot up, one hand on my bear mate and one on my wolf. Didn't I have a third mate? Where was he?

Tiptoeing out of bed, I cracked the door and crept down the stairs. Seymour was in the living room, with Albie on his chest in the baby carrier that was a little too small. He was swaying and humming a song by his favorite musician.

What a sweetheart. My dragon shifter mate must have been just as tired as me and the others. But he was looking after our son and allowing us to catch up on sleep.

I should have done exactly that, crept back to bed. But observing my newest mate tending to Albie warmed my heart. Treating my son like his own signaled fate had chosen well. I tried to put myself in Seymour's position. He came into a ready-made family with me mated and going into labor with Mate Number One's child. But his heart had expanded and included my mates and Albie under his dragon wings.

Seymour picked up two toys and conducted a conversation with them using high-pitched voices and jerky movements. Albie giggled. His laughter touched my heart after his pain-filled cries, and I stayed where I was, listening to the story Seymour was telling my son. There were more giggles as my dragon mate held one toy and swooped in and tickled Albie's belly. Peals of laughter filled the room.

Seymour's hesitation and uncertainty on joining our family seemed to be resolved, and he'd jumped in with both feet to be not only my mate but a father to Albie.

"I see you peeking." Seymour didn't turn around, but his super-sneaky shifter hearing must have picked up on my breathing. Or my human clumsiness as I'd staggered to the door, half asleep.

"I wasn't checking up on you."

"No?"

No. I wasn't. But it may have appeared that I was. I didn't want my mate to feel less-than in our family. "I got frightened when I couldn't hear Albie. But he's in good hands."

"Go back to bed."

“I will.” But I couldn’t resist kissing our son, his scent and soft skin soothing away my exhaustion, though it would return to bite me in the ass later in the day.

“You’re not going back to sleep though, are you?”

No, I was. I needed days and weeks to catch up on missed sleep. But I was also craving coffee. Having a cup would ensure sleep wasn’t happening.

“I’ll make it,” he offered.

“Nah, you’re on baby duty. I’ve got this.” I got out two cups because Seymour enjoyed his morning coffee as much as I did. “Do you have any children in your extended family?”

“No. My family didn’t reproduce easily, so there were many single eggs rather than a clutch.”

My belly lurched when he said eggs. Dragons were reptiles, so of course there were eggs, but if I ever got pregnant after sex with Seymour, I’d have a live baby inside me. Humans didn’t carry eggs.

“That must have been hard.”

“Hard, yes.” I picked up on his husky tone. Hard. Right. We’d all been hard last night.

Seymour put the baby in his high chair. Good, I didn’t want him to be aroused while holding Albie. No, no, no.

While standing at the coffee maker, I glanced down. Shoot, I wasn’t dressed. After our hours-long sex session last night that lasted into the early hours of the morning,

not long before Albie cried, we'd fallen asleep in a tangle of limbs. Seymour was wearing PJ pants, but I was buck naked.

My dragon shifter mate gasped as I jiggled my butt while the coffee maker did its thing and flooded the kitchen with the aromatic caramelized fragrance.

Glancing over my shoulder, I asked, "Is there a problem?"

"Ummm, no." His voice thick with emotion told me he was fibbing. "None at all."

"Are dragon shifters not good at telling fibs?"

"Ummm—"

He was interrupted by my son banging a toy on the high chair tray.

I placed his mug on the table and gave Albie his sippy cup.

"Why do you ask?" Seymour took a sip, and another, holding the cup in front of his face for longer than necessary.

"Oh, it's not important. Just wondering."

"When in dragon form, our beasts don't hide their emotions. They're angry, they burn. When they're happy, they burn. And when they're frustrated, the same."

"And you?" I sat opposite Seymour.

"I tend to keep everything inside, but my voice often betrays me."

"Any other part?" I asked innocently.

He tossed down a mouthful of coffee. Owwww. It was hot and must have hurt. Seymour didn't react. He may as well have been drinking a luke-warm drink. But as a dragon shifter, maybe he was used to heat.

“My dick gives away some of my secrets. When I'm near my mate, I can't hide how you excite me.”

He fiddled with his mug, twisting it around.

I reached out and took his hand. “I'm glad. I like that your cock tittle-tats.”

He burst out laughing. “Never thought of it that way. My tittletattling cock.”

Chapter 14

Seymour

I had all but moved in with the guys. Most of my clothes were there, as were all of my toiletries. There were still a few things back at the house, but they weren't my everyday items and some of them probably should just be tossed.

Ever since we all got together, I only went back to the house when it was time to check on things, and I never stayed long. Why would I? It had been a place to live when I needed it, but it had never been home. Now it was a responsibility, one I gladly kept, but that was really that.

We hadn't officially decided that I'd moved in, but that was what had basically happened. The four of us just sort of fell into it, none of us ever wanting me to go home. And because it wasn't official, my dragon was starting to get a little antsy. Fine, not a little, a lot antsy.

He couldn't have been more content than he was with our men, but not having roots was starting to bug him. And I guess, in a way, it was bugging me too. But until I decided to alpha-up and say something about it, nothing was going to change.

I parked the car, glad to have the distraction from my thoughts. My favorite bakery was on my way home, and it was time for some cake.

"Can I help you with something?" the woman asked as I stared at the cakes for far longer than should be necessary.

“Yes, no, yes.” I stood up. “I need a cake.”

“I was guessing, sir. Anything particular about this cake I should know? An occasion, maybe?” The woman had patience beyond my own. I’d have probably snapped at me by now.

“Well, it’s a home-warming... maybe.” That wasn’t quite the correct term, but then again I wasn’t sure there was a term for making your sleeping arrangement official.

“And what kind of filling do they like?”

I knew the answer. Of course I did. We had talked about cake quite often, all of us fans. But in that moment, my mind went blank, which was ridiculous. The conversation I needed to have wasn’t a big deal, right? And even if it was, I was currently buying a cake. That shouldn’t be hard.

“I’ll take the yellow one with the green border.” I picked the first one I saw as I looked at the case again. I had no idea what was under the frosting, but cake was cake.

“Excellent choice.” She went and got the cake and boxed it up.

The entire time, I was running through scenarios of how to begin the conversation. All of them ended with me deciding my initial idea sucked. Why did I get myself all worked up like this?

I mumbled to myself on my way out of the bakery about how I’d do better next time, as if this had been a stupid test or something.

Kai... Dante... Gideon... I could talk to them about anything. I wasn’t even asking for a change. Or maybe I wasn’t asking for anything at all, just opening a dialogue.

And yet I managed to turn it into a big deal in my head.

When I walked through the door ten minutes later, Kai had Albie in a baby-wearing wrap and was bouncing up and down as he walked back and forth across the kitchen. At first, I thought he was trying to get the baby to sleep and that was why he was bouncing, but then I saw he had a jar of what appeared to be milk in his hand.

“Do I want to know?” I asked.

“I didn’t have any butter for bread, and I had some cream... and I saw this on a TV show.” He shrugged. “It might be delicious.”

I looked at him. “A TV show?”

“Or some movie I saw in school as a kid. I can’t remember, but cream in the jar... that’s a thing. I’m sure of it.”

I certainly hoped so, given he was taking so much time trying to achieve buttery goodness.

“Do you want me to shake it?” I offered.

“Nah, this is good.” He pointed to the cake with his jar-filled hand. “What’s in the box?”

“A housewarming cake.” And there it was—the perfect opening to the conversation.

“Housewarming?”

I set it on the counter. “Yeah. Housewarming. I thought maybe tonight the four of us could talk about me... us... the family and where we should live.”

“Well, you live here,” Dante said as he walked in. I hadn’t even realized he was home.

“Sort of, I do. But like, not all my stuff is here, there’s some at the house.”

He wrinkled his nose. “But that’s not your home?”

“No, it isn’t.” I shook my head. “This is.”

Kai handed me the jar of cream. “Uncle.”

“I got you.” I started shaking it, hoping he used actual cream and not milk.

“But what about Gideon?”

“What about me?” Gideon asked, suddenly appearing. The gang was all here.

“Seymour didn’t realize he was living here already,” Dante explained.

“Oh, does he know now?” Gideon asked.

“Yeah, my brain caught up.” Finally. “I brought a cake.”

“Cake for the win,” Dante said. “But after dinner, we need to go get his things.”

“I don’t have a lot,” I reminded them. The place had been completely furnished, and I’d culled a great deal before I even moved in.

“Good. That means after you’re all moved in, we’ll have time for...” Kai covered Albie’s ears and mouthed, “Bedroom fun.”

“Yeah,” I laughed, “I suppose we would. We’ll go after the butter is ready.”

A half-hour later, we gave up on the butter, stopping at the store to get premade on our way back with the remainder of my belongings.

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Chapter 15

Kai

I'd taken the train to the end of the line, as I needed to get my "fake not fake" ID card renewed from Froon.

My mates were at work, and I had Albie with me. Another passenger on the train helped me carry the stroller up the stairs, and now I was sitting in Froon's office while one of his assistants prepared my card.

Albie, as Dante's bio son, was a legitimate member of Tarrin society, but my existence was in the gray area.

"You've experienced many life changes since you arrived." He shuffled papers, of which there were many, on his desk. I never understood how he found anything, but he'd never made a mistake with my documents.

"Yes. I mated three alphas and had a baby." In the back of my mind was always that niggling fear that I'd be whisked away, either back to Pineville or to another dimension, with or without Albie.

If my son was with me, I'd mourn the loss of my mates and how they would grieve not having Albie in their lives. If it happened and I was alone, grief would envelop me until the end of my days. The only positive would be knowing my son had three alpha dads to raise and love him.

“I met someone who is like you.”

Froon’s dark eyes studied me as if waiting for my reaction. I was stunned into silence, my mind mingling with fear and excitement. Knowing I wasn’t the only one lifted my spirits. I could connect with and maybe meet up every month for lunch with someone from the before time.

“From Pineville?” Not that it mattered if I didn’t know them. But we could reminisce about our old lives while also relishing the new ones. But what if the person didn’t have a great life here? What if they were pining for the before time?

“Yes.”

I asked the person’s name because I would know them unless they arrived after I arrived in Tarrin. But Froon didn’t know, just said he’d heard whispers. They hadn’t come to him for an ID, but if they did, he’d let me know.

“But you said you’d met people like me the first time Dante and I came here.”

“People who didn’t have the correct documents. Not someone who came from Pineville.”

On the train journey home, I pondered how I’d react if the rumor was true. I couldn’t take my mates or Albie, and my heart would be wrenched out if I deliberately left them behind. If the choice was taken away from me, I had no control, but I wouldn’t elect to leave.

Maybe Albie sensed I was conflicted, and he ate and played for the rest of the day, napping and finally sleeping in the evening, allowing me to wrestle with the possibility of meeting someone from Pineville.

I was busy with my online work and the baby, and I made an effort to join in my mates' conversation and laugh at their jokes. Keeping this a secret was necessary until I had more details, even though I knew how I'd answer if the possibility of leaving was presented to me.

And when Froom's message arrived in my inbox, I sweated profusely, and my heart jacked up the pace, thinking it was a racecourse. I practiced the breathing techniques I'd used during labor before reading what Froom had sent.

I've not met the guy but his story is intriguing. Come for tea tomorrow.

"What are you up to today?" Gideon asked as we sat around the table eating breakfast.

I swallowed and choked on the piece of toast I'd been chewing. Seymour banded me on the back, his dragon-shifter strength ensuring the mouthful sprang out of my mouth onto the floor.

My mates hugged me and argued about who would stay home from work to be with me today.

I assured them I was fine and had planned an afternoon with Albie both at the park and shopping. They reluctantly agreed, saying they'd check on me regularly before they synchronized a schedule of who was calling me and when.

The morning passed slowly, the minutes creeping by. Even the train was in frustrate-Kai mode, stopping longer than usual at each stop.

Froom was waiting with a pot of tea when I entered his shop, and the bell above the door tinkled. He poured me a cup as I tore off a nail, my mind a tangled mess of "what if" questions.

“Well?” I said as he took his first sip.

“I don’t know the man’s name, but like you, he had been in a car accident.”

Memories of that day, the noise of the train rushing over the tracks and me frantically trying to get out, filled my head. Sweat trickled down my spine, and I placed a hand on my sleeping baby’s head to assure myself I was here and not about to be crushed by a speeding train.

“But he had flashes of memory after that when he was in the hospital.”

Maybe what happened to me only occurred when someone had an accident. That was odd. Like a giant hand picked them up and tossed them into another universe.

“He must have been unconscious because there were times when he recalled doctors hovering over him, pumping his heart, and long periods where machines beeped, but he couldn’t speak.”

Froon explained the guy was only in Tarrin a short time before he disappeared, so there was no roadmap to how to return to Pineville. I was relieved. The decision was taken out of my hands, unless whatever hand had placed me here decided to send me back.

But as Albie sat on my lap on the return home and other passengers chatted to him and made funny faces so he’d laugh, I ran over the details Froon had told me. Studying the piece of paper where I’d jotted notes, I pondered why this unknown man’s story seemed familiar.

He’s been in an accident, hooked up to machines, was in and out of consciousness and appeared in Tarrin when he was... I gulped. Was he here when he was unconscious? And did that mean I was...? I couldn’t say the word.

But if it was as I thought, there was no going back.

This was my new chance at life.

I tossed my notes in the garbage when I arrived home. That was the end of that.

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Chapter 16

Seymour

Work had been long, not in length but in how everything that could go wrong managed to do just that. I was dead tired by the time I was getting ready to leave. When the notification sound on my phone went off, I smiled. “They must sense I’m coming home.” I pulled the phone from my pocket and discovered how wrong I was.

I glanced down at my phone to see a message from Dante: We need to talk.

That was never good. All the horrors of what it might mean flashed through my head as I fumbled to try and message Dante back: Something happened to Albie... they changed their mind about me living there full-time... I made them angry. So many possibilities, and the more I tried to type a response, the less I was able to form a thought.

“I’ll just call.” I let out a long breath.

When I hit the call button, he texted back: Meet us where Albie was born. My stomach was in knots. We, not me. Whatever I did that upset them, because my brain had decided that was the most logical answer, had to both be awful and impact most if not all of them. Great. Just great.

I agreed and drove down there, surprised to find both him and Gideon were already waiting for me. Had they been there when they messaged me?

“What’s going on?” I asked, hoping desperately that they weren’t kicking me out or worse.

Before the text, everything felt like it was going perfectly. We had a routine, and the only complaint any of us could have—or at least that I thought any of us could have—was not getting enough sleep because we couldn’t keep our hands off each other. But this didn’t feel like a minor thing. There was a heaviness in the air. This wasn’t about bed sizes or sleeping. This was more serious, and I wasn’t sure how to handle it.

I took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Whatever it was, I could handle it.

“I found this,” Dante said, holding up a piece of paper, one I didn’t recognize.

“You’re gonna have to help me. I don’t know what that is,” I replied.

Then he went on to explain where he found it and how it mentioned going home . Discovering Kai’s past had been a mind fuck to me, but even knowing all that I did, I didn’t pretend to understand how Kai got here.

When I learned that his television show had been his real life, it had been a complete shock to me. There wasn’t a camera crew or a script—it had been his actual life. And he had been hit by that train. But I guess it never crossed my mind that maybe that life —the one he’d been leading—was actually the one he wanted to return to. Beyond that, I didn’t know it was a possibility that he could.

“What do we do?” I asked, my voice low. I didn’t want him to go, obviously, but I didn’t think there was a way we could go with him, which also brought up the question of Albie. But one huge ordeal at a time.

I would go with him, though. If it were on the table, I’d jump at the opportunity.

Beginning completely over again in a new world was a bazillion times better than trying to rebuild my life here without him. I'd give up everything for him, but giving him up? That was going to be nearly impossible. Please don't let it come to that.

"I don't know what to do," Dante said, taking my hand. "That's why Gideon and I decided we needed to meet first. The three of us needed to come up with a plan, one that would give Kai the life he deserved, one that will protect Albie, and one we can all live with."

It was a tall-ass order. That was for sure.

"We need to support him," Gideon added, his voice cracking. "But what if that means our hearts break?"

Dante's eyes fell to the ground. He'd been with our mate the longest; their bond was the strongest. This had to be difficult on a level even greater than mine, and mine was about to crush me.

"Did you ask him about it?" I questioned. "The paper, I mean?"

They both shook their heads.

"I think that's what we need to do first," I suggested. "And what if he says he needs to go home?"

Gideon's voice wavered. "Then I think we need to let him go."

"Agreed." As much as I hated it, it was the only solution. The only one.

My dragon did not like that. He didn't like that one bit. Shit, he didn't like any of this, and he was making it known. If I didn't get undressed for the shift that was about to

tear through me, I was going to lose all of my clothing, something I hadn't done since I first gained control over my beast.

I barely got my shoes off before he forced my shift, my clothing left in tatters on the ground. He took to the air circling the clearing and going to a burn pile I'd built for us to use. At the time I'd built it for fun. Who knew it would be a necessity.

When I circled around again, I noticed both Gideon and Dante had taken their beast forms too. All of us were on edge. This thing with Kai had the potential to break us all, but it was the right thing to do.

Our mate deserved everything. And my plan—our plan—was to give it to him, even if we were left the casualties.

Please don't let us be the casualties.

Chapter 17

Kai

“Kai.”

I was on the sofa reading a book, but I must have dozed off. When I opened my eyes, my three mates were leaning over me. Their expressions were indecipherable, but they weren't happy. Perhaps they were resigned, and Seymour had been crying. He wiped his tear-stained cheeks with his sleeve while Dante sniffed and Gideon blew his nose.

“Albie!” I shot up, but our son was on his playmate.

My mates sat on the floor, each one touching me.

Something was terribly wrong. I'd been dreading a day like today where I was whisked away out of Tarrin, but in my dreams, I'd had no warning. Now my mates were in possession of knowledge that had them on edge and crying.

“Just tell me. Don't draw it out.” My heart clenched, anticipating the worst news.

“You want to go home,” Dante choked out.

“And if that's what you truly desire, we won't stand in your way.”

Seymour opened his mouth but slammed it shut when more tears streamed over his

cheeks.

“What are you talking about?” I’d sworn Froom to silence, and keeping secrets was his business, so this was something else.

Seymour handed me a crumpled piece of paper with my handwriting scrawled over the page. Shit, they’d found the note I made after getting the news about that guy from Froom.

“We found this.”

“Why didn’t you tell us?” Gideon touched his brow on mine and tears dripped onto my face.

“Because I made my decision.”

“But don’t we share everything?” Dante nibbled his bottom lip.

Not everything. We were mates, and while we occasionally snapped at one another, I didn’t always tell them when they pissed me off. I counted to ten or went to the park with Albie and walked off my frustration.

How could I tell them that it wasn’t a decision I could make? I’d figured out that much. There was no going back for me, but even if there were, this was where I belonged and where I was happy.

My life in Pineville was over and what hand had dumped me here had given me another chance at life.

“There was nothing left for me in the before time. Sure, I might miss my favorite snacks and apps. We need a company in Tarrin to develop apps.”

“Okay.” I’d moaned about the lack of apps many times, and Dante always nodded when I explained their purpose. Whether Tarrin would have the pleasure of using apps soon or in the years to come, I’d wait.

As for the snacks? I’d have to be satisfied with bringing up memories.

I got up and opened my arms. We group hugged, and Gideon picked up Albie and brought him into the center of our circle where he kissed him and each other.

The knowledge Froon had given me answered the big question that had hung over my head since I arrived. I was here to stay and my former life was over.

Gideon went into our home office to take a call, and Seymour got busy in the kitchen. I got Albie ready for his bath, and when I was sitting beside him and he was playing with his toys and splashing water everywhere, Dante came in.

My mate and Albie played smash the toys in the water and made a big mess, and when our son lost interest and tried sinking his plastic boat, my Number One Mate glanced at me.

I knew that look. He was saying everything in his gaze.

“You know more than you’re saying.”

“About what?” I took a sudden interest in Albie’s game, not wanting to gaze into my mate’s eyes.

Dante put a hand over mine. “You’ve always been worried your existence here would come to an end and you’d be back in Pineville or somewhere new.”

“Yeah.” That stress had vanished, and I was experiencing a lightness for the first

time.

“You can’t go back to Pineville, can you?”

Damn, why did this alpha know me so well? The man who’d been with me through the worst of my confusion, sadness, and insecurity, to the happiness of being a dad and having three mates I adored.

“What if I said I didn’t know?”

He lifted one of our son’s toys from the bath and bopped my nose. Albie complained, and he returned it to the water. “I wouldn’t believe you.”

“I don’t know for sure because there’s no one who can fill me in.”

“But?” Again he understood there was a but coming. I wished it was his butt with my fingers in his hole or my butt and he was inserting his cock.

“But yeah, I’m pretty certain that life is over for me.”

We held each other’s wet hands, our eyes locked on one another. I hoped what he witnessed in my gaze was the same love that appeared in his.

“Do we tell Gideon and Seymour? Both of them appeared to accept what you said earlier.”

Would it make a difference to their lives? I couldn’t answer that. “How about we do this? If they ask, I’ll tell them what I told you.” There were no right or wrong answers in this situation.

“Sounds good.” We kissed, reminding me of the first time our lips met.

“I love you, Mate Number One.”

“I love you more.”

“Oh, really? And how do you measure your love against mine? Do you have a sneaky pair of love scales around here somewhere?” I squeezed his ass as he lifted Albie out of the bath.

“Maybe.” He grinned, that infectious smile of his that got my insides gooey and melty. He wrapped our son in his hooded bath towel and hugged him. “Because no one has ever loved someone as much as I love you.”

“I heard that.” Seymour popped his head in the door. “I love you as much as Dante.”

“Me three. But my love for you three and Albie can’t be measured.” Gideon got on the floor with us.

“Glad that’s settled. But I’m hungry.”

As we ate dinner, I gazed at my family, thanking fate for bringing me here.

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Chapter 18

Seymour

I flipped the grilled cheese sandwich over, the toasty, buttery brown of the side telling me I had hit the perfect temperature for the griddle. These were going to be amazingly delicious.

Kai and I were having a date night—or, well, more accurately, a date day. The four of us had talked early on about how we all needed to make sure that we had alone time with each other. Not everything had needed to be, nor should be, a group activity.

We loved being together, the group of us—we all got along, cared about each other, and it was great. But also, we didn't want to lose sight of our own private relationships either. That turned out to be easier said than done.

It was easy to let life get in the way, especially when you had a little one at home, jobs, and basic life stuff to deal with. Canceling a walk because we ran out of milk and needed to run to the store real quick or to decide to stay in and chill with the family after a long day at work both seemed like no big deal. And in isolation, they weren't, but they could quickly become habit, and if we wanted to prioritize our relationships, we needed to be sure to do the actual prioritizing.

Dante and Gideon had taken Albie to the aquarium today. He loved looking at the fish, and especially loved the crawling play area they had built for the littlest visitors. We decided to stay home, watch a movie, and eat lunch together. It might not have been a typical date night, but we were both excited.

“I picked a movie,” Kai called from the other room. “Need help with the sandwiches?”

“Nope. They are almost ready. I’ll be there in a sec.” I flipped them onto the cutting board, cut them into strips, and plated them up with a little sauce cup of tomato soup for dipping. It was one of my all-time favorite meals, and I was excited to share it with him. There’s something so satisfying about homemade tomato soup coating buttery, toasted bread with long, stringy cheese—delicious. Not as delicious as my mate, of course, but close.

I brought the food out and set it on the coffee table. Kai already had the film pulled up on the screen.

“This looks like a horror movie,” I said, basing my assessment on the butcher knife dripping with blood.

“Yeah, it is, but it’s not a scary horror movie.”

“There are other kinds?” Because wasn’t scary the entire point?

“This is more psychological. Apparently, this guy owns a butcher shop and is being haunted by a ghost.”

“So, they thought they should make it look like a slasher film?”

He shrugged. “I don’t make the movies, I just turn them on.”

“You turn me on. That’s for sure.”

He rolled his eyes.

“And besides, you sort of did make them.”

“Okay, fine. I made a TV show, but I didn’t know, so it doesn’t count.” He grabbed his plate and started eating, making little moany sounds of delight as he did.

That whole television thing was still weird to me, but I didn’t mind. Not that he was on a show, but that it wasn’t a show to him. And I felt guilty because whatever the surrounding conditions were, they brought Kai to me, and I was sort of glad he’d been in the accident. That thought came with an extra helping of guilt, but I couldn’t help how I felt. It brought my whole family to me, and I refused to be mad about it.

“Okay, but if you get scared, don’t cling to me, because I’m going to be just as scared as you are.”

“You’re the bravest person I know. If any big, bad ghost came here, you’d burn them to ash.”

I paused, amused. “Think about that. How would that even work?” My dragon was fierce, true. But burning-ghosts fierce? That wasn’t even possible. At least I didn’t think it was... if ghosts were even real.

“Fine. No ghost burning.” His mouth was full and he mumbled the words. “You’d burn the butcher to ash instead.”

“I thought he wasn’t the bad guy.” Now I was doubly confused.

“Just eat your sandwich.”

We turned on the movie and ate our sandwiches, and sure enough, there were a few jump scares. The butcher might not have been the “scary” element in the movie, but he did eat dead people, so that was extremely subjective. It was well done, though,

and had us on the edge of our seats.

That was until Kai ended up using my lap as a seat.

“Fuck!” Kai yelped, nearly leaping out of his skin as the ghost flew up the butcher’s nose.

In one swift motion, he ended up on my lap, his arms wrapped around me, his heart pounding against my chest. I could feel the tremble in his arms, the way his breath hitched slightly as he kept taking a look back at the screen before burying his face into me once more.

“Hey, we can turn it off,” I murmured.

“It’s fine, Seymour,” he sighed. “I was just liking this seat better, is all.”

And to be fair, I did too.

His fingers found the hem of my shirt, absently playing with it as he now watched the film.

“It’s the going-up-the-nose thing, is all.”

I thought back to the episode of his show where his coworker had a spider crawl in his ear, and it made sense. That was creepy for me to watch and I wasn’t even there. Heck, I thought it was television magic.

We continued to watch the movie, but there was a shift. His hands went from playing with my hem to caressing my skin, and then when a not-so-scary scary moment appeared on the screen, he turned around and faced me “to be on the safe side.”

My lips found the top of his head, peppering soft kisses into his hair before tracing a path down to his temple, then to the spot just beneath his jaw that always left him squirming and begging for more. Kai leaned in, and I pressed my mouth against his in a tender, deepening kiss.

As our lips moved in sync, the butcher completely forgotten, the sound of the action on screen drowned out by the sound of our mingling breaths. My hands started to explore, skimming over the fabric of his shirt, feeling the warmth of his skin beneath. Kai moaned into my mouth, a subtle shift of weight guiding my hand lower, past the waistband of his pants.

There wasn't a day I didn't look at him and wonder what I did to make fate shine so favorably upon me. Kai was everything I wanted in a mate and more.

With each button undone, each zipper lowered, we peeled away layers. There had been a time in the beginning when I'd have frozen now, worried that I might be crossing a line, not with Kai, but with Gideon and Dante. Now? Now I suspected that they were both looking forward to hearing the recap later.

The world narrowed down to the taste of Kai.

"Se-Se... Seymour," he gasped between ragged breaths.

"I've got you." I went to my knees in front of him, taking him into my mouth.

It had been too long since I'd made him come with my mouth, and by too long I meant at least a day. But I couldn't get enough of him. I sucked him, licked him, bobbed my head up and down his length, swallowing each time he reached the back of my throat.

His hand came up behind me, and he wove his fingers through my locks, not guiding

me, but holding on as if he were afraid I'd disappear.

I wouldn't. I had a mission to accomplish, and gods, what a great one it was.

I savored the salty-sweetness, the way he swelled and twitched, reacting to every flick, every suckle. I could hear his hitched breaths, feel the way his thighs tensed, and an increased abundance of small, appreciative noises that escaped him.

And then, with a stifled groan, Kai succumbed to the sensation, spilling warmth into my mouth. I took everything he had to offer without hesitation, swallowing it whole, licking him clean, helping him ride out his orgasm.

As his shaking subsided, I slowly made my way back up to face him, where he pulled me in for a searing kiss before bringing his lips to my ear. "My turn for dessert."

Chapter 19

Kai

“Come to Daddy.”

Albie was learning to walk, and he toddled a couple of steps from where Dante was holding him into my arms. Gideon and Seymour were on the sidelines cheering, ready to catch our little boy if he toppled over.

I hugged our son, his unique scent washing over me, and he kissed my face all over. Albie’s slobbery kisses were the highlight of my day.

But as I sat on the floor holding our little boy, the room spun around. Gideon, who was closest to me, must have sensed something was wrong, and he whisked Albie into his arms and tickled him.

Seymour helped me to my feet as he held up two fingers. “How many?”

“How many what? People? Babies? Fingers?”

“You’re fine,” he decided.

But as I headed to our home office, I wobbled, and Dante caught me.

“You’ve been working too hard. A nap is what you need.” He helped me up the stairs and put me to bed.

Maybe he was right. Albie had been sleeping well, so I hadn't been woken ten times a night. But I had been spending long hours in front of the computer, even taking the laptop to bed.

My mates, being shifters, could sleep through any disturbance whether it was a storm, the TV blaring, me tapping on a keyboard, or the neighbors arguing. And yet, they always woke when Albie cried out during the night. Funny how that worked.

I didn't expect to sleep and scrolled through work messages on the phone, but the next thing I remembered was Dante standing beside the bed with a tray.

"What time is it?" I mumbled.

"Eight."

"At night or morning."

"Evening. Albie's asleep." He placed the tray over me. "We cooked pasta."

My mates had made a creamy sauce, and the pungent aroma of blue cheese wafted off the food. My stomach lurched one way and the other.

"Kai, your face is greenish."

"My belly doesn't feel so good."

Dante took the tray and yelled down the stairs, "Kai is sick."

My Number Two and Three mates bounded up the stairs. "What's wrong?" Gideon held my hand, and Seymour put a hand to my brow.

“Might have eaten something bad.”

My mates studied the food Dante was holding.

“Not that food. Something earlier today.”

“You cooked breakfast.” Seymour jerked his head at Gideon.

“You helped,” Gideon snarked in return.

“And Dante made you sandwiches before we left for work.” Seymour side-eyed my wolf-shifter mate.

“Guys, it’s no one’s fault.” Being a human and prone to injuries and sickness shifters weren’t, my mates were very particular when prepping my meals.

“It’s someone’s fault,” Dante added.

I glowered at him because I didn’t want any of my mates to blame themselves.

“But can someone remove that pasta? I’ll throw up if I see that creamy sauce.”

Dante bustled out of the room.

Gideon asked, “Would you like some tea or crackers and?—”

I slapped a hand over his mouth. “Don’t finish that sentence.” There was no and. Just plain crackers.

My Number Two mate disappeared to get crackers, leaving Seymour holding my hand.

“Is there anything else I can get you?”

“A new body.” My current one was achy and hurt, and I wished I could exchange it for another one. Just for a while. I loved my body because it had given birth to Albie.

“Oh no!”

“What?” Seymour tensed, his arms outstretched, as if ready for an emergency.

“I’m exhausted.”

“And you’re in the right place for sleep.” He patted the mattress.

“And nauseous.”

“The icky pasta is all gone, and you can enjoy a meal of crackers and crackers.” He made a face, and while it didn’t sound appealing, it was all I could stomach.

“And my body is aching.”

“Can I give you a massage?” Seymour wiggled his fingers.

“Get Dante and Gideon here, please. Quickly.”

Blood drained from Seymour’s cheeks. He stood at the top of the stairs, yelling, “Emergency.”

With Mates One, Two, and Three standing by the end, I said, “I know what’s wrong with me. Or should I say what’s right with me.”

They looked at one another while Dante mumbled that it was human speak.

“Care to explain?” Gideon asked.

“I’m pregnant.”

This was weird. When I’d announced my first pregnancy, I’d had one mate: Dante. The baby was his. There was no question. What if we had two little wolf shifters and my bear and dragon mates were upset they hadn’t fathered children?

Dante, Gideon, and Seymour whooped and hollered, hugging me and each other.

“We’re going to be fathers again.”

“Albie will have a sibling.”

“We need a bigger house.”

I put a finger to my lips, shushing them in case they woke our little one.

“What do you need?” Dante put his face close to mine.

“Crackers, hot tea, and more sleep.”

“Sorry!” He flew out the door. “I forgot the crackers.”

Gideon tapped his phone. “We need a shopping list. Another crib, a double stroller, more onesies.”

“Guys, we have plenty of time and most of the stuff.” Albie had already grown out of three sizes of clothing. Or was it four? My brain was mush. Another sign of pregnancy.

Dante arrived with another tray containing a pot of tea and a plate of crackers. My mates studied it and made faces.

“Yum,” Dante said.

“Looks good.” Gideon inspected one and screwed up his nose.

“Wish I was having crackers for dinner.” Seymour slapped on a fake smile.

“There’s no need to pretend. Go and eat the pasta, and I’ll enjoy the boring crackers.”

“We can eat our dinner here so you won’t be lonely.” Seymour looked so proud of his suggestion.

“You’re green again.” Dante shuffled my other mates out of the room. “We got the message loud and clear.”

“I love you,” I shouted after them. “But don’t come back until you’ve brushed your teeth.” There had to be no lingering cheesy smell. Gross.

The crackers and tea soothed my belly, and as I ate, I thought about the baby growing inside me. This little one would be born knowing I wasn’t going anywhere. Not to Pineville and not to another universe.

“I can’t wait to meet you and introduce you to your brother.”

Chapter 20

Seymour

“Ready for some fun?” Dante sing-songed to Albie as he settled him into the stroller.

We had decided to spend the day at the City Park, where they were having a festival of the arts. Kai had seen the flier at the coffee shop and thought it would be a fun family outing. I’d never been to this festival before, but it was a yearly event that people always talked about. It had to be good, but also, even if it wasn’t, who cared. The company would be amazing.

I was here with my four favorite people. What could be better than spending the day with them?

Albie held onto his little pacifier—he rarely suckled it but often clung to it—as my mate buckled him in. He loved going places, and if he was awake, preferred the stroller. When it was sleepies time, he’d pick being strapped to one of us every time. He was a little snuggle buggle, that was for sure.

I didn't know what to expect as we walked through the parking lot to the main entrance, but I was pleasantly surprised by how the park had been completely transformed. The arts festival sprawled across the park, filled with vibrant colors, bustling activity, and the sweet sound of music drifting through the air. Booths lined the pathways, offering everything from intricate handmade jewelry to expressive paintings, pottery, and textiles. Performers entertained with street music, dancers swirled to lively beats, and the air was alive with creativity. And of course, there was

a food truck alley. The place had the makings of a fabulous day.

The scent of cotton candy hit my nose—because what would an adventurous day at the park be without cotton candy? I wanted to follow it and grab my own, but if we weren't systematic about how we navigated the space, we were going to miss things, and I had a feeling we didn't want that. There was treasure to be found here. I could feel it.

"This is going to be so much fun!" Kai squeed.

"I'll push." I grabbed the stroller handle.

They walked beside me, Kai in the middle, holding both Dante's and Gideon's hands as we started down the path toward the art that was for sale.

There were some really cool artists, some of them mixing mediums with paint and recycled trash. I was quite taken with those—the idea of making something beautiful out of things people once discarded was pretty cool to me.

"I think Albie's more interested in this than we are." Kai chuckled.

"Look at his face—he's mesmerized," I agreed. He was watching everything so intently. It was so stinking adorable, I couldn't even.

"Art speaks to everyone." I grinned. "Even the little ones."

We stopped by a booth where a woman painted abstract landscapes on glass. Dante was fascinated, stepping closer to ask her about her process. She smiled warmly and explained how each stroke was a way to connect the energy of nature with human emotion. I never understood artspeak, but I didn't need to to feel her passion.

“I could watch this all day,” Dante said, completely captivated.

Gideon, meanwhile, had wandered over to a booth selling intricate wooden carvings. He picked up a small carved dragon, examining the detailed wings and scales. “What do you think?” he asked, holding it up for me to see.

“It’s beautiful. Maybe we should get it for Albie’s room,” I suggested. It wasn’t snuggle worthy, but it was well done and not breakable which were two big pluses in my book.

Gideon nodded, smiling softly. “Yeah, I think he’d like that.”

There were also more traditional painters, art sketchers, and digital artists. I watched the digital artists zoom in, draw a couple of pixels, then zoom back out, repeating the process as if it were second nature. Their pieces ranged from the ridiculously ironic to dark, horror-themed works, to simple, everyday scenes. I loved them and ended up picking up a couple that I thought we might frame for the living room.

“I really like these,” Kai said, pointing to a booth filled with clothing.

It wasn’t what I expected for an art walk, but then I saw why it absolutely belonged here. Like the paintings we had seen earlier that combined garbage to create new art, this clothing was made from recycled clothing. They even had a ton of children’s clothes. It was safe to say we spoiled Albie, picking out little outfits for him—not just in his current size, but in the next two sizes as well.

When Albie woke up and was ready to eat, we pulled over to a grassy area and sat down, enjoying the day as he enjoyed his meal. We people watched, which ended up being just as entertaining as the artists were.

“What should we do next?” I asked. “There’s a puppet show in ten minutes. There’s

also Food Truck Alley.”

“Food Truck Alley,” Kai jumped in, singing, “obviously!”

We grabbed food from a truck selling homemade empanadas, and at another, fresh fruit smoothies. And of course we grabbed some cotton candy. That was hardly something I could pass by.

We sat at the picnic tables, sharing the meal while listening to a nearby band playing jazz. Albie bopped his head to the sound. It was officially the cutest thing ever. Albie had a way of showing us a new “cutest thing ever.” It was his super power.

We left the park later that day with our bellies full, far more art than we needed, and the undercarriage of the stroller packed to the brim. But more than that, we left with a whole lot of great memories. What could be better than that?

Chapter 21

Kai

“I feel weird.”

This pregnancy was so different to my first. I was worried because the baby appeared to be on one side, my right, as though they were being squashed. And my belly was an odd shape. Smooth on one side and constantly changing with the baby’s movement on the other.

“Would consulting a midwife make you feel better?”

“Maybe.” Having the healthy, happy baby in my arms would make my anxiety disappear, but that wasn’t happening for a few months.

“I suggest we consult a dragon midwife or, failing that, one who is familiar with dragon pregnancies.” Seymour was already on his phone, scrolling through lists of names.

I put a hand over his phone, and he glanced up. “Ummm, why would we do that?”

“Over to you.” Dante pointed at my dragon-shifter mate.

“You’ve got this,” Gideon added.

“What are you not telling me?” I recalled the conversation I’d had with Seymour the

morning after we'd all had sex when he spoke of eggs. But that couldn't be. I put that idea out of my head.

"It's possible you might have an egg in your belly."

I giggled because he was correct. "Is this dragon humor?"

"Huh?" my three mates responded.

"I do have an egg. You made me an omelet this morning."

Seymour had me worried for a minute, thinking I'd be sitting in a nest in a cave waiting for the egg to hatch. If it was the same cave where his dragon had buried the chocolate, that would be some compensation, but I recalled him saying it'd be stale. Ewww. And covered in dirt. Nope. Not happening.

But I recalled a dream I'd had where I was devouring moldy chocolate and loving it.

"A baby dragon encased inside an egg." Seymour sat me in an armchair.

I was numb, my body unable to move by itself.

"But that can't be. I'm human. Where's the egg going to go?" I grabbed Seymour's hand in a vice-like grip. "No, you're wrong. The baby's been moving." I looked at my three mates. "You all put your hand on the bump while our little one wriggled."

Mate Number Three was wrong, though he would be disappointed not to have a little dragon shifter running around the house.

My three mates shared a glance, and for once, I didn't demand they spill what they were thinking. My baby kicked me during the night, so there were no eggs inside me,

other than my breakfast ones.

Seymour continued to insist we consult a dragon midwife, and as there was no harm in that and I didn't want to tell him no, I agreed.

As we drove up to the midwife's residence at the base of a mountain outside Martlock, Seymour told me this wasn't the mountain with the cave and the buried chocolate, but he'd take me to the place if I wanted to.

The four of us squeezed into the midwife's office, and Marty, the midwife, got me on the examination table and prodded my belly.

"Interesting."

There was more jabbing. I was fairly sure that the midwife in Pineville was more gentle, but dragons were tough, and I may have been Marty's first human client.

"Interesting."

I didn't want my pregnancy to be interesting. I hoped for normal, nothing out of the ordinary, as expected, or looking good. No one wanted an interesting pregnancy.

"You have a live baby in your belly, and considering everything, they're a good size and about an average weight."

Wow. Marty could tell all that with his jabby fingers? But that was how it had been done for centuries. Perhaps Marty came from a long line of dragon midwives who'd passed their skills down the generations. Shame no one told him to be a tad more gentle.

"Oh." Seymour's face fell. Poor guy. He so wanted a baby dragon. If this little one

was a bear shifter and Albie was a wolf, Seymour would be all on his lonesome.

Marty examined the other part of my belly, the “weird” side. “So interesting.”

Again with the interesting.

“You are carrying another little one.”

“Twins,” everyone blurted out.

“No.” There was more poking on my belly from Marty.

So some baby had snuck inside me, one not related to me, the same one who didn’t move about and made my belly hard?

“Tell me.”

“You also have an egg.”

Seymour cheered, leaping up and down and planting kisses on my face.

This was too much, and Marty had to be wrong. As soon as we left, I’d demand to see another midwife. No eggs were allowed other than yummy ones my mates cooked.

“No.” I cradled my belly, silently telling the baby they were fine. Me too. We were all doing okay. I was walking out of here and banishing any egg talk.

“Would you like a feel?” Marty was looking at me, but three sets of hands, none of them mine, were placed on my bump. I reluctantly added my own, and Marty put pressure on one side, saying that was the baby’s shoulder.

“Awww,” Dante said. “Our baby has a shoulder.”

“So cute,” Gideon gushed.

“Adorable,” Seymour agreed.

They all looked at me. This was one of those rare moments when my mates irritated me. “I love that our baby has a shoulder.”

“And now for the other side.” Marty was kinda stabby as he pressed into my belly, and I grunted.

“Sorry, but it can be difficult to feel the shell.”

My mates copied Marty, all performing little stabby stabs.

“Hey, cut that out.”

“Sorry, love,” they chorused.

“Care to put your hands on the shell?” Marty asked.

Everyone was staring at me again, and I’d be a party pooper if I said no. So I performed the silly stabbing action, and oh gods, what was that? It couldn’t be. No, I refused to consider it. But if it wasn’t an egg, it was a growth, and I should go straight to the closest hospital.

“What if the baby kicks the egg and breaks it?” My eyes filled with tears as I patted both sides of my bump.

“They are both separate and safe. No need to worry, dads.”

As we pulled away from Marty's home, I had an overwhelming desire for chocolate. Maybe a bit of mold wasn't so bad.

Chapter 22

Seymour

“What do you think? Do you think Daddy wants corn?” I held up the ear of corn for Albie, who didn’t really pay much attention at all. At first he was enjoying his time in the cart and seeing all the colorful packages and produce, but a half-hour in and he was done

“Yeah, I think he wants corn.” I picked a few ears and put them in the cart with the rest of the groceries. Now that Kai was very pregnant, I tried to pick up some of the chores he had been doing. We all did.

Everything had been reshuffled when I officially moved in, as far as who did what. We tried to keep everything equitable so no one had too much on their shoulders. But as his pregnancy progressed, Dante, Gideon, and I each took on one more little task at a time.

Kai was growing life, and that was enough—along with taking care of Albie. Not that we left the responsibility of Albie entirely on him. We didn’t. We all pitched in equally. It was important for Albie to see that growing up—your designation didn’t determine who you loved or how you cared for others.

“Let’s see what else is on the list.” I opened up the folded piece of paper I had taken off the fridge. It was old-fashioned, but it worked for me. “Oh, I almost forgot the baby carrots and yogurt,” which, of course, were on the other side of the store from each other.

I grabbed the little carrots and made my way to the back corner where the yogurt lived. After grabbing a few, I gave the list one last check and got in line to pay and then brought the groceries home.

I had expected to find Kai still napping when I got back—he had been exhausted and was nearly asleep when I left. How wrong I'd been.

As I put Albie in his crib so I could grab the groceries from the car, the scent of cleanser tickled my nose, and it was strong. I got to the bedroom and saw why—Kai was scrubbing the baseboards. The baseboards! I didn't even realize there were baseboards in here, that was how little attention I paid to them. But there he was, scrubbing away.

“Why are you doing that?” I asked.

“It needed to get done.” He didn't even look up from his work.

“No, it didn't.” This was ridiculous. If it truly had to get done, he wasn't going to be the one on his hands and knees. That was for sure. “Come here. Let me help you up.”

“I can get up on my own,” he insisted. Less than fifteen seconds later, he conceded. “Maybe I can't.”

I helped him up and hugged him tight. “Sweetie, if something needs to be done, let us do it. You've got three of us and only one of you.”

“I know,” he sighed, “and I would have, but Dante and Gideon were out, and you were out, and it just had to get done.”

“Oh, sweetie.” I kissed his cheek. “I think you're nesting.”

“Nesting?” he asked, his eyebrows raised.

“Yes, nesting.” I kissed his forehead. “Now wait here because I need to go get the groceries from the car before they get gross, and please, for the love of grass, do not get on the ground again. If you really want these cleaned, I will clean them.”

He begrudgingly agreed, and I went to get the food and put it away.

When I came back to the bedroom, he hadn’t gone back to the baseboards, which was a relief. That didn’t mean he wasn’t still hyper-focused on cleaning. Nope. That was still there, but at least this time it didn’t require him being on the floor. Baby steps

In the short time I was gone, Kai had pulled all of our clothes onto the bed and was refolding them. I didn’t even argue with him. He might not see what was going on, but I did. With human pregnancies, I didn’t have a clue, but dragon pregnancies? Oh yeah, this was nesting.

I helped him refold everything and put it back where they came from. I was crossing my fingers that would be enough to settle him for a little while. It wasn’t.

From there he went straight to asking me about the blankets from the night he gave birth to Albie. I pulled them out of the closet where we had stored them. He grabbed them from my arms and brought them directly to the washer.

That was how the day continued—he’d find something that “needed” to be cleaned or taken care of, and he’d do it.

It wasn’t until he started actually making an actual nest that he understood what I had been telling him all along.

He gathered blankets and cushions—nothing too fancy or formal—and began

building it in the corner of the room. It would probably need a futon mattress or at least an air mattress underneath, but it was cute. And best of all, he looked satisfied.

“I like it.” He rested his hands on his large belly. “It works in this space.”

I saw the moment it dawned on him that this wasn’t room redecoration, that it was so much more. This was where our egg would be until it hatched.

His mouth formed a little “O” and I nodded.

“This is for when I lay my egg,” he said, rubbing small circles with his hands on his belly.

“Yep.”

“So, like a nest nest?” he asked, his eyes wide.

“Yeah, a nest nest.”

“Where I will lay an egg like a chicken.” He scrunched his nose up.

“More like a dragon.”

He walked over to it, looking at it from all angles.

“At least the room’s clean.” He shrugged.

“It sure is.”

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Chapter 23

Kai

“I can’t wait to see who comes out first.” Gideon rubbed his hands.

I sat in the middle of the nest. Hot, grumpy, and with swollen feet.

“Maybe we should have bets.” Dante flipped over to a blank page in his notebook.

“No.”

All three of my mates froze.

“The babies will come in the order they’re going to come.”

I may have sounded confident, as though I had my shit together, but I was worried the baby and the egg might be engaging in in-utero sibling rivalry. What if they tried to come out at the same time and got stuck?

Dante handed me ice water, and I gulped it, water dribbling onto my oversized paternity shirt. It reached my knees, and I wore nothing else, anticipating the birth and laying of the egg soon.

I so wanted to meet my children. And speaking of kids, Gideon had Albie and was swing him over the nest and back, our little boy’s laughter the only bright spot in the day.

Maybe the kids were arguing in my belly and both decided to stay where they were?

My brain was tired, thinking of all the possible scenarios, and while I'd been through a live birth with Albie, I didn't know what to expect despite Marty, the midwife, explaining the process.

Not that it was complicated.

Need to push.

Egg arrives.

"Can someone rub my back?" No matter how much bedding we had on the nest, it was still a bunch of sticks, covered in blankets and quilts.

"What about this?" Dante held up a small, blow-up kiddie pool. "You were worried about the egg cracking, so if we pile this with cushions and you plop the egg in here, our little egg will be enclosed in softness.

"Plop? You think I'm going to do some plopping?" I sniggered, and Seymour guffawed. Gideon and Albie joined in, and Dante cracked up.

"Owww! Giggling hurts. Everyone stop laughing."

The room became silent, even our son stopped cackling. But the pain in my belly continued.

There were more owwies, and while I wouldn't say they were the same as the contractions I'd experienced with our son, the egg was on the move.

"Better get the bedding in that pool because the egg wants out!"

Dante and Seymour tossed quilts and pillows into the pool and placed it on top of the nest. No more sticks digging into my ass in the middle of the night.

Seymour helped me into the pool. This was a great idea of my Mate Number One. Dante supported me from behind while Seymour sat in front, waiting for the egg. Gideon had taken Albie into the nursery and was playing loud music to muffle my groans.

“Oh, the egg.” The smooth surface of the shell was so different from squeezing out a head, a pair of shoulders, and a tiny body.

It was happening so fast. I pushed twice and the egg slid out. Seymour wrapped a blanket around it and admired the iridescent shell.

“Wow! I did that. I laid an egg.”

Dante and Seymour kissed me and hugged one another. Gideon brought Albie to inspect the egg, making sure our little boy kept his distance because Seymour insisted on the rule, “Don’t touch the egg.”

But now I could see the egg was in one piece, all my concerns shifted to my live baby. I rubbed my belly, telling our little one it was okay to come out. But there were no contractions, and my backache vanished.

Dante made food, and we all sat in the kiddie pool eating, with the egg in the middle. Laying an egg was hungry business.

Since making the nest, my mates had taken turns sleeping in the nursery with Albie, but now that the egg was here, they wheeled his crib beside the nest so we were all together. While there wasn’t enough room for four adults to sleep in the kiddie pool, I curled up with the egg, making sure not to make contact, and my mates slept in the

nest itself.

When morning arrived, I was thankful for my mates who fed, clothed, and played with Albie while I dozed. Sleep was constantly interrupted as I checked the egg hadn't cracked and rubbed my belly, willing the contractions to grip me.

But our little one stayed put.

My days consisted of eating, watching the egg, cuddling Albie, and snatching periods of sleep. When our little one was born and the egg hatched, we'd have three kids under two. But there were four adults, not two, and I wasn't a single parent, so we'd muddle through.

"Maybe the egg is waiting to hatch until their sibling arrives," Dante suggested.

"Or it's the other way around and the little one inside Kai is telling the egg, 'Crack that shell.'"

If they were playing that game, we'd be here forever in a holding pattern.

"What if we did something to get things moving?" Gideon suggested.

"Like what?" Dante asked. "Sing?"

"We're all terrible at singing," Seymour noted as he inspected the egg for any cracks.

We crossed singing off the list.

"Sex?" Gideon looked hopeful.

"Not happening." I was in no mood.

“Spicy food.” Dante was already checking our recipes.

“I like that. The hotter the better.”

Dante prepared a steamy hot curry, and our eyes streamed and noses dripped as we scooped it up with flatbread and rice.

Before I’d eaten the last mouthful, my belly tightened. “Guys, it’s working.”

I stepped out of the kiddie pool into the larger nest. We should sell that curry to pregnant omegas who were past their due date.

My labor with Albie was long and drawn out, but this little one was eager to meet their dads, big brother, and whoever was nestled in the egg. The contractions wracked my body, and while I didn’t know how much the baby inside the egg could hear, I muffled my cries in a towel.

Labor progressed quickly, and I was ready to push. Despite the small space in the kiddie pool, that was where I had to be. My mates knelt around it while I was on all fours.

Our daughter arrived in a rush, and her dads admired her and kissed her head while I held her close. She was on my chest when Seymour waved and pointed to the egg. Dante stuffed pillows under my head so I could see the huge crack running around the middle of the egg.

“They were coordinating.” I hoped they’d be great friends, and also with our firstborn.

Despite no movement from the egg until now, multiple cracks appeared so it resembled crackling, until each tiny piece collapsed and a little dragon lay in the

shattered shell. The beast vanished seconds later and was replaced with another girl.

I wrapped my arms around my new babies, inhaling their unique scents. But I needed my little boy, and Dante put Albie in my arms.

“Baby.” He snuggled and patted one sister before doing the same to the second.

“Maybe they are twins.” Seymour studied the little girls on my chest. “They’re identical.”

Dante

I grabbed the groceries from the back of the van. If anyone had told me back in the day that I would own a full-sized van—and that every seat would be filled with just my family alone—I'd have thought they were out of their mind. But here I was, not only owning said van but thrilled because it symbolized how full both my heart and my life were.

The sound of my family laughing, and in Albie's case, singing, filled the air. I was home. Not home home, but our cabin. I walked around the back to see that Gideon had already set up the grill. We had brought everything we needed for our first-night-at-the-cabin barbecue here, except for the hot dogs. There was a local butcher who made the best ones in the state, and we always picked them up when we got here.

When Kai first saw the flier for this place, we were walking to our favorite coffee place. I humored him at the time, saying, "Yeah, we should look at it," but in the back of my mind, I figured it would be junk. After all, what real estate didn't sell right away and needed to have a flier in the realtor's window?

But the second we stepped onto the property, all four of us knew this was where we needed to be. And we were right. It was here where Albie, the twins Sarah and Lily, John, Allie, Ryan, and George all had their first shifts. And now, it was where our youngest, Steve, was about to take his form for the first time.

Seymour had scented Steve's shift coming close—dragons got a slight scent of ash during puberty—and this morning, when Steve told us he heard his dragon for the first time, we knew it was time to get down here—to celebrate his beast joining us.

Dinner didn't take long to finish cooking, and we all sat at the picnic tables with the fire pit roaring beside us, chit-chatting about our first shifts and the day that we had.

Steve stood up and took four steps back. "Dads," he said, looking at us, "it's time."

Seymour joined him, and the two of them walked to the clearing, all the rest of us following behind.

Seymour shifted into his dragon form, his beast encouraging Steve's to come forward. When his dragon finally listened, there were so many hugs, laughter, and cheers at the sight, at greeting his beast for the first time.

Steve's dragon laid down, putting his head on the ground, encouraging everyone to come over, and they did—with congratulations, hugs, kisses on his nose, and comments about how beautiful he was.

I stepped back, with Kai, Gideon, and the other kids all beside me, and we watched as Steve took to the sky for the first time. There were a few moments when I thought he might fall, and I flinched, fearing the worst, but of course, his dragon figured it out. All our beasts knew what to do. It was the human in us that did the second-guessing.

Steve and Seymour circled the sky a few times before coming back down to the ground. He wouldn't try his fire today—we had learned that lesson with Sarah. There were certain things young shifters had to ease into, and fire was one of them.

"Why don't you all get back to the tables." Gideon pointed the way, wanting to give Steve some privacy. It would also give us parents time to have a few words with him.

"That was... wow," Steve said, pulling on his jeans. "I mean, I knew... I'd seen your dragons... I knew, but... wow."

"Yeah, wow," I agreed. "You were stunning, Son." I cupped his shoulder. "And nice

job controlling your fire.”

He rolled his eyes. “I know. I was there. I remember. It was my favorite chair that melted.”

“At least you weren’t in it?” Seymour pulled on his shirt.

When Sarah’s fire came out, it had startled her and she turned her head too quickly. It was funny now, but at the time, significantly less so.

“There’s cake, right? That wasn’t just a way to get them to leave?” Steve was done with being the center of attention or he was legit worried about the cake. Probably a bit of both.

“Nope, there’s cake. Chocolate,” I assured him.

He gave us a quick hug and then bolted back to be with the others.

Seymour took my hand. “Hey, I remember my first cake.”

“You do?” I did too. It was hardly fabulous, but it did its job.

“Yeah. It was the first time I realized that maybe all of this might be possible.”

We’d each had that moment—the one where we realized that Kai wasn’t a dream, that the life we were planning for ourselves could actually be real. We each shared ours, and the sounds of our kids calling dibs on a second piece of cake got louder and louder.

“We should probably get back before the kids devour the cake or have a food fight.” Kai’s assessment was accurate. He kissed Seymour on the cheek and then did the same for Gideon and me.

“That’s the last piece!” Lily was not impressed, and the entire mountainside now knew it.

Seymour grinned. “How little she knows. I have one hidden away for us, for later.”

“Chocolate?” Gideon licked his lips.

“Chocolate.”

“You’re the best mate ever.” I gave him a far-too-brief kiss.

“Hey, I thought I was the best mate ever.” Gideon chuckled.

“You all are.” And it was the truth.

“Works for me.” Kai grabbed my hand.

And it worked for me too.

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