



Still Singing To My Heart

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Category: LGBT+

Description: In this slice of life story, Jonah and Blake Knight-Darnell, the true-mates from Omega's Homecoming, take a trip to visit their eldest son and contemplate where they might call home in the next chapter of their lives. All they know for sure is wherever they go, they go together

Total Pages (Source): 6

Page 1

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 6:11 am

Blake

From the Journal of Blake Knight-Darnel

Chestnut is curled up hugging his fluffy tail to his chest as I write. As a kid I would've never imagined having a squirrel as a pet. Okay, maybe pet isn't the right word. Sure, I sorta domesticated him, but he wanted to be domesticated. Besides, he looked just like the squirrel who my psycho stalker killed back in California. The madman was only there because he thought I belonged to him. So, I figured I owed the squirrel community a favor. Chestnut just cashed in on that favor.

I still remember the first day he wandered in through the open door of my art studio and climbed right up on my shoulder as if we were long-lost friends. Now, he's my little buddy. He's also been an exercise in patience for my pups. He's a squirrel who smells like food to them, but he's a friend instead. Talk about impulse control. J-interruption.

"Blake?" Jonah called from the bathroom. "Are there any towels in the dryer?"

"There should be towels in there," I arched a brow in the direction of the bathroom door.

I always kept the good towels in our bathroom to prevent the pups from eating them up or using them for tug of war. Chestnut stirred in his sleep, his nose twitching as he sniffed out danger. Finding none, he fell still again.

“Shit!” I swore under my breath. “We packed them!”

“I didn’t pack all of them!”

“I didn’t either,” I laughed, pushing myself up from the bed. “But if I packed some and you packed some – then we probably packed most of them. I just didn’t want to use up all of Duke and Syre’s towels. I know how many towels our son seemed to go through in a day from the time he started walking.”

“Uhh--- Me too. Will you unpack me a towel while I shave?”

“Okay,” I said, crossing the room to where our duffel bags were. Sure enough, we each stuffed more towels than we’d ever need for a weekend trip up to see Duke, Syre, and their baby Duchess. I grabbed him a towel out of the bag and crossed to the bathroom door. Chestnut opened one eye, watching me cross the room. He’d been eyeing our luggage all day. He knew something was up. He just wasn’t sure he liked the idea of whatever it was. He wasn’t going with us to Heartville. There were too many unpredictable factors that would always be out of our control to take him through the Other World and into Heartville proper. Besides, whether he liked it or not, he was a city squirrel. He’d stay with Joy and he’d like it. He actually probably would enjoy the break from all our pups. Only, he didn’t know that yet and he’d only met Joy a handful of times. She was so busy running the lounge that she hardly stopped by anymore. We visited her at work sometimes, but only in the down hours, not wanting to take the attention away from her. It’d been years since the Grim Howlers were officially together, but it didn’t matter. Anytime Jonah, Micah, or Xander walked into any place that had music, they were instantly recognized. Thankfully, it’d been a few years since any of them had a stalker.

Inside the bathroom, I dried off Jonah’s broad shoulders and muscular back while he examined his face in the mirror. Wolf fur grew in fast and so did his beard as an alpha. While social media debated whether or not he looked good with a beard, I

loved him either way.

“You look good,” I said, hugging him from behind even though he wasn’t totally dry.

I nuzzled my cheek against his shoulder blade. He smelled good too. He smelled like the woods and fur despite having just showered, but mostly he felt like home. I kissed his back and rose on my tiptoes to meet his gaze in the mirror.

“I don’t think we have time for all that, mate,” he smirked at me. “Not if we’re going to get there when we told them we would.”

Sighing, I pressed one more hard kiss to his shoulder before pulling away from him so he could get dressed. Duke might be all grown up with a baby of his own now, but we never lied to him on purpose. Adult or not, it was still our job to keep all our promises. Hell, maybe now more than ever. Having a baby in the house wasn’t the time you needed your parents to start lying to you. Especially when your bio-sire has gone MIA and isn’t even answering the phone for your carrier.

“Eh, forget about him,” Jonah said drying his chest and neck before pulling a black, fitted t-shirt over his head. “He does this. They do this. I know you’re friends with Lotus and all. I know she helped save Lee from Jeb, but that was a long time ago. This is what they do since they moved back over there. They waltz in and out of our lives like we should bow down and thank them for it.”

“Jonah,” I sighed out his name.

Chestnut came sprinting into the bathroom and climbed up my back to perch on my shoulder as if I needed backup in our most recurring debate.

“Don’t ‘Jonah’ me,” he grinned. “I’m right. You know I’m right. Sure, Lotus went to visit but that’s probably because she felt bad for keeping Fred locked up.”

“You’ve seen the size of that dragon no one could keep him locked up,” I laughed.

“Let’s not waste our time with Duke and the baby thinking about them, okay? If he wanted to be a granddad, he’d be there or at least take more time out of his ‘busy’ life to check on them.”

Jonah was right, but I didn’t want him to be. Part of me believed if I just annoyed Fred enough he’d be the daddy to Duke he promised to be all those years ago.

“Ha! I’ll sooner eat my buddy, Chestnut, than he’ll live up to his promises,” my wolf chimed into my thoughts as said squirrel jumped from my shoulder and landed gracefully on Jonah’s head.

Jonah’s wet hair was shoulder length and Chestnut took to grooming it whenever he caught him coming out of the shower. Jonah laughed as Chestnut got to work and we made our way into the bedroom to double-check what else we might’ve double-packed. The pups were already with other pack members. All that was left to do was put our shoes on, drop off Chestnut with Joy, and drive up to the Other World Gateway.

“Seriously,” Jonah said, nudging Chestnut back onto my shoulder before turning to grab his little harness and leash. “Don’t waste your time worrying about Fred. Focus on our grandbaby.”

“I am,” I said as Jonah decked out Chestnut in the gear we used only when we needed to transport him somewhere.

He chattered excitedly because he knew the harness usually meant a car ride and that was one of his favorite things.

“It bothers Duke more than he lets on,” I said, as Jonah shouldered both duffel bags

and we headed toward the door.

Once upon a time, I'd have insisted on carrying my own bags, but I gave up on that after all our years together. Besides, I already had Chestnut on one shoulder chittering away as we stepped outside.

"I know," Jonah sighed. "I know and I hate that we can't do anything about that. We can do our best and that's all we've ever been able to do. Look, don't think I don't want to kick his ass sometimes. I do. I just promised someone I wouldn't go around picking fights with Fred the dragon."

I laughed and rolled my eyes. He was right. I made him promise not to fight with Fred when Duke was a toddler. I didn't particularly want Fred beaten up right now either. It was strange to think that at one time I was afraid Fred would kidnap Duke and I'd never see him again. Now, I had to pester him into being a sire for our kid.

"Fuck 'em," Jonah said as we loaded the bags into the back of the jeep. "Seriously, fuck him. If he doesn't see he has an awesome kid after all these years, fuck him. He's the problem."

I nodded as I headed for the passenger side of the jeep. In a blur of speed, Jonah beat me there and opened the door for me. Laughing, I stole a kiss before sliding into the passenger seat and moving Chestnut onto my lap. I stroked the top of his head as he chattered away looking in all directions.

"No more Fred talk?" Jonah arched a brow as he slid in behind the steering wheel.

"No more Fred talk," I nodded my agreement.

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 6:11 am

Jonah

Heartville wasn't as small as I expected it to be. It wasn't as small as it was the last time we visited for Yule. I heard about all the people who took refuge in the village as the war in London raged on, but I expected some of them to have gone back home. Apparently, more of them wanted the quiet life than I had bet on.

Duke met us at the Other World Gateway, kissing us both on the cheek, and trying to take the duffel bags from me. Sometimes he treated me like an old man, but at least we raised a kid who was pack-minded and wanted to help out. I was proud of him. I was proud of him for opening the lounge and proud of him from having Blithe's back when everything hit the fan. He was a good mate to Syre and always talked so much about Duchess. Such a good dad. If not for the draconic qualities of his 'inner dude' it'd be easy enough to forget that Fred Moonscale had anything to do with his conception.

"Thought you said no more Fred talk," Blake prodded me over our mating link as we made the walk to Duke's house.

"Quit reading my mind, but it wasn't really about Fred. It was about how well our kid turned out despite him," I shrugged.

"You two okay?" Duke asked.

"We're fine, baby," Blake said, speeding up to walk beside Duke. "Just double checking that your dad packed the towels."

“Dad, I don’t use that many towels,” Duke groaned at the old debate. “We have plenty of them at the house.”

“I swore as a teenager you ate them,” Blake laughed.

“Did you bring the squirrel guy?” Duke changed the subject. “I still haven’t gotten to meet him.”

“He’s a city squirrel,” Blake shook his head. “You’ll meet him the next time you come for a visit.”

“We’ll come soon,” Duke nodded.

“Not too soon. Make sure Syre gets enough rest,” I reminded him. “We miss you, kiddo, but don’t want anyone worn out and traveling. I remember how that feels.”

“Oh! That reminds me,” Duke swiveled around so that he was walking backwards and looking at me while he talked. Blake hated when he did it as a kid and by his scent he still wasn’t fond of it now. Blake didn’t say anything, because at some point you have to let your kids take their own risks. Duke never fell before, guided by whatever internal compass his inner beast had.

“Huh?” I blinked, unsure of what new topic Duke was tossing into the arena.

“I liked the demo from that one band. Uh—What’s it called?” he glanced up at the sky as if the answers were written in the fluffy, white clouds.

“Bent Scales?” I arched a brow trying to remember the last demo I sent him.

Duke wasn’t involved in the music industry now. He was for a tiny bit when he owned the lounge and would let new and upcoming bands play there occasionally. He

really enjoyed the demos of bands The Grim Howlers Record Label were considering. So, I still sent them to him.

“They played at your lounge last night,” Blake said.

“Joy’s lounge now.”

“That’s not how generational wealth is supposed to work,” Blake teased him. “You’re not her dad.”

“Eh, what was I supposed to do? Just shut it down? Besides, it made her happy. Hopefully, it still is,” Duke said.

“She loves it. She practically lives there now. She’s made the place a bit brighter, but I expected that,” I said.

“It’s hers. She can do whatever she wants to with it,” Duke nodded as his house came into view. “One second. Let me make sure everyone’s decent.”

He sprinted ahead and I flashed Blake a grin.

“You sure you don’t want help with the bags?” he asked as he always did.

“I’m fine. I’m not old yet,” I laughed and stole a kiss as we took our time walking up the driveway to where Duke lived with his mate, baby, and his cousin’s family too. Blithe was more or less one of our kids just like Lee and Bane could say the same about Duke and the rest of our brood.

“Okay,” Duke said, stepping onto the porch. “We’re good, but you have to take your shoes off and wash your hands before you touch the kittens or Duchess. Not just you guys. Anyone would have to.”

“We’re not mad that you have boundaries,” I chuckled. “Calm down, kiddo.”

He let out a long, slow breath. Whether because of Fred never being around or because he grew up in a pack, Duke hated the thought of making anyone feel left out or singled out.

“Just show me where to put the bags down where they won’t be baby toys and we’ll wash up,” I said, already kicking off one sneaker.

“Let me take the bags,” Duke said, his big eyes hopeful.

I sighed but handed off the bags. Some days the offers of help made me wonder if I looked old, but knew that was just the way the wheel of life spun. You raised kids, helping them every step of the way. Then they grew up and wanted to help you. We were lucky with Duke, Joy, and all the others.

“Better than a packed concert of screaming fans?” Blake smirked as Duke disappeared into the house to put our bags in the guest room.

“Any day,” I laughed and stole another kiss.

I used that very line in one of the songs I wrote right after we moved back to Mage Street shortly after Joy was born. She was perfect as a baby and still was, if you asked me.

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 6:11 am

Blake

The living room was empty. So I made a dash for the kitchen. Even as teenagers Duke and Blithe mostly lived in the kitchen of whatever house they were currently at. It didn't surprise me that they and their mates still spent a lot of time in the kitchen.

Syre, Duke's mate, rocked their baby girl in the dark wood rocking chair. My heart leapt into my throat, and inside his inner sanctum, my wolf's tail wagged. It took all my self-control not to try to pick up Duchess right then and there. Instead, I waved hi to Syre and made a b-line for the sink. I washed my hands twice before drying them just to be sure they were clean enough for Duke's liking. I loved how protective he was over his little baby.

"Let's move to the living room," Duke said, walking back into the kitchen as Jonah washed his hands. "That way everyone has somewhere comfortable to sit."

We all shuffled into the living room with Duchess and her two kitten cousins in tow. I wanted to hold all the babies. After all the kittens were Lee's grandbabies. So many little babies being born in to our family while we were still having babies of our own. I wondered how many generations we'd get to see before our doors showed up.

"Many, many more," Jonah said over our mating link as we sat down on the sofa.

Syre kissed Baby Duchess's head before passing her off to us. My heart skipped a beat when my granddaughter looked up at me blinking. Jonah smoothed down her thick, dark hair. She looked so much like Duke. She was perfect. I'd never met an imperfect baby, but until I was a granddad I secretly thought our babies were the most

perfect. I couldn't imagine what would keep Fred away from this tiny baby. He knew all about her. Duke and Syre told everyone about her. She was rightfully the center of their universe right now.

"She's so precious," I said, finally glancing up at Duke and Syre.

"She's perfect," Syre grinned.

"They always are," Jonah nodded.

"We were hoping for a small favor," Syre said and Duke bit his lip.

"Bring back my stuff if you want me to get the checkbook out," Jonah laughed.

"Oh! No!" Duke shook his head fast. "We're good. We just wondered if you'd watch her while we took a nap."

"Oh!" I laughed. "You know we will."

"We didn't want to assume you'd just be free babysitting," Syre said.

"We're here to visit and help," I said.

"We know. We just --- We don't want to be those parents. We love her to death. We love all of them to death," Syre glanced at Blithe and Cord's sleeping kittens.

"We're just tired," Duke laughed.

"Go on then," Jonah waved them off. "Sleep. We're here and she'll be fine."

"Our milk is in the blue. The pink is Cord's," Syre said as Duke wrapped an arm

around him and started to lead him out of the living room. “They’ve crossed before, but we try not to because we don’t know if they have the right stuff for each other and---”

“We have it,” I grinned. “Really, rest. Take all the naps you can squeeze in.”

Before long, Blithe and Cord took their kittens off for a nap too. With the baby cuddled up in my arms we went for a walk. When I first visited Heartville, everyone thought I might be a little pissed off that Bobby and Liam lived in my parents’ home. I wasn’t. Mostly because after my crazy stalker attacked in the middle of the night, Fred crashed through the roof to save Jonah. Only that meant a large portion of the house was remade. It wasn’t the same house my parents had lived in. It wasn’t the same house I’d loved and grown up in. Besides, I was just happy that a happy family lived there. I’d never know for sure, but I figured my parents would like that better than the house sitting empty. Still, my feet carried me to their backyard. It was the last place I’d seen my parents alive after all. I waved to Liam through his kitchen window and stretched out on the grass with Jonah beside me and Baby Duchess on my chest. This was how I visited my parents now. Lee had met our carrier in the afterlife and assured me our parents moved on, but some very Earthside part of my brain couldn’t wrap itself around that fact. So, I still had to visit them. Besides, all traditions surrounding the dead were really about the living. Once a soul moved on, I figured they didn’t care much about if they were honored or not. Sure, they still cared about their loved ones, but I hoped they were beyond worrying about the rest of it. I hoped my parents were reborn and had found each other all over again by now. If they hadn’t, I still hoped they were happy. I needed them to be happy as much as I needed my kids to be happy.

“I wonder if they met in the afterlife,” Jonah said, rolling onto his side to face me. “My parents and yours that is.”

“I bet they did,” I grinned up at him. “I bet they at least met in passing. They have to

have some connection of their own, right? They're practically family."

"Not even practically, mate. If they were all alive now, they'd be here too," Jonah said and kissed my forehead.

We both fell silent, comfortably into our own thoughts and Baby Duchess dozed off as babies are like to do. Jonah nuzzled his chin onto my shoulder and whisper-sang to the sleeping baby. It was the song he wrote about Baby Joy coming into the world. My eyes stung with tears as he sang. Even after all these years it was like he sang straight to my heartstrings. I turned my face and kissed his forehead. Soon, we'd have another baby. I knew that soft, tender expression taking over his face as he sang to our grandkid. I was ready for another one too. Lee wouldn't be thrilled about it. He was starting to joke that the kids outnumbered us, but we were a happy family.

Page 4

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 6:11 am

Jonah

After dinner, Duke and I sent the babies, the omegas, and Blithe into the living room while we cleaned up. It was probably one of the few times we'd have to talk alone.

"How are you really holding up?" I asked him as we cleared the table.

"I'm good, actually. Like really good. Better than I thought I'd be."

"And about Fred?" I asked the question about the elephant who wasn't in the room.

"He's an asshat," Duke shrugged. "I've had to make peace with that again. It's not like I'm not happy. Sure, I'd love him to magically change and become a granddad, but he's not going to do that until one of his and Lotus's kids have kids and I'm okay with that. It's not fair to Duchess, but it wasn't fair to me either. Only, I turned out okay. I turned out happy and she will too. I know Dad's worried about me. Tell him not to, even if he won't listen."

"I have. Well, I have NOT told him not to worry about you. I told him not to worry about Fred," I said, putting another plate in the sink.

"I have you guys and the pack and now Syre's parents too. I have enough. I'm happy," Duke said and as usual his scent smelled like he was telling the truth. "I really am. I didn't think I'd ever be this happy."

"I'm happy for you, kiddo. That's all we ever wanted for you – to be happy. Baby Duchess is just an added perk."

“There is one thing that would make me happier and no it has nothing to do with Fred Moonscale,” Duke laughed, turning on the sink.

“What’s that?” I asked, wiping down the table and the counters.

“If you and Dad would move up here. I know, I know. Uncle Lee will never move and Dad doesn’t want to leave him, but you guys could still do your jobs up here. I know that would leave Joy without you too, but I don’t know. I miss you guys.”

“We miss you too,” I smiled at him.

“We could set up a recording studio and Heartville is still small enough recording artists wouldn’t be badgered here.”

“You can do that,” I grinned. “Hell, I’ll have to talk to the guys but you could probably even do it under our umbrella.”

“Joy could come too,” Duke bounced on his heels as he washed the dishes, ever the fidgeter. “I’d open her a new lounge if she wanted.”

“Maybe in a few years,” Blake said from the doorway and we both startled apart. “Let Joy find her mate, true or otherwise. Let Lee get a bit more frustrated with practicing medicine when he wants to just research. I’ll get them to move with us.”

“Really or are you placating me?” Duke asked.

“Not placating you. I’ve thought about it. I think maybe we’d have stayed if not for the madman,” Blake frowned. “It would be nice to come home.”

“But Uncle Lee has to come too.”

“You stayed here for Blithe,” I pointed out.

“I like it here now, though,” Duke said.

“We do too,” I nodded. “We just have to put a lot more thought into moving. You were single and didn’t have a kid when you did it. Even if we could say yes today it would take a while to plan.”

“I know. I just---” Duke said and didn’t finish his sentence for a minute. “It’s not about having help with the baby even. It would just be nice to see you two more often.”

Blake crossed the kitchen and reached around Duke to turn off the sink. He turned our kiddo around and hugged him tight. For the first two years of his life, it was mostly just him and Blake. Sure, Blake had help, but before we met he was infamous for not wanting to be away from kiddo for one second longer than he had to. He spent nights crying after Duke decided to stay in Heartville, but we’d never tell Duke that. Kids were supposed to grow up and be able to make it on their own if you raised them right and that’s exactly what Duke was doing.

“I will talk to Uncle Lee about it again,” Blake promised him. “Dara being here is a big selling point. Sure, Bane could work in family medicine. I’m sure Dara and Rex would welcome the help, but Lee could be free to just do his research. It would still take a long time for a lab to be built properly. We’re not talking about weeks or months here, baby, but we’ll try to visit more.”

“Thank you,” Duke said, squeezing his dad tight.

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 6:11 am

Blake

From the Journal of Blake Knight-Darnel

The rest of the house is still out cold. We're all set to leave in a few hours and it breaks my heart to think of staying or to think of going. Once, a stalker followed me all the way out here. Before that, before Psycho Roger, I wanted to be here where I felt the closest to my parents. In the end, I went home to Lee. Before, home was where he was, because Duke was little and moved where I did. Now, it's not so simple. I know years of medical service have worn on Bane who talks about changing careers every other week. Mostly in a joking way – I think it's in a joking way at least. Maybe it's Mage Street that he and my brother need a break from.

Either way, staying is impossible right now. The rest of our kids – our kids who are still too little to take care of themselves – are counting on us to come back and I can't let them down. Would never let them down on something so big. I always do my best to be everywhere on time for them. I never want them to feel like I forgot about them. At the same time, the idea of leaving Duke and Duchess breaks my heart. Why do kids grow up and leave home?

Maybe it breaks my heart so much because I never left home. Well, not in the way Duke and Blithe did. My parents died and then my brother disappeared. Then I left to find him. Did I miss out on a milestone that would make it all make sense? Would I understand it better then? I'm not sure, but I gotta get moving or we're not going to have time for breakfast before we have to leave.

Jonah was unusually quiet during breakfast. Even over our mating link his wolf was mostly silent besides commenting on the fact the bacon could've been crispier. Thankfully, the furry hottie kept that between us because I didn't want any of the kids to get their feelings hurt.

After breakfast we had just enough time to double-check that we packed everything, hide some new towels in the linen closet to ensure Duke had enough, and hug everyone goodbye. Duke hugged me so hard, I thought he might crush me before he let go. He was always a big hugger like that but somewhere along the way he went from my tiny baby boy to a giant of a man who I still sometimes saw as that little boy trying to fly away after Fred or me.

Duke walked with us to the Other World gateway and Jonah even let him carry the bags without an argument. Was he sick? Not feeling well? Something was up with my alpha, and I wasn't sure what, but as soon as we were out of earshot of our kid, I was sure as hell going to find out.

Duke hugged us both again and I kissed him on his cheek saying that I'd text him when we got home to let him know we got there safely. I always wanted the kids to text one of us when they got home and now that he and Joy were grown, I tried to do the same for them. I didn't want anyone to worry. I didn't want to leave anyone in the lurch. I lived in that lurch after Lee disappeared. Sometimes if I didn't see him for a few days, it felt like I was right back inside that old lurch. My therapist would say that was an emotional flashback. I wasn't sure what I'd call it, but I hated it and never wanted to make anyone else feel that way.

We made it through the first gateway without a problem. We slipped past the little crowd gathered up chit-chatting without anyone asking Jonah for an autograph. It was a game we played any time we went anywhere in public. Some fans caught on and said it made him an asshole, but my guy didn't owe them every second of his life and one autograph was never just one autograph. Maybe we would be better off moving

to Heartville for that reason.

“Maybe we just want him more to ourselves,” my wolf piped into my thoughts, his voice deep and husky.

Yep. He was horny. I was too. Well, as horny as someone could be having spent the weekend visiting their adult child and grandchild and was about to go home to greet their house full of kids. Sometimes, sex and romping were put on the back burner. That was just the way of life and as long as I got my Jonah cuddles every night, I could deal with it.

“This way,” Jonah said, tugging my hand in the wrong direction.

I’d made this trip enough to walk it blindfolded and still get to my destination as long as no one got in my way.

“Wrong way, babe,” I laughed and tugged him in the other direction.

“No, it’s not,” he grinned. “Come on.”

“Huh? Jonah!” I laughed. “We don’t have time to get lost. The kids are expecting us home any time now!”

“No, they’re not,” he shook his head and pulled me off the beaten dirt path under the canopy of the tree line.

I glanced up because I could never resist the urge since I knew the Other World had a lot of dragons. Raising a kid who flew made you realize how most people never look up at all. A rainbow flock of birds rested above our heads, chittering to each other.

“What do you mean? The kids aren’t expecting us?” I asked him.

“While you were smuggling new towels into Duke’s linen closet, I called a place. Then when I got the answer I wanted, I video called the kids to see if they were okay with me taking you away for a few days on a surprise. They were all excited about it. They’ll be okay. They were excited about you getting a present since you’re always giving everyone else one.”

“Where are we going? Not Europe? Too many fans over there,” I shook my head.

“We’re not going to Earthside. We’re staying at a little Bed and Breakfast not far from here,” Jonah grinned.

“Only you could get a last-minute reservation at an Other World BB,” I laughed.

“It wasn’t my name that got me in. It was you. Apparently, the guys who run it remembered your parents passing through.”

I grinned at the thought of walking the same paths my parents did. With Duke all grown up I missed them more than ever. I remembered how much I missed them when Duke was little. I wanted to tell them so many things and I wanted them to meet their grandbaby.

“Hey now,” Jonah flashed me a sad smile, “I know that feeling, but let’s actually relax on our little extended weekend, huh?”

“It’s all so bittersweet right now, Alpha. I’m sorry,” I bit my lip.

“Bittersweet or hormone filled?” Jonah asked me.

“What?” I laughed. “Like horny hormones?”

“Well, those too. Those every time we get the chance to let them out,” he laughed and

the sound wrapped around me like a warm, toasty blanket.

“What are you trying to imply, mister?” I stepped back from him, standing akimbo.

“Nothing. We’ll see when we get home.”

“See what? You think I’m pregnant?” I arched a brow.

“My wolf thinks so,” Jonah shrugged.

“Was that why you were so quiet at breakfast this morning?” I asked, reaching out to take his hands in mine.

Jonah entwined our fingers together and his warmth spread over me.

“Yeah,” he nodded. “I didn’t want to say anything and outshine the breakfast. I also didn’t want to jinx you into morning sickness.”

“I haven’t had any.”

“You haven’t always gotten it really bad though, either,” Jonah said, letting go of one of my hands and leading me back onto the path.

“Maybe not. What makes him think I’m pregnant, though?” I asked, glancing down at my belly.

I knew from the way Jonah looked at our grandbaby that he’d want another pup soon. I’d get the stirring too, but I didn’t feel pregnant.

“Said he heard it,” Jonah shrugged as he led me around a bend in the road.

Tree limbs hung heavy on either side of the road, tickling the tops of our hair. A bird called out in the distance. Looking up, I couldn't find it, but it was there. I wondered if it was a crow or another of those gorgeous rainbow birds flying around today. You never knew what sort of animal you'd encounter in the Other World. That was one of my favorite parts about it. I made a mental note to sketch them out later and suddenly I had the urge to have my hands back in the charcoal and paint. I shook it off and focused on Jonah and his wolf's suspicions.

"Do you think they have pregnancy tests over here?" I asked him.

"Nope, but I have one."

"Will it work over here?"

"Umm... The magic doesn't cancel out science. Magic and science are lovers," Jonah teased.

"That's gonna be your next song," I laughed, and hip bumped him as the BB came into view.

It had a cozy log cabin vibe going on or at least as cozy as a big three-story log cabin could have. Still, it felt cozy to me. The path leading up to it was paved with grey and blue stones. Flowers of every color grew along the edges of the path on both sides. Jonah squeezed my hand as we approached the cabin. The smell of bacon and eggs wafted from inside as we stepped onto the cabin's big, wraparound porch.

"Think their bacon will be crispy enough for you?" I teased Jonah.

"Hey! That's what you get for eavesdropping so hard! I had to make him talk about something before you picked up on the fact I thought you were pregnant or that I was planning a getaway for us. I didn't want to tell you about my idea in case it didn't

work out.”

“Well, I’m glad it did and you didn’t hurt the kids’ feelings in the process. I thought the bacon was fine.”

“I did too. He’s the one who wants it burnt,” Jonah laughed and pointed at his chest.

“You’re one and the same,” I rolled my eyes playfully.

Inside we were greeted by two cheerful men behind the reception desk. They were both tall elves with long, crimson hair tucked behind their pointy ears. I opened my mouth, almost asking about my parents, but decided against it. If I got to thinking about them too hard, the weekend would be a somber one and I wanted to have fun and relax as badly as Jonah did. The men introduced themselves but I was so lost in thought that their names went in one ear and out the other as Jonah checked us in. They ran down a long list of BB activities, but I didn’t think we’d attend any of them. I didn’t want to tend to anything that wasn’t a naked Jonah now that the fact we were really going to have some actual alone time sunk in.

They didn’t give us a key, only directions to our room. Jonah shouldered our bags as we walked hand-in-hand down the long corridor. The carpet was dark green, and the walls were as blue as the sky. The ceiling matched the walls except for the fluffy white clouds someone must’ve put a crick in their neck to paint up there. The doors were all different colors as if someone painted them all at different times. It would’ve been tacky in a lot of places, but here it only added to the cozy vibes. Our door was a deep, rich orange with our names on a little plaque.

“Jonah and Blake Knight-Darnell,” Jonah read our names aloud.

“I still love how our names sound together,” I said and opened the door.

Inside, wasn't just a room, but a suite. The living room was huge with big picture windows overlooking a lake that I didn't even know was there before I saw it. Jonah put our bags behind the black leather sofa and kicked off his shoes. Following his lead, I took off my shoes and shirt.

"Well, keep going," he smirked as my shirt hit the floor. "I like a show."

"You put on the shows," I teased. "I only watch from backstage."

"Nah," he shook his head and leaned his palms against the back of the sofa. "It's your turn to put on the show."

"What show is that?" I said, running my hands over my abs and chest.

"The one where I watch you get naked," he said, bringing his hungry gaze to mine.

"I think you've seen that one before. It'd only be a rerun," I said, tugging off my socks.

"Maybe not," he shook his head.

"You've definitely seen that one before," I laughed.

"Not here, I haven't. Besides, what if it's my favorite show?" Jonah leapt over the back of the sofa to sit on it.

"Don't break their couch," I shook a finger at him.

"Made for dragons," he slapped it and raked his gaze down my body.

Goosebumps rose on my flesh. Who knew how many times Jonah had seen me

naked? Who knew how many times he watched me undress? Still, sometimes his gaze made me flustered and put on the spot. I loved it. I reveled in my shaking hands, excited to undo my fly and show myself off to him. I took my time undoing my fly and sliding my pants off. I took even longer teasing him by playing with the hem of my boxer briefs.

When I was finally naked, the scent of his hunger filled the room, and my fangs tickled my gums wanting to come out and play too. I didn't drink from Jonah often. I always wanted him to preserve his energy just in case he needed it. Still, sometimes, fanged biting happened, and Jonah never minded. He beckoned me to him with the wave of a finger and I crawled onto the sofa between his legs and looked up at him. He looked like a cocky king perched on the back of the sofa.

"King, huh?" he smirked picking up my thoughts over our mating link.

"King of my heart," I nodded, sinking onto my knees.

"Who's trying to write cheesy song lyrics now?" he asked, trailing his long, nimble fingers over my cheek.

"You've rubbed off on me," I laughed.

"Only when you invited me to," he said, tracing my lips with his thumb.

He probed it between my lips, and I kissed it, twirling my tongue around his thumb as I'd soon do to his cock if I had my way.

"How about you be a naked king?" I asked over our mating link because my mouth was busy.

Jonah pulled his thumb away from me and stripped off his shirt over his head and let

it drop onto our bags behind the sofa.

“Magi, are you engaged?” Jonah asked.

Silence rang through our ears.

“Good,” I nodded.

Magi was a magical hearthstone system that was used not only in hotels, houses, and cars but in almost anything an AI personality would be helpful in. At least ‘he’ was on Earthside.

“Exactly,” Jonah nodded.

While Duke was a teenager, we went on a family vacation to a little BB in Spain. The place used Magi and someone turned off his emergency only recordings and tried selling photos of our teenager. That ended up with a guy having a lot of broken fingers and many singed body parts. We figured they were aiming for footage of Jonah but tapped in at the wrong times.

“One of the few times Fred and I agreed on something,” Jonah laughed. “Test or romping first, love?”

“Romping, definitely romping. If we are my brain will going spiraling into the future and I think we did enough of that for a bit. We still gotta talk about Heartville, but not yet.”

Jonah nodded and slid off the back of the sofa. He scooped me up, his powerful arms lifting me seemingly without effort. I laughed, feeling freer than I had in a long time. No one was randomly going to yell for us while we washed each other clean.

Jonah set me down on my own two feet and I rose to my tiptoes to steal a kiss. Our tongues danced between our mouths and his hands slid over my bare ass. I was already slick and hard. Jonah's dick pressed against my belly, making me want him more than ever. It would be so easy to drop to my knees and--- Then he was gone. He disappeared back into the living room of the suite and came back with our toiletries. Sure, the BB provided some basics, but we'd both grown picky over the years after finding the brands we liked.

I turned on the shower to heat up the water as he set them and our clean fresh towels from home out. Despite being put through the wash at Duke's house, they still smelled like home or maybe they just smelled like us and that tricked my brain into thinking about home.

"You are my home," Jonah said, stripping off the rest of his clothes and tossing them into the living room so nothing would get left behind.

He and his bandmates learned long before we ever met that leaving behind anything at a hotel or the like might just end up with that item auctioned off online. It seemed innocent enough but who wants to sell or buy a stranger's used underwear?

"People are weird," Jonah shrugged, reaching his hand under the running water. "Perfect. Maybe that's a perk of a BB in the Other World."

"Maybe I'm just good at knowing where to turn the knob to," I smirked.

I stepped into the shower and Jonah followed in after me, sliding the door shut behind him. We stood under the rain of the shower letting the near silence fill our ears. It was nice to have a break from the usual chaos of the world. I loved our life. I loved our kids. I loved our pack, but sometimes you needed a bit of space to hear yourself think.

In the silence, interrupted only by the pitter-patter of the shower, we scrubbed each other clean. We showered before we left Heartville, but there was something soothing about starting off a vacation like this. Maybe it was washing away our worries and starting with a clean, fresh slate, or maybe we didn't get enough chances to touch each other all over these days. Either way, I let go of my worries about all the kids and concentrated on Jonah's big strong hands drawing soapy circles over my naked flesh. The scent of our warm arousal filled the shower, clinging to the steam. I let out a long, slow sigh as Jonah turned me around to start on my back. I couldn't touch him anymore but I gave in to the gentle pressure of him all over my skin, slipping and sliding his way lower until the loofah slid over the curve of my ass. My hips arched for him out of familiarity. A growl vibrated out of his throat and my wolf whimpered back to him. Our inner beasts were on the same page as us for once. They weren't always, but they never turned down the chance for a romp.

Jonah stepped closer and I rubbed my ass over his hard, throbbing cock, trapping it between our bodies. He growled again and the sound coiled around me. I ground harder as his hands found my hips.

"Too bad Magi isn't here to turn on the music," he teased. "You're practically dancing on my dick."

"That's why we have speakers in the bathroom back home," I said, rubbing against him, following a rhythm that only played out in my thoughts.

"I thought that was to hide our noise from the kids and a million other pack members who always seem to want to show up while we're in the shower," he said, tightening his grip on my hips.

"All of the above," I said, leaning back against him as I moved, letting him take on some of my weight.

“You’re so slick already,” he said, dropping the conversation about back home before we jinxed ourselves into an interruption.

“Always am when I’m alone with you,” I nodded, grinding harder, so that he slid between my cheeks and stayed right where I wanted him. “You don’t know how many times we’ve been in the middle of cooking dinner or doing some fucking paperwork that seems to never end and I’ve just wanted to toss it all out and knock you over so I could have my way with you.”

“I think whatever paperwork that was could’ve waited,” he let out a breathy chuckle.

“Adulting sucks,” I laughed but the sound morphed to a moan as Jonah’s big, warm hands slid to my cock. For a moment he held me with both hands, squeezing, before letting go with one and stroked me in time with my grinding back into him. My breath hitched in my chest before seeping out in a moan.

Our conversation fell away as I inched toward the shower wall. I rested my hands on the heated, blue tile and rubbed my ass against him harder. It didn’t take Jonah long to get the message. He let go of my dick and ran his hands up and down my back before trailing to my ass and cupping both of my ass cheeks with his hard, throbbing dick still between them. I sighed, pressing my forehead against the tile. Sometimes I just needed Jonah to fuck me. To let go and give into our primal energy. Sometimes it was the only way to chase away all the mundanity that threatened to drive me crazy. It was too easy to get caught up in paying bills and arranging playdates and after school activities and forget about the things that lit me up – art, writing, Jonah. Everything about Jonah and after all this time.

He dragged his mouth across the back of my neck and a chill shimmied down my spine as the head of his hard cock pressed against my slick, hungry hole. I gasped, pushing back against him to welcome him home into my body. His grip on my hips tightened. His fingers dug into my flesh as he pushed his way inside. I lost myself to

my body waking up under his touch. My every nerve ending stood on edge as he filled me up.

“Footing good?” he asked, always the considerate mate.

“Perfect,” I nodded, already panting from anticipation.

We found our rhythm easily. After all these years, we knew each other inside and out. Our bodies knew the dance and all we had to do was give in to the carnal energy flowing between us. He thrust deep into me, and my toes dug into the shower floor. Thankfully, the footing was as good as I thought it was because my knees wobbled as the heat built inside of me. I ground back against him, moving with him, and taking him inside me again and again until our flesh sliding together consumed us. His pleasure rained down on me over our mating link. It grew thick and foggy until I couldn't parse out what sensations started with me, and which really belonged to him. Truth be told, they all belonged to both of us. That's how the true-mate magic worked.

Everything inside me burnt hot and tense as Jonah fucked me closer and closer to the edge. His thrusts came faster and harder until we were one big ball of need rolling toward the edge of oblivion. With one hand still on my hip, he reached around and took my throbbing, jerking cock in his hand.

“Jonah,” I gasped out his name as his fingers locked around me.

“Blake,” he whispered against the back of my neck before raising the wrist of his freehand to my mouth.

So close to coming, I couldn't say no. My fangs elongated from my gums and sank into his offered flesh. His warm, coppery blood flooded into my mouth – pure ecstasy along side his throbbing dick jerking and close to orgasm inside me. I wanted to

moan his name again, but my mouth was busy drinking down his offering. He squeezed me as he stroked, urging me on even as he chased after his own orgasm. I came hard, trembling in his hand as my body tightened up and clenched around his still pumping cock. I ground back against him, craving the warm explosion of his passion inside me.

“Jonah!” I gasped, pulling away from his wrist having had my fill.

His flesh knitted the edges of the bite marks together as he pumped hard and fast into me. I said his name over and over again as each thrust drew out my pleasure. He growled as his dick trembled hard before letting go of its warm, sticky treasure. My legs shook and I leaned against the shower wall for support as we panted our way back into breathing normally, his arm still wrapped around my middle.

He kissed the back of my neck whispering about how much we needed this. He was right. We needed the sort of break that we only found alone with each other. I wouldn't trade our kids for anything, but some days I still needed just to be Blake Knight getting his brains screwed out.

Page 6

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Jonah

The next morning, I rolled over to spoon into Blake, but I was alone in the strange BB bed. I sniffed. He was close by. Probably in the bathroom. I glanced at the nightstand where we left the pregnancy test the night before. It was gone.

“Mate?” I called out, swinging my legs off the bed.

Normally, I needed coffee to move this fast, but I didn’t want to miss a second of our new kid’s life. My wolf wagged his tail sleepily, sure he was right about how the pixelated baby would show up. He’d never been wrong before.

“But there is a first time for everything,” Blake sighed.

“Huh?” I said, glancing down at the counter where the used test rested.

“I didn’t feel pregnant. I still don’t. So, I wanted to take it before you got up. That way I could soften the blow,” he said, pressing his lips together in a tight frown.

“What?” I glanced at the negative test. “No, we’ll take another. He’s never been wrong.”

“Well, maybe this time he is. Look, it’s okay. Neither of you have to have a perfect guessing record. Wishful thinking happens. Besides, you know what this means, right?”

“That my nose is broken,” I chuckled, rubbing it.

“No, we get to decide whether we want to spend our weekend trying for a baby or hold off until we figure out what’s going on with the move.”

“Which one do you want?” I arched a brow, stepping closer to him and pulling him against me with an arm around his waist.

“Which one do you think?” he smirked.

“One more before the big move? They’ll be at least a toddler by then. No moving around with newborns anymore. That’s our rule.”

“One more before we move,” Blake nodded and rose up on his tiptoes to kiss me.

I wasn’t the first wolf in history to mistakenly think his mate was pregnant and I probably wouldn’t be the last either. I hoped I wasn’t the last, because one day this would probably be a funny story.

“Hey, we can just get me pregnant this weekend and tell everyone you were right,” Blake said when the kiss broke.

“Sounds like a plan, mate,” I growled and scooped him up to carry him back to the bed. “If we’re going to get you pregnant, we better start trying now!”

He laughed and for the weekend we were just true-mates finally finding a moment alone together again. Whatever came next, I was down for it.