



## Shiny Things (Texas Magic #2)

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**Category:** LGBT+

**Description:** I've already had my poor wolf heart broken by one selfish, trinket-hungry avian shifter, and I am never going through that again.

Hell, I moved all the way out to the shifter town of Bee Cave, Texas to start over, so...yeah. That adorably twitchy raven shifter at the local coffee shop had better get it through his pretty skull that he's not gonna get one over me.

Even if he is so sparkly and gorgeous, I can barely help myself.

**Total Pages (Source):** 9

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## THORIN

Seattle sucked for a lot of reasons, but at least there was decent coffee. When I moved to Bee Cave, Texas—a tiny shifter town right outside of Austin—I was told it has several excellent coffee shops. I have remained skeptical because the first two were a bust, and I refuse on principal to go to the national chain.

The third shop is already on shaky ground because it's a rock emporium-slash-coffee shop. No good comes from a place with a slash in its description.

The prospects dim even further when I walk in and realize, from the sparkly display shelves, that the place is run by an avian shifter. A crow, by the scent of things, because the universe hates me. It's also early in the morning and the shop is nearly empty. Yet another bad sign.

Just as I'm about to nope the fuck out of here, a guy pops his head through a beaded curtain, tilting to the right and left as if to get a better view of me .

Oh. He's pretty.

Stop it, Thorin. You've already been down this path before.

The strikingly beautiful man—definitely an avian shifter—sports a fashionably messy faux hawk, his hair the shiniest, most beautiful black I've ever seen. His long, thick lashes highlight sharp icy turquoise eyes, and his thin, slightly hooked nose over pale,

plush lips give him that artist-slash-musician vibe.

Okay, fine. Some things with a slash in the title are actually pretty good.

As a wolf shifter, I appreciate a nose with personality. I also happen to appreciate the way his tight jeans and sparkly T-shirt hug his wiry body.

Not that it matters because, as I mentioned before, he's an avian shifter.

I shudder. Definitely not going there.

But he smells so good.

Absolutely not.

"Hey! Sorry, running a little late this morning," he says, his voice high with an alluring bit of a rasp to it.

I check my watch. Six-oh-three.

"No worries. I work from home."

He disappears behind the beaded curtain and then reappears with a flourish, flitting over to the espresso machine, getting things fired up as he hums something classical to himself.

"I'll be with you in two shakes," he calls out, disappearing once again behind the beaded curtain.

Cute ass.

Ignoring whatever my wolf side is doing, I take a second look around. The tables for the café are set in the middle of the space, which is framed out in glass shelving which boasts polished agate, local fossils in a light, chalky rock, and jewelry made from all manner of precious stones. Not nearly as tacky as I've seen in some avian establishments, I'll give him that.

Unsurprisingly, everything in the store is placed to catch the sun, and I can admit the sparkly effect is quite lovely. Testing out a theory, I take a bit of amethyst and angle it just out of the sun. A few seconds later, my avian friend peers through the beaded entryway, sending me a brilliant smile.

Save your smiles, buddy. I'm not fooled by pearly teeth.

His eyes cant off to the side and he dips his head sharply. "Do you like amethyst?" he asks.

"Yes. How did you know?" I ask innocently.

"The amethyst is in a slightly different location."

The shifter brushes past me to adjust its position back into the light.

"Do you remember where everything goes in your shop?"

He taps his temple with an elegant finger. "Mind like a steel trap."

"You crows and your shiny objects," I tease, wincing slightly at my condescending tone.

He wrinkles his nose, probably offended. Taking a beat, he places his artistic hands on his narrow hips and lifts his chin at me. "I see you've gone with the undercut

instead of the modern shag, like so many of your fellow coyotes do. It looks nice on you. ”

A not-so-subtle growl rumbles in the back of my throat. “I am no coyote . I am a wolf.”

“I know,” he responds, winking on a slight head flick. “And I’m a raven.”

I hold up my hands, duly chastised. “My bad.”

He flutters his gorgeous eyes at me, then gives in to a full grin. “My name is Poe. I own the place.”

“No shit. Your scent is everywhere. I was right about the avian, but do apologize for mislabeling you. It won’t happen again. I’m Thorin.”

“Does anyone call you Thor?” he asks with an appealing smile.

“Not if they want to live,” I respond, adding a little bass to my answer.

He cracks up. “Thorin it is. What can I get for you?”

“Triple espresso with cream and no sugar, please.” I look over his breakfast offerings. “I don’t suppose you have anything with protein in it?”

He taps his temple again. “The local gossips told me a lone wolf was new in town, so I made sure to stock a few things, just in case you wandered in. Maria’s breakfast tacos are the best, and I’m told the ones with smoked venison are to die for.”

My eyes widen. I haven’t had good venison in a while. It’s one of the reasons I chose to move into this area. When local municipalities are overrun with deer, they allow

locals to participate in controlled hunts, and I am an excellent hunter. Still, I haven't sampled the local meat, and I'm excited at the possibility of a preview .

I stick my nose in the air, sniffing, wondering how I could've missed something like that.

He chuckles. "Maria just pulled up, so you're getting them fresh."

The door chimes and a very short woman—I'm guessing javelina shifter—hips open the door carrying an enormous box filled with foil-wrapped breakfast tacos.

"Oh my Goddess." I inhale deeply, picking out each of the amazing flavors. Chorizo, black bean, cheese, and... yes. Venison . "I'm going to need one of each of those."

Maria examines me. "Onions don't bother your stomach?"

I shake my head. "Not in my human form."

Grinning, she picks out four tacos and hands them to me.

I take them, then look over to Poe, grimacing. "I will pay for these. I wasn't trying to steal them from you, I promise."

He laughs and waves me off. "I know you're good for them. Besides, your first breakfast is on the house. Welcome to Bee Cave."

Mm. Pretty and generous, even after I was kind of a jackass to him.

Maria takes off, leaving us alone again. Aware of Poe's eyes on me, I move to a sunny table while he sets up the rest of the breakfast tacos behind the counter. In the meantime, I tear open the foil and take a bite, practically downing half the taco in one

gulp.

I curse under my breath, shaking my head .

“Problem?”

“Are you kidding? I’m wondering if it’s too much to ask for another.”

He shakes his head, digging into the box. “Incoming!” he calls out, hurling a foil-wrapped breakfast taco at my head.

I catch the venison goodness in one hand while demolishing the rest of the first one in the other. I sense Poe’s eyes on me and assume my wolfish eating habits are out in their full glory.

Not my fault Poe brought my favorite wild game into the equation.

I take down the second venison taco just as quickly and with as much pleasure. The chorizo one is next, and I curse, having forgotten how good actual Tex-Mex really is. The coffee is mid—high praise for a Seattle coffee snob such as myself—but as I start in on the cheese and egg taco, I know I’ll be back.

Tomorrow. We’re coming back tomorrow.

For the breakfast taco.

Sure, whatever you have to tell yourself.

I don’t know why my damned wolf is dying to get to know this raven shifter right after I said I wasn’t going there.

But, but, but... he's so pretty.

Shut it, wolf. This is just a dry spell. Calm all six of your tits.

I can feel Poe's eyes on me, so I send a brief glance in his direction. He snaps his head one way, then the other, giving me a thorough up-down.

Goddess, I love that sexy, twitchy thing avian shifters do .

"See anything interesting?" I ask through the last bite of the egg and cheese deliciousness.

Turning my head, I catch a bit of blush on his cheeks.

He holds up his hands and steps back. "Apologies. I forget others don't see all the colors I do, and your hair is stunning. Though... maybe you see even fewer colors than humans do."

I shake my head. "I've got the full human color spectrum in this form. What does my hair look like to you?"

"You must have a lot of ash in it."

"I do."

"That explains it. To my eyes your hair is a brilliant, iridescent rainbow," he says on a sigh. "And you're sitting in the sunlight, so it's even more beautiful."

I stifle my smile. "Thank you."

My crow ex had loved my hair for the same reason, and I used to sit in the sunlight



for her all the time. Not sure why I did that now. Habit, I guess.

Or maybe you were trying to get this pretty boy's attention.

Shut up.

Trying to redirect the argument with myself, I look around. "This is a nice place. I'm surprised you don't have more people here."

He grins. "It's still before six-thirty."

I check my watch. Six-twelve.

Plenty of time for what you have in mind.

Shut. Up.

Ignoring the internal battle with my inner horn dog, I unwrap the bean and cheese taco, then tear it in half and approach the counter.

Setting one of the halves in front of him, I ask, "Will you help me? I won't be able to finish this on my own."

Is this what passes for flirting, Thorin? Pathetic.

Grrrr.

Poe slides his hand out and swiftly pulls back the offering, grinning as he takes a bite.

"You're okay with dairy, I take it?"

He nods. “In this form.”

“Nice.” I pop my half of the taco in my mouth, making sure to chew with my mouth closed, even though I don’t know why it matters.

You know why.

He finishes his half with delicate bites, then grabs the foil out of my hands and combines it with his into a ball, tossing it into what appears to be a foil-only trash can. I angle for a better look, curious.

“I know it just looks like trash, but it’s so sparkly when I shift,” he explains, his eyes meeting mine.

He sharply tilts his head to the side. “Did you know your eyes glow?”

Wait. Is he flirting with me?

“I wasn’t aware. Then again...” I take a moment to fully appreciate him. “Huh. Your eyes have a sort of glow to them, too.”

He flutters his lashes at me. “Really? And what color do you see?”

I lean in, enjoying the scents of espresso and taco wafting off him. “They’re the color of the Caribbean, a sort of clear turquoise that goes on forever. ”

He pulls his plump lower lip through his teeth. “Why, thank you. When I look in the mirror, they’re more of a purplish iridescent.”

I nod along and check my watch.

“Oh, am I boring you? Do you have somewhere to be?”

His teasing tone tickles my balls and spins my head. “Most of your customers don’t come in until six-thirty?”

He shrugs. “At the earliest.”

“Gee,” I say, touching the tip of his nose. “I wonder what we can do with sixteen whole minutes?”

His brows shoot up. “Wow. You’re forward.”

Oh fuck.

“Sorry,” I say, putting my hands up as I step back. “I have a weakness for avians and it’s been a stressful few weeks.”

Poe’s eyes glow even more as he lifts the pass-through and steps aside. “Then let’s see what we can get done in sixteen minutes.”

Holy shit, what the fuck am I doing?

Getting laid, hopefully.

I give him a wolfish smile, unbuckling my belt as I pass through the beaded curtain into a small office area. He follows me, directing me to the tiny couch that takes up half the space. I pull my jeans and underwear down to mid-thigh, then sit bare-assed on the tiny couch.

He bites his lower lip again, his eyes glinting as a set of translucent underlids blink from the sides. His pretty raven hair develops an iridescent sheen .

“You’re a big boy,” he says appreciatively as he kneels in front of me. Pushing up my shirt, his grin brightens. “And so hairy. Look at this gorgeous pelt.”

He runs his delicate fingers through the fur over my abs and chest, and it’s as if electricity is shooting from his fingertips. My cock sways and drools as he runs his perfect nose up the length of me, using the tip of his tongue to capture the pearl of pre-cum emerging from my slit.

Before I can process what’s happening, he’s got nearly my entire cock in his mouth, sucking as he bobs his head up and down.

“Damn,” I say—growl, really—cupping the back of his head. “Bringing out my wolf with that mouth of yours.”

Buddy, I’ve been here the whole time.

His gaze flits up to mine and lightning strikes. A birdlike purr comes from his chest and his eyes glow even brighter, his hair rippling into feathers and back again. I tilt my head back, and I have to bite back a howl. Seems our magic is compatible—a pleasant bonus to this back-of-the-shop blow job.

He pulls back, flushed, panting, and confused. “Why does this feel so fucking good?”

“I was just about to ask the same thing,” I respond, guiding him back to my cock.

He rolls his eyes and grins, but then takes me down to the root all over again. I’m gonna come so quickly, which is a good thing because time is running out and I definitely want to return the favor. Just as everything starts to go fuzzy, a blue aura shimmers over his raven black hair.

“Your hair—” I choke out, hardly able to pull a thought together.

“Mm?” he mumbles through a mouthful of cock, continuing to work me over.

“Your hair. It’s glowing.”

Poe keeps going for a few more seconds, like an addict who can’t get enough of me. Finally, my words register in his eyes—so fucking turquoise—and he sits back, sliding his mouth off my cock.

“Oh, no,” he trills, backing away from me on his knees, his hand to his chest.

“Shit, did I do something wrong?” I ask, suddenly really fucking dizzy. “Did I hurt you?”

He shakes his head, distracted as he examines himself. His eyes flit back to mine and then get impossibly wider. Scrambling to his feet, he makes his way to the wall and turns on the overhead light.

It’s like turning on a brilliant blue spotlight. I double-check and the light is nothing special, but Poe?—

“Holy shit.” I lean forward to get a better look. “Why are you glowing blue? Has that ever happened to you before?”

Poe, in the meantime, is shaking his head, repeating, “No, no, no, no, no, no. No .”

“What’s going on, Poe?”

“You’re glowing blue, too,” he says, gesturing at me.

I hadn’t even thought to look at myself and... shit .

“Why is this happening?” I ask, still bare-assed on his couch. “And what is this feeling in my chest?”

“It’s our bond. We just mated,” he says dramatically.

Mate good. Mate mine.

“I don’t think oral sex really counts as mating , right? That’s weird.”

“No, as in fated mates. As in bound forever, true love, Rick-rolled for all of eternity... fated .”

“Fated? What the fuck?”

Well, that’s what I try to say. I get as far as fated and a growl comes rumbling out of my mouth. I look down again, and I’m transforming. I immediately attempt to halt the shift, something I’ve been able to do since I was a pup, but there’s no stopping it. Within seconds, I’m a fully transformed gray wolf and my jeans and underwear are in a puddle on the floor.

What’s more, there’s a pissed-off raven shaking out his wings as he stands in a pool of his own clothing, glaring up at me. Poe hops up from the floor onto the couch and pecks at my nose.

“Ow.”

He pecks me again. “You idiot! I wasn’t looking for a mate!” he squawks.

I grimace, or at least as much as a wolf can grimace, and shake my head. “Are you sure? We haven’t had a fated mating in my family in three generations.”

“Yes, I’m sure,” he says, this time pecking my forehead. “Don’t you know what a mating looks like?”

“Uh, no .”

Having put it to the back of my mind, I’d completely forgotten my shifter biology lessons. I had no idea what this sort of thing even looked like. Hell, I rarely shift around others, so I’m just glad I remembered how to talk in this form.

“What are we supposed to do?” I ask, howling on the last word.

Poe lets out a long breath and shakes out his gorgeous blue-black feathers. “I’m going to need to close my shop for the day. And we’re going to need a bed.”

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:39 am*

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POE

“We’re going to need a what?” Thorin asks, his voice pitching up and down as he shifts back into his human form. He’s completely stunned and enticingly nude.

“A bed,” I respond, shifting back into my naked human form.

“Why?”

“If this is anything like what happens in my family, we aren’t going to have a lot of control over our impulses for the next day or two, and this couch is going to get hella uncomfortable.”

“I have work to do,” he growls, still unable to fully control his vocal cords, his hands flaring out into sharp-nailed paws and then back to hands again.

“So do I,” I say, gesturing toward my shop. “Neither of us has much choice in the matter, I’m afraid.”

When I was younger, I loved hearing everyone’s fated mate stories. When I came of age, I was ready, wondering with every new encounter if that person was my mate. By last year, after ten years without a mate, I stopped hoping and tried to act like I was okay with being unmated. Instead of waiting for fate to arrive, I decided I would open my business and start living my life.



It's been hard work, accepting myself as an unmated shifter and starting a new business, and I'm damned proud of myself for doing what I needed to do to make myself happy. Only, now that things are finally settling and I'm getting a handle on this reimagined life, a fucking wolf shows up and throws a wrench into everything.

None of this is as I thought it would be.

Taking a deep breath and ignoring the awful disappointment creeping around the edges, I grab my clothes and head toward the staircase. "Come on. My apartment is upstairs."

"Um, what about your customers?" Thorin asks, pointing at the two cars that just pulled into the parking lot.

Fuck. It's a good thing my family lives out of town.

Covering my bits with the wadded-up clothes, I flit out to the front and lock the door, turning the open sign to closed.

Miss Geraldine, a sweet owl shifter, frowns at the sign, then steps back when she spots my less-than-dressed state.

"I just mated, Miss Geraldine," I explain through the glass. "Probably going to be a couple of days."

"Oh, congratulations, honey! Enjoy!" she says, fluttering her hand at me before turning back to tell Mr. Harbinger about my situation. No doubt the entire Bee Cave shifter community will know by lunchtime.

I shake my head and turn to the back, giving my customers a spectacular view of my ass. Pushing through the beads, I can't help but notice the wolf is still sitting on my

couch, bare-assed and stunned.

“Come on,” I say, gesturing for him to stand up. “This is only going to get worse the longer we put it off.”

“The longer we put what off?” Thorin asks as he carefully lifts himself off the couch, then pulls his jeans up around his hips. He manages to avoid his painful-looking erection, letting it stand out from his pants like a beacon.

I use my wad of clothing to motion between our two extremely obvious situations.

“So, what? We have to have sex now?” he asks, sounding, frankly, a little put out. Even though our bond is new, I can sense his unease under all of the attitude.

Trying to keep a positive outlook, I put on a cheery grin. “We get to have sex now. Lots of it.”

He narrows his eyes, subconsciously stroking his swollen cock, either uncaring or unaware of the fact it’s leaking all over my pristine floors. “I have shit I have to do.”

“Better tell your bosses you won’t be coming in today.”

Shaking his head, he attempts—unsuccessfully—to zip up his jeans over his whole dick-and-balls situation . “No fucking way. This is ridiculous. I’m outta here. ”

I stand there, trying not to laugh as he changes tactics and pulls his shirt down over his humongous erection. He may have covered his cock, but his engorged sac still swings hilariously below the hem.

Wincing, he curses as he bends down to gather his shoes. He then attempts to smash through the beads, nearly garroting himself. Knowing exactly how this is about to go,

I listen for his stomping footsteps. He gets as far as the counter and stops. His curses, which are interspersed with angry yips and groans, escalate in both imagination and volume.

“Problem?” I ask, sliding through the beads to find him half-shifted and banging on my beautiful counter.

Fuck. Wolfie’s balls are so fucking swollen it’s making me drool.

“Could you maybe not destroy my shop while you find a way to accept what’s happening here?”

“No!” he barks. “None of this is acceptable.” He bends over, hands on his knees. “And why is everything so fucking swollen?” he whines.

I spread my hands. “Because the universe thinks we’re meant to be together. Sorry, buddy. I’m in the same situation. Let’s go upstairs and get some relief. We can figure out the specifics later.”

He looks up from his bent position, his canines descending as he pulls back his lips into a snarl. “You don’t have to look so happy about this.”

I sigh. “You called it. I’m thrilled. An uninterested wolf shifter is everything I ever wanted in a fated mate,” I deadpan.

He straightens with a pained expression and starts walking toward me, his menacing look equal parts sexy and terrifying.

“Fine,” he says between gritted teeth as he pushes me back through the beads. “Take care of this.”

“Fine,” I snap back and fall to my knees, palming his gorgeous, overfilled nuts. “But if I didn’t fucking need your cock so bad right now, we’d be having a conversation about some fucking boundaries.”

Before he can think of a retort, I lick his dripping cock, then tilt my head back, letting out a satisfied, guttural croak. His fluid is literal perfection, ambrosia on my tongue. I need it like life, so I take him to the back of my throat, gagging on him, hurrying him along so I can swallow his divine cum.

Thing is, he’s just standing there, and I need... something. Energy, excitement. Participation, at the very least. I pull away and look up at him, giving him my best pouty lip.

“Fuck my mouth. I’m begging you.”

Instead of going for it, he stills his hips. I look up and find fear, so I sit back. “Too much?”

“I—” Words fail him, but the burning look in his eyes is easy enough to read. “Fine.”

Grabbing my head with both hands, he plunges his cock back into my mouth, his heavy balls bouncing against my chin. He doesn’t stop until my nose is buried in his pubes and my body is spasming from the tilt-a-whirl combination of gagging and needing him to go so much deeper.

I’ll never get enough.

Mercifully, he pulls back enough to give me oxygen, then forces his way back into my mouth, twitching his hips to fuck my throat as he stays buried. Our gazes meet and I start stroking my cock, needing this intensity like the air he’s currently denying me.

Swiftly, he pulls out again. “Fuck, I’m about to knot.”

I chirp, imagining my lips stretched around it.

He shakes his head. “Whatever you’re thinking—no. It could break your jaw.”

I pout in response. “But I’m thirsty.”

Ignoring my adorableness, he rumbles, “So... where’s this fucking bed you were telling me about?”

I point to the staircase leading up to my studio apartment. Curling his upper lip, he bends down and picks me up in a princess carry, then storms up the stairs like a knight taking a castle. The details of my apartment matter not—he beelines for the bed, practically throwing me on it.

“Where’s the lube?” he demands.

I point a shaky finger to the bedside table, then check my hair in the mirror. He circles the bed and pulls out the drawer so violently it breaks the track, spewing the contents onto the floor. I’d be mortified about the variety of prostate stimulators on display for Goddess and everybody, but he’s too busy pawing through them to get to the lube to pay attention.

He barks in triumph when he finds the good stuff, then throws it to the bed as he wrangles out of his clothes. “Hands and knees.”

I hurry to assume the position, my cock a quivering, leaking fountain of need while my hole and taint exquisitely contract and release in preparation. I’m about to come from the preparation alone.

Thorin crawls on the bed behind me and spreads my cheeks. “Jesus, why is your hole doing that?” he asks, slicking himself up. “It’s pulsing.”

“That’s what happens when a smaller shifter mates with a knotting shifter. My body is preparing for your massive cock,” I explain, entirely without irony.

“I don’t have a lot of control right now,” he growls, pressing two lubed fingers right at my entrance.

I look back, panting. “Neither do I. Look, I don’t need any more prep. Just fuck me before I peck your eyes out.”

“I could hurt you.”

“No, you won’t. Promise. Just... wreck me. Fuck me. Hard and fast.” When he’s not impaling me within two seconds, I widen my eyes at him and shout, “ Now !”

He takes a deep breath, then shoves his fat cockhead past my sensitive and greedy ring of muscle.

“Fucking yesss.”

I hiss and chortle as he rapidly bottoms out, then arch, nearly cracking my spine in half as I give into the deep, necessary pleasure. Before, anyone fucking me would have to aim for a specific spot, but now everything up there feels like a magic runway, and the thick ridge of his massive erection is making my eyes roll back in my head as it drags along every nerved-up inch.

“Oh, fuck ,” I shout, saliva dripping from my open mouth.

He stills. “Too much? ”

“Not enough,” I say, still drooling. “More, please.”

He pulls back, almost all the way out, then sinks back inside me like he owns the place, grunting and snarling.

“Yes, yes, yes ,” falls out of my mouth. “Mmf. Please. Harder.”

Gripping my hips, he gives me everything I need, pumping furiously, setting my nerves on edge.

“Fuck, the way your hole is gripping me... so tight,” he growls. “I’m going to fill you and knot you and then do it all over again.”

“Yes, yes, yes,” I chant, losing my grip on reality.

With one final body-shaking thrust, he buries himself in me, his body vibrating as he howls through his orgasm. I go over, too, unable to hold back a second longer. I come and come and come, leaving a pool of the good stuff on my fancy duvet.

Impossibly, he thickens even more. “Poe, I can’t stop the knot. Want me to pull out?”

“Don’t you fucking dare,” I whine, pushing back against him. “Stretch me, Thorin. Please.”

He presses deep inside, bottoming out once more as the base of his cock swells, reigniting all of those happy places inside me. I moan as the delicious strain intensifies.

“Fuck, beautiful. Look at you all stretched around my knot,” he says, wonder in his tone.

I pull away, loving the tug, loving how fucking trapped I am on his cock right now.

“Ah, ah, ah. Poe, when you pull away like that... fuuuuck,” he says, as more heat fills me .

I squeeze and pull, extending his orgasm, living for how stuffed full of him I am. He reaches forward, grabbing my sensitive cock with his slicked fingers and palm. With the slightest tilt of his hips, he sends me into orbit all over again, adding to the growing lake of cum below me.

Slowly, he rolls us to the side, helping me to avoid the enormous wet spot. Grunting, he pulls up the edges of the duvet and slips it out from under us.

“Fuck, another.” I groan, grateful when he catches my release— oh, oh, oh, still going—on the soft material before tossing it to the floor.

He groans as well, and more of his cum fills me, swelling my belly.

“Making you come makes me come,” he says, yipping as he adjusts us on our sides.

I lean back against his broad chest, shimmying up against him, pleased as more heat blooms inside me. “As does any moving around at all, it seems.”

Grumbling, he takes my nipples in two half-shifted hands, twisting and scraping at them with sharp nails.

“Fuck, that’s good,” I whine, testing his knot.

More of his liquid heat blooms inside me as I arch into his devilish fingers.

“Ever come from nipple play alone?” he asks on another sharp twist.



I shake my head as more cum—pre or post, I couldn't tell you—flows down my cock, dripping off my own swollen balls.

“No.” I hiss as his thumbnail grows to a sharp point against the sensitive skin .

He drops his hands to my stomach, lightly, carefully dragging his claws up the delicate skin, pleasure-pain-pleasure blooming along the scratches he leaves behind. Goose bumps flare down my arms as he continues his growly, pointed exploration of my flesh.

By the time he returns to my hard nipples, I'm right on the edge. Tucking his chin over my shoulder, he unleashes a long tongue, lapping at one nipple while plucking at the other. Cum squirts like a fountain from my cock, splatting all over my belly as heat washes through my insides yet again.

“Mm. Look at you. Too bad you can't get pregnant. I'd make beautiful puppies with you,” he murmurs, his voice deep and sleepy as he nips at my neck while rubbing my belly.

Reaching for the duvet, he wipes me down with a clean corner, then wraps me up in his arms. Within seconds, he's out, his hand cupping my balls as he remains buried inside me.

I yawn and nestle in for a nap, not minding for a second being stuck on his huge cock. I smile as my belly swells even more with the delicate movement.

Hm.

This might not be so bad after all.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:39 am*

3

THORIN

This is the absolute worst . I just got out of a shitty relationship with a crow . I can't imagine being fated to a raven is going to be any better. They're only about the shiny things. Only about the money.

After Poe and I took a nap together, I managed—awkwardly—to get us to his shower. It's a good thing, too. When I pulled away from his body, it was like unleashing a dam. I didn't realize I could produce so much cum.

Not going to lie, a sort of possessiveness came over me as I watched my seed leak out of his puffy, abused hole. I distinctly remember grabbing an ass cheek while sinking my teeth into his shoulder on a growl.

Not my finest moment.

Thankfully, we had enough orgasms to satisfy us for a while, so I went home after telling him I had to pick up a few things. That wasn't the entire truth—I went home to see if I could get this whole fucked-up mess fixed somehow.

Jolly, a lynx shifter and my best friend, works in the pharmaceutical industry like I do, plus he's a renowned genetics and fated mates expert. Surely, he'll know what to do. I hit his number and put the phone to my ear, rubbing my sac to relieve the pressure.

“Jolly here.”

“Jolly, buddy. It’s Thorin.”

“Thorin! How are you settling in? Sorry I’ve been on the road and couldn’t be there to make you feel welcome.”

“No worries, buddy. Uh, when do you think you’ll be back home?”

“Tomorrow, I hope.”

“Cool, cool.” I palm my nuts again, and it’s no good. They’re heavy in my underwear and my cock aches—from overuse or desire, I can’t tell. “So… I’ve got a bit of a situation, and I’m really hoping you might be able to help me out.”

“Anything for you, my dude. What’s going on?”

Jolly’s interest in pharmaceuticals used to include a serious addiction to pain medications, along with a few things he would inject between his toes. Seeing my college buddy in distress was too much for me, and I paid for his rehab. He’s almost four years sober and has turned his experience with addiction into a job as a shifter consultant for companies like mine.

His interest in fated mates is connected to his recovery, as he found his mate right out of rehab. They’ve been ecstatically happy together, which is sort of why I’ve been staying away. Still, he must know what to do if a mating is unwanted.

“What do you know about reversing a fated pairing?”

The hesitation on the line isn’t encouraging.

“Did something happen? Did you mate with somebody you hate?”

“No. I mean, yes, I mated with a raven shifter. I don’t hate him, but I don’t know the dude.”

“If you don’t hate him, why would you want out of it? I promise, as you get to know each other, you’ll see. It’s the most awesome feeling, ever. Can’t you feel the bond growing between the two of you?”

I rubbed my chest. “All I feel is annoyed.”

“Dude—”

“Does every fated mate pairing fall in love with each other?” I ask, cutting him off. Dammit, I should’ve paid closer attention in biology class. “This feels like a conspiracy.”

“I mean, yeah. Pretty much.” He chuckles. “By the way, a group of ravens is called a conspiracy.”

I huff out an annoyed bark and Jolly goes quiet.

“Sorry, Jol. I’m just...”

“It’s okay, friend.” He hesitates. “To your original question, there are extremely rare cases of incompatibility, but that usually has to do with an underlying shifter health issue. Once any issues are resolved, the mating usually continues without a hitch.”

I resume my pacing. “Damn. I was hoping you’d have something for me.”

“Sorry, man. But hey, the universe, Goddess, Fate, or whatever works on the

attraction that's already there. Falling in love happens naturally as a byproduct of the hormone overload."

I shake my head. "I don't want to fall in love with this guy."

"What's the deal? Are you not attracted to him physically?"

"It's not that. He's gorgeous and has the kind of shiny black hair that all raven shifters have. His eyes are a crazy clear turquoise, he's got an interesting nose, and his lips are kinda pretty, I guess. He's also sort of short and skinny, and you know how I like that."

There's another pause on the line, this one even more uncomfortable than the first two.

"Jolly?"

"Did you hear yourself at all, buddy? You practically wrote a sonnet about his features."

I let out a frustrated grunt. "Shut up."

"Oh. "

When he doesn't elaborate, I curl my upper lip. "Oh, what, Jolly?"

After another judgmental pause, he says, "Are you seriously telling me all this angst is because you can't get that fucking crow out of your mind? Are you still in love with her?"

Talk about going in for the kill.

I stare at my phone, mouth agape. “Oh my Goddess, Jol. No . For fuck’s sake, I moved from Seattle to get away from her bullshit. ”

“Are you sure you didn’t move away because you still had feelings for her?”

“Absolutely not. I moved because she wasn’t taking the hint and I was losing too much property, not to mention sanity.”

“Then what’s the problem?”

I stare at my phone as though it’ll tell me why he’s being deliberately obtuse about this. “I only got here, Jolly, like, thirty seconds ago. Why would I want to get immediately trapped into some fated mate situation?”

Jolly’s thoughtful purr filters across the lines. “Sorry, bud. The universe disagrees with you.”

“Well, the universe is fucking wrong,” I say, unzipping my jeans to give my nuts some room.

“So, when did this happen?”

“This morning,” I grouse.

“Wait—this morning? How are you even talking to me right now? When I met Kate, we didn’t leave her house for seventy-two hours because we legitimately couldn’t stay away from one another. I had to work from home the first month because fucking her on my desk at the office would’ve been frowned upon.”

“God dammit .” I growl, becoming more uncomfortable by the second. “We fucked all morning and then took a nap. That made it bearable enough for me to get away so

I could see if you'd help me out."

"Dude, I don't have anything for you. I've never run across anyone who didn't want to be fated to their mate. I mean, sure, there are some folks who sometimes want to murder their mate, but they still love them. "

"This doesn't make any damned sense. How the hell am I supposed to fall in love with a stranger?"

"Like anyone else. You spend time with him, growing your bond."

"So, you're telling me there's no fucking way for me to get out of this?"

"Thorin, buddy, I'll look into it, but... damn. I hate to say it, but I think you're stuck."

Just like we were this morning.

Oh, shut up, you horny bastard.

My thoughts, which have begun to spiral, are interrupted by a loud banging on the door.

"What's that?" Jolly asks.

"Thorin, let me in!"

"That would be the love of my life," I retort, rolling my eyes.

I rub my chest and realize that the feeling from before was Poe's annoyance, which has grown in to anger.

“Man,” Jolly says as I gingerly walk toward the door, “if you’ve got a nice, attractive guy, I think you’re gonna need to get over your whole corvid thing.”

I curse under my breath. “You’ve been no help at all. I’ll call you later.”

Jolly wishes me good luck as I open the door. Fuck. I’m going to need it.

“How do you know where I live?”

Poe, wearing baggy pajama bottoms and an enormous shirt, makes a low croaking sound in the back of his throat as he pushes his way inside. “Apparently, being mated gives you some sort of internal GPS. Or maybe it’s a raven thing, I don’t know.”

He rubs his chest, taking in my living room, no doubt trying to figure out how much the place is worth. And if he can replace the overhead fixture with a disco light.

“Are you fucking taking inventory?” I spit out, the words nasty. “Can’t wait to make this place yours, can you?”

Poe rolls his eyes. “That is not what I’m doing.” Rounding up on me, he points both hands at his crotch. “I don’t give a damn about your boring beige aesthetic because I’m in agony, and it’s your fault . You’re not supposed to leave your fated mate during the first several days. You’ve been gone two hours .”

“You can’t even go two hours without me?” I ask, pacing my living room again.

“Don’t do that. Don’t act like this is all about me.” Poe gestures to the unzipped situation in my pants. “You can’t go without me, either. There’s no way you’re not suffering right now.”

“Yes, of course I’m suffering. But I was trying to figure out a way to get us out of



this. A friend of mine, Jolly, is an expert on fated mates.”

Poe deflates as my words land. His shoulders droop, as does his entire body. “You were trying to dissolve our bond?” he asks, unable to hide the sadness from our connection.

“Yeah,” I admit, wishing I could do this without hurting him. I know he doesn’t deserve it. “But Jolly doesn’t seem to think it’s possible. ”

He shakes his head. “I don’t even know anyone who’s ever wanted to dissolve their bond. And if you’re talking about Jolly Fortunes, he knows better than almost anybody.”

I nod along. “He’s my best friend.”

Poe’s posture sinks down even further. “Oh.”

Feeling guilty, I walk up to him and grab his shoulders, then immediately expel a relieved breath. Fucking hell. This simple contact takes down some of my internal agitation, and I hate it.

“I’m sorry. You’re right. This isn’t about you. I have a fucked-up history with avian shifters. Crows, specifically. And ravens and crows are...” I let out a disgruntled sound.

“Related, but not the same.” He raises his brows at me. “Also? One shifter being an asshole does not mean every single shifter in that particular species is an asshole.”

“I know. I know . But—” I grip my head, pacing. “I literally just got out of a shitty relationship. She was a grifter who stole thousands of dollars from me. And now that I moved halfway across the country to get away from that fucking crow, I run face-

first into this ,” I say, gesturing the length of him.

Hurt crosses his face and... dammit. I am such an asshole.

“I’m sorry, Poe. That came out wrong.” I sighed, raking my fingers through my hair. “I came here because I needed some fucking peace. She ripped through my life in Seattle, making my favorite city in the world an awful place. I’d visited Jolly out here a bunch of times, and he convinced me to make the move.”

Snapping his mouth shut, Poe makes a sort of sad trill with his nose. “Sorry to have fucked up your big plans.”

4

POE

O f all the dreams I ever had about meeting my fated mate, never once did I dream it would be someone who hates me. Especially someone who hates me for something that isn't even my fault and isn't about me at all.

I was raised to look forward to being mated, and I spent untold hours dreaming about what it would be like to meet my one true love for the first time. When I reached maturity and still hadn't found my mate, it still took years to accept it wasn't going to happen for me.

To have this sprung on me now, only to discover my mate hates me so badly he can barely even look at me? To have a bond that practically screams DO NOT WANT? I wish I could go back to that younger version of myself—the one who imagined so many lovely mating scenarios—and shake him until his head pops off.

The angry, hurt part of me wants to walk away, to tell this guy to go fuck himself, but that's not how any of this works. If I walk away now, all of these awful, unresolved desires itching under my skin will intensify for both of us until we're driven insane with need.

I want desperately to fall to my knees for him, but I refuse to pleasure a man who can barely stand the thought of me. The untenable situation leaves me frozen, standing in his foyer, taunted by the kind of home I'd hoped to buy for myself one day. It's open and airy, with a view of the Texas Hill Country any raven would give their tail

feathers to have.

Despite the beige-colored walls, the living room has exquisite lighting and, most damning, built-in shelves— currently empty, natch —which would perfectly showcase the necessary trinkets of our lives together. I can see it so clearly, how I would fit into his life.

Pathetic .

I mean, it's not like I expect him to instantly fall in love with me, but I'm tired of feeling like some gross specimen he has to endure.

“What are you thinking?” he asks, nearing me.

I flinch away from him and shake my head, walking out to the deck and the devastating vista of the big Texas sky over rolling evergreen hills.

“I don't like you very much. And I don't want to be here for a single second longer.”

Whipping off the baggy shirt I wore to hide my painful erection, I quickly slip out of my pajama bottoms and flip-flops. Underwear was absolutely out of the question when I got dressed, so with those pieces gone, I'm nude. Shooting him a fierce look over my shoulder, I face my uncertain future and shift. Wherever I'm meant to be, it's clearly not here.

Talk about your Sophie's choice. In my raven form, the physical need isn't nearly as painful, which is a good thing. In its place, however, is an instinct so strong I'm finding it impossible to fight. I've spent the entire afternoon flying away from Thorin, only to find myself circling back to his place. It's not even a conscious choice. I fly out over the lake, enjoy the view, then attempt to turn toward home and end up in his backyard.

After half a dozen attempts, I'm exhausted. Giving up, I land on the branch of a tree just beyond his deck. To give myself something to do, I search the area for the items I would need to build a comfortable nest. Luckily, the raccoons have managed to flip open the lid on his garbage can, and he uses the good cotton balls.

I'm not exactly thrilled with his choice of facial toner—it really is rather astringent—but at least I don't have a bunch of twigs poking me in the ass. As I'm fussing with the final details—and yes, I found a tiny bit of quartz to jazz up the place—I'm overcome with the creeping feeling of being watched.

Hopping around, I startle to find Thorin's wolf sitting peacefully on his deck. I turn away from him, ignoring all of that while I settle into a comfy spot. Asshole.

"I'm not a stalker," I call out. "My internal GPS keeps sending me here. I'm too tired to keep trying, so I'm going to stay out here tonight."

Goddess, this is so fucking embarrassing.

"And hope the owls don't eat me," I mutter under my breath.

The avian shifters in this community all get along, but any regular old owl will still eat my ass if given half a chance. Raptor bastards.

"It's easier in our shifted form, isn't it?" he says, moaning in dog.

I look over my shoulder, eyeballing his ears. I should notch the hell out of them for his stupidity.

"You did hear me say I have no control over where my wings take me, right? I am speaking at one of the frequencies dogs can hear, am I not?"

“I am not a dog.”

I spread my feathers, shaking them out. “Could’ve fooled me.”

“I’m sorry .”

I glare at him over my shoulder. “Fuck off.”

I adjust my vantage point to watch the sunset, but the feathers at the back of my neck spike up at the sound of his paws on the ground. Peering over the edge of my humble—yet fashionable—abode, I find him walking toward me.

“I will notch your ears, wolf boy,” I caw. “Don’t test me.”

He stops at the base of the tree, looking straight up at me. “If it makes you feel any better, I didn’t realize shifting lessens the physical burden, so I’ve been miserable this entire afternoon. It wasn’t until my wolf took over and shifted for me that I got some relief.”

I let out a disgruntled screech. “Relief . You jackass. Yay, my nuts don’t feel like they’re about to drag to the ground in this form. But the mating instinct won’t let me fly home. I want to sit amongst my shiny things—trinkets that I own, that I bought for myself—and curse the universe for thinking we should be mated. But I can’t even do that, can I? So, you’ll forgive me if I don’t give a shit about your discomfort.”

Thorin walks his paws up the side of the tree. “I was wrong, Poe. Even looking at you now, you are so much more beautiful than that stupid crow. I felt like a loser because she took advantage of how much I loved her. I promised myself no more avian shifters, no more sugar daddy bullshit.”

I hop to a lower branch, eyeing the perfect tips of his hairy ears. “Is that what you

think this is? Do you seriously think I'm trying to take advantage of you? I know my shop is humble, but I am making a profit. I live above the store because it's easy and allows me to reinvest in my business. I don't need anything from you." I huff. "Well, save for the one thing."

Thorin paws at the bark. "Jolly said being mated was the best thing that ever happened to him, and I thought about that a lot as I was writhing in agony today."

I laugh. "Serves you right."

He whimpers, and it is the most pathetic sound I've ever heard.

Not that I care .

"It did serve me right, Poe. I've spent the entire afternoon thinking about how the universe gifted me with a gorgeous mate, someone bright and funny, a perfect counterbalance to my darker impulses. Someone who I doubt has ever tried to take advantage of anyone."

I shake out my feathers, avian speak for no shit.

"I'm going to need a little time with the love part. I promise, I'm not some heartless bastard. I'm just..." His words trail off as he drops all four paws to the ground again.

When he doesn't complete the sentence, I hop back to my nest and drop a Q-tip on his head. "You're just what ?"

He looks off to the side. "I'm just heartbroken."

Ah, fuck him. I could have stayed mad at a heartless bastard, but a heartbroken bastard? Talk about unfairly tugging at my emotions.

“So, what? You still love her?”

“No,” he barks, sitting on his haunches. “That died the moment I understood exactly who she was. I’m not heartbroken over her , I’m heartbroken because my dreams about what love could be were smashed to pieces. I’m heartbroken that the city I used to love is now tainted with her memories. I’m heartbroken because I had to move thousands of miles away to get the stink of failure off me.”

Empathy swamps me as I hear the pain in his voice. Goddess, I’m such a pushover.

Fine.

If he can be vulnerable, so can I .

“I’ve spent years trying to act like I’m okay with not being mated,” I admit. “You have to understand, though, in my family, it’s a big thing. And not in a shitty ‘you’re less of a shifter if you don’t mate’ kind of way. It’s our biggest source of joy to see each other so happy. If I’m brokenhearted about anything, it’s because I never got to share in that joy with my family. Even though I’m mated now, I’m still unable to participate in the joy. I can’t even celebrate our mating, and it’s the worst feeling in the world.”

“Goddess,” he growls. “I really fucked this up, didn’t I?”

“Yes, you did.”

“Well, I’m not going to let you sleep out here and wait for an owl to come and eat your ass. Get inside,” he demands, turning toward the door.

“Are you seriously trying to boss me around?” I ask, swooping down from the branch to join him on the back porch. “Because I am not putting up with your alpha dog



bullshit.”

We both shift into our nude human forms, and I flick his ear—a warning—before crossing my arms. Thorin, however, reaches out and I raise my brow, pulling my chin back. He persists, cupping my jaw, stroking it with his thumb.

For the first time, I feel warmth, and something like affection, flow through our bond.

“I would never try to boss you around. And we don’t stand on alpha bullshit in my pack.”

We stand there for a moment, staring into each other’s eyes. The mating instinct is so goddamn strong in this form that I can barely hold my ground. I have never wanted anyone more than I want this man at this moment.

Jackass.

It was hard to read his expressions as the wolf, but as a human, Thorin’s face is a kaleidoscope of emotions, swinging between sad and frustrated and horny.

“I would like to start over again,” he says, breaking our stalemate. “If we can.”

My first reaction is to tell him, in ways both painful and inventive, to go fuck himself, but that just reminds me how much I need him to fuck me and knot me and make my belly swell with his seed.

His eyes widen, and I’m pretty sure he can tell how I’m feeling.

Fine.

I guess we’re starting over.

Rolling my eyes, I stick out my hand. “Hi, my name is Poe Ravenswood because my mother is a hopeless romantic.”

His grip on my hand is warm and sure, just like it was on my cock the first—second?—time we fucked. “Hi, Poe. My name is Thorin Wolfsbane because my father wanted to make sure his son had a good, strong name.”

“What does Thorin mean?” I ask, distracted by the memory of him jacking me off while knotting me.

Goddess, I need his fucking knot. Right. Now .

He shifts on his bare feet and looks out over the setting sun. “Thunder. ”

I can’t help the snort-giggle that rises up out of me, and Thorin’s eyes light up at the sound.

“Did you just snort?”

“Maybe. What of it?”

He steps into my space and grips my hips. “It’s the sexiest sound I’ve ever heard. Though, are you making fun of my name?”

I shiver. “No way. Having slept with you, I find it an apt description of the way you fuck.”

A growl starts up from the middle of his chest before pitching up into a needy whine. I stroke the back of my hand over his furred belly.

“How about this? I promise not to decorate your house in sparkly bits—not yet,

anyway—and you promise to stop being a scared little bitch. Then we go into this beautiful house of yours and do whatever comes naturally.”

He chuckles, then pulls me in against his body, hugging me tight as darkness descends.

I whimper as his desire floods our connection. “Careful with the goods, they’re awfully swollen.”

“Why don’t we take care of that?” he asks, his voice deepening.

Trying not to look as desperate as I feel, I yelp as he sweeps me up into his arms. Just being held by him relieves some of the want-want-want, need-need-need pressure.

He carries me through his house, practically running, and within seconds we’re upstairs in his room and tumbling onto the bed, a mass of knees and elbows and lips. Pulling me to the center of the bed, he pants as he cages me in, looking down with so much intensity in his glowing yellow-green eyes I can barely breathe.

“Fuck, you’re beautiful,” he whispers, lowering his body to mine, aligning our shafts.

I sigh into the weight on top of me, and we begin to move in time, groaning with the warm velvet slide of our cocks. Sweet fucking relief.

We kiss deeply, grunting into each other’s mouths as liquid heat blooms between us, both of us coming at the same time, our libidos on a hair trigger. One orgasm isn’t nearly enough, so we continue rocking against each other, desperate.

Half a dozen strokes later, Thorin arches his back, throwing his head back, howling as more of his cum pools on my belly. A few seconds later, another orgasm barrels through me like a cosmic event. The birth of a star, the implosion of a sun, something

with a lot of heat and a lot of force.

With a deep rumbling in his chest, he scoops the cum off my chest, then flips me violently. Perfectly.

5

THORIN

I tug aside a cheek, exposing his hole to smear his cum over the clenching and relaxing muscle. “Fuck, I love it when it does that.”

Poe looks over his shoulder as I slick myself, then press myself against his body.

“I’m desperate to bury my cock inside you, sweetheart.”

His eyes widen at the endearment. “Do it. I don’t need the preparation. My body wants you. Right now.”

Keening as I push inside him, I stretch him to the limit, nearly coming as he writhes on my cock. I whimper when he pushes back against me.

“Oh, fuck,” I growl. “My knot... It’s going to be a big one. Maybe too big.”

I try to pull out, but Poe stops me, gripping my arm. “It’s not too big. I need it.”

“Are you sure?” I ask, stifling a whine as he rocks back against me .

“Jesus, yes,” he says, intensifying the rocking motion. “Need it so much.”

It’s hard to argue with his iron-clad logic, though, to be fair, there isn’t any blood going to my brain at the moment.

I swirl more of our cum along his stretched rim, panting as my knot expands. He chirps, his muscles jumping as black iridescent feathers rise and fall along the ridge of his spine.

Our connection, both physical and metaphysical, builds on itself and within seconds, he's coming. I'm right there with him, our shared movement pulling bliss from every cell in my body.

"Yes, yes. I want it so bad," Poe begs, whistling and chortling for more even as I'm giving him everything I've got. Another wave hits me, hard, and I grunt through another orgasm, setting him off again.

Poe settles back against me, humming, and I wrap my arms around him, needing him closer. Every movement spawns another orgasm, as if our bodies are making up for lost time as quickly and violently as possible.

We thrust and arch against each other as night continues to fall. I palm his belly in wonder as it swells and swells, whispering filth into his ear every time an earth-ending orgasm washes over me.

Finally, somewhere around three a.m., exhausted, starving, and sore, I gently lift Poe from the bed and carry him to my bathroom.

"Fancy shower," he murmurs, more cum dribbling down his hard cock as I shift him .

"My knot is finally going down," I admit, exhausted. "And we'll ruin the bed if we try to untangle ourselves out there."

"Good call," he says sleepily.

I gently slide from his body, and we both moan through a final peak. Poe crosses his

delicate forearms on the shower wall and leans his forehead against them as my cum streams down his leg.

I stand behind him, spreading his cheeks. “Fuck. Look at this beautifully used hole. Goddess, I came buckets,” I say, kissing his shoulder.

“So did I. I think we may have ruined your duvet, anyway.”

“I’m going to have to order one of those rubber lined bedsheets for us,” I say, dipping my thumb inside of him.

“No complaints from me,” he says, grinning as he reaches back to stroke my poor, sensitive dick.

My nuts are ready to throw in the towel, but one more weak orgasm shivers through my body. Poe’s stomach grumbles, and I laugh, resting my forehead on his shoulder.

“Let’s get you cleaned up and fed. Can’t have my mate wasting away,” I say, kissing his shoulder.

He turns in my arms and looks up into my eyes. “This is the first time you’ve called me that.”

“What?” I ask, smiling wolfishly, unable to approximate innocence. “My mate?”

“Asshole,” Poe whispers, wrapping his arms around my neck to pull me down for another kiss. We make out under the hot water until his stomach rumbles again, and I laugh against his lips.

“Fucking hell.” I shake my head before resting it against his. At his confused look, I answer, “I let her get so much into my head it blinded me to anything else. I’m so

fucking sorry, Poe.”

He cups my cheek before pressing his lips to mine. “I didn’t realize how hard it had been for you, but I kinda get it now. I know you don’t know what it means to be mated, but my family does. As soon as we’re safe for public consumption, I’ll introduce you to them, and you’ll see how it’s supposed to be.”

Somehow, I believe him.

I take his soft lips with mine, then whisper, “I can’t wait.”

I may only be barely conscious, but I do know when my cock is being sucked. Wiping the sleep from my eyes, I look down, enjoying the visual of messy black hair nestled between my thighs, Poe’s pale slip of a body and adorable ass laid out in front of me.

“Morning,” I rumble, my voice rough from sleep.

Continuing his sensual slide up and down my cock, Poe flits his eyes up at me, and they catch the light.

“Stunning.” I cup the back of his head, tilting my hips, loving the way it feels to use his throat. To know his mouth is mine as much as it is his.

Thankfully, the hair trigger on my orgasms has backed off, and we’re able to enjoy the simple pleasure of a morning blow job. He runs his hands up and down my thighs, moaning as he continues to take me apart. His fingers creep up onto my belly, running through the thick hair all the way up to my chest, where he gently plays with my nipples.

We sigh and breathe together, our bodies gently rolling in time with one another, his



hands teasing out even more pleasure in tune with his talented mouth. Soon enough, a sleepy, slow-moving orgasm spreads through my limbs. He moans again, slurping down every bit of me.

Finally, Poe pulls away from my cock, sitting back on his knees, grinning as he wipes a bit of cum away from the corner of his mouth. I feel his happiness in my chest.

“I never let a guy come in my mouth before,” he says, his head tilting to the side as he lashes his tongue over his lips, going after every last bit. “Now I’m drinking it down like it’s the secret to life. This mating stuff is wild.”

Chuckling, I reach for him, dragging him up for a kiss. “I would never demand it, of course, but few things are as sexy as watching you take my big wolf cock into your pretty raven mouth.”

Deepening our kiss, I reach for his dick, gently stroking him, thumbing the head, loving how much he’s dripping for me.

“I’ve never seen so much pre-cum in my life,” I say, nuzzling into his temple as my cock revives.

“Me neither. Before, I’d maybe have a little drop if I were super turned on, but this is a whole new ballgame.” He snickers. “Literally.”

“Mmf. All this talk about pre-cum is making me thirsty.”

I push him down onto the bed, sliding my mouth down his dripping cock, drool flooding my mouth. Poe’s breathing goes a little erratic and a growl rumbles in my throat.

“Coming,” he caws, grasping my head, fucking my mouth.

I take his hips, pulling him in deeper, loving the first hit of cum at the back of my throat. He's right, of course. Something about this experience is very different. I never minded swallowing before, but this... this is new. His delicious, perfect cum is necessary, somehow. Hell, I might have an addiction to the stuff.

Poe bucks and arches through another powerful orgasm, then melts back into the bed, his head lolling to the side.

"How do you keep on giving better and better orgasms?"

I laugh, pushing the hair off his sweaty forehead. "If you want to give me credit for what the universe is doing, fine. But we both know that whatever this is, it's bigger than either of us."

He rolls his head to the side, eyeballing me. "Looks like someone is giving in to the magic of mating."

"Shut up," I grumble, heat rising on my cheeks.

"Hey." He awkwardly rolls over before straddling my lap, coming in for a sweet kiss. "I heard what you said yesterday. It makes sense. The timing on this seems all off, but maybe it's actually perfect. "

"I dunno." I laugh ruefully. "Ask me again in a month."

Rubbing my chest, he leans forward, briefly pressing his lips to mine. "Maybe between fucking each other's brains out today—which I sincerely hope is the plan—we can get to know each other."

I press in for another kiss as a thought occurs to me. "That sounds good. Do we need to go to your shop?"

He groans and buries his face in my neck. “I am losing so much cash keeping the shop closed like this.”

I wrap my arms around him, secretly thrilled when he melts against me. “Do you have an employee who can take over for a few days?”

He shakes his head. “The business does well, but I haven’t quite made the leap to boss.”

“So you’ve been doing this all on your own?”

He nods. “I’d love to stay open past midday, if not into the evening, but I’m not there yet.”

“What time does your shop usually open?”

He disentangles himself from my arms and reaches for his phone. “In about twenty minutes.”

I pull him back against my chest, feeling pride when he presses his face into my neck. “Let’s suck each other off one more time, then see if we can make it work.”

“How?” he asks, rubbing his erection against mine.

“We’ll try to get through the morning rush, then slip upstairs for a little relief. If that works, we’ll go from there.”

Poe laughs. “Alright then, lover. Lie back. It’s about to get messy.”

We get to the shop right as a pelican shifter pulls in.

“I wasn’t sure if you’d be open today,” she says, biting back a smile.

“We are certainly going to try,” I admit, grinning.

Poe smacks my belly. “What do you mean, we ?”

“How do you think I put myself through college?” I asked, pecking his nose. “I know my way around an espresso machine.”

Our customer sits at one of the tables with a bemused expression while Poe and I get things ready. We fire up the espresso machine right as the breakfast taco lady shows up.

“You got any more of those venison tacos?”

She smirks. “Doubled up on them for you.”

“Good woman,” I say, grabbing the box from her.

Before we know it, people start walking in. Lots of people, actually.

“You’re pretty popular,” I note as I pull a double shot for Mrs. Fernbridge.

“Thanks. And you make a damn good cup of joe.” He hip-checks me and grabs Mrs. Fernbridge’s soy chorizo taco.

“I’m just saying... I definitely can see you pairing with local food vendors and opening this up to the lunch crowd.”

Poe sends me a wide, bright smile that feels like warm electricity zipping around in my chest. I’ve never experienced anything close to the connection I feel with him. As

much as I thought I loved my ex- girlfriend, those sentiments had nothing on the chemistry and emotions I'm experiencing now.

I finally see why people more or less immediately fall in love when they meet their mate. It's almost impossible not to. I'm nowhere near ready to say those three little words, but I don't imagine I'll be able to stop where this is going.

After finally giving in to it, I don't want to.

Moving to Texas after my breakup felt, at the time, like an insane, desperate move. But now I'm starting to wonder if I was always meant to be here. Just this last twenty-four hours has put everything about my ex and her shenanigans into perspective.

Speaking of the devil, her new nickname shows up in my text notifications.

X: Did you actually move to Texas?

Me: Yes.

X: That's all you're going to say to me?

Me: Yes.

The three little dots bounce while she no doubt comes up with some scathing bit of commentary, but I'm already just... over it. Over this conversation, over feeling like I'd somehow fucked up, over everything. I click on her info and block her before the message comes through.

"Is something wrong?" Poe asks, nudging past me.

I shake my head. “My ex is texting me, asking me why I moved to Texas.”

He puts his hand on his hip. “To get away from you, jackass,” he says, imitating my deeper voice.

“Damn skippy.” I palm the back of his head, bringing him in for a quick-ish kiss. “Anyway, I blocked her.”

Poe does a terrible job of hiding his brilliant smile behind his hand, but his bewitching eyes spark with amusement and possession.

“You are not subtle,” I say, throwing him major brow as I hand Mr. Henderson his Americano.

Poe tilts his head side to side, all adorable and birdlike, and sweeps out a hand to gesture over the space. “Yeah, I don’t do subtle.”

“True.” I gather him close. “But you’re also not gaudy.”

He shakes his head. “There’s no need to be gaudy. I like to find things that catch the light and set them out like little jewels. Let nature be gaudy,” he says, half shifting to show off the shimmering black ruff on his neck.

Mr. Henderson hurries out of the shop, leaving me alone with my beautiful raven.

Pulling him in tight, I whisper in his ear, “You are so fucking beautiful. It makes me wanna take you in the back and do all sorts of things to you.”

Poe looks around, grabs my hand, and starts heading toward the beaded entryway. “We don’t have time for all sorts of things, but maybe a quick hand job and make-out session?”

I yip in agreement and follow him to the back.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:39 am*

6

POE

Over the next two weeks, Thorin and I get into a rhythm. We wake early in his bed, make each other come two or three times, then head to the coffee shop. He helps me through the initial rush, then works from his laptop through the morning until I close.

We then go back to his house, rub up against each other two or three more times, then he finishes out his afternoon of work while I manage the numbers and social media aspect of the shop.

After, he knots me until I look pregnant, we shower, fall into a dreamless sleep, and start the process all over again in the morning.

Honestly, it's bliss. Pure fucking bliss. More than the fucking, however, the bond is growing between us. I know how he's feeling, even when he isn't right in front of me. And we actually talk. The natural rhythms of the coffee shop give us moments of privacy, which we use to jerk off or to find out more about each other, or maybe a bit of both.

For example, I'm discovering that Thorin is an amazing businessman. He's had quite a few suggestions for the shop, but only when I ask for his opinion. He somehow manages to do so without ever making me feel stupid for the choices I've made.

He surprised me last Sunday by inviting my family to his home so we could officially share the news with them. My father cried so hard he lost a contact, and my mother is



beside herself to have a wolf shifter in the family again. He charmed everyone when he shifted and let my little nieces and nephews ride on his back for over an hour.

I'd been worried about Thorin's reaction when my dad called him son , but he responded with a proud smile and a soft kiss to my lips. I didn't realize how much I needed his reassurance until I had it. He's so happy with our union that thinking about it for too long makes me weep.

This weekend we're flying out to surprise his parents. They live in northwestern Washington State and, Goddess, I hope they like me.

While Thorin still refuses to join in on my viral video dances—turns out, that's a good thing because the boy has no rhythm—he offered to make us social media official. Three days ago, he took a selfie of us enjoying lunch on the back deck, both of us looking so damn happy it makes my teeth ache with the sweetness.

Having him help around the shop these last two weeks has also shown me that hiring someone to work with me and expanding my hours would both increase my income and create more balance.

I've since put up a help wanted ad on a few employment websites, and I've gotten a couple dozen really interesting nibbles. I've already interviewed the first two of three total candidates, and while they've been great, I'm really looking forward to meeting this third candidate.

Thorin couldn't join me this morning because he has a series of Zoom calls with his office, so we got up extra early to get in a few more orgasms than usual. I would've expected chafing by this point, but our ability to recover from even the most spirited lovemaking continues to astound me.

It's probably a good thing he's not going to be in this morning because I have the last

of the three prospects coming in, and Thorin and I have proven to be completely untrustworthy about keeping our mating under lock and key.

The first gal nearly walked in on Thorin bending me over the glass jewelry case, but thankfully we were able to put ourselves together quickly enough to avoid a pre-employment HR incident.

I battled an erection during the entire second interview, and I was grateful I'd taken to wearing tunics over soft pants to hide what this man does to me. Here's hoping I can maintain some sort of normalcy with this last interviewee.

Just as I hand Miss Geraldine, my sweet owl shifter friend, her cream and sugar with a splash of coffee, a gorgeous woman walks in. She's got to be an avian shifter with all of that bling on her. Definitely either a crow or a raven, and I can see what Thorin meant about gaudy. I happen to think she's gorgeous, but her level of costume jewelry is just this side of too much for most people.

Thankfully, I'm not most people.

"Poe?" she asks, pulling a portfolio from her enormous handbag.

My final candidate. Fuck. Yes.

I nod, waving her over.

She skirts around Miss Geraldine, then puts on a brave smile and comes right up to me. "I'm so excited to be here," she says, her attitude super positive. She looks around and gestures at the rocks and jewelry. "You must be a crow like me. Everything in here catches the sun."

I grin. "Raven, but close enough. And don't you worry about Miss Geraldine," I say,

waving at one of my favorite customers as she heads out. “The avian shifters in this area are completely friendly with one another.”

A strange expression crosses her face, but she smooths it out quickly. If she’s had an unpleasant experience with other avians before, I hope to prove to her she’s in a safe place now.

Remembering I’m the one in charge, I point to a small café table in the corner and invite her to sit. We chat through her experience, the various responsibilities, and the salary. All in all, I think she’s lovely, if a little distracted by all the shiny things.

This could be fun.

“All right, that’s what I have for you. Do you have any questions for me?” I ask.

Her smile, which seemed permanently affixed to her face, falls. I wonder if I’ve done something wrong until she lets out a croak and curls her lip.

“I still can’t believe Thorin left me for a boring raven in some shitty little hovel of a coffee shop.” She gestures to my outfit for the day, a glittery, oversized Dolly Parton T-shirt, white ankle-length linen pants, and a pair of dangly, sparkly earrings I borrowed from the glass case. “How can you call yourself a raven with such drab attire? Have you no sense of pride in your avian heritage?”

Ah, fuck.

I should have figured it out earlier. I straighten my shoulders and cross my ankle over my knee. “You know what’s interesting about you?”

“No, what?” she squawks.

“I don’t even know if Fran is your real name. Thorin has never even once said it out loud. Hell, you’re in his phone as a big X. As in ex-girlfriend . As in completely x’ed out of his life. As in blocked. And now you’ve decided to show up at my shop and spy on me? Sweetie, the only thing I have for you is a crippling case of secondhand embarrassment.”

Her smile this time is an ugly thing. I shiver as she leans across the small table, getting in my face .

“Say what you want, bird boy,” she says on a sharp chirrup . “I came to claim what’s mine. We had a small misunderstanding, Thorin and I, which I will be able to clear up with the snap of my fingers. By next week, you’ll just be a blip in his rearview.”

### THORIN

I 'm juggling my keys, cell phone, and laptop as I walk into Poe's shop, distracted by a spiking sense of anxiety across our bond. Poe explained that avians have higher anxiety levels and that he's working with his mom to figure out how to control what is shared, but I made sure he knows I don't mind.

I like being the person to soothe his ruffled feathers.

In fact, I was in a rush to let him know the meetings went well, and that my team will be coming to Austin for a professional development week next month. I'm thrilled that I'll be reunited with them shortly.

More importantly, I realized as I ended the call that I no longer questioned the wisdom of my decision to upend my life and move to, of all places, Texas. Not just because I found Poe. Not even because it enabled me to get away from Fran. This place is actually good for me. I'm maintaining the connections I made in Seattle, but now I'm starting a life that's truly mine .

I assumed that being mated meant being shackled. I didn't know that having the exact right person in your life is the opposite of a burden—it's a force multiplier. Sure, I had to wrangle an erection during the entire meeting, but even with that distraction, I was more focused, more happy, more involved than I had been in a long time. My friends noted it, and now I can't wait to tell Poe all about it.

Rushing in, I'm halfway through the shop before I recognize her voice.

"We had a small misunderstanding, Thorin and I, which I will be able to clear up with the snap of my fingers. By next week, you'll just be a blip in his rearview."

The color drains from Poe's face, reminding me how poisonous Fran could be with her words. He sees me walking up to the table and I send him a wink—I know who I belong to. His shoulders relax a fraction of an inch, but not nearly enough for my satisfaction.

Unwilling to let her gaslight my mate for a second longer, I slam my things down on the closest table. Fran jumps, but then sees me and morphs into the fawning lover, sending me the smile that used to bring me to my knees. Utterly predictable.

Circling behind Poe, I place my hands on his shoulders and give the tight muscles a squeeze. Fran's cloying smile falters.

"I understood you clearly, Fran," I say, going in before she can manipulate the conversation any further. "There was no misunderstanding, at least not on my part. It was you who stole and then maxed out three of my credit cards. It was you who convinced my car guy to sell you a Porsche on my credit. And I'm pretty sure it was you who used one of those stolen credit cards to rent an apartment for your side dick."

Her head twitches at a sharp angle, and she opens her mouth to—I dunno, keep lying—but I talk right over her.

"So, yeah, I'm fucking crystal clear about who you are and who he is." I lean forward to kiss the top of Poe's head, wondering how I ever fell for someone like her. "He's my fated mate, and I would've never met him without your help, so thank you."

Her mouth snaps shut at the magic words, and her chin trembles.

"Sorry, Fran," I say, not sorry in the slightest. "If I can't fight the whims of the universe, neither can you."

"B-but... how? Your family hasn't had a fated mate in forever ."

"Just lucky, I guess." I place my hand over Poe's heart. "Speaking of forever, I'm gonna love this man for the rest of my life, and by my math, that makes you the blip in our rearview. A mistake learned from and easily forgotten."

Her chin trembles and large crocodile tears track down her face. Goddess, it's embarrassing to think about how often I fell for her act. Over and over again.

Not anymore.

Before she can reply, I cut her off. "I don't know what the fuck you think you're doing coming all the way down here, showing up like this, especially after I so generously agreed not to file charges against you. I'm well within the statute of limitations and will happily reverse course if you ever come here again. You're not welcome in my life. And you never will be."

Fran's nose flares and her face turns red.

"Shit, y'all," Miss Geraldine says, ambling into the store. "I forgot my phone."

At the same time, Fran stands up and sweeps the jewelry display off the shelf. Shaking with rage, she picks up her chair and smashes the shelves, instantly scattering thousands of dollars' worth of merchandise. Still vibrating, she shifts into her crow form, quick as lightning, and dives toward Poe.

Before either of us can shift, a great horned owl sweeps in, capturing her in its massive claws.

“Miss Geraldine!” Poe shouts, zipping to the door in an instant and opening it for her.

Miss Geraldine flies out and releases Fran over the parking lot. With a terrified caw, Fran makes for the hills, winging her way out of our lives for good. Poe holds the door open as Miss Geraldine flies in and lands, ever so lady-like, on his extended arm.

I grab Miss Geraldine’s clothing and hand it to her. She delicately plucks her things from my hand and hops to the back room. While she changes, I take a garbage bag and shove Fran’s gaudy clothing and cheap accessories—Poe has certainly taught me the value of things—into it before tossing the bag into the dumpster behind the shop. By the time I return, Miss Geraldine is joining us in her human form, running her fingers through her thick salt-and-pepper hair .

“That crow was a cheap piece of work,” she coos, dusting herself off. “Bullshit and bad vibes.”

Poe and I fall over each other laughing and we bring Miss Geraldine in for a group hug and a free coffee. She offers to help us clean up the mess Fran left behind, but we shoo her away with a smile and another round of hugs. Poe and I need a little alone time.

She takes the hint and leaves, blowing us a kiss as she does.

Fran’s temper tantrum was more dramatic than actually destructive, thankfully. The glass shelf she broke has to be ordered special, so I go out to the local building supply shop for a sturdy piece of wood. There’s a teak piece that fits perfectly, and once everything’s in place, Poe lets out a little chortle as he puts his head on my shoulder.



“It’s nice, the glass and wood together.”

“Kind of like us, right?” I ask, kissing his temple.

He gazes into my eyes, thoughtful. “Did you mean it? Do you... do you really love me?”

“I meant every word,” I say, cupping his face, bringing him in for a soft kiss. “You are the love of my life, Poe. And you will be the love of my life for the rest of our lives. I’ve never been more certain of anything in my life. My ideas about what a fated mating could be were completely wrong. I don’t feel trapped, I feel loved. I feel settled. Happy.”

“You are, you know,” Poe says, a gentle blush tinting his cheeks. “Loved, that is.”

I pepper his pretty face with even more kisses. “I know,” I say, thumping my chest. “I can feel it right here. That’s romantic, don’t you think?”

“It’s damn romantic, if you ask me. Which is a good thing because I kind of like loving you.” He emphasizes this with another searing kiss.

Rolling my hips, I whisper against his lips, “I kind of like loving you, too. What do you say we finish cleaning up in here and I show you exactly how much I love you?”

“Sounds like a plan.”

8

POE

We pull up to the Wolfsbane family home—compound, really—overlooking Oak Harbor, and I turn to Thorin. “Are you sure that we shouldn’t have called first?” I ask as I open the door.

He gets out on his side and gives me his most wolfish grin over the roof of our rental car. “For the hundredth time, yes, I’m sure, my love. If you think my reaction to being treated like shit by my ex was bad, you should’ve seen theirs. My mother, the kindest soul on the planet, wanted to rip her throat out. They need to meet you and to know that this is different.”

“Thorin?”

My eyes widen as Celia Wolfsbane, Thorin’s stunning, silver-haired mother, sprints down the front porch steps to us. “What are you doing here?” she asks, delighted as tears stream down her face. “I thought you wouldn’t be here until the holidays.”

Thorin’s smile is soft and so full of love as he gathers her up in a big hug. “I couldn’t wait until then. There’s someone I need you to meet.”

His mother turns her glowing eyes to me. She’s a wolf-shifter, there’s no doubt of it, and her hair shines iridescent in the afternoon sun.

“You have the most stunning hair I’ve ever seen,” I gasp, unable to stop staring. “Is

this what Thorin's hair will look like as he gets older?"

"Uh, yes," she says, probably weirded out that I'm looking at her like she's a goddess. Because hello, she is. "And who are you?"

I grimace at the growl in her tone and look to Thorin for help. He laughs and lets go of his mother, pulling me into his arms. "Mom, this Poe Ravenswood."

"Son," she says, concern lowering her voice, "another avian? So soon? I thought..."

Her words drift off, and I ruffle my fingers through my hair, awkward.

"Yes," Thorin answers proudly. "Poe is a raven shifter. More importantly, though, he's my... mate."

A line appears between his mother's brows, and she shakes her head. Shit. Will she not accept us?

"Wait, what?" she asks, still confused.

"Poe is my fated mate."

Understanding lights her eyes, and she comes at me so quickly that I barely have time to throw my hands up. "It's not what you?—"

"A fated mate?" She pulls me into a bracing hug. "My stars, what a blessing!"

After several life-flashing-before-my-eyes seconds of being crushed by a powerful wolf shifter, Thorin clears his throat.

"Mom. Let him breathe."

She immediately lets me go, then takes my face in both hands as I suck in air. “I’m so sorry, dear. I’m just... shocked. Amazed. Stunned, really.”

“That was your son’s response as well, Mrs. Wolfsbane.”

She snorts. “Mrs. Wolfsbane is my mother-in-law, deary. You can call me Celia. And tell me—how badly did my son freak out when you discovered this... compatibility?”

I caw, ignoring Thorin's affronted look. “He did not take it well at all. Threw a proper fit and ran away,” I say, glossing over all the fucking we did in and around his freak out.

She laughs, slapping her thigh before bringing me in for a softer, less bone-crushing hug. “Oh my . You, Poe, are a miracle. And you should know that his dad and I share the blame for his lack of preparedness. We haven’t had a fated mate in generations.”

“No worries, Celia. I brought him up to speed.”

Thorin flushes a violent red as he makes the quit it gesture at his neck. “Poe.”

Celia laughs even harder. “I love it! Do you know how hard it is to make my son blush?”

I share a look with Thorin. We got a little experimental just before the trip, and it had been eye-opening, to say the least. As it turned out, my big, bad wolf rather enjoyed the electric stim nipple suckers and had no complaints when I found his prostate with my cock .

“Poe,” he wheezes. “I beg you.”

Just as I am about to put him out of his misery, another shifter appears on the front

porch, his hair pure white.

“Thorin? Son? Is that you?”

Thorin got his build and bone structure from his dad and his good looks from his mom, that much is obvious. As his dad ambles down the steps, Celia runs up to him and points me out.

“He’s been fated, Cannon. Our son has a fated mate.”

Cannon Wolfsbane stops and stares at me for a solid minute, absolutely speechless. “Son...” he finally says, his voice cracking as his eyes find Thorin’s.

Thorin goes to his father, and they bear hug each other as the elder shifter practically sobs at the news, just like my dad did. Tears streak down my face, and Celia wraps her arm around me.

When father and son finally release each other, Cannon rushes over to greet me, and this time I don’t act like I’m about to be attacked.

“Goddess, what a blessing,” he says, pulling me into a standard, non-life-threatening hug. “And a raven, too. Natural ally to the wolf.”

“My favorite kind of shifter,” Celia says, rubbing her husband’s shoulder.

I finally let out a breath and turn to Thorin. “I can see why you’d want to surprise them with the news.”

Celia and Cannon laugh, and we join them.

Thorin rescues me from his parents’ embrace, pulling me to his side. “Poe’s family

are fated, and his parents have many lovely ways of welcoming new bond mates. So, whatever we don't know, I'm sure they'll happily share their knowledge."

Celia claps her hands in delight. "Maybe we should invite them for the holidays? Or, perhaps we can join you in Texas?" she asks, looking at me.

I hold up my hands. "I'm certain my parents will insist on inviting you down to their lake house for the holiday. Honestly, I'm surprised they didn't stow away in my bags to come up and meet you in person."

Thorin thins his lips and looks away.

"They already insisted on coming, didn't they?"

He grins, flashing his canines. "What can I say?" He pulls me into a kiss, ignoring his mom's wolf whistle. "I can hardly resist you. How am I supposed to resist an entire conspiracy of Ravenswoods?"

We kiss, and I know without a doubt that I am the luckiest shifter on the planet.

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:39 am*

POE

My family warned me that once I was mated, things would move quickly. They weren't lying. After all of us returned from Oak Harbor—our parents got along like gangbusters, natch—it didn't make sense to keep living as a guest in Thorin's house, at least according to him. After celebrating, then celebrating a little more, then cleaning up, then cleaning up again, we boxed up most of my stuff and took it to his place.

We haven't been apart for a single day since. That is, until this week.

Thorin has continued to work with his team in Seattle, and they had a big company meeting at the main office. I couldn't go with him, even though I finally hired someone for the shop.

While I can trust Daphne to run things when I need to take a few days, Bee Cave Buzzfest is this week, and we have a booth. Tech and art types depend heavily on caffeine and, as it happens, have a similar addiction to shiny things. It's all Daphne and I can do to keep enough coffee and trinkets on hand.

All of which is to say I haven't seen my beloved in three days, and I am about to go out of my fucking mind. His flight takes off in an hour, and he'll be home late tonight, so I'm exhausting my energy running around the booth, checking out the festival, and coordinating with other local businesses, trying to stave off the deep longing for Thorin's strong arms.

Not to mention his massive cock.

All the running around is almost enough to make me feel normal. Almost . Who would've thought that we still can't get enough of each other after six months? It's not the sex—er, not just the sex. I really do like being with him.

On top of that, the bond between us has only grown stronger. Even though Thorin's way across the country, I can still tell when he's happy or bored or missing me.

Did I take advantage of his boredom last night by jacking off to the thought of his broad tongue breaching my tight asshole? Possibly. I certainly can't be blamed when he FaceTime'd me thirty seconds later and we finished together.

I'm just saying', we've been having fun with this mated business. Even now, in the middle of rushing around, I can feel how anxious he is to see me. It's as if his soul is traveling ahead of his body, too impatient to wait on air travel.

Thankfully, before I can get too morose, there's a lull between sessions and we're overrun with caffeine seekers and impulse buyers. I send Daphne off to take a break while I restock and reset the booth.

"Looks like they've kept you busy," a deep voice says as familiar hands land on my shoulders.

I close my eyes and let out a sigh from the bottom of my toes. "Oh, thank Goddess. How are you here?" I ask, spinning in my beloved's arms. The glow of his eyes and the iridescent shimmer in his hair does it for me every time.

"Got on an earlier flight." He pushes aside his carry-on as I hop into his arms and wrap my legs around his waist. His eyes crinkle with his smile. "Couldn't stand another minute away from you."

I start talking and kissing him at the same time. "I'm so happy. You have no. Idea. I was. Going to go insane. Without you."



He laughs between kisses and pulls me in tight. “I’d make some joke about you already being insane, but me too, baby. It was great to get up to Seattle, to see my people, but let’s never do that again.” Leaning in close to my ear, he whispers, “You should’ve seen the size of my nuts last night.”

“I did,” I whisper back, rolling my hips.

“I was in a bad way, even after our little FaceTime rendezvous.”

“Poor baby,” I say, patting his cheek. His pupils flare with passion, and I suddenly remember a very important detail. “So, if I know the location of a private bathroom for the vendors, would that interest you?”

Before Thorin can answer, Daphne walks up, a grin on her face .

“It’s good to see y’all are still as passionate as you were when I first interviewed.”

Thorin lets me down gently and I lean back against him, loving how my mate automatically surrounds me in his warm embrace. Puzzling at her words, I ask, “What do you mean?”

“It was pretty clear that you two’d been fucking right before I walked in.”

She holds up her hands when we both try to protest, and we know the gig is up. Gesturing at us, she shakes her head. “Just go home. I can handle this afternoon, and I’ll get Clark from the candy booth to help me with the breakdown tomorrow.”

Thorin and I exchange a filthy look, and he picks me up again. “You don’t have to tell me twice,” he growls, stalking toward the front entrance.

I tighten my grip on him, running my nose along his neck. “I’m so glad you’re home.”

“Me too, my love. Me too.”

THORIN

We pull into my garage, and Poe is out of the car and in my arms before I even close the garage door. I throw him over my shoulder and race up the stairs, pushing into our bedroom before practically launching him onto the bed.

“I’m gonna knot on the first go,” I warn him, removing my belt with a leathery crack

.

“Yes,” he begs. “I need your knot so bad. ”

We don’t waste time being cute with the clothing removal. By the time we’re naked, a button is rolling off toward the hallway and I’m pretty sure his underwear is ruined. Completely feral, we throw ourselves at each other as he begs me to fuck his barely prepared hole.

I do exactly as he asks and between the pained and pleased groans, I’m writing a thank-you note in my head to the inventor of lube. I’m also more than a little glad this place has a larger lot. Without the extra distance between our neighbors, I’m sure they’d be calling the police with all the ruckus we make. Still, I slow the punishing rhythm, needing to make sure his body can take my knot without injury.

“I love you so fucking much,” he says, rolling his hips in time with my thrusts.

I peer into his glowing turquoise eyes, still bowled over by his beauty and his quick wit. “I love you, too, Poe. I’m so lucky to have found you.”

“We both got lucky,” he whines, right before his eyes roll back in his head.

He arches and shivers, and I help him along with my hand on his cock. Seconds later,

he shoots all over his belly, cawing sharply as he does.

The tight squeeze at the base of my shaft does me in and I let my hips loose, thrusting with wild abandon as I fill him up. The familiar pressure of my knot, expanding, pulsing in the tight confines of his body, tells me I'm home.

Poe nails me with that icy gaze of his. "Stretch me, baby. I missed your knot. I need it."

I thrust one last time, going as deep as I possibly can, my knot swelling until we are well and truly stuck together.

He inhales sharply, his eyes going wide. "Oh, oh, oh," he whines, his desperately high-pitched caw nearly enough to send me over. "It's too much. It's too much. Mm, I love it."

I still my hips, letting his body adjust to me, forever on a hair trigger when it comes to this man.

"Fuck, sorry, baby," I say, filling him again. "I swear, I used to have so much self-control."

"Thorin, your nuts are the size of small avocados. Come as many times as you want to. You know I need it just as much," he says, rubbing his belly, which is already beginning to swell.

Humming with satisfaction, I grip his cock, shuttling my hand up and down a few times before he arches. "I like how you talk about my nuts, as though you aren't in the same predicament." I emphasize this by tugging on his gorgeous, fat sac.

He stiffens again as I gently pull and twist on his sensitive balls, grinning as his cock spurts another huge load onto his belly. Running my fingers through the mess, I raise

them to my lips, savoring his taste.

“Fuck, your knot feels like it could last forever.”

I flick and suck on his nipples. “Goddess, I hope so.”

Hours later, after we’ve spent multiple times over and cleaned up in the shower, we’re lazing in bed, not sleepy enough to sleep, but too exhausted from making up for lost time to do anything else. I love these moments with him .

“Oh, I forgot,” I say, pulling him in for a kiss. “I got you a gift.”

Poe’s eyes fly open. “You got a gift for me?”

I grin. “I did. And it is so shiny.”

He claps his hands and pushes me down on the bed, straddling me to press his ass against my indefatigable cock.

“You know how I love shiny things.”

It’s true—my Poe adores his sparkly trinkets. Still, he does manage both taste and restraint. Too many shiny things and you can’t make one out from the other. Just enough, however, and there’s something about the beauty of the space he’s created that lets us enjoy what he’s put together.

Unfortunately, retrieving his gift means I have to leave the bed, and he complains the entire time. He welcomes my return by tackling me with a kiss, momentarily forgetting that I have something for him.

Poe finally pulls back and sticks out his hand, wiggling in anticipation. I place a small box on his palm and his brows shoot up.

“Thorin? What is this?”

I kiss his forehead. “It’s exactly what you think it is.”

He opens the ring box, and his jaw hits his chest. “Diamond and platinum?” he asks, his eyes nearly popping out of his head.

“Your favorites,” I respond, stroking his cheek. “I loved you before I understood what was happening. Though I struggled with our mating at first, I have not one single doubt in my mind that moving from Seattle to Texas was the universe arranging things so I could meet you. So that I could be yours and you could be mine. It has taught me the difference between a fated love and the cheap love others tried to give me.”

Poe’s eyes go shiny with tears, and he stretches up for a kiss.

“I came to you heartbroken, and you helped me put myself back together. For that alone, I’ll be grateful for the rest of my life.”

Taking the ring from the box, I hold it up and ask the most important question I’ve ever asked in my life.

“Poe Ravenswood, will you marry me?”

“Yes, Thorin Wolfsbane,” he says, his voice cracking on my name. “I will marry you. I will be yours forever.”

My hands shake as I place the ring on his slender finger, kissing him through a mess of smiles and tears, sealing the pact started by an interfering universe.

Our love, like the stars, will burn forever.

Thank you for reading Shiny Things!