



# The Diamond Dragon Prince

## (Omega Fairy Tales #3)

**Author:** *MM Farmer*

**Category:** LGBT+

**Description:** Once upon a time, in an enchanted kingdom of captive omega princes and jeweled dragon alpha princes....

Leo

I should have been born an alpha. I am strong, courageous, and desperate to do whatever it takes to defend the people of my father's kingdom from his tyranny. But as an omega, I'm barred from wearing the crown.

But when I meet my dragon prince fated mate, everything changes. Suddenly, I have the power to take action and the magic of a dragon to help me in my quest. But I also have an unquenchable heat and a need to follow my omega nature, and when the inevitable happens, it shatters the foundation of who I believe myself to be.

Diamant

I have always taken my privileged dragon life for granted. My dragon kinsmen have always teased me for leading a life of luxury as a first-rate magical rake. And then I met my fiery, dedicated, omega mate.

I am ready to give up my life to follow my fierce omega's lead, but liberating villagers and attempting to overthrow a king is harder than even I thought it would be. And then there's the egg....

The Diamond Dragon Prince is part of the Omega Fairy Tales, which were first introduced in Their Alpha. It is a tale of courage and passion, an impossible destiny and fated mates, with heat, magic, bonding, and a dragon shifter who doesn't know how strong he is until he meets an omega hero.

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## Chapter

### One

#### Leo

I might have been an omega, but I wasn't afraid of anything. I was a prince, for one, despite the fact that my father treated me and my omega brothers like we were lower than the lowest servants in the castle's scullery. I had royal blood in my veins. Not only that, I had goodness and fortitude, I hoped, that I'd inherited from my beloved Papa. I missed Papa every day of my life, and from the moment he'd died, I'd vowed to live my life in a way to make him proud.

Even if there was nothing particularly proud or dignified in being constantly locked in the bedchamber I shared with now three of my brothers.

"You will tell me what happened to the other two," our father, King Freslik, growled and huffed as he paced back and forth on one side of our large, circular room. "I refuse to believe that they have simply vanished and that you pitiful lot do not know where they are," he went on, the four guards standing near the door behind him looking stiff and uncomfortable. "And I most definitely refuse to believe that there have only ever been four of you, not six."

I tried to hide the wicked grin that pulled at the corners of my mouth as I peeked across the line my brothers and I stood in at my youngest brother, Obi. In the month since our brother Selle had mated with his gold dragon, Gildur, birthed a beautiful, golden dragon egg, and made the decision to move into the magical world full-time,

my remaining brothers, Rumi, Misha, Obi, and I had amused ourselves by concocting as many different stories as we could about what had happened to Selle and our other brother, Tovey, who had also met his fated mate and birthed twin eggs, and who had chosen to move entirely to the magical world. Obi had come up with the idea of pretending that Selle and Tovey never existed. Father didn't believe it, but it had been fun trying to convince him.

"You are hiding them," Father said, pausing his pacing to stare first at the four of us, then around our bedchamber. "Yes, that is it!" he gasped, as if struck by inspiration. "You're hiding those wretches somewhere in this room, I know it. Guards! Search the room!"

My smirk vanished and I snapped straighter, alarmed. My brothers and I exchanged anxious looks as the lumbering guards shook out of the near stupor they'd fallen into as they listened to my father's daily admonishments.

"Search the room?" one of the dull guards asked, blinking.

"Yes! The room, the room! Search it at once!" Father shouted and huffed.

I met my brother Rumi's eyes before both of us glanced quickly to his bed off to one side of the great room. Rumi was the eldest of my brothers and something of a leader to us. But more than that, he had a mysterious beau, who he'd thought was just an ordinary man when they'd met, but who he'd discovered much later was, in fact, a dragon, who had gifted him with a bit of magic in the form of an emerald marble. That marble had rolled under Rumi's bed and formed a doorway into the magical world.

In the months since that fateful night, my brothers and I had used the doorway to escape into a world that was filled with wonders. We'd begun by making our way to an enchanted pavilion in the middle of a crystalline lake in order to dance the nights

away with any number of fantastical new friends, but our adventures had expanded in exciting ways from there.

The magical world was where Tovey and Selle had met their fated mates, dragons who were princes in their own right. They were kin to Rumi's emerald dragon, and my absent brothers had fallen very much in love with their mates.

I had met a dragon at those dances as well, and although as of yet, all we'd done was dance and flirt. As far as I could tell, my dragon was a clever rogue who loved nothing more than dancing and enjoying life. He was handsome and amusing, and I could feel our time to be together approaching.

But none of that would happen if Father's guards found the door under Rumi's bed.

"You cannot search our things as though we are criminals," I said, scowling at my father. "We have rights, you know."

As expected, Father did not take my defiance well.

"You have no rights," he insisted, eyes going wide with offense. He marched right up to me, using his natural alpha height to tower over me. I despised being shorter than I felt I should be. "You are criminals, as far as I am concerned. You are a lot of disobedient, conniving, ungrateful criminals who have stolen two sons from me. I could have married those two off to some of the wealthiest alphas in the land in order to secure their riches and support."

I so badly wanted to reply by telling him if he really had the ability to marry us to men we despised to enrich himself that he would have done so already. I knew better, though. I knew he could trade us like commodities whenever he wanted, but for the time being, we were of more use to him as lures to dangle over the heads of the noblemen he wanted to woo.

“The only reason you would object to me searching this room is if you truly have something to hide,” Father went on.

He gestured to the guards to get on with their search. Unfortunately for my brothers and I, they did as they were instructed.

I held my breath and Misha, who stood next to me, reached for my hand for comfort as the four guards spread through the room, opening wardrobe doors, ripping bedcovers from our beds, and upsetting the tables beside each of our beds. They focused their efforts on Tovey and Selle’s things at first, but they didn’t stop there.

I held my breath and squeezed Misha’s hand in return as one of the guards reached Rumi’s bed and began tearing it apart. Magic, as I had learned, was a funny thing, and there was as much a chance as not that if the guard pushed the bed aside, the door into the magical world wouldn’t be there. But if it disappeared now, would it ever reappear?

There was a dragon in the castle, disguised as one of Father’s councilors, I knew. If Rumi’s magical door vanished, perhaps we could search him out for help. But we didn’t know who he was specifically, and without the door, we would be locked in our bedchamber for real without any way to seek the other dragon out.

“Um, Your Majesty, there’s nothing here,” the guard searching Rumi’s bed said at last with a shrug, stepping away.

I wasn’t ready to breathe in relief yet. The oaf could still bend over to check under the bed.

Fortunately, Father had very little patience.

“I know you’re hiding something from me,” he growled at the four of us, eyes

narrowing. “It has something to do with that sorceress, doesn’t it.”

I did as good a job as I could of looking blank and confused, and so did my brothers. There had been a sorceress in our castle a month ago. She had come from the magical world with the intention of conquering my father’s kingdom and our entire world. Fortunately, she’d been defeated. Selle and his dragon had something to do with it all.

The trouble was, I didn’t really remember what had happened. None of us did. Selle informed us that everyone’s memory of the event had been magically altered after the fact. That included Father’s memory, but something of those events must have stuck with him. He was now obsessed with sorceresses and witches.

It was a good thing that everyone in the castle thought he was losing his mind a little and that they didn’t believe sorceresses or magic was real.

“I’ll sniff it out eventually, mark my words,” he went on. “And then I’ll make your lives even more miserable than they already are. You will not be fed tomorrow!” he declared, then turned to stomp out of the room .

The guards left with him, banging the door shut so loudly that it knocked one of the pictures on the nearby wall askew.

“And stay out!” I shouted, as if we’d kicked them out.

Obi snorted with laughter, but the four of us were too traumatized by Father’s visit to laugh about it the way we’d laughed when the visits had begun, when Tovey went missing.

“He’s just going to get worse and worse,” Misha sighed, still holding my hand. “How long can we hold out before everything becomes intolerable?”

“I can hold out as long as he can,” I said, chin tilted up. “So can you. All of us are stronger than he is by far.”

“Stronger, yes,” Obi said, looking tired. “But being strong is exhausting.”

We all took a moment to breathe and release the tension that Father’s visit had brought. Our room was a mess, so we wandered to our own parts of the room to begin cleaning up.

“I would leave this place forever and pledge myself to my dragon mate if I wasn’t so worried for the people of our kingdom,” Rumi said with a sigh as he picked up the clothes the guards had flung out of his wardrobe.

“Sometimes I wish that another savior would come along to make everything alright so that we could move to the magical kingdom, like I know we are fated to do,” Misha said sadly.

I hummed, pretending to agree, but I wasn’t so sure. I didn’t like the idea of someone else being the champion when I was perfectly capable of saving people myself. I might have been an omega, but I was strong and brave.

“Enough of this,” Rumi said after only five minutes of cleaning. He’d just pulled the bedcovers back over his bed, but then he leaned down and pushed the bed aside, revealing the magical door. “Time hardly moves in this world at all when we’re in the magical world. I feel like dancing now and cleaning this place up later.”

We all made sounds of agreement and threw our things aside, heading to Rumi’s bed and the door. It had been a long, exhausting day in our world, and I was more than ready to dance the night away, hopefully in the arms of a certain alpha I already knew was mine.

The magical door opened easily for Rumi, and the golden staircase that descended down from it took us quickly into the nighttime forest of the magical kingdom. I loved everything about the magical world, everything I'd discovered about it so far. I loved how the sky was a deep purple at night, dotted with stars like diamonds. I loved how fragrant the trees and grass were. I loved that the trees seemed to be hung and dripping with jewels of every description.

Most of all, I loved the feeling that blossomed in my heart as we approached the lake and its pavilion. It wasn't just the beauty of the decorations or the sweet strains of music. It wasn't even the knowledge that there were tables of the most delicious food inside that would satisfy me after being given only bread and water all day in our bedchamber. It was the knowledge that we all now had friends in this magical world and that they were waiting to greet us with open arms.

It was also the knowledge that my fated mate was part of this world and that he might very well be a part of the festivities that night.

"You're here!" Selle greeted us as the four of us crossed over the magical bridge of grass that formed specifically for us to cross over the lake and into the pavilion. "Every night, I worry that something has happened to you and that the four of you will be lost to us forever."

"Never," I said, stepping over to my brother and closing my arms around him, and the egg he wore in a sling against his belly, in a manly hug. "If something happened and Rumi's door disappeared, I would move heaven and earth to find a different way to come back here."

Selle laughed as he hugged me back. My shoulder bumped his glasses askew as we separated. Even though Selle's dragon had the ability to correct his vision so that he didn't need glasses, it only ever stayed fixed for a day or two at a time, so Selle had gone back to wearing gold-rimmed glasses.



“I’m certain there are all sorts of ways to open magical portals into our old world,” Tovey said as he hugged us all in greeting as well. He had his eggs with him, but since his had grown to the size of the balls we kicked around in our Papa’s garden sometimes, he wore them in a pack strapped to his back instead of against his stomach.

“Oh! There are!” Selle said, brimming with excitement. “I forgot to tell you the other day,” he said to Tovey. “Billi gave me the most amazing gift last week.” He started rummaging in the small satchel slung over one of his shoulders.

“Billi is the one you think is a unicorn?” Obi asked, eyes bright with excitement.

“He is a unicorn,” Selle said, taking a large, glass disk just slightly bigger than his hand out of the satchel. “He transformed for me a couple weeks ago to prove it. And he had the magic to make this for me.”

We all crowded around as Selle held out the disk to show us.

“What is it?” Misha asked, blinking curiously .

“It’s a scrying glass,” Selle said. “Well, something like that.”

“Good gracious, is that our bedchamber?” Obi exclaimed, shifting to squeeze up against Selle’s side as he looked into the glass.

“It’s a window into our room,” Rumi said with a delighted laugh.

“Someone’s made a right mess of it,” Tovey said, shaking his head.

“That was Father’s guards,” I told him. “Father got it into his head that we were hiding the two of you in there somewhere.”

“I do not miss that man at all,” Tovey sniffed.

“Oh! Look!” Obi went on. “It’s not just our bedchamber. That looks like Father’s bedchamber.”

“What is he doing?” Rumi asked, then suddenly said, “Never mind. I don’t want to know.”

I might have laughed and made a joke about what Father did at night, but a warm tingling began to spread through me and my heart began to race. I caught my breath and stood straighter. I knew what that feeling meant. Even though we hadn’t bonded yet, I knew when my fated mate was nearby.

I dragged my eyes away from the scrying glass and took a few steps deeper into the pavilion, away from my brothers, searching this way and that. I’d met him early on in our time in the magical world. We’d danced together once and I’d known in my heart and in my womb that the two of us were meant to be.

Unlike Tovey’s and Selle’s dragon mates, Diamant hadn’t rushed in to claim me immediately. Part of me wished he had, but as he’d whispered to me in a moment when the dance had us curled around each other, palms to palms, our lips only a breath away from each other, sometimes the dance was as beautiful as where it led.

I caught my breath when I spotted him striding toward me from the far end of the pavilion. Diamant was one of the most magnificent alphas I’d ever seen. He was tall with broad shoulders and strong legs. The fine clothing he wore couldn’t disguise the power of his body underneath. He had white-blond hair that seemed to glitter like diamonds in certain light, and his eyes were ice blue, and yet somehow filled with fire.

When he spotted me staring at him, his shapely mouth formed into a rake’s smile. He

slowed his steps, approaching with swagger, like he had already claimed me and was on his way to retrieve his property.

The feeling that an alpha already believed he owned me was strangely thrilling. Not because I longed to be claimed, like Tovey, or even like Misha, who was as afraid of the claiming as he craved it, but because I longed to challenge Diamant's insistence that he owned me. I pulsed with excitement at the idea of butting heads with my dragon.

"Well, well," Diamant said as he reached me. He rested his weight on one leg, crossed his arms, and caressed me with a glance. I was certain he'd worn tight breeches on purpose so that the bulge they concealed was more pronounced, like he was flaunting his alphaness at me. "Aren't you looking full of yourself tonight," he said, meeting my eyes with a fiery grin.

"Just tonight?" I asked, crossing my arms in imitation of him. "I'm full of myself all the time."

Diamant laughed. The sound had my blood pumping and slick threatening to pour out of me. His rich, alpha scent, like expensive, exotic spices, intensified my body's reaction to him.

My womb seemed to wake up inside me, which was slightly disconcerting. I didn't see myself as an omega brood mare at all. Tovey and Selle might be happy to have babies, or rather, eggs, but I wanted more from a bond with my fated mate than that. My body's reminders that it didn't care what I wanted created anxious sparks in the back of my mind.

I pushed them aside in favor of flirting with Diamant.

"Why am I not surprised?" he asked, coming forward and offering his hand as the

musicians started into the opening strains of the next dance.

As soon as I took his hand and our skin touched, my body seemed to dance with light. Especially when Diamant tugged me closer with exciting force, leaned close to my ear, and whispered, “Of course, I’d rather you be full of me.”

I wanted him so desperately that I was breathless for a moment. My hole squeezed like it longed to milk him, and if it were not for the reinforced pants I wore under my trousers, I would have embarrassed myself with slick stains.

It was completely unlike me. I’d never been attracted to arrogance or anything close to the indifference to responsibility that radiated from Diamant. But the fact that he was so different from the sort of mate I’d always thought I might end up with, if Father had allowed it, felt like a delicious challenge.

“And what if it is I who wishes to claim you?” I whispered right back, tempted to bite his neck the way Tovey and Selle had described their mates biting them when they were claimed.

Diamant laughed, the sound warm and inviting as it rumbled through him and vibrated through me. “I think I might like that,” he said .

I could hardly breathe. I loved the arousal that Diamant sparked in me. I loved the promise of all the ways we would enjoy each other when the seduction we’d begun months ago reached its consummation. I ached for that day.

At the same time, I knew my heat was growing nearer with every day. I wanted it, but I feared it, too. Diamant would take me through that heat, I was certain, but I’d seen what had happened to Tovey and Selle. One glance to the side and I could see the eggs they both now had with them.

I wasn't a papa, I was a warrior. I wanted to mate with my dragon and claim him as he claimed me, but I didn't want to then end up floundering in ordinary papahood when I knew the world needed me to be a fighter.

"Do not worry, my fiery omega," Diamant whispered against my ear. "I will be gentle with you."

I shook myself out of my thoughts and grinned at my dragon, aroused all over again. I loved this kind of flirting. I loved that we were growing bolder and bolder with each other as we got to know each other better.

"How do you know I want you to be gentle?" I asked him, arching one eyebrow. "I've no intention of being gentle with you."

Diamant's eyes lit up. "You make me question my decision to wait with you," he growled.

"Your decision?" I gave him an incredulous look.

He tugged me closer still, and I was certain he would wrap his arm around my waist and pull me flush against him. He might have even slanted his mouth over mine in a possessive kiss, despite the fact we were in public.

But instead, Obi's cry of, "That looks like an army, and they're attacking a village!" shook me straight out of my thoughts.

Diamant and I both turned to where my brothers were all crowded around Selle, gazing into the scrying glass.

"What is that and where did you find it?" Diamant asked, stepping away from me to see what was going on.

Selle glanced up at Diamant as though he were someone who was part of his life every day and said, “Billi gave this glass to me. It sees into my father’s world.”

Diamant frowned. “Magic like that is regulated. Does Gildur know about this gift?”

His question, which was so fussy I would have to tease him about it later, was ignored.

“I know that village,” Rumi said. “It’s to the far west of the castle, but it’s right along the road leading to our neighboring kingdom.”

“Is the neighboring kingdom attacking us?” Obi asked.

“No, look!” Tovey said, pointing at the glass. “That’s Rottum leading the army.”

Rottum was our father’s chief of guards. He’d been missing from the castle for a few weeks. Hearing that he was leading an army in attack of one of our own villages was disconcerting.

“Is Father trying to attack his own people again?” Tovey asked.

“It looks like it,” Rumi said, rubbing the back of his neck.

“We have to do something about it,” I said, making the decision right then and there.

“We have to go back to our father’s world and find a way to put a stop to the attack.”

## Page 2

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Chapter

Two

Diamant

From the moment I'd first spotted Leo with his brothers in the pavilion, I'd known my life would never be the same. I wasn't too proud to say that from the first sight of his clever eyes, his svelte, omega body, and his surprisingly masculine features, I'd known he would have me under his thumb in no time.

Unlike Rufus and Gildur, I'd decided to take my time with the fascinating and feisty young man. We were fated, which meant we had all the time in the world to be together, literally hundreds of years, once we mated and he shared my magic. I never did anything in my life in a hurry. I indulged, enjoyed, and languished. It was simply what diamonds did. So why rush to the completion of a romance when the seduction could be so sweet?

Of course, I was tempted to change my mind and whisk Leo off to some concealed corner to have my way with him as soon as he suggested going to war. I wasn't cowardly or craven, but it had never occurred to me to step away from the finer things of life to go to battle for a just cause. Doing so by Leo's side might be fun.

"You can't just jump through the glass and battle an army," Tovey pointed out, swinging the pack that contained his eggs around so he could check on them.

"Why not?" Leo asked. "We're princes of our father's realm. It is our duty to our

people to protect them, especially against Father.”

“No, I mean you can’t just blip from one world to the next,” Tovey explained. “There are laws governing who can move between worlds and where and when.”

“He’s right,” Selle said with a sigh. “Saoirse and Lord Manfred were punished for doing just that last month. Queen Gaia wishes for there to be less travel between worlds for now, not more.”

“But we cannot simply stand by and let whatever Father is plotting this time hurt innocent people,” Leo insisted.

I was so proud of him I could burst. His heart was always in the right place, and he had the strength of will to follow through with whatever was needed to help people. I’d learned that already in the few, short months since we’d met.

And I was absolutely going to help him.

“Making a doorway between worlds is no trouble at all,” I said with an admittedly arrogant shrug of one shoulder. “We dragons do it all the time.”

“Yes, but you are not supposed to,” my brother, Gildur, said, walking up to stand beside his omega. He rested his arm around Selle’s shoulder and smiled at him as if the two of them were on their way to a picnic instead of discussing plans for war.

“‘Supposed to’ is such a gold concept,” I said, smirking at him. “Diamonds don’t wait around for permission to do anything.”

“Diamonds are fickle and self-indulgent,” Gildur laughed, fortunately. We might have occasionally been at odds with each other, but that didn’t stop us from loving each other. “You’re starting to sound like Rufus,” he added.



“Who’s starting to sound like me?” Rufus asked, striding over to join us. He stood behind Tovey and wrapped his arms possessively around his mate.

“Diamant,” Gildur said, nodding to me. “He wants to create a doorway between worlds so his omega can charge off into battle against King Freslik.”

“You? Diamant?” Rufus blinked in surprise. He frowned a moment later and glanced from me to Leo then back again. “What is that bastard king up to now?” he asked.

“We don’t know,” Leo said, speaking to my brother as if he, too, were an alpha and a dragon. “Selle has a scrying glass, and through it, we were able to see into my father’s world.”

“There’s a small army attacking a village on the outskirts of our father’s kingdom,” Selle explained, twisting to address Gildur with a honeyed look, like he was determined to get what he wanted from his mate. “We cannot let our father continue to attack his own people this way.”

Gildur looked at me as if it were my fault, but he didn’t dismiss the whole thing the way I assumed he might. “I’ve been in King Freslik’s court,” he said. “That man has no morals or scruples. He would destroy his own people if he thought it could bring him more gold and prestige. ”

“I don’t dispute that,” Rufus said. “Something must be done about the man.”

“Precisely,” Leo said, pounding his fist into his palm. “It’s up to us to do something. Time is wasting, we must act.”

“Time between that world and this one moves differently,” Gildur reminded us. “You’re being hasty. This attack might not have happened yet. Where did you get that glass anyhow?” he asked Selle.

“From Billi,” Selle said, then, without Gildur having to ask the question or open the discussion, he went on with, “I trust Billi’s magic.”

Gildur still didn’t look happy. “I’m not saying that something doesn’t need to be done, but I don’t want my mate or our egg involved in another fiasco with King Freslik. My nerves still haven’t recovered from our last adventure.”

“And I’m not sure that I should go either,” Tovey said, wincing slightly. “The twins are at a fragile age right now.”

Leo blew out an impatient breath. “Then we’ll go,” he said, turning to me as if the two of us running off to fight villains was a usual occurrence. “You can open a doorway to somewhere near this village for just the two of us. We could take them together.”

I smiled, whether it was the appropriate time for a smile or not. “Careful, my little fireball. If you tempt me too much with your ferocity, we’ll never reach the battle in the first place.”

Leo’s face flushed with heat. I could practically see the blood pumping through him, particularly the intimate parts of him. It was even better when he asked, “Are you trying to stop me from defending my people, dragon?”

“I would never dream of it,” I said in a low growl .

“Right,” Gildur said impatiently. “If these two are going to flirt over a battle, then I say let them. But I’m keeping my omega close to home.”

“And I’m doing the same,” Rufus said.

“I want to go!” Prince Obi said, all smiles and excitement. “I’ve never actually fought

a battle before, but I'd like to do something to make a difference."

"I'll go as well," Rumi said with a firm nod.

Emmerich would be proud of his omega mate. Argus would simply be amused by his.

"Um, I'm not certain I'm much of a fighter," Prince Misha said, looking bashful.

Azurus would be charmed by his fated mate. I wasn't certain whether the two of them had even met yet, but I knew it.

"You don't have to come with us if you don't want to," Leo said, resting a hand on his brother's shoulder. "We can handle this."

"With confidence like that, I'm certain you can," Rufus said, though I could tell he was mostly amused by Leo's fight.

"We should go as swiftly as possible, then," I said, wanting to reach out and pull Leo into my arms rather than rush off to a cold, hard battle. "That way, we can gain our victory and return to dance away the rest of the ball before it ends."

My brothers knew that was just a lot of bravado, but they nodded in agreement all the same.

"Let's go," Leo said, taking my hand like he would lead me off to fight.

I grinned and let him lead me, although once we reached the edge of the lake, I stepped ahead of him to summon a bridge to take us over to the forest. Prince Rumi and Prince Obi followed behind us.

"I've never taken part in a battle before," Prince Obi repeated his earlier statement,

but with more worry. “I hope I’ll be as brave as you are, Leo.”

Leo laughed with excitement. “Let’s get there and assess the situation first, then we can decide whether a battle is necessary.”

“Clever prince,” I murmured to him as we walked into the trees just far enough that everyone in the pavilion wouldn’t see me conjure a questionably legal doorway. “I knew there was a reason I liked you.”

“I thought you liked me because I’m pretty,” Leo tossed back, teasing me.

It was going to be a challenge not to jump my delicious omega at the first opportunity we got.

I forced myself to concentrate on my magic for a moment and thought about where I wanted us to go. I wasn’t completely certain where the impending battle was located, but intention alone was enough to open a small portal that would take us close enough to where we wanted to go.

“It’s just after dusk,” Prince Rumi whispered once we’d all traveled through into the countryside of the cruel world. “You can still see the last rays of the sunset on the western horizon.”

Leo nodded, receiving the information like intelligence. “This must be the village of Gannet,” he said, swaying closer to me so he could point out the features of the area around us. “That’s the village there, and you see those hills just that way?”

“Yes,” I whispered, breathing in his enticing scent of ripe summer fruit .

“There are caves from old mines that way,” he explained. “In his younger days, Father was certain there was gold buried in his land. He had several mines

constructed, but he never found?—”

His words were cut short by the sound of horses galloping. We were at the edge of a small wooded area, but it wasn't enough to provide us with complete shelter. The four of us were forced to dash for the cover of some bushes off to one side and to crouch so that we wouldn't be seen by the riders.

“Are those soldiers?” Prince Obi asked, his youth showing through. “Are they on their way to attack?”

“We have to follow them,” Leo said.

As much as I loved my omega's determination to do what was right, I wasn't as happy with his impulsiveness. Rushing into serious things had never been my way. I was far more likely to sit back, preferably with a drink of something tasty, to think about a situation before engaging. Leo leapt up and started following the riders before I could grab him and hold him back. I lunged after him, but he saw that as me following his lead, and his brothers came with us.

Whether it was the smart thing to do or not, all four of us were racing across the shadowed field, following the riders to the small village just beyond where we'd been hidden. I hated leaving an open door to the magical world behind me, but there wasn't time to seal it up tightly.

“I think we're too late,” Prince Obi whispered when the four of us made it to the edge of the village. “It looks like the soldiers have already won.”

Unfortunately, the young prince was right. By the time we reached the edge of one of the houses that made up the small village, the air was still, and instead of the shouts and clash of a skirmish, we heard soldiers giving orders and women and children weeping.

“Stay down,” Leo said, taking command of our mission, which I found both adorable and arousing. “We need to discover what happened.”

With a few quick sweeps of magic, I could have read the minds of any of the nearby people or frozen them so that we could walk among them, as if we were observing a painting. Leo seemed to be doing a perfectly reasonable job of leading our mission, so I hung back, smiling with pride in him, and let him take charge.

“...for putting up a fight,” a deep, male voice said from the center of the small square all of the village’s houses were built around. “King Freslik knows you are hiding something. He knows that a sorceress attempted to overthrow him and that she escaped to the edges of his realm to hide and regroup.”

I fought not to laugh. Gildur had told us all about Saoirse’s little gambit with King Freslik and Argus’s attempt to erase the memories of everyone involved. It seemed as though my brother’s powerful magic wasn’t enough to wipe the idea that a sorceress had attacked him from Freslik’s mind entirely.

“We...we know nothing about any sorceresses,” one of the hapless villagers answered.

We’d snuck close enough, using the buildings of the village for cover, to see what looked like about fifty people on their knees in the square, surrounded by maybe half as many mercenary soldiers. It was the smallest army imaginable, but the simple village people were in no position to fight them. A few were bandaged like they’d tried.

“Sorceresses don’t exist,” one of the other villagers pleaded. “King Freslik is mad if he thinks one is set against him.”

“Quiet!” the head of the mercenaries shouted, which was followed by a slapping

sound. “How dare you insult the king!”

Leo tensed by my side at the cruelty shown to the villagers. I was certain he wanted to rush into the square and fight them with his bare hands.

I was about to join him. It would have been easy to wipe every one of the soldiers out with fire. But the situation changed before I had a chance.

“Don’t bother with this lot,” one of the men on horseback said. “King Freslik has other plans, especially if this lot won’t talk.”

“Rottum,” Prince Obi gasped behind me, and I heard Prince Rumi shush him.

“But, sir, we have orders,” the lead mercenary said.

“Oh, I’ve no doubt,” the man on horseback, Rottum, said. “We’ll hold this lot hostage along with the rest of them.”

“The rest of them, sir?” the mercenary said.

“There won’t be enough room,” the second man on horseback said.

“Then we’ll make more room,” Rottum snapped. “King Freslik wants as many hostages as possible from among his people. He says they’ll be easier to control if we have a corral filled with their sons and daughters to threaten every time they step out of line.”

“Father is planning to take hostages from among his own people?” Rumi murmured behind where Leo and I crouched.

“Oh, sorry,” Rottum said, almost as if he’d heard Rumi but addressing the other man

on horseback instead. “Not a corral, a work camp . All of those sons and daughters will be put to work for the benefit and glory of King Freslik.”

“Including this lot?” the other man asked.

“Yes, why not,” Rottum said, sounding as if he were having a grand evening. “They can work building more houses for the other hostages, I mean workers , to live in.”

“You cannot take us away from our homes,” one of the villagers pleaded. “My omega is with child, and he’ll give birth any day now. He cannot work.”

“He’ll work if he knows what’s good for him,” Rottum said with a sniff.

“What should we do with this lot, then?” the lead mercenary asked.

“Round them up and move them on,” Rottum said. “We won’t reach the camp by daylight, but we can get part of the way there in a few hours.”

“Yes, sir,” the mercenary said.

The soldiers closed in on the villagers, forcing them to stand and jostling the poor people into a clump so they could be prodded and pushed on, as if they were cattle.

“What do we do?” Prince Obi asked as Leo and I turned toward him and Prince Rumi.

“Someone has to tell the others,” Prince Rumi said. “Maybe there’s a way we can reach out to the other villages of the kingdom to let them know what Father has planned.”

“Holding our own people hostage and forcing them to work is barbaric,” Leo said.



“Every time I think Father has sunk as low as he can go, he finds something worse to do.”

“Can we stop him?” Prince Obi asked.

“Every tyrant can be stopped,” I said. “How we do that depends on the resources we have available, not to mention the care we need to take to make certain no one else is harmed. ”

Leo glanced at me with a smile. “I knew there was a reason I liked you,” he said.

I winked back at him, wishing on the one hand that we didn’t have the mercenaries of an evil king to battle, but relishing the opportunity to fight by my omega’s side on the other.

“Rumi, you should take Obi and head back to the pavilion to let the others know what’s going on,” Leo went on. “Diamant and I will follow the soldiers, and when they make camp tonight, we’ll do whatever we can to sabotage them and help the villagers to escape.”

“A brilliant and noble plan,” I said, nodding to my omega. I was game for this adventure if he was.

“Are you certain the two of you will be safe on your own?” Prince Rumi asked.

“I’m a dragon,” I reminded him.

“And I’m a prince with a will of iron,” Leo said in a similar tone of voice.

Prince Obi made a long, low sound. “They really are fated mates, aren’t they.”

Prince Rumi chuckled as he stood, offering his brother a hand so that he could stand as well. “I’m almost afraid to leave them behind because I know they’ll get into all sorts of trouble together.”

“That’s the best part,” Leo said, grinning at me.

Prince Rumi shook his head, then turned said to Prince Obi, “Come on. I assume the doorway will be where we left it?”

“It should be,” I said. “But it won’t last forever.”

He nodded. “Stay safe,” he told Leo.

“I’ll stay as safe as is right when people need our help,” Leo answered.

The brothers embraced to say goodbye, then Leo and I stood where we were for a moment, watching the other two princes disappear into the darkness.

Once they were gone, he turned to me with a fire in his eyes that glowed even brighter with the reflected light of the bonfires that had been lit in the square.

“I’m not going to let them get away with this,” he said. “These are my people as much as my father’s, even though omegas cannot be kings in this realm.”

“A gross oversight on someone’s part,” I said, resting a hand on his shoulder. “You would make a fearsome omega king.”

Leo laughed, but the sounds of the villagers being forcibly moved brought both of our attentions back to the matter at hand.

“We need to follow them and do whatever we can to foil their plans,” he said as we

crept out of our hiding place, keeping to the shadows as we followed the contingent out of the village and along the narrow, country road.

“I won’t let any harm come to them,” I reassured him. Whatever my omega needed me to do, I would do, even though I could tell it meant my life of idle pleasure was over.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 7:31 am*

Chapter

Three

Leo

My heart raced with excitement as Diamant and I chased through the night, following the mercenary soldiers who paraded the poor people of the village through the darkened countryside. I loved the thrill of the mission before us, the feeling that people needed me to rescue them, especially as it was my father who had brought them harm in the first place. My pulse also hammered with rage that my father could stoop so low as to take his own people captive in order to manipulate the others into doing what he wanted.

“I can feel your anger from here and we aren’t even bonded yet,” Diamant murmured to me as we lay almost flat in a clump of bushes close to where the soldiers had finally decided to stop and rest for the night.

I twisted to look at Diamant, first with a frown that was born of my indignation over my father’s actions, then with a smile for the heat in his eyes. They seemed to glow white-hot in the night. Clearly, my fated dragon mate was a man of passion.

I’d known Diamant was my fated mate almost from the moment I’d spotted him across the pavilion on one of those first occasions my brothers and I had ventured into the magical world. I could have dismissed the attraction I felt as a natural draw, because Diamant was an extraordinarily handsome alpha. But after hearing Tovey and Selle talk about their feelings towards their dragons and how instantaneously they

had formed, I knew that something greater than base lust was at work.

Of course, watching both Tovey and Selle fall into what I considered more traditional omega roles in a mated couple had made me question everything I felt. I wasn't that kind of omega. I wouldn't be satisfied with settling down and raising babies. It was fine for some, but I no more wanted to be trapped in a prison of domesticity than I wanted to be locked in my bedchamber in my father's castle.

That was why I'd kept my distance from Diamant for the last two months instead of flinging myself into his arms, the way Tovey and Selle had with their alphas. I felt the pull to give myself to Diamant in every cell of my body. I'd lain awake, sweating and restless, as thoughts of what it would be like for Diamant to take my next heat assailed me. I'd even slipped behind pillars at the pavilion or out into the night to kiss Diamant a time or two.

But I didn't want to become his docile houseomega anytime soon.

"You wear your thoughts in your eyes," Diamant whispered as the commotion of setting up a camp began to settle as the soldiers tucked in for the night.

"I do not," I protested, heart and womb both fluttering at the way Diamant looked as though he wanted to devour me with his compliments.

"Oh, yes you do," he chuckled. "I can see the love and concern you have for your people, even in the darkness, and I can see your frustration that you were not born an alpha."

I tried to swallow, but my throat had closed up. Perhaps Diamant could read me after all.

"Someone needs to stand up against my father and take the throne," I whispered. "For

the benefit of all the people of this realm. But the laws of our kingdom say it cannot be me.”

It was something I regretted deeply. I’d had dreams of rising up and changing the laws so that omegas could be kings, but if that time was ever to come, it would be so far into the future that I would be dead and gone. And now that I knew my future would be in the magical world and not this one, I wished even more ardently for someone who would do what I could not.

Diamant reached across and rested a hand over mine as it splayed on the dirt of our hiding place. “You are doing what you can, my brave omega. That is more than most people ever do. It is more than what I would do on my own.”

I smiled, warmed by my dragon’s confidence in me, but something about the comment didn’t sit right.

“You’re a dragon,” I told him. “Of course you are a warrior and a leader.”

Diamant shook his head, a touch of sheepishness that wasn’t at all dragon-like making his face look sad. “I’m a diamond,” he said. “We’re pretty and entertaining but more or less useless.”

“Don’t say that.” I scooted closer to him, resting a hand on his arm. “Diamonds are the hardest substance in nature.”

“A substance that is used for decoration and as an ostentatious display of luxury,” Diamant argued.

It was almost as if he didn’t know his own worth. “They are used to drill and carve,” I said. “You don’t have to be a silly plaything to be a diamond.”

Diamant faced me with a modest smile. “No one has ever thought as highly of me as you seem to,” he said.

My grin widened. “You’re my fated mate. Of course I think highly of you. And of course that means you are a fighter. I dare say you could fight all those incompetent soldiers on your own if you had to.”

Diamant laughed softly. “Only because they’re incompetent.”

I’d never known someone so magnificent to think so little of themselves. Diamant was the master of the dancing pavilion, but I felt in my soul that with a little encouragement, he could be the master of the battlefield, too.

Thinking of all the ways I could build my mate up affected me in more ways than one. My cock pressed hard into the ground under me, and the fleeting thought that we could slip off into the forest to truly enjoy each other before defeating my father tickled my mind.

But no, we had a mission ahead of us.

“We might not be able to stop my father from implementing his horrible plan on our own, but at least we can slow these soldiers down and stop them from taking this group of villagers to whatever camp my father plans to establish,” I whispered .

“What do you suggest?” Diamant asked.

My heart flipped in my chest. Diamant was a great and powerful dragon. He had magic beyond anything I yet understood, and while I knew from Selle’s investigations that there were actually laws and rules about him using that magic in this world, he easily could have taken charge and told me what to do. Instead, he asked for my opinion.

“It doesn’t need to be anything elaborate,” I whispered. “We simply need to foil the soldiers and make it difficult for them to move. Stealing their boots, perhaps.”

Diamant laughed. “I like your way of thinking,” he said.

“And if we can, we need to free the villagers,” I went on.

“Absolutely,” Diamant agreed with a nod.

Why no one had ever given my dazzling dragon a chance to prove himself before was a fault I would need to bring some people to task for someday. But not today.

I glanced into the soldiers’ camp. Studying what I could by the light of the few fires they’d lit and the lamps they carried. “If we move slowly and look as if we belong, they won’t question us or demand to know why we’re there,” I said.

“And a little of Rufus’s favorite trick to avoid notice wouldn’t hurt,” Diamant added.

He stood, helping me up. Touching him was exciting and sent swirls of desire through me. Whoever made the rules about how fated mates reacted to each other clearly didn’t understand the importance of focus and concentration while executing a plan to foil a tyrant. Once again, my body urged me to disappear into the forest with Diamant and to spend the rest of the night in pleasure.

Diamant laughed as if he could feel my thoughts. “Soon enough, my feisty omega. ”

“Damn your eyes,” I snapped in return, though I smiled as I cursed him.

We set out carefully into the soldiers’ camp. I couldn’t feel whether Diamant cloaked me with some sort of magic, but I assumed he had, since neither the soldiers nor the villagers seemed to notice me as we walked up to the edges of the camp.



I wasn't certain where this particular band of mercenaries had come from, but they clearly weren't trained and disciplined soldiers. Most of them seemed more interested in setting out their bedrolls, eating the rations that a wiry, old beta was dishing out from one of the larger fires that had been made, or teasing the hapless villagers, who were in a bad way.

"Your idea will work," Diamant whispered to me, pointing to a pair of boots that one of the soldiers had removed before slipping into his bedroll.

I nodded, then tip-toed over and carefully took the boots away from the foot of his bedroll. They were old and smelly with holes in the soles. I felt no guilt at all about throwing them on one of the fires near the edge of the camp.

Several other pairs of boots were whisked away from their sleeping owners and tossed into one fire or another, or thrown into the stream that wound near the spot where the soldiers had set up their camp. Diamant and I didn't stop with boots either.

"What are you doing?" I whispered to him in alarm as he walked up to the horses that Rottum and his deputy had been riding earlier.

"Setting the horses free," Diamant said, a mischievous twinkle in his eyes .

"They'll notice missing horses," I whispered in return. "They'll notice before morning."

"No, they won't," Diamant said, tapping the side of his nose and winking.

I tried not to laugh as he unfastened their bridles from the tree branch they'd been tied to near the stream and patted their rumps to encourage them to wander off. I could have sworn I saw a sparkle of magic as he tapped them.

We subtly freed as many of the villagers as we could, too, though that proved harder. Too many of those weary souls had already fallen asleep on the grass of the plain.

“It’s alright,” the man whose omega was heavy with child said as he led his husband away. “Free too many of us and the mercenaries will notice. Free just a few and we can go for help and come back with an army of our own.”

“Are you certain?” I asked.

The man nodded, then stared at me for a long while. Then he gasped and his eyes went wide. “Prince Leo,” he whispered in awe.

I nodded, then said. “Don’t tell.”

The man made a sound of surprise that was close to laughter. “So there is good in the castle after all,” he said.

“There is,” I confirmed with a nod. “But we have to fight to conquer the evil.”

The man nodded, then led his omega off, along with two other alphas we’d managed to free.

I wished we could have freed more, but the man was right. We were outnumbered, and if all of the villagers went missing at once, we would have a battle on our hands that we couldn’t win. Diamant could have used his magic, I was certain, but that would have caused untold problems.

“I suppose part of fighting is realizing your limitations,” Diamant whispered to me as we made one final round of the camp, stealing boots, disposing of trousers where they’d been removed for the night, and hiding other supplies. “We will save these people, we just need to make certain we have what it takes to do that.”

I nodded and let out a heavy breath of frustration. It would have been so much more satisfying to save everyone and make everything right all at once. At least we could do what we were able to in the moment.

And working by my dragon mate's side for a cause I was passionate about was a great deal of fun.

"Tie those two into their bedrolls," I whispered to Diamant, almost giggling as we made one last pass through the camp. "They'll have a hard time getting out."

Diamant grinned, his smile surprisingly dragonlike in the firelight. "Gather up those weapons and bring them into the forest," he told me as he crouched to tie up one of the bedrolls.

I nodded, grabbing every rusty sword and rotting cudgel I could find. It was a good thing Diamant and I were on the side of rightness and good, because we could have caused a great deal of trouble if we weren't.

Once we'd finished our mission and retreated into the forest, disposing of the stolen weapons as we went, my heart felt light.

"That was fun," I said as we walked deep into the cover of the trees, where I assumed we would wait until morning to see if our mischief did what it was supposed to do.

"Exceedingly enjoyable," Diamant agreed, pausing as we reached the edge of a grassy clearing by the stream.

I had been glancing back over my shoulder at the faint lights of the camp in the distance, but when I turned back, I caught Diamant staring at me with a ravenous look .

My pulse kicked up, and my insides shivered with excitement and heat.

“I can think of something else that would be exceedingly enjoyable,” Diamant said in a low rumble.

I blinked. Could we do that? Right there, in the middle of the forest, deep into the night? I wasn’t even in heat. Could alphas and omegas just enjoy each other for fun?

But of course we could. It was ridiculous that I would even question that, not to mention a sign of how wretched my life had been so far.

I didn’t want to be a wretched, victimized omega. I wanted to be bold and take what I wanted.

So without being completely certain what I was doing, I flung myself into my alpha’s arms. I gripped the front of his dirty tunic, breathed in his rich, alluring scent, lifted to my toes, and slammed my mouth over his.

The effect was instantaneous. Diamant closed his arms around me and growled as he took command of the kiss. One of his hands slipped down to cup my ass and his tongue invaded my mouth.

We’d kissed before, but those stolen kisses seemed chaste compared to the way Diamant explored my mouth now. I could feel his hunger through the heat of his body and the way his thick alpha cock pressed against my belly, even though we were both clothed.

“Wicked omega,” Diamant growled before dipping close to me again to kiss and nibble at my neck.

It was glorious. I’ve never experienced anything like it. The two heats that my father

had sold to noblemen of his court in the years before had given me a taste of what happened between alphas and omegas, but those incidents had been nightmarish at best.

Diamant was a dream, and I wanted it to continue for as long as possible. I fumbled with the fastenings at the front of his tunic as he continued to kiss my neck. He worked through the buttons and ties of my clothes as well and was far more nimble with his task.

“Yes,” I gasped as he peeled off the vest I wore, then tugged my shirt off over my head. “Yes to all of this, even though I’m not in heat.”

“I’ll have you in heat someday soon,” Diamant growled, lifting me off my feet and setting me down in the grass so he could cover my body with his larger one. “Very soon,” he added, then leaned down to lick one of my nipples.

It was magnificent. I’d always known pleasure like that was possible, but I’d never dreamed it was something I’d ever experience. Diamant worshiped my body with his mouth and hands, kissing my chest and suckling my nipples as he worked through the fastenings of my trousers and pushed them down.

I sighed loudly as my cock jumped free, then let out a deeper cry as Diamant took it in hand to stroke it.

“Yes, my brave omega,” Diamant said, lust and laughter in his voice as he watched my reactions to being pleased for the first time. “Give in to what I know you want. You are passionate and greedy for it.”

He was right, and it was a revelation. I wasn’t the shy, retiring omega I’d always been schooled to believe omegas should be. I was filled with desire and wanted to embrace it.

Diamant must have known. He shifted down a bit and pulled off my boots and trousers to leave me completely naked in the grass under him. I loved it and writhed with all the good feelings pulsing through me. Then he grasped my thighs and pushed them apart before bending low over me so that he could pull my cock into his mouth .

I cried out and started to come almost immediately. My hole leaked slick like a dam had burst, and my insides wanted to be filled so badly that I was near tears. The night air against my skin made everything that much better as well.

But that wasn't all I wanted. As my orgasm subsided, I pushed up, managing to flip Diamant to his back so that I could treat him to the same pleasure he'd just given me.

"Mine," Diamant growled as he relaxed into the grass while I straddled him. It was a paradoxical thing to say, as I was the one pinning him down and stroking my hands over his solid, muscled body to learn it, but it felt right.

Diamant was beautiful in so many ways. He had the physique of a fighter, and as I stroked and kissed his body, I could have sworn that his skin glittered like diamonds in the moonlight.

I wanted to explore all of him, but a particular sort of desire continued to pulse through me, even though I'd just come. I scooted down so that I could undo his trousers and reach in to free his cock.

As soon as I did, a wave of awe and fear fluttered through me, as though I'd freed a potentially dangerous wild animal that wanted to eat me. Diamant was thick and long with a domed head already wet with moisture. Just the sight of him had slick pouring from me and my hole squeezing. I didn't know if he would fit in me, but I wanted to find out.

I wanted to taste him first, so I leaned forward and closed my mouth around his head.

He groaned and placed a hand on my head, gripping my hair like he would force himself all the way to the back of my throat. I could have managed it in heat, but I didn't think I could do it right then .

Diamant seemed to sense that, and instead of pushing in that way, he let me slurp and suck and take what I needed and what I could. The taste of him drove me wild, and every omega mating instinct that had laid dormant in me flared to life.

Again, Diamant seemed to be in perfect accord with me. "I need to be in you," he growled, rising up and grasping me under my shoulders.

I was so drugged with pleasure and need that I put up no fight at all as he flipped our positions once more so that I was on my hands and knees in front of him. The sudden vulnerability of that position had me catching my breath, and when he pushed my thighs apart and brought his heavy cock to my hole, I bore back on him before he could begin to thrust.

It was primal and sudden, but oh so right. Diamant grabbed my hips and thrust hard, burying himself in me. I stifled a cry of pain as he forced past the muscle of my hole, but that resistance was fleeting at best.

My alpha had me. He gripped me tightly as he pushed deeper and deeper, taking what was his. Part of my mind rejected the idea that he had that sort of right over me, but the rest of me gloried in the way he took me, thrusting hard and fast until he was hitting the opening of my tightly closed womb.

He didn't just take. Once he'd set a rhythm, he reached around and stroked me, bringing me to orgasm again as well. My body shuddered and blossomed with the feeling of coming while he filled me. I made all sorts of wicked sounds as I reveled in the feelings he gave me, and when I felt suddenly fuller, I knew he'd spent his seed in me.

It was glorious. I wasn't in heat so he didn't knot me, but that didn't matter. As the moment of completion faded for both of us, Diamant dropped to his side, still in me, his body sheltering mine as we caught our breaths.

"Beautiful Leo," Diamant panted, pulling me close.

"My dragon," I said in return.

I wanted to twist in his arms and say something clever or kiss him some more, but exhaustion overcame me and my eyes closed. But in the back of my mind I felt a distinct stirring. This was only the beginning of what would come for the two of us.



## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 7:31 am*

Chapter

Four

Diamant

My omega. My incomparable, delicious omega. Mine.

I breathed in Leo's scent as the first hints of morning sun dappled down through the leafy canopy above us. He felt so perfect in my arms, his warm, naked body pressed against mine. He belonged there, and I would move heaven and earth in this world, the magical world, and every other world to keep him there for as long as possible.

I breathed him in again and stroked a hand down the lean line of his side. It was a shame he wasn't in heat, although I could feel it whispering in the background, ready to break out in flames at any moment. I wanted to take my omega again, claim him with a bite and burst the bond that was latent between us wide open. Leo might fight me over that claiming, but nothing thrilled me more than the idea of vanquishing a more than worthy opponent.

Not even vanquishing, really. I might have been an arrogant, aggressive dragon, but I relished the idea of a mate who could challenge and master me. Deep within, I had wanted someone who would see more in me than a pleasant dance partner or a good lover. I had always wanted that.

Now there he was, in my arms, snoring gently and adorably as sleep lightened over him. I would tease him about the snoring bit. As soon as he woke fully, I would poke

him in the ribs and tell him he was so noisy he woke half the forest. Then I would flip him to his back, lift his ankles up around his ears, and plow him like?—

The sound of shouting jolted me from my heated thoughts and sent my already hard cock softening. Leo snorted and sucked in a breath as if he'd heard it, too, even though he was just waking up.

I pushed myself up on one arm and turned my head to listen as the shouting sounded again.

“What is it?” Leo asked drowsily.

A moment later, he burst into a smile as memories of our frantic lovemaking from the night before returned to him.

“My dragon,” he murmured, reaching for me.

I couldn't resist the urge to roll on top of him and to kiss him until we were both breathless. But when more shouts sounded, Leo heard them and tensed.

“The soldiers,” he said, sitting as I rolled to the side. “They've discovered our tricks.”

“They must have,” I agreed with a nod, reaching for the tunic I'd tossed aside the night before .

I'd never fully removed my trousers, so it was easier for me to dress and push myself to my feet. I used a bit of magic to clean myself and Leo from our activities of the night before, then helped Leo back into his rumpled clothing.

We made our way to the edge of the trees, crouching to observe the camp.

“It looks like our efforts have borne fruit,” I said, humor in my voice.

I was right. The camp was in disarray. Many of the soldiers were just waking up to find their boots or trousers gone. I couldn’t help but laugh at the sight of some of them dashing around in just their drawers, or with nothing on the bottom at all. Someone had discovered a pile of destroyed boots in the ashes of a burned-out fire. Someone else had found some in the stream. No one had located the weapons yet.

“What is the meaning of this?” Rottum shouted above the confusion. “Where is my horse?”

No one had an answer for him. The horses were long gone.

Better even than the confusion and distress of the soldiers, I noticed that the number of villagers sitting in the center of the camp was greatly diminished. In fact, as far as I could tell, there were only a handful of them, all of them alphas.

“The rest of the villagers must have escaped in the night,” Leo whispered beside me. “And it looks like the ones who remain are there to fight.”

“Good,” I said, reaching across the grass for Leo’s hand.

I was so proud of my omega, so proud of his bravery and cleverness. I was proud of myself for taking a stand against evil as well. It was a new feeling, as new as my communion with Leo. Leo took my hand and squeezed it as if the feeling were mutual. We made the perfect partnership.

“This is outrageous!” Rottum continued to shout and stomp around the camp. “What is the meaning of this chaos? I knew I should have chosen better men from among you.”

My and Leo's grins dropped and we both turned back to the camp.

"You asked for volunteers from the main army," one of the soldiers, who had found his singed trousers and hopped around as he stepped into them, said. "We volunteered for this."

"Volunteered to avoid the main battle, I assume," Rottum's deputy said.

I frowned. It made perfect sense that this motley band of fools wasn't the only force King Freslik had working for him. I didn't like the implication that there were more mercenaries out there, though.

"Resolve this mess as swiftly as you can," Rottum shouted. "We need to rejoin the rest of the army before their attack on Berk."

Leo sucked in a breath. I glanced at him in question.

"It's one of the larger villages in the west," he told me, scowling as if Rottum had offended him personally. "They are good people, prosperous people. The village is strong enough to stand up against Father, but not if they're overrun with mercenaries."

"Then we need to go ahead and warn them," I said, shuffling back and pushing myself to a crouch.

Leo pulled back as well, but he wore a look of confusion. "How?" he asked. "Berk is at least a day's ride from here. We don't know where the rest of the army is or how close they are to attacking the village."

"We can find out," I said with a broad smile.

I could tell by the curious look in Leo's eyes and the excited smile that tried to take his mouth that he had some idea of what I was talking about. I gestured for him to follow me away from the line of the trees, moving as swiftly as I could in the undergrowth while still being quiet.

"I trust the men who stayed behind from the other village to do whatever they clearly have planned to escape from those fools," I said once we reached a small clearing deep in the trees. "As for us, we have an entirely different means of escape at our disposal."

"You don't mean—" Leo started.

Before he could finish, I drew in a deep breath and felt the prickling of scales and the cracking of bones as my body transformed from human to dragon. The moment of transformation was always uncomfortable, but once it was complete and I stood on all fours in the smallest version of my dragon form, it felt good to stretch my wings.

Leo's mouth had fallen open as I transformed, and he let out an exultant laugh as he looked up at me. "You're magnificent!" he gasped, eyes wide.

All dragons were magnificent, but diamond dragons were some of the flashiest of our kind. My body shimmered with an iridescence that was almost white as the sunlight glinted off my scales. My face and form were a bit sharper and more angular than some of my brothers, but it had its advantages.

"Climb on," I said, my voice lower and deeper, but with the same overall sound as before.

I lowered one shoulder and positioned my arm so that Leo could mount my back easily. My ferocious omega wasted no time in running to me and scrambling up until he sat astride my shoulders, leaning down to grip my neck tightly.

“Tovey and Selle have told me that riding a dragon is one of the most thrilling experiences of their lives. I know you won’t let me down,” he said.

I laughed, then with a powerful push, I leapt into the air.

As soon as I was above the trees, I exerted my magic to grow in size, to secure Leo to me so that he couldn’t fall off, and to cloak us so that we would appear like a cloud against the morning sky.

I should have come up with some way to muffle sound as well, because Leo whooped and laughed with joy as I soared far above the land.

“It’s incredible!” he shouted, shifting to the side so he could look down past my neck to the rolling fields, clusters of woods, and meandering streams below.

I couldn’t help but show off. Flying was such a thrilling, freeing thing. I turned circles in the air, speeding up at one point and diving closer to the ground at others just to show my mate how dexterous and swift I could be.

Leo loved every second of it. I could tell without even having a bond between us. He laughed and shouted, gripped my body tightly, leaning into it when I dove, and sitting straighter to feel the wind in his hair when I ascended again. I felt very much like he was the valiant warrior that he was, riding towards certain victory.

My joy and Leo’s sobered slightly when we spotted the army we’d been looking for stretched out across the land below us.

“They’re close to Berk,” Leo shouted, pointing at the hill where the front of the army had amassed. “It doesn’t look like the people of Berk know they’re coming. ”

Leo was right. The hill concealed them from the view of the large village. I could see

what were probably a few shepherd lads running from the hill toward the village as if to give warning, but it was still early, and I doubted the people would be ready before the army arrived.

“Lucky for them, they have a dragon and a prince on their side,” I said, pulling my body in tight so we could zoom toward the village.

We made it there just as the out of breath shepherds came within shouting distance of the edge of the village. Thanks to the concealment I’d conjured for me and my omega, once I transformed back into my human form, we looked like any other villagers who could have see the army from the hilltop.

“They’re coming!” one of the lads shouted as Leo and I joined the crowd forming near the edge of the village. “An entire army! They’re coming.”

“It looks like there could be five hundred men or more,” Leo added without hesitation. “Berk will need to mount some sort of defense against them. My father has plans to kidnap villagers and hold them hostage at work camps in order to force the rest of you to do his bidding.”

The confused and frightened murmurings of the villagers stopped and all eyes turned to Leo.

“It’s...it’s Prince Leo!” one of the ladies at the edge of the crowd called out.

“Your Highness,” a middle-aged alpha said, dropping quickly to one knee.

The rest of the villagers followed as word that Prince Leo had arrived among them began to spread.

“Stand, please,” Leo said, though it sounded more like an order. “There isn’t time for

deference. We need to work together to make certain Berk can defend itself from my father's army of mercenaries."

"What do we do? How do we do that?" the alpha asked.

"We're villagers, not soldiers," someone else in the crowd said.

As valiant and well-meaning as Leo was, he didn't have any military experience. He glanced to me with a look that bordered on desperation, breathing fast.

"You'll all need weapons to begin with," I said, trying to think things through. "And every entry point into the city will need to be barricaded and defended."

"I know how to build barricades," another alpha said, raising his hand.

"We have a few weapons in the village hall," a female alpha said. "They won't be enough for everyone."

"Pitchforks will work in a pinch," Leo said. "The most important thing is to block the army from entering and to keep those who are vulnerable protected in the center of the city. From what I was able to observe, there are more of you than there are of them, even if they seem more powerful at first glance."

"We'll fight to protect what is ours," the alpha said.

His words were met with shouts of determination. That determination shifted to action as the villagers organized themselves into teams and as those teams moved out to spread the word and set about mounting defenses.

"I think we can do this," Leo said, panting and pink-faced as the two of us went with the group heading to the village hall to distribute weapons. "We can defend this



village from my father's cruelty, and from here, we can keep the rest of the kingdom safe."

"We can," I said, blooming with pride in my mate.

There was more going on with him than met the eye, though. Leo worked as tirelessly as everyone else finding and distributing the weapons. The villagers were in awe of him, despite him being an omega, and followed his orders without question. Leo rose to the challenge, as a true leader did, and helped the different armed groups take up positions along the perimeter of the village.

"It would be better if the village had walls," he said as he moved on to help one of the groups that was piling broken boards and debris on top of an old wagon that had been rolled into the space where the main road leading out of the village opened. "But we can defend the place regardless."

He stopped as soon as he'd finished speaking and nearly doubled over. He rested his hands on his knees and breathed quickly, then forced out a longer breath.

I knew what was wrong. I could smell the heat wafting from him without even standing close to him. Our lovemaking the night before had done exactly what I should have been able to predict it would, given that we were fated mates, and sent him into heat.

"Leo," I said in a warning voice, striding closer to him. "You might not be able to stay for this fight."

Leo growled and straightened. "I have to stay. I cannot abandon these people just as they are about to be attacked."

"You are a prince of this realm," one of the alphas who had been helping to build the

barricade overheard us and said. "It is not right that you should risk yourself on our behalf."

"I have to stand up for you," Leo said, distress painting his face as he stood. "Someone has to stand up for you."

"I heard there was a sorceress trying to overthrow King Freslik," a lovely young omega woman said as she bravely helped a man who looked like her sire pile debris on the wagon. "She might be the one to save us."

"No," Leo said, shaking his head and pacing in agitation. "I have never known a sorceress to fight for the side of what is right."

Leo had to puff out his breaths to steady himself as the wave hit him. The seat of his trousers had turned slightly damp. Some of the other alphas were taking notice as well, though they were good men who were fighting to contain their reactions.

"I heard that there is someone else, another king, possibly a dragon, that has vowed to overthrow King Freslik," a beta who had rushed onto the scene with a bucket containing drinking water to relieve the workers said. "Though I shouldn't say such things in front of you, Prince Leo, since he might want to overthrow you, too."

"There's no such thing as dragons," another villager scolded the beta.

"I think there might be," someone else said. "I've been hearing more and more about dragons of late. I think they might be possible."

"There are no dragons here," the alpha who was in charge said. "Just a village that needs to defend itself from an army. Look!"

He pointed out toward the hill. We all turned.

Sure enough, the mercenary soldiers had just rounded the top of the hill and were marching straight for the village.

“Hurry!” Leo shouted, turning back to his people, though he was dripping in sweat and reeking of ripe fruit. “Man your positions. Take up whatever arms you can. Keep the most vulnerable away from the edges of the village.”

Everyone moved at once, following Leo’s lead. I wished my mate could have seen how bold and powerful he seemed to those around him. He was a natural leader.

At least, at any other time he would have been a natural leader. As the two of us hurried back into the town to see to the other groups of defenders, he had to stop more than once to breathe through the ache I knew kept filling him. It was a fiery, hollow ache, one that demanded to be filled. The way Leo kept looking at me was all the proof I needed that he knew precisely what he needed to fill it.

“You can’t fight this fight, my love,” I told him when the pains of his first heat wave nearly brought him to his knees. “You’ve done everything you can. It’s time to take care of you now.”

“No,” Leo said, shaking his head and trying to force himself to walk on. “I refuse to be a weak omega at the mercy of my body. I am a leader, a fighter. My people need me.”

“You have already done so much for them,” I told him, attempting to reach for him and pull him into my arms.

Leo dodged away from me, and I was reasonably certain why. His heat was coming on fast and hard, and if our skin touched, he wouldn’t be able to stop himself from giving in to his natural needs.

“I have to fight,” he growled through clenched teeth.

“No, my love,” I said, striding over to where he’d gone in his attempt to get away from me and grasping his face in my hands. “You need to breed.”

Leo made a frustrated sound of anguish. Then he threw himself at me, wrapping his whole body around mine in a way that forced me to lift him off his feet.

“Damn you,” he gasped and panted, kissing me as if he would devour my tongue and jerking his hips to rub his hard cock against my body. “Damn this body of mine.”

“It’s alright, love,” I told him, flicking my wrist to open a door to the magical world beside us. “I’ve got you. We’ll take care of this together.”

As the first shouts of battle sounded behind us, I stepped with Leo through the door.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 7:31 am*

Chapter

Five

Leo

I could handle pain. Despite what my father and nearly every other alpha I'd encountered believed, omegas weren't fainting violets who burst into tears when they so much as stubbed a toe. Omegas, by nature, could manage extraordinary amounts of pain when called on to do so. I'd been through more empty heats by far than I'd had an alpha for. I would rather suffer through the agony of an empty heat than be given away like a prize to some lascivious old alpha who paid my father a fortune.

I would have rather toughed it out and dealt with the blinding, hungry pain that gripped my insides while helping the people of the village of Berk defend against my father's mercenary army than be whisked off into whatever realm of pleasure and softness Diamant had in store for me.

"No!" I shouted, struggling in his arms and reaching for the portal he'd created between the two worlds, like I could fight my way back into my father's world. "No, I don't want this! My people need me. I have to be with them!"

Even as I shouted that, another wave of heat and pain and need nearly doubled me over.

"You don't have a choice, my sweet," Diamant said, his voice somehow lower and darker.

“Don’t call me that,” I insisted, twisting and writhing to get out of his embrace as he carried me away from the doorway and...down a dimly lit hall?

I gasped and stopped struggling long enough to assess my surroundings. Diamant had opened a door from the village straight into what appeared to be a great manor house. The hallway he pulled me down was wide and comfortable, with landscape paintings on the walls and several doorways into parlors and sitting rooms that would have my father’s courtiers drooling over their opulence. The floor we walked across was marble, but it appeared to have streaks of diamond spreading through the base stone.

“Where are we?” I asked, beginning my struggle again as we neared a wide, curving staircase. “Where have you taken me?”

“I’ve brought you home, my love,” Diamant said, shifting his hold on me as if he would take my hand and lead me upstairs. “I’ve brought you to my lair, where you belong, for your heat.”

“No!” I shouted, wrenching away from him. “This cannot happen. My people need me. I need to fight, to defend the village and save them, not?—”

My strong words were cut short by a wave of desperation so sharp that it buckled my knees completely. I sank to the marble floor, relieved by its coldness. So much so that I tipped back to sit on the cool stone, hoping my quivering hole would get the message and stop its heat-addled nonsense.

Instead, I was mortified by the sensation of slick pouring out of me and soaking not only my trousers, but the floor under me as well. It was undignified, but worse than that, it seemed to prove the worst of everything my father and his ilk had ever said about omegas. We were weak, libidinous, empty-headed fools who were only good for having our holes stuffed and our wombs expanded with children.

“Love, you cannot fight your nature,” Diamant said in a voice that was both soothing and thick with desire.

When I glanced up at him, incredulous at being accused of everything I didn’t want to be, I gasped at the shape of his eyes. They had gone from ordinary ice blue to slit like a dragon’s eyes. His pale skin was flushed with rut, and when I let my gaze drop a little, I could see his thick cock straining hard against the front of his trousers.

Without thinking, I lunged for him. A cry of longing and defeat left my lungs as I buried my face against his groin, clawing at his trousers as if I could rip through them to reach his cock and draw it into my mouth. I needed to suck and swallow him more than I needed air. I needed to feel his cum hit the back of my throat and slide into my belly, easing the need that pounded through me.

“I know, sweetheart,” Diamant growled, stroking my hair then reaching down to scoop me up under my arms. “I feel it, too. It’s never been this strong.”

I whimpered as he lifted me, but I hated that sound coming from me so much that I struggled against him once I was on my feet.

I managed to break free, and with all the resistance I had left in me, I bolted away from Diamant and across the wide hall towards a door I’d just noticed.

“No you don’t,” Diamant said, chasing easily after me and catching me around the waist. “I had hoped we could manage this calmly, but I can see that isn’t going to happen.”

“Let me go! Let me go!” I shouted as Diamant hoisted me over his shoulder and headed back down the hall.

His indrawn breath was audible as he breathed in my heat scent. My dripping ass was

close to his head as I lay over his shoulder, and I felt the tremor that passed through his body as he carried me swiftly into what appeared to be a private wing of the house.

Being so close to him and so much at his mercy affected me, too. I panted with the need to feel him deep inside me, like the night before but deeper. My womb trembled in excitement within me, making my heart race, my cock stand up greedily, and my hole gush with slick.

It was as exciting as it was humiliating. I growled and thrashed, trying to roll off Diamant's shoulder so I could flee back to the battle in Berk, but Diamant's grip on me was too tight. I wouldn't be able to break free, and that had me as close to tears as I'd ever been.

I lost the will to fight for a moment and lay over Diamant's shoulder, panting and moaning as I caught my breath. As soon as he walked me into a large bedroom decorated all in shades of white, a huge bed draped with curtains of diamonds in its center, my energy returned.

"I don't want this," I groaned as Diamant gently set me on my feet. "I don't want to be a brood mare for a dragon."

"You aren't?—"

Before Diamant could finish, I broke away from him, dashing toward the large, glass doors that led out to some sort of garden patio.

"Enough of this!" he roared. The doors slammed shut magically in front of me, arresting my progress. "You are my omega, you are in heat, and you will give in to your natural desires."



“But that’s not who I am!” I shouted, turning to face Diamant.

“Yes, it is,” he insisted, stalking toward me.

I could sense that his patience had grown thin. It wasn’t just my heat that the two of us had to content with. We were fated mates, and my heat had sent him into rut. I could feel the change that had come over him. My good-natured, humorous, dragon companion had given way to a hungry beast with a look in his eyes that said he would have me whether I wanted it or not.

The thrill of those feelings might have been the only thing that kept me from despair. I couldn’t choose whether I was in heat or not, but I could choose how that heat went.

“You can’t force me,” I said breathlessly, dashing to one side.

Diamant knew that I meant the exact opposite of my words. His ferocity seemed to grow as he darted to the side, chasing me around the bed and grabbing for me, but underneath what was a truly frightening demeanor, I could feel the pulse of his love for me.

“If that’s the way you want to play it,” he growled, swaying to the side as I attempted to dodge around him.

I made a break for the other side of the room, but this time, he didn’t just swipe at me, he caught me around the waist and pulled me close. I thrashed and struggled, but he lifted me off my feet and threw me hard onto the bed .

I gripped the silken coverlet, trying to crawl my way to freedom across the cloudlike expanse of the bed. Diamant caught me by one ankle and pulled that boot off, then wrenched the other boot from my foot as well. Whether he used magic to assist him or not, he had my feet bare in no time.

“You are mine, omega,” he growled, stretching over me and reaching for my waist so he could yank me back toward the edge of the bed. “You will succumb to me. Your womb will open and I will fill it with my seed.”

Another burst of genuine panic cut through me. I thrilled at the idea of Diamant having his way with me and bringing us both mountains of pleasure, like he had the night before, but the idea of being bred made me want to scream in frustration. Mostly because my body loved the idea.

“No,” I panted, clutching at the bedcovers and trying to get away, even as Diamant wrestled my trousers off, leaving my lower body completely exposed.

“Yes,” my dragon insisted, pulling me even closer to him so he could yank my vest and shirt off.

He was quick and efficient with his movements. My body strained and sang as air swirled around my bare skin. My cock stood straight out in front of me, dripping almost as badly as my hole, which spilled volumes of slick across the bedcovers.

“You cannot escape your fate,” Diamant said, his voice rougher and more primal than ever as he flipped me to my back.

I gasped at the sight of him, naked and erect, by the side of the bed. He must have used magic to remove his clothing, but it hardly mattered. His body was huge and chiseled, like the finest sculpture imaginable. Sweat already shone over his body like diamonds. The look in his eyes was one of pure lust as he swept his gaze over my pink and straining body.

“My mate,” he growled, gripping my thighs and pushing them apart. “You are mine and mine alone.”

I groaned in despair, but that sound turned into a cry of pleasure as Diamant dipped down to rake his tongue across my slick-messy hole. He moaned as if tasting the most delicious treat ever. That sound combined with the sensation of his tongue stroking and probing my hole had me bursting with orgasm before I could stop myself.

It was powerful, intoxicating, and it rendered me completely helpless. More slick poured from me as thin trails of cum painted my belly. Diamant found that alluring and shifted to lick it straight from my skin. That had me coming again and writhing for more.

“Fuck me!” I demanded, gasping for air. “I want my dragon in me, now!”

I couldn’t believe I would make such a demand, but when Diamant laughed, the sound almost sinister, and shifted back to spread my legs wider and grasp my hips, I didn’t care.

He wasn’t gentle or easy with me. I didn’t want him to be. If I was destined to be a hole for my dragon to pleasure himself in, then I wanted our mating to be as raw and primal as possible.

I cried out as Diamant first breeched me, relishing the moment of pain as my body adjusted to his intrusion. He seemed somehow bigger than the night before and his thrusts more demanding. I gripped the bedcovers above my head and cried out as he pounded deeper and deeper into me.

I felt the swell of acceptance and excitement in my womb moments before the head of Diamant’s cock pushed right past any resistance it might have put up. There was no resistance at all, really. As much of a fighter as I was, my traitorous womb blossomed like a flower in spring and let my dragon mate in without so much as a pinch of defense.

It was the most amazing sensation I'd ever felt. I closed my eyes and cried out as I felt my beloved's seed spill into me, filling me with life and pleasure. We were one in that moment, pulsing with carnal delight that was so good it felt as though the old me melted away and a new man formed in its place.

Greater still was the sensation of a door between me and Diamant bursting wide as our souls entwined. I was vaguely aware of him bending over me as his impossibly large knot formed, locking us together, and biting my shoulder at the junction of my neck.

Even more pleasure flooded through me, but it was my mate's pleasure as well as mine. Every part of me was alight with magnificence as one, continuous orgasm crashed through me. It was so all-encompassing that I wasn't sure where it began or ended.

"Leo," Diamant moaned above me, rocking into me over and over as the last of his orgasm faded, his balls completely empty. "My Leo."

I replied with a wordless sound of acceptance and despair. I wasn't sure that I was his Leo anymore. I was different, changed. I could feel the spark of something inside me, feel the expansion of my womb as new life doubled and grew with lightning speed within me.

As exhaustion pulled me hard into sleep, I came close to weeping with the knowledge that my dragon mate hadn't just taken my heat, he'd bred me .

I wasn't certain how long I slept. I'd never known sleep so deep or so peaceful before. When I awoke and blinked to take in my surroundings, I saw that I was in the same bed, only the right way around. I could feel Diamant's body behind me, almost wrapped around me, and felt the humidity of his breath against my shoulder. His spicy, alpha scent encompassed me, soothing me on a soul-deep level.

But it was the distinct awareness of him on a profound level that startled me the most.

“We’ve bonded,” I said groggily, reaching up to touch the slightly painful spot on my neck where he’d bitten me. My hand came away with a small collection of perfect diamonds that I dropped into the sheets.

“Yes, we have,” Diamant said, snuggling me as if I were some soft toy that he loved.

I both adored the feeling and frowned at it.

Then the greater reality hit me.

Heart in my throat, I lowered my hand to my belly. Sure enough, it was slightly round and I could feel something solid within me.

“It’s alright,” Diamant said, feeling my distress. He laid his hand over mine on my belly. “All fated mates conceive during their first heat together. I don’t know of a single instance where it isn’t true.”

I let out a sudden sound of despair and frustration. “It’s not who I am,” I said, sounding as pitiful as I felt and hating it. “I’m not some docile papa. I never wanted to have babies to begin with.”

I half expected Diamant to be angry with me. It was his child, his egg, I was carrying, after all. Instead, my mate radiated understanding .

“I’ve never imagined myself as a sire either. My life has been too frivolous for that. We will manage this together,” he said. “I will not be cloying and say that you will love our child as soon as it is birthed, but I do know that you have a good, open heart.”

“I’m a fighter,” I said, struggling not to weep. “That is who I am. I don’t know who I am anymore like this.”

“You are my beloved,” Diamant said, kissing my cheek and neck and as much of me as he could reach. “You are my fated mate and the bravest, strongest omega I have ever known. You make me a better alpha.”

“I don’t want the person who I have worked so hard to be taken away from me,” I breathed out, battling against the despair of an unknown life that I would be forced to live but that I didn’t choose.

“We will face this together,” Diamant said. “We will?—”

His promise to me was cut short by an urgent knock on the door.

“My lord,” a male servant’s voice came from the other side. “You are needed downstairs at once. Prince Selle and Prince Tovey are here seeking Prince Leo with urgent news.”

That was enough to startle me out of my stupor. I sat up along with Diamant and turned toward the door.

“What is the nature of this urgent news?” Diamant asked, as if inquiring whether it was really so urgent as to drag us out of bed.

“I do not know for certain, my lord, but they say they have seen something distressing in a certain scrying glass.”

I gasped. “The battle. They must have seen something about the battle.”

I threw off the bedcovers and scrambled out of bed, searching for my clothes. I

needed a thorough wash while I was at it. Fortunately, there was a wide basin in the corner of Diamant's room next to a screen.

I didn't make it more than three steps in that direction before a cool breeze, like someone sweeping the finest silk over my body, swirled around me. When I glanced down, not only was I perfectly clean, I was dressed in a magnificent suit of white and blue decorated with diamond accents.

When I turned to Diamant, who rolled out of bed, stood, and was instantly dressed in a similar manner, he shrugged. "What is the use of magic," he said, "unless you can use it to complete life's more mundane tasks in the blink of an eye?"

I grinned at him and nearly laughed before remembering the urgency of the situation before us.

I walked around the bed and took his hand, and together the two of us left the bedchamber. We followed the middle-aged, beta servant downstairs and into one of the parlors we'd passed the night before. Selle and Tovey were waiting there, their dragons with them.

"Oh! You're looking...." Tovey greeted me, but stopped, flushing pink, as if he didn't know how to point out what we all knew I'd just done.

"What is the news?" I demanded, striding into the room like a general and ignoring the bulge of my belly.

Selle, who was wearing glasses again, adjusted his frames as he stared at my belly. He shook his head as though there were more important things for him to focus on, and there were.

"We've just seen in the scrying glass," he said. "Father's army attacked Berk. The

people of Berk put up a long and noble fight, but in the end, they lost.”

“Dozens of prisoners have been taken,” Tovey added fretfully. “They’re being marched toward the camp Father established.”

My turmoil and uncertainty melted away. I knew with absolute certainty what needed to be done.

“We have to rescue them,” I said.



## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 7:31 am*

Chapter

Six

Diamant

“ N o.” I wasn’t generally inclined to put my foot down when Leo truly wanted something, but circumstances had changed in the last several hours and we had more than just the two of us to consider now.

“No?” As expected, Leo turned to me with his own, sweet brand of fury in his eyes. “You expect me to languish here, like I have become your bed slave, when the people we were helping less than a day ago are in danger?”

I had to fight not to smile. My beautiful omega really was a fighter, but the way he subconsciously rested a hand over his belly was proof that everything had changed for him.

I huffed impatiently and sent my brothers a quick look. The two of them understood the gravity of the situation, but I could tell they were amused that I now had a strong-willed omega as part of my soul, too.

It wasn’t polite to talk about such things in public, but I had to point the obvious out to Leo. “You’re only half-bred,” I said, clearing my throat. “You have an egg growing inside you. We, er, need to finish the process.”

I felt a brief flash of amusement from my mate over the sheepishness with which I

spoke of such things aloud, but it quickly turned to stubborn indignation.

“I don’t have to birth the egg immediately,” he said, then glanced to his brothers. “Selle, you birthed your egg almost right away, but Tovey, you waited several days before yours were birthed, right?”

“Yes,” Prince Tovey said hesitantly, glancing to Rufus at his side. “I felt terrible for those days, though.”

“That was because you were separated from your mate,” Prince Selle pointed out with a nod. “I never felt sick because I was with Gildur the whole time.” He smiled up at Gildur, then faced Leo again. “I think it’s possible that you won’t feel too ill if you and Diamant stay close.”

Leo damn well would stay close to me. Anyone who tried to separate the two of us now would feel my wrath.

I could feel Leo’s approval of those emotions through our new bond. He sent me a wicked grin then said, “That settles it. We’ll return to Berk and do whatever we can to help the villagers.”

I still had reservations about allowing my omega to dash off into a potentially volatile situation while with egg, but I knew him well enough to know it would be more painful to try to stop him. Besides, with the distress he was feeling about his impending papahood, allowing him to fight might be the best thing for him.

“We can go with you,” Prince Selle spoke up, standing taller.

“We will not,” Gildur countered him with a frown. “We have a precious egg at home that needs us.”

“Our eggs can do without us for a short time,” Prince Tovey said, appealing to Rufus. “If you’d like, we can stay in the background and only act if we’re needed.”

“Our triumph would be guaranteed if we had three dragons with us,” Leo said, energy and excitement pulsing through our bond.

I rather liked the feelings of Leo’s emotions wrapping themselves around me. He was so full of life and determination. It was like feeling a bracing breeze that encouraged action.

“We have to help our people,” Prince Selle appealed to Gildur one last time. “Our Father would destroy them all if given half a chance.”

Gildur let out a sigh. I knew my brother well enough to know that settled the matter. “Alright,” he said. “But you will stay well back from any danger. Our child needs you.”

Prince Selle practically burst with excitement as he turned to Leo. “What do we need to do?” he asked.

“First, we need to see what we’re up against,” Leo said, then glanced at me. “Can you make a doorway into Berk?”

I nodded. “Easily.”

I sensed Gildur’s disapproval and Rufus’s excitement as I waved a hand and opened a portal off to one side in the parlor. The only one of my kinsmen who was better at creating doorways than me was Emmerich. Fortunately, we didn’t need that level of precision for this particular door.

My door opened into an abandoned street at one end of Berk. As soon as we stepped

through, the scent of burning and the cries of wounded animals assailed my ears .

“We’re too late,” Prince Tovey said, clinging to Rufus’s arm.

“We cannot be too late,” Leo said, marching forward, one hand on his belly.

I strode after my omega, ready to jump to his defense if he needed it.

There were no soldiers in the streets like there could have been, though. There weren’t as many people as there had been before the battle either.

“How much time has passed?” Leo asked, glancing to me as we marched side-by-side to Berk’s main street, searching for the people who had become our friends before the attack.

“I can’t tell,” I said, “but at least a day.”

“You’ve returned!”

Our small procession stopped and turned to find the alpha who had been skilled with making barricades coming out way.

“What happened?” Leo asked without hesitation, moving to meet the man in the center of a crossroads. “How did you fare in battle?”

“We held out as long as we could,” the alpha said, his voice laced with defeat and exhaustion. “They broke through our defenses and started burning buildings after a few hours.”

“Do you need help putting the fires out?” Prince Selle asked, stepping forward.

The alpha started to speak, then froze and just stared at him. “Prince Selle?” he asked. “We all thought you were lost. And Prince Tovey. Your Highnesses.”

The alpha moved like he would kneel before the three princes in front of him, but Leo stepped forward and stopped him .

“There will be time for that later,” he said, as strong as any leader. “Right now, we need to know where the army is and what hostages they’ve taken.”

The alpha only looked surprised that Leo knew hostages had been taken for a moment. “It must be ten hours at least since the soldiers swept through the village, taking as many of the vulnerable as they could.”

A woman who had been working near by noticed the conversation and came over to join us. Her dirty face was streaked with tears. “They took my sister and my papa both,” she said, sniffing. “I overheard one of their generals say King Freslik would be pleased to have such comely prisoners and that his noblemen would pay handsomely for them.”

I hadn’t thought my disgust in King Freslik could sink any lower, but the hint that he planned to sell his own people as slaves disgusted me.

“We need to find the camp where they’re being held,” I said, glancing first at my brothers, then at Leo. “This kind of cruelty by a king against his own people cannot be tolerated.”

“Agreed,” Rufus said, a deadly sort of fire in his eyes. “I should have squashed that bug when I first had the opportunity.”

“No one is squashing anyone,” Gildur said, holding out his hands. When we all turned to stare incredulously at him, he said, “Mother has rules. We cannot—” He

glanced to the alpha and the woman, then cleared his throat. “We must obey the rules of engagement and find another way to resolve the situation.”

Meaning we couldn’t simply charge through the cruel world using magic to do the work for us .

It would have been infinitely more convenient to resolve the entire situation with magic.

“We should begin by helping these people restore their homes and livelihoods,” Prince Selle said, as if he’d already decided what he wanted to do.

“It’s a shame Rumi and Obi went back to the castle, otherwise they could have helped us,” Prince Tovey said.

Leo seemed to light up. “Rumi and Obi,” he said. “We need their help. And Misha’s, too, though this whole thing would probably terrify him.”

“I don’t see how putting more of you in danger is going to do much to find the captured villagers and rescue them,” Gildur said.

“This is their kingdom, too,” Leo insisted. “I know they want to be part of the efforts to save it. Besides, Rumi is the eldest of us and knows more about how Father thinks than the rest of us do.”

“He really would want to be a part of the efforts to fight back against Father’s tyranny,” Prince Selle pointed out, pushing his glasses up his face.

“Very well,” I sighed. Aside from the fact that my omega was stubborn enough to get himself into trouble if he didn’t get his way, I had to admit that involving Prince Rumi and Prince Obi could lead Emmerich and Argus to join our cause as well.

“Where are the other princes now?”

“Back at our Father’s castle,” Prince Tovey answered. “They returned there hours ago.”

“Then I suppose we’re headed straight to the lion’s den,” I said. Admittedly, I felt a thrill at the possibility of facing King Freslik on his own turf. There was no telling what I would do if the two of us ended up alone in a room, though.

Leo grinned at me, clearly sensing that I wasn’t as opposed to the idea of continuing our crusade on the most dangerous ground possible. “Should we fly?” he asked, excitement rippling from him.

“No,” I said with a wry laugh. “Not in your condition, and not when we’ll be heading into a highly populated area.”

I could sense my beloved’s disappointment, but it abated a bit when I raised a hand subtly and caused a doorway straight into King Freslik’s castle to appear off to one side, out of view of the villagers who had gathered to plan a course of action with us.

“We need supplies first,” I gave the excuse for our departure to the villagers completely unconvincingly. I gestured for Leo to follow me to the alley where I’d created the door.

“What can we do to help you here?” Gildur asked the villagers as we left, drawing their attention away from us.

As the alpha answered, Leo and I slipped off, traveling through the doorway and straight into what looked like a seldom-used servant’s hallway in the castle.

“Mother will have words with me when she learns how many doorways I’ve created

in the last few days,” I muttered, careful to close the door behind us before Leo and I started down the hall.

“From what Selle tells me, Queen Gaia is aware of everything that happens in the magical world, and this one, too,” Leo said. “If she didn’t want you meddling in things, she could find a way to stop you.”

“True,” I said. Although that had me wondering why she didn’t stop so many bad things, like King Freslik coming to power, in the first place and solve us all a lot of trouble.

As if my thoughts of King Freslik summoned the bastard, Leo and I heard his sharp voice moments before we were about to turn a corner that would have brought us face to face with the man.

I threw out an arm to push Leo and myself up against the wall, using a bit of magic to make us difficult to notice as the man passed.

“—don’t care what sort of army he has with him, I want him neutralized, even if I have to do it myself,” he was saying to a pair of advisors.

“Your Majesty, these are rumors only,” one of the advisors, a youngish alpha who already looked debauched beyond his years, said. “The only army within your kingdom is the one you hired to round up peasants and take them to the work camp.”

“The work camp is coming along nicely,” the other advisor, an older beta, said. “It will achieve so much more than simply bribing your people to behave on threat of their loved ones being hurt. I’ve already found a buyer willing to pay top dollar for the barrels and tools the prisoners, er, the workers have made.”

The man had more to say, but the trio moved too far away from where Leo and I hid



for us to hear more.

“My father is evil,” Leo growled as we slipped back into the main hall and hurried on, Leo taking the lead. “He’ll pay for the cruelty he’s inflicting on his own subjects.”

“I’ve no doubt he will,” I agreed, though in my gut, I knew that it sometimes the arc of justice was long.

Leo slowed down as we approached the part of the castle where he explained in a quick whisper that his and his brothers’ bedchamber was located. I suspected his reason for slowing down as we approached and was proven right when we peered around the last corner to find four bored guards lounging in front of the door.

Two of the guards were playing some sort of dice game while sitting on the floor. One of the others was sitting in a corner, arms crossed, eyes closed, snoring. The fourth stood with his back against the door, picking his teeth with his fingernail.

“Your father doesn’t think much of you princes if these are the men he’s put in charge of guarding you,” I said with a bitter smirk.

“My father doesn’t think much of us at all,” Leo sighed. He swung back around the corner to look at me and whisper, “Do you think you can draw them away from the door?”

I grinned with particularly dragon-like zeal. “Easily.”

I gestured for Leo to lean back against the wall with me, and after reviving the spell to make us unnoticeable, I called out, “Guards! You four! Attend me at once!”

The order came out in King Freslik’s voice. Mimicking voices was a party trick I’d mastered, but never imagined using in any serious context. It worked, though. From

where we waited around the corner, Leo and I could only hear the sudden scramble and clumsy shuffle as the guards leapt to attention.

“Your Majesty?” one of them asked.

“Follow me!” I shouted in Freslik’s voice. “You’re too slow! Attend me in the throne room!”

“Yes, Your Majesty,” all four of the guards grunted and blurted.

A moment later, the four of them rushed around the corner. They breezed right past us, not noticing Leo and I were there at all, and hurried on down the hall, as though they believed they were at fault for losing sight of their liege.

“I wish I could do that trick,” Leo laughed as we turned the corner and sped up to the door to the omega prince’s bedchamber. “I can think of a dozen times when it would have come in handy.”

“Given time, I’m sure you could do it,” I said as we reached the door and worked to lift the bar keeping it closed, then to turn the lock. When Leo looked at me with excited questioning, I said, “You’re a dragon’s mate. You share my magic. It takes time to learn to use it, but you have all the time in the world now.”

“I do?” Leo asked breathlessly.

I laughed as we turned the last lock. “Dragons live so long we are considered immortal, and our mates live as long as we do.”

“You mean I won’t ever die?” Leo’s eyes went wide with surprise.

“We all die eventually,” I said. “You and I will be blessed with a very long life

indeed, though. If we can avoid being killed in an effort to defeat your father.”

There wasn't time for all the questions I could feel Leo suddenly had about our future. As soon as we opened the door, Prince Rumi, Prince Misha, and Prince Obi leapt up from where they'd been reading, or in Prince Misha's case, mending, in an arrangement of chairs in the center of the room.

“Leo?” Prince Rumi asked, coming forward ahead of the others. “What are you doing here?”

“Why are you coming in this way instead of—” Prince Obi glanced back to one of the bed, then blushed and glanced to me, as if he wasn't certain he could reveal secrets in front of me.

“We need your help,” Leo said, gesturing for his brothers to leave their bedchamber and follow us. “Father's mercenary army attacked the village of Berk and kidnapped many of their people. And just now, we heard Father and some of his advisors talking about this vile work camp he has established. We need to do whatever we can to find out where it is so that we can?—”

We'd only just reached the end of the hallway outside the princes' bedchamber when the voice that I'd just imitated rang from the connecting hallway.

“I would never demean myself by calling the likes of you to my throne room,” King Freslik shouted in a temper. “You have one job and one alone, to guard the princes.”

There was no time to change course or open a doorway so that we could escape. A second later, King Freslik turned the corner, the four guards and two advisors with him. The omega princes pulled up short, eyes wide, as our two groups converged.

“You!” King Freslik bellowed, glaring at his sons. I could tell from the way he

looked at them that he saw only three of them and not Leo. The cloaking magic I'd used earlier was still in effect. "How dare you?" Freslik went on. He turned to the guards. "How dare you allow my sons to escape. Are you in league with the sorceress?"

"We didn't...They weren't...Your Majesty," all four of the guards stammered their weak defense, bowing and lowering themselves.

Prince Rumi stood straighter, valiantly taking charge. "We've heard about your wicked plot to keep your own people prisoner in a work camp, Father," he said. "We won't let you get away with this."

King Freslik looked shocked at first, then his eyes narrowed. "If you are so concerned about the fate of a few, pitiful peasants, then perhaps you should share their fate," he said.

I felt Leo tense by my side and through our bond, but not with fear or horror. My omega had just been struck by an idea. "Yes," he said, stepping forward and breaking the spell that kept him hidden. "We should experience it for ourselves."

King Freslik blinked and shook his head as he noticed his other son. His brow knit with suspicion, but instead of contradicting Leo, he snapped, "Guards! Take these sniveling omega whores to the work camp at once."

I sucked in a breath as I realized two things. Firstly, Leo had used my magic with surprising deftness for one who was inexperienced with such things to put the thought of taking the princes to the camp into his father's head. The second was that he didn't want me to come with them.

"Tell the others," he said aloud without looking at me. "You can find the camp through our bond."

“What?” King Freslik barked. “What is that supposed to mean?”

I knew exactly what it meant. My brave omega thought he could outsmart his father. As much as I hated the idea of separating from him, he had a good point.

There wasn't time for me to discuss or debate the plan at any rate. The guards, eager to prove they weren't a complete waste, jumped forward to grab the princes. All I could do was stand there and watch my beloved being marched away before turning and opening a door to race back into the magical world for whatever came next.

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Chapter

Seven

Leo

The plan had begun to form in my mind from the moment Father insulted me and my brothers by hinting we were no better, in his estimation, than the villagers he'd condemned to his work camp. No one we'd spoken to so far had been entirely certain where the work camp was, how fortified it was, or how the villagers who had already been taken prisoner might be freed.

But if we were on the inside, if we were taken there directly by the castle guards, not only would we learn so much more about the wretched place, we'd be able to rally the prisoners who were already there to break out.

It was a simple, brave plan and I was certain I would have finally had the opportunity to stand up as a true leader of my father's people, but as soon as Diamant and I were separated, I discovered the flaw in my plan.

"Are you alright?" Misha asked, scooting closer to me in the stuffy, enclosed carriage the four of us had been tossed into, chains on our wrists and ankles so that we wouldn't be able to escape the way Tovey had when Lord Groswick had tried to steal him away. "You're looking rather grey and green."

"I'm fine," I lied through clenched teeth.

“I don’t think you are fine,” Rumi said, leaning toward me from where he sat against the carriage’s other side. “What aren’t you telling us?”

I could see the suspicion in my brother’s eyes. He knew, or at least he had a good guess about why I felt so horrible and struggled so much as Diamant and I grew farther apart. I could tell that my bonded mate was back in the magical world, but feeling that only added to the distress that I couldn’t tamp down completely.

“I know what it is!” Obi gasped wrestling with the shackles that bound his wrists as if he could break free of them. “He’s in the same condition Tovey was when he came back from that first night with Rufus. You went into heat with Diamant, didn’t you.”

I winced and growled, clutching a hand to my stomach where the growing ball of life inside me rested. It was almost as if it was arguing with me that it wanted out, that it wanted a nice, safe, warm place to rest so that it could prepare to...hatch.

Thinking about the strangeness of it all had me swallowing like I was trying not to be sick.

“Yes, I went into heat,” I confessed in a gust of breath, my shoulders dropping in defeat. “Yes, I have an egg in me that needs to come out, just like Tovey did.”

My brothers reacted with varying degrees of happy, supportive surprise, but somehow that only made me feel worse. I shrugged Misha off when he tried to embrace me .

“I’m not papa material,” I growled in protest. “I’m a leader. I should be a leader, a fighter.”

“If you knew you were pregnant, why did you let yourself be separated from your mate?” Obi asked.

Rumi gave him a quick, sharp, sideways look as if the question were inappropriate, but I knew my brother well enough to know he was probably thinking the same thing.

“I can handle this,” I insisted. “Diamant and I won’t be parted forever. This is the only way I could think of to gain the intelligence we desperately need about this work camp. We can save those people from the inside,” I went on, not allowing any of my brothers to second-guess my decision. “And Diamant will go for help, bring some of the other dragons, and follow our bond to know exactly where we are. This is the best possible way forward, regardless of how I feel.”

Silence filled the dim interior of the carriage. My brothers watched me. I could tell they didn’t entirely approve, but Rumi, at least, knew I was right.

“What’s done is done now,” he said. “We’ll watch out for you as much as we look out for the villagers kept prisoner in the camp.”

I grunted, pretending it was the ache in my belly, but really, I didn’t like the way I’d suddenly been lumped in with a bunch of captive villagers.

The carriage rolled on, and in far less time than I would have expected it to take to reach a nefarious, hidden work camp, we came to a stop.

“More prisoners?” a deep voice called out to us. “And these ones delivered in a fancy carriage, like royalty?”

“They are royalty,” the alpha guard who had accompanied us from the castle said.

The carriage jostled as he and the other guards jumped down from the driver’s seat, then one guard came around to open the door, revealing the four of us.

An alpha with a rough face and a smarmy expression stepped into the open doorway.



His smirk immediately turned into a look of shock when he saw us. “The omega princes?” he gasped.

“King Freslik wants to teach them a lesson for constantly trying to escape,” our guard said.

“They’re to be sent to work with the rest of these useless peasants?” the alpha asked.

Our guard shrugged. “That’s what the king wants.”

More guards had gathered around as the four of us were wrenched out of the carriage. Being manhandled like that only made me feel worse. I despised the feeling of any other alpha besides my mate touching me. My knees nearly buckled once my feet hit the ground.

“Like they’ll be good for anything,” the alpha in charge snorted. “Take them to the barracks. Work is done for the day, but they can at least eat with the other swine.”

If I’d been feeling better, I would have given the alpha in charge a piece of my mind over the way he treated princes. As it was, the best I could do was to stay on my feet as my brothers and I were dragged away from the carriage and into the work camp.

For a moment, I forgot all of my aches and complaints. The work camp was larger than I’d supposed it would be and far more daunting, but I was excited to get a good look at it.

The central part of the camp, where our carriage had arrived and where we were dragged off to, was made up of several longhouses with crudely thatched roofs and few windows. They stood in rows like soldiers, and indeed, soldiers guarded them. I caught sight of a few people staring forlornly out the windows or being led from the fields that surrounded the center of the complex, all of them looking weary and

defeated.

The fields must have been part of the work that the villagers who'd been taken prisoner were meant to do. It was the wrong time of year for planting, but from the look of things in the light of the setting sun, a vast amount of empty wasteland where the camp had been built was being cleared for later cultivation. It wasn't a bad idea to cultivate that land, but forcing peasants to do the backbreaking work, almost certainly without compensation or any right to the land, was evil.

There were a few other buildings that didn't appear to be lodgings. I supposed those structures held other types of work, perhaps for women or even children, which I saw too many of as my brothers and I were brought to one of the longhouses. My father's cruelty knew no bounds.

"What are we supposed to do with them?" a grizzly old soldier who looked like all the other mercenaries we'd fought back in Berk asked as we were taken into the dim, smoke-smelling building. "They look too fancy for this place."

"They're King Freslik's omega sons, you dolt," the alpha who I was now certain was in charge of the entire camp said. "He wants them kept here for a while to teach them a lesson."

"The...the princes?" the grizzled guard looked nervous, as he should have been.

"Yes," the alpha in charge said, calculation in his eyes as he rubbed his stubbly chin. "And I think I know just what they're good for."

Beside me, Misha shivered and let out a low moan that he quickly swallowed. I felt sorry for my gentle, sweet brother. Rumi and I could face this sort of a situation and rise above it. Even Obi had hidden depths of strength. But Misha was all sweetness and softness. He was far better suited to papahood than being a prisoner.

Part of me wished our situations were reversed, but I wasn't about to give up my dragon to anyone.

Thoughts of Diamant bolstered my flagging spirits. I closed my eyes for a moment as the guards debated how we should be treated and called upon him through our bond. I don't know where you are, my love, but I could use you right now.

"Keep them here until I give further orders," the alpha in charge snapped. "It's up to them whether their own people embrace them or curse them, since it was their father who landed them all in this position to begin with."

He raised his voice at the end, speaking to the crowd of bedraggled villagers clustered along the sides of the walls of our new prison. The vicious smirk he wore hinted that he hoped the other prisoners would hate us.

I had more faith in people than that.

As soon as the alpha in charge and the other guards turned to leave, slamming the barrack's door behind them, I turned toward our new companions.

"We've been hoping to find you all and this camp for days now," I said, pretending that we'd arrived to liberate them instead of to join them in captivity. If I had anything to do with it, that's exactly what we would do. "We're here to help."

The villagers just stared back at us at first. They were mostly young or very old, and there wasn't an alpha among them. A few appeared to be betas who might have had mental and physical strength, but who looked far more beaten down than I wanted to see .

"This is our father's doing," Obi told them as we walked deeper into the room to join them. "Believe me, we've been working for a long time to counteract everything he's

done to harm our people. He's treated us just as badly as he's treated you all, though."

I winced, uncertain whether it was best to start out with that.

"What can you tell us about this place and how you got here?" Rumi asked, far more sensibly.

The villagers looked at each other, as if trying to decide what they made of us. Most of them ended up glancing at a particularly tall beta who was around my and Rumi's age.

"If you're here to help us," the beta said, "why haven't you come before? Some of us have been here for months."

"We didn't know where this camp was," I said, trying to sound apologetic, which didn't come naturally to me. "We weren't even aware of its existence. We only just found out about it a few days ago."

"We've been held prisoner ourselves," Rumi added, far better at being friendly than I was. "The king keeps us locked in our bedchamber in the castle."

"Then how is it that you're here?" an omega woman who looked several months pregnant asked with a frown. "Have they brought you here to spy on us?"

"No!" I said.

I would have explained, but a deep twinge of pain struck me just then, nearly doubling me over. I clasped my hands to my belly in a futile attempt to stop the feeling.

The pregnant woman seemed to understand my problem immediately. “How far along are you?” she asked, stepping bravely forward to rest a hand on my arm. “I’m Shayla,” she added.

I tried to smile gratefully at her, but at the same time, I was wary of explaining fully. “I’m far enough along to feel horrible,” I said with a groan.

Shayla immediately shifted to my side to rub my back. “The king did this as well, I suppose,” she said in a disapproving voice. “Selling his own son’s heat for whatever gain he thinks it will get him.”

My face flared hot with reluctant shame at the idea. Even though that wasn’t how I’d ended up with child, Father had sold my heats before. It made me feel sick that the people of our kingdom knew about our shame, or rather, our father’s shame.

At the same time, it broke down the barrier that would have been there otherwise.

“King Freslik is evil and a menace to this kingdom,” the beta growled, coming forward to shake Rumi’s hand. “I’m Milosh, and I hope you don’t mind me saying that.”

“Not at all,” Rumi said, shaking Milosh’s hand in return. “I agree with you. We all do.”

The atmosphere in the longhouse changed immediately. My brothers and I were drawn farther into the building, to the far end of the room, where some sort of weak stew was bubbling in a large pot over an open fire. The captive villagers made certain the four of us were settled and had been given a meager portion of the supper, although they all took less than we were served, and in short order, we were eating together.

“From what we can gather,” Milosh explained as we ate, most people sitting on the floor, “the purpose of this work camp is more about separating us from our families and loved ones so that they do whatever the king says than it is to produce anything.”

“Baylin, the chief in charge of the camp, is as corrupt as they come,” Shayla picked up the explanation. “He’s the one who’s profiting from the wool we’ve carded and the rope we’ve made.”

“The entire system is corrupt, from top to bottom,” another young omega said with a sigh.

“How well-guarded is the camp?” I asked. “Has anyone tried to escape?”

“We’ve tried a few times,” Milosh said, rubbing a hand over his face in exhaustion. “The trouble is that they work us so hard that by the end of the day, no one has the energy to try to battle their way out.”

“They keep us guarded as we work,” another beta added from the edge of our group. “There aren’t a lot of them, but they’re heartless and think nothing of hurting anyone who, as they say, gets out of line.”

“But you could all rise up and fight back as one if you needed to,” I said, more plans swirling together in my mind.

The villagers exchanged another round of tired, sheepish looks.

“We’ll do whatever you need us to, if you’re willing to lead us,” Milosh said. “You don’t know what being in a place like this day after day, week after week, does to you, though.”

“We want to break free,” Shayla said. “I want to return to my wife. But the

relentlessness of cruelty shown toward us—” She burst into tears instead of finishing.

Anger tore through me, which only made me feel worse than I already did. Kidnapping people from their homes and lives and holding them prisoner was one thing. Breaking their spirits until they no longer had the will to fight back was salt rubbed into the wound.

“We’ll help you,” Obi said, still full of youthful enthusiasm. “We can help everyone form a plan to fight back and to escape.”

The villagers looked hopeful but doubtful at the same time.

“Begging your pardon, Your Highnesses,” Milosh said, “but how can four pampered omegas fight back against an army of hardened mercenaries to free hundreds of captive souls, many of whom have lost the will to resist?”

“We have help,” I said, wanting to reassure them, but uncertain how much I could say about the magical realm. “We have strong, powerful help from people who know we are here and know how to find us.”

That brightened the spirits of the villagers.

“He’s right,” Rumi added. “We have support from men that the king doesn’t even know about. They will find us soon, and if all goes to plan, we will not only be able to escape, we will free all of the captives and destroy this place.”

That had everyone’s attention. I could feel hope racing through the defeated villagers again.

“Tell us what we need to do,” Milosh said.

“First,” Rumi said, setting his stew bowl aside and leaning in, like we were conducting a secret meeting, “we need to know more about this camp, its size and its strengths and weaknesses.”

“Any information you can give us will be helpful,” I added, wanting to take charge as much as Rumi.

The villagers were more than happy to tell us everything they knew. They knew more than they thought they did. Not only were they able to tell us physical details of the camp, where it was most heavily fortified and where it was weaker, they were clear about just how corruptible the guards were.

“Father’s greed just might be our salvation in the end,” I commented to Rumi late into the night, after our meeting with the peasants concluded and we all shuffled off to bed. “Instead of hiring men that could be trusted to operate a place like this, he found the cheapest, cruelest people he could.”

“They should be easy to bribe,” Rumi agreed as we climbed into the same small bed, since there weren’t enough beds in the longhouse for everyone.

“I’m convinced we can fight back,” I said. “These people might be tired and disheartened, but did you see how their eyes lit up when they realized help is coming?”

“It restored them,” Rumi agreed. “I’m convinced that we’ll be able to lead a rebellion within these walls, sooner rather than later, and that everyone will be free by?—”

He stopped speaking as the longhouse door opened and the alpha in charge, Baylin, stepped into the building holding a lamp.

“Where are the princes?” he growled, his face eerie as the lamp illuminated it.



I exchanged a glance with Rumi, and even though my body ached and my stomach felt terrible, I pushed myself to sit, then to stand.

“We’re here,” I said, chin tilted up in defiance. “Who wants to know?”

Rumi, Obi, and even Misha were quick to scramble to their feet beside me. I couldn’t speak for them, but I had the deep sense that we needed to do whatever we could to protect our new villager friends from harm by facing whatever came our way bravely.

A few seconds later, I wasn’t certain that was such a good idea.

“The four of you, come with me,” Baylin said, gesturing for four guards who had been waiting outside the door to come in and grab us .

Being touched by another alpha set my teeth on edge and made me slow and clumsy as I was dragged out of the longhouse and into the starry night as the villagers, who had gained so much hope by our arrival, wilted as we were taken away.

“Let go of me,” I panted, feeling like I would be sick to my stomach. “You have no right to touch me.”

“Quiet!” Baylin said once we were a few steps away from the longhouse. “Don’t make a sound and don’t try to escape.”

For a few, glorious seconds I felt like my brothers and I had stumbled into an impossible stroke of good luck. I considered that Baylin might have been on our side after all and was letting us go.

Then we reached the edge of the camp’s defenses, where we were met by an even rougher group of men with a covered farm wagon.

“See?” Baylin said, presenting us to the men by the wagon. “I told you it was them.”

“This cannot be happening,” Misha moaned quietly.

One of the men by the wagon stepped forward, a small sack in his hand. “It’s them,” he confirmed with a nod, then held out the sack to Baylin. “Payment as agreed,” he said.

Baylin chuckled as he took the sack, then gestured for his guards to push us toward the wagon. “They’re all yours to do with as you please,” he said.

I wanted to fight and struggle in protest, but I felt so horrible that it was all I could do to stay upright as the new set of captors took us.

Diamant, where are you? I called out through our bond.

The plan had been to infiltrate the work camp so that we could help the captive villagers stage a rebellion. Instead, we’d just been sold off to an unknown fate.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 7:31 am*

Chapter

Eight

Diamant

The moment I stepped back into the magical world, I regretted my decision to let Leo out of my sight. I could feel the lurch of separation as it hit him right before the divide between our two worlds made it feel as though we were separated by a thick wall of impenetrable water. He was still there, in my heart and soul, but when I reached out to him, all I felt was a distant echo.

“This is madness,” I huffed, turning to march straight back through the portal I’d made.

I took one step before the portal closed up without guidance from me.

“What the?—”

“Diamant, what are you doing?” my brother Azurus’s voice spoke from behind me.

I whipped back around to find that I’d somehow managed to open a doorway straight into the large, comfortable lounge in the castle where my dragon kin often spent their days when they were not busy with their own affairs.

Most of my kinsmen were incredibly busy with their own affairs these days, but Azurus and Emmerich sat at the small, polished table near the window that looked

out over the magical land, playing chess.

I supposed it made sense that in a moment when I needed my kinsmen's help, I would instinctively create a portal that would take me straight to them.

"You know Mother doesn't like you whipping open portals between worlds like you're plucking flowers from her garden," Azurus went on, leaning back in his chair with a spark of humor in his bright, blue eyes.

"Azurus," I greeted him, abandoning my plan to return straight to Leo's side and marching up to the chess table instead. "I haven't seen you in a while, but we do not have time to catch up."

Azurus had opened his mouth like he would engage in the ordinary sort of banter two brothers who cared deeply for each other but hadn't seen each other in ages would have, but when I cut him off, he closed his mouth with a huff. "It's nice to see you again, too, brother," he said in a wry voice.

"Don't mind him," Emmerich said with a grin. "Diamant has eschewed his luxuriant ways to become the slave of an omega."

Azurus's expression lit with amused excitement at Emmerich's characterization of my new bond with Leo. "Is that so?" he said. "No more lounging around the kingdom, indulging in the dances at the pavilion and leading a life of leisure?"

"I was never as bad as all that," I said impatiently. "I was merely waiting for a cause I felt passionate about, and I've found it."

"He's mated and bonded with one of King Freslik's omega sons," Emmerich said with a wink.

“I’m not surprised,” Azurus laughed. “I hear that we’re all fated to one of the princes, as is the way of these things. I have no complaints.”

“As well you shouldn’t,” Emmerich said. “As far as I can tell, there’s only one omega prince left that’s unspoken for, and you’re the last of us to meet them, so?—”

“There is no time to discuss our romantic entanglements,” I said, a bit too forcefully. “My Leo has been taken prisoner, along with the three of his brothers who are not currently in this realm. They’re being taken to a work camp that King Freslik has established in some unknown location as a way to terrorize his subjects into doing whatever he says. We need to find Gildur and Rufus and return to the work camp to free the princes and the villagers immediately.”

Azurus and Emmerich stared at me. At least the teasing was gone from their expressions.

“Rufus and Gildur, along with their omegas, Tovey and Selle, saw through that handy scrying glass Prince Selle owns that the people of the village of Berk needed help,” Emmerich said. “They left hours ago to help them recover after an attack by King Freslik’s mercenary army.”

“And I assume that Argus is still working within Freslik’s court, disguised as one of his councilors,” Azurus said.

My kinsmen were maddening sometimes. “Then what are the two of you doing here, playing chess when your help is needed elsewhere?” I demanded.

Emmerich smirked slightly and shook his head. “Always in a hurry,” he said. “Never trusting that fate will see things through to their appointed end.”

To my surprise, Azurus snorted as he pushed his chair back and stood. “Sometimes,

my dear brother, your patience and your insistence on taking things slowly is annoying.” He glanced to me. “I’m ready to help whenever you need me.”

I blew out a breath of relief and turned to Emmerich, raising one eyebrow.

“I’ve heard about this work camp,” Emmerich said, standing. Even he couldn’t continue his insistence on letting fate choose his speed of action forever. “I thought it was merely an idea Freslik and some of his more dastardly cronies had concocted. I’d no idea it was real.”

“It’s very real,” I said. “And right now, my Leo, your Rumi, and Prince Misha, who is very likely Azurus’s fated mate, are all trapped there.”

That was all it took to spur Emmerich to action.

“If anyone has harmed so much as a hair on Rumi’s head, I’ll tear them limb from limb,” he said, walking away from the chess table and opening a doorway. He glanced back to me and Azurus, who had risen and was following us, and said, “In my dragon form.”

I laughed humorlessly. Emmerich was, perhaps, the most even-tempered and strategic of the six of us. He’d met Prince Rumi months ago, but instead of just stealing him away, he’d given him the marble that created a more lasting doorway between our worlds. He claimed that there was plenty of time and that many things had to come to pass in both worlds before it was their time to be together.

But seeing him now, as he stepped through the doorway he’d created and straight into a wide, empty field just after dawn in the cruel world, you would think that he was as impulsive as Rufus.

I should have known that Emmerich would be able to take us straight to the work

camp. Whether he was already aware of its potential location or whether he was following his sense of Prince Rumi I didn't know, nor did I care. All that I cared about as we marched across the recently tilled fields around a set of several longhouses guarded by crude palisades were the shouts, cries, and clash of battle that came from within the compound.

"It looks like your omega prince has already started a revolution," Azurus said as we picked up our pace.

It was difficult to tell what had happened at first. The morning light had only just reached the hovel-like longhouses. As we drew closer, it was obvious that a battle was taking place.

"For Eterra!" someone shouted.

His shout was followed by a chorus of other shouts, and as we reached the edge of the palisade, we saw a motley band of young beta and omega men in tattered work clothes charge at a cluster of guards.

The guards were half-dressed and only a few of them held weapons, as if they'd been awakened to the rebellion instead of diligently on guard against it.

"For Tunston!" another shout came from a different direction.

A second battalion of peasants ran forward to join the first group in bashing the guards with bits of broken furniture and tools.

"We've arrived in time for the rebellion," Emmerich said, flexing his hands as they flashed into dragon claws.

"Don't go giving all your secrets away yet, brother," Azurus said as the three of us

rushed to join the melee. “It looks as though this fight can be won without the help of dragons.”

Azurus was right. Whether it was because they were unprepared or simply second-rate guards and soldiers, instead of mounting any sort of organized defense, the alphas who had been put in charge of making the prisoners’ lives miserable cowered and fled. It was as likely as not that, as the worst sort of alphas, they hadn’t expected their prisoners to fight back at all.

“We have them on the run!” the leader of the first group shouted. “Let’s finish this!”

My dragon kin and I had arrived at the end of what must have been a clever and exciting fight. As we rushed in, ready to lend a hand, dozens of rough and dirty alphas poured out of the camp carrying whatever they could. The betas and omegas who were left behind at the edges of the palisades suddenly seemed more like victors defending their turf instead of prisoners held against their will.

I was half tempted to join in with their shouts of triumph as they celebrated but for one thing. I knew without seeing it that my Leo wasn’t among them.

“Hold!” a strong voice shouted. “Who are you?”

A beta with the mien of an alpha marched forward, flanked by a few others, to stop us from coming much closer.

“We mean you no harm,” I said, raising my hands to show them we weren’t armed. “Where is Prince Leo?” I blurted before I could stop myself.

The beta paused several yards away from me, letting out a breath like he was more exhausted than he wanted to let on. “Who asks?”



“I’m his fated mate,” I said .

Emmerich made a disapproving sound, reminding me that people in the cruel world didn’t have fated mates like we did in the magical realm. “We’re beloved of the princes,” he said instead. “We’ve come to help them.”

“Then you’ve come too late,” the beta said. He closed the distance between us and said, “I’m Milosh.”

“What do you mean we’re too late?” I demanded.

“It is an honor to meet you, Milosh,” Emmerich said, far more diplomatically, shaking the tired beta’s hand.

Milosh looked like he didn’t know whether to trust us or treat us as more enemies. “The princes are good men, unlike their father,” he said, then waited, as if testing to see how we would react to that statement.

“King Freslik is one of the most evil men this world has ever seen,” Azurus said, understanding the question and giving the answer that would let the growing group of villagers know we were on their side. “The things he has done to his sons and to you all are a disgrace.”

Milosh nodded as if we’d passed the test. “The princes were brought here last night. They were understanding and strong. They gave us hope and made us see that we can fight back, we do not have to accept this as our fate. They...they told us that you would be coming.”

“But?” Emmerich asked, sounding more worried than I’d ever heard him.

Milosh sighed, his shoulders dropping. “But Baylin, the former governor of this

camp, came and took them away last night, after most of us had gone to bed.”

“He was overheard saying that someone had offered to buy the princes,” a young omega man added, glancing to the three of us as if he might never trust another alpha for the rest of his life .

“Buy them?” I asked, instantly furious. “Who would dare?”

“We have no idea,” Milosh said. “Baylin is as corrupt as could be. Well, was corrupt. He was one of the first to go when our rebellion began this morning.”

I nodded. That was all I needed to know about the fight. What the villagers did to avenge themselves was their business. I only wanted to find Leo.

I took a deep breath, closed my eyes, and reached out to him through our bond. It was much stronger, now that we were in the same world. I could feel his presence to my right, though he was many miles away.

“You’ve bonded, I see,” Emmerich said, interrupting my concentration. “You lot are in such a hurry to domesticate yourselves. But I suppose bonds have their use.”

I ignored his teasing as now was not the time for it.

“They’re that way,” I said, pointing to the western horizon.

“Then that’s the way we go,” Azurus said, setting off at once. “Are you coming?” he asked Emmerich as he passed him.

“Of course.”

I turned to the freed villagers even as I started walking after them. “Congratulations

on freeing yourselves. You are good and strong people, and I know that you will ultimately be victorious.”

“Thank you,” Milosh called after us.

I heard him but didn’t acknowledge him. My mind was already ahead of me, plotting how I could rescue my beloved from whoever would dare to purchase him.

Le o

For the second time in the same day, my brothers and I were tied up and thrown in a vehicle. Only this time, we were bound with ropes instead of shackles, and we had blindfolds put over our eyes.

I couldn’t decide if it was better or worse than the way our father had disposed of us from the castle. I didn’t like not being able to see and I felt as sick and sore as ever, but the wagon bed was filled with hay and blankets, and we were even given bread, cheese, and water after we were settled.

It wasn’t an ordinary kidnapping.

That didn’t stop Misha from weeping and sniffing as he lay pressed against my side. The rocking of the wagon and the exhaustion of the day had lulled us to sleep, but when we woke up as the first rays of morning light brought a hint of warmth and some small bit of light under the bottom edge of my blindfold, Misha was still breathing heavily and sniffing beside me.

“It’ll be alright,” I told him, rolling as much as I could toward him. My arms were bound in front of me so I couldn’t hug him properly, but I did find and hold his hands. “We are the mates of dragons. No harm can come to us for long.”

“I hope you’re right,” Misha said in a trembling voice.

“You might want to sit up and remove your blindfolds,” Rumi said.

I realized then how loose my blindfold was, and by rubbing my head against the bottom of the wagon, I was able to remove it entirely. I then lifted my head to see that Rumi and Obi were sitting and looking in the direction the wagon was traveling. I took a moment to struggle, helping Misha remove his blindfold with my teeth, until Misha and I were sitting with them.

“Where are we?” I asked, checking the surrounding countryside.

For most of our lives, my brothers and I had been kept close to the castle. We’d been able to ride off into the countryside closest to the castle from time to time, though not for years. Villages like Berk were so far beyond any of the places I’d ever traveled within my own kingdom. Now, as I glanced around at the rolling hills and fields of grass, the edge of a forest in the distance one way and what looked like a great, meandering river in the other, I realized that I knew far too little of my own kingdom.

If we were still in my father’s kingdom.

“We must be in the hinterlands,” Rumi answered me.

I nodded, but was too distracted by what I realized was in front of us to give him proper acknowledgement.

We were heading toward a camp. Not a work camp, like we’d come from, or a camp filled with useless mercenary soldiers, like Diamant and I had had so much fun confusing the other night. No, we were headed straight toward what looked like an organized, well-appointed army camp.

There weren't any walls or barriers, telling me it was a moving camp. There were soldiers, however. Hundreds of them. They appeared clean and well-ordered. I could smell campfires and the beginnings of breakfast cooking. Flags on long poles flapped in the breeze marking what could have been specific areas or leaders within the camp. They all bore the same sigil, though.

They bore the sigil of a dragon.

"Who are these people?" I murmured, pushing myself to stand and balance as best I could in the wagon. My heart raced. As weak and sore and sick as I felt and as much as the lifeforce within me wanted to find my dragon so it could get out, I felt as though we'd stumbled onto something important, and I wanted to know more.

"Hullo there!" the man driving our wagon called out to a small group who had broken away from the main camp and were on their way to meet us.

Our wagon was flanked by four armed men on horseback. The two closer to the front reached into their saddlebags and brought out flags of their own. They were simple, half red and half green, but they clearly meant something to the men from the camp who came out to meet us.

"What took you so long?" an alpha with a cheery face and long, graying hair asked, his arms flung wide as if he would embrace all of us. "Osric has been on pins and needles all night."

It was a small thing, just a name, but it tickled something in the back of my mind.

"Osric?" Rumi asked, glancing to me as if the name meant something to him as well.

"Where have I heard that name before?" Obi asked, almost as if talking to himself.

The wagon continued forward to the edge of the camp, where the grey-haired man met us. I should have been completely on my guard, since these people had bought us from Baylin. I should have been looking for a weapon to defend myself or a way to escape. But there was so little tension in the servants who rushed forward to take the horses from the guards when they dismounted, and instead of hurrying in to yank and jostle us out of the back of the wagon, a pair of servants came forward to help us down as if we were honored guests .

“What’s going on?” Obi asked one of the young betas who helped him to the ground and who rushed to undo his binds. “Who are you all and where are we?”

I desperately wanted to hear the answer to that question, but as I struggled down from the wagon and my feet hit the ground, I cried out and doubled over with a sudden burst of desperation.

“Are you alright, Your Highness?” the beta who had been helping me down asked. He knew who I was.

I couldn’t answer at first. My insides felt like they were on fire, but it was more than that.

Diamant had just returned to this world.

“You’d better take them straight to Osric,” the man with long hair said, coming around to inspect us as the rope binding us was removed. “He’s been worried sick about them.”

“Speaking of worried sick,” another alpha said, stepping around to join the one with long hair. “This one doesn’t look too good.”

He tried to touch me, but I jerked and thrashed and bared my teeth at him.

“Careful, Keegan,” the long-haired alpha said. “He clearly has an alpha, and he might have just finished heat.”

It was embarrassing that an alpha could see something like that about me, but it was the least of my worries.

“Right this way, Your Highnesses,” the long-haired man said. “I’m Daniel, Osric’s steward. He really has been anxious to meet you all.”

I was so confused that I could hardly put one foot in front of the other. I knew Diamant was close. I was walking away from him instead of toward him, and it was painful.

Even that pain was banished from my mind a minute later as my brothers and I were walked into the center of the camp. We were taken straight to a man of early-middle years...who bore a shocking resemblance to my father.

The resemblance hit home with particular strength when the man smiled at us and said, “My dear cousins, we meet at last.”

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*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 7:31 am*

Chapter

Nine

Diamant

I didn't see why we couldn't assume our dragon forms to fly or use magic to follow my sense of where my omega was.

"We would be faster in the air," I grumbled to Emmerich as the three of us ran down the side of yet another hill we'd had to cross over to follow my innate sense of connection to Leo.

"We would have been faster if we'd borrowed horses," Azurus added, though whether he was on my side or not was hard to tell.

"Flying would have brought too much notice," Emmerich said, barely winded from our chase. "And there weren't any horses to borrow."

"We could have found some," Azurus insisted.

"We're fast enough on foot," Emmerich said, enjoying the chase and the banter a bit too much.

He had a small point. Being dragons, we were capable of great speed, even in our human form. I didn't like the way my human muscles ached and my lungs burned after an hour of running, though. There were easier ways to accomplish the mission



that beat through every vein and cell in my body.

I wasn't about to give up or let up, though. The closer I came to Leo, the more I could feel him. He was in distress. He needed to birth our egg. Beyond that, as the distance between us closed and I could feel his emotions with more clarity, I sensed a sort of astonishment from him that confused and worried me.

"Look ahead," Emmerich said as we rounded the top of yet another hill. "There they are."

My brother was right. Ahead of us, spread out over a vast, grassy plain, was what looked like a large army camp. Unlike the mercenary soldiers working for King Freslik, this camp seemed ordered and organized, even from a distance. Smoke from many campfires set at equal distances from each other curled into the air, and the arrangement of the small tents contained in the camp was regular and tidy.

"I don't think these people work for Freslik," Azurus said what I was thinking. Or, at least, what I would have been thinking if every bit of my brain and heart wasn't focused solely on my omega.

"There are other powers in this world, other kingdoms," Emmerich said, though I could tell from his frown that he wasn't certain what he was looking at either.

The better discipline of this new army was also apparent in the way the three of us were noticed long before we reached the perimeter of the camp. A small contingent of men on horseback broke away from the camp and rode toward us, and before we were anywhere close to a place where we could do harm, we were surrounded.

"Who are you and what is your business here?" the lead scout demanded, though with a note of fairness in his voice that gave me hope Leo hadn't fallen into the wrong hands.

“We’ve just come from King Freslik’s abominable work camp in search of the omega princes,” Emmerich answered, standing tall and proud, like a dragon should.

“You have my mate,” I blurted, breathless and anxious. “Prince Leo. He is mine, my omega, my heart and soul. Take me to him at once.”

Emmerich sent me a sideways look of disapproval and shook his head. Azurus chuckled, then hid his grin behind his hand.

The soldier scouts didn’t know what to make of us. I wasn’t surprised. We weren’t like any alpha of standing they would have expected to come out of Freslik’s kingdom.

“Remove any arms they carry,” the lead scout ordered the others.

“We’re unarmed,” Azurus said, holding his arms out to his sides to prove it.

Two of the others dismounted to check us all the same, then nodded to their superior that we were telling the truth.

“Come with us,” the lead scout said, wheeling his horse around and marching us toward the camp.

It was indignant for dragons to be led around by mere mortals, but I didn’t care about high and low at that moment. All I cared about was my Leo and holding him in my arms again. It was as if I’d had my heart and my purpose ripped from me to be separated from him. My dragon kin was right. I had never amounted to much before Leo danced and fought his way into my life. I could see now that the idleness of my days was a pale version of the life I could have been living, the life I would live with my fated mate.

My eagerness to reunite with Leo was tempered slightly by the surprises waiting for us inside the army camp. For one, the camp and army were just as well organized up close as they had been from a distance. The soldiers we passed all seemed clean, well-equipped, and disciplined. The camp was efficient, and even though the soldiers were eating their morning meal, they all seemed ready for whatever orders they might be given.

The biggest surprise came when we reached the center of the camp. Several camp chairs had been set up around a larger fire. A few soldier servants rushed about, serving food and providing the men seated in the chairs with steaming mugs of something. It was comfortable and almost homey, even though it was out in the open.

None of that mattered to me.

“Leo!” I called out, rushing forward to where my indomitable omega sat slightly hunched in one of the chairs.

Leo glanced up at me as if he’d been struck by lightning. He let out a cry, then dropped his mug to the grass in front of his chair and flew to me.

“Diamant!” he groaned, leaping into my arms and wrapping himself around me.

I let out a cry of relief and wrapped my arms around him, holding him close. I could feel his body and soul settle and repair themselves as we breathed each other’s air and felt each other’s warmth. Leo let out another cry as he pressed his cheek against mine, then shifted so that he could kiss me passionately.

Everything would be alright. That was what that kiss told me. I had my omega back in my arms, our egg was still safe inside him, though I could feel how eager it was to come out into the world. A whirlwind could have swept through the plain, flattening everything, and I wouldn’t have felt it.

“—can see that they are mates,” a deep, warm voice from the center of the area we’d been led to said.

Remembering that Leo and I were not alone and that the world we were in was fraught with major events shook me out of the moment of reunion. Leo seemed to realize we weren’t alone either. He lowered his legs until he was standing on his own then pivoted to stand by my side, one arm still around me.

“I must admit to being confused,” Emmerich said, far more focused on whatever situation we’d walked into than I was. “Who are you?”

“He’s our cousin, Osric,” Rumi said, standing from where he’d been seated in one of the chairs and approaching Emmerich with stars in his eyes. I’d never seen Prince Rumi so taken with anyone before. It was clear there was a connection between him and Emmerich already, and if Emmy wasn’t such a stick in the mud, Prince Rumi would have thrown himself at him as quickly as the other princes had embraced their mates.

That thought vanished from my head entirely as what Prince Rumi said registered in my mind.

“Your cousin?” I asked, glancing to Leo. “I wasn’t aware you had a cousin.”

“We do,” Leo said, color and life returning to his form and spirit more and more as we touched. “We’ve always heard rumors about him.”

“We weren’t certain whether they were true,” Rumi told Emmerich, walking up to him but stopping just short of touching him. “Our father had an omega brother whom he banished from the kingdom ages ago.”

“Omegas are banned from wearing the crown,” Prince Obi filled in the rest of the

story from his camp chair near to Osric. “But we’d always heard the rumor that Uncle Florian was with child when he was banished and our father feared the child would be an alpha who would have a claim to the throne.”

“He was right to be afraid,” Osric said, standing and walking closer to me, Emmerich, and Azurus. “And they weren’t just rumors. My papa, Florian, was indeed with child when he was banished. But there’s more to the story than that.”

“There always is,” Azurus said with a laugh.

Osric grinned at him as if the two of them were instant friends. “Uncle Freslik had tried to keep my papa a prisoner in the castle, as he has done with his own sons. He was not as stringent about guarding him, however. Papa was able to move freely within the castle, which was where he met my father, Lord Oberlin.”

“Lord Oberlin,” Rumi explained, still primarily focused on Emmerich, “was a good and wise nobleman who had vast estates in this part of the kingdom, near the border with our neighboring kingdom. The two of them fell in love.”

“More than that,” Osric picked up the explanation again. “They were secretly, although perfectly legally, married. I am in no way a bastard, which struck even more fear into Uncle Freslik’s heart, if he has one. Through treachery, he had my father killed. He would have killed my papa as well, but Papa escaped to my father’s estates. My father’s kin agreed to keep him secret and to raise me as one of their own, all without Uncle Freslik’s knowledge.”

“They are good and noble people, then,” I said.

“They are,” Osric agreed with a nod.

“It’s more than that,” Leo said, gripping me tighter. The excitement that poured off

him through our bond had my heart beating fast as well. “Cousin Osric has a legitimate claim to the throne. All we need to do now is fight Father and remove the crown from his head and Osric can become the king.”

“He’ll be a much better king than Father ever could be,” Prince Obi said. “I daresay he’d bring peace and prosperity to our people instead of turmoil and heartache.”

“That is my aim,” Osric said. “I was hesitant to make myself known so soon or to raise an army to fight what amounts to a rebellion, but with everything my uncle has put his kingdom through of late, I had to act.”

A small silence followed those words. I could feel not only Leo’s hope and excitement but the hope of all the omega princes. My heart ached for all of them. They had suffered through so much, personally and through watching their father destroy good people and their livelihoods. For them to have a hero emerge who stood a real chance of reversing the fortunes of the cruel world must have been like a miracle to them.

But it was called the cruel world for a reason.

“How do you plan on challenging Freslik for the throne?” Emmerich asked the question on the tip of my tongue. “He may be a horrific king, but he wears the crown legitimately and he has an army of his own to protect him.”

“I’m not saying it will be easy,” Osric said, facing the question with admirable strength and practicality. “My uncle will not give up his power without a fight.”

“But with us fighting on his side, we’re bound to win,” Prince Rumi said, eyes shining with determination .

I shuffled awkwardly, glancing at Emmerich. There were definite laws about those of

us from the magical world aiding in any sort of campaign of conquest in any other world. Mother wouldn't allow it, no matter how good the outcome might be. If Prince Rumi included us dragons in his estimation of who could fight on Osric's side, he might be disappointed.

By their expressions, I could see that Emmerich and Azurus understood the same problem. Strangely, it looked as though Osric understood as well. He had a definite look of wisdom in his eyes.

"Please, join us for our morning repast," he said, gesturing toward the circle of chairs. "There is much more to discuss."

There was indeed, and we all sat down to eat and discuss it.

At least, my dragon kin and the omega princes did.

"We need to talk," I whispered to Leo, steering him off to one side as the others settled in.

I noticed briefly that Azurus took the seat beside Prince Misha, who had been silent and pale throughout the introductions and explanations. The poor prince looked as if he wanted to be anywhere other than where he was and as if he might burst into tears if the wind blew too hard.

As soon as Azurus leaned close to him and said something I couldn't make out, and as soon as Prince Misha grew brave enough to raise his eyes and look at him, I sensed a certain glow around the two of them.

But I didn't have time to watch the sweetness of fated mates meeting for the first time.

“Yes,” Leo said, taking my hand and leading me away from the center of the camp and behind one of the larger tents. “We definitely need to talk. We need to talk about what the dragons can do to help in the coming battle against my father.”

I loved the pulse of determination and zeal I felt from my amazing mate. He wasn’t going to like what I had to say, though.

“Leo,” I said firmly, contradicting my tone by resting my hand tenderly on his face. “We need to talk about getting you back to the magical realm, to my lair, so that you can birth our egg.”

Leo stiffened, frowning. The anxiety and helplessness that flowed through our bond painted a different picture than the frustrated warrior who stood before me.

“I don’t want to throw away my chance to do something meaningful for my people by curling up in some comfortable nest somewhere and hatching an egg,” he said.

I sighed. “It’s not like that at all. Once the egg is birthed, you can hire a nursemaid to watch it until this battle is done.”

“But I’ll feel my child’s pull constantly, in everything I do and every breath I take,” Leo said, pained by the idea. “That’s what Tovey and Selle tell me, at least. Once you’ve given birth, you are forever a papa, whether you want to be or not.”

I wanted to tell him that he would love our child and that he would enjoy being a papa, that he could be a papa on his terms. It would have been crass to say those things, though. I couldn’t say that they were true. I wasn’t an omega, especially one with as much fire and purpose as Leo. I knew what a life of leisure felt like, and now that I, too, had drive and purpose, Leo’s drive and purpose, I didn’t want to go back to being idle.



“If I could give you everything you desired, dress you up in the finest armor, and put you at the head of the battle that appears to be coming, I would,” I told him, grasping his face in both my hands. “But what’s done is done, brave Leo. The egg is already within you. There’s no turning back from your fate and mine. We are in this together.”

I lowered one hand to rest on the bulge in his stomach. It had grown a bit since I’d last held him in my arms.

Whether it was my touch or some sort of internal acceptance, Leo lowered his head and blew out a breath. “I do want this child,” he admitted quietly, then raised his eyes to me again. “But not yet. My work here in this world isn’t finished yet. We need to overthrow my father and make Osric king. I cannot simply leave something so important for other people to do.”

I clenched my jaw and stood there staring at him, wishing a solution to the whole thing would come to me.

“Selle has told us all before that eggs don’t have to be birthed immediately after conception,” Leo went on, more certainty in his voice. “He says that some dragon mates have been known to wait an entire week before birthing their egg. It’s only been a couple days.”

“What are you saying?” I asked, even though I already knew.

“Give me time,” Leo said, taking my hands and standing closer to me. “Give me two or three more days to help Cousin Osric launch his campaign. Once this thing has been put into motion, I will take time to go with you to your lair and bring our child one step closer to the world.”

I smiled. Leo was far braver and bolder than I had ever been. I would have a lot of

work ahead of me to be worthy of such an outstanding mate.

“Alright,” I said, pulling him close for another kiss. “But as soon as I feel your urgency to birth this egg, and that moment will come, I’m taking you to my lair. ”

Leo’s face pinched as if he didn’t like the truth, but he relented and said, “Agreed.”

I couldn’t help but kiss him again, long and passionately. I knew what waited for us when we finally did come together to bring our egg into the world and the anticipation of that sort of passion alone fired my blood.

“Now,” Leo said, rocking back from me, a look of fiery determination in his eyes, “let’s rejoin the others and plot a revolution. My father won’t stand a chance against an army like this.”

Dragons or no dragons, I knew my beloved was right. He alone was a force to be reckoned with.

Chapter

Ten

Leo

It was such a relief to have Diamant close to me again. I'd been feeling worse and worse as the morning progressed, despite the amazement of learning there was actually someone with a legitimate claim to my father's throne. Not just someone with a claim, but someone who was everything I would have wanted to be as a king myself.

Osric was intelligent and kind. He'd taken us in and welcomed my brothers and I with open arms. He'd made certain that Misha, who was traumatized by all the conflict and stress around him, felt as safe as he could, and he'd answered all of Rumi's and Obi's questions openly and in detail. He'd been raised well by Lord Oberlin's family, and he had a sense of justice that I admired. And a few times he'd said something that hinted to me he might know about the magical world .

All of that was like the answer to a prayer, but it did nothing to ease the ache deep in my gut and in my heart.

And then Diamant had appeared in Osric's camp and it was as if I'd been washed with clean water and made whole again. Even the egg that continued to grow inside me felt happier and softer within me. Being with my dragon meant all was right with the world again.

Well, almost right with the world.

“We need to head to Freslik’s dastardly work camp first to make certain the prisoners he’s taken are well and that they can be returned to their villages,” Osric declared from the top of his magnificent steed as his army gathered into marching formation. “I doubt my uncle would allow his plans for the camp to simply evaporate.”

“I don’t think it’s likely that the guards who scattered when the villagers revolted would stay away for long either,” Rumi added as he and Emmerich took places on horseback near Osric’s side.

It was curious to watch Rumi interact with Emmerich. I knew they were fated mates and I knew my brother well enough to see that he wanted to be with his dragon right then and there, just like the rest of us who had found our mates. Why Emmerich didn’t simply take him was beyond me.

Then again, despite having bonded and mated with my dragon and having his egg inside me, I was far more determined to see the people of my father’s kingdom saved from tyranny than I was to go play happy house with Diamant.

I didn’t want to go into battle without Diamant by my side, though, and fortunately, I wouldn’t have to.

“You will tell me at any point if you feel too ill to continue,” he said as we waited for the bulk of the army to be ready to start out. “I don’t want you to suffer any longer than you need to.”

If not for the genuineness of concern that I felt from him through our bond, I might have been annoyed with his fussing.

“I will be fine,” I told him, reaching across to grasp his hand. Every touch of my skin

against Diamant's gave me courage and made me feel loved. He made me feel as if I could do anything. "This child of ours will end up being a great warrior at this rate. They started their life as part of the most important battle this kingdom has known for years."

Diamant huffed a laugh and squeezed my hand. "The two of you will run circles around me, I'm sure."

"Move on!" one of Osric's deputies called out in his astoundingly loud voice, breaking the otherwise sweet moment between me and my dragon.

The entire army surged forward, moving as one entity. I was impressed by how closely all the soldiers obeyed Osric's orders. I'd only ever known guards and soldiers to grudgingly obey my father's commands on pain of punishment, and they'd never done a very good job of following.

Osric was a good leader, though, and he would be a good king. Just as I would have been a good king if I'd been born an alpha.

If only I'd been born an alpha! I could have risen up and overthrown my father years ago. I could have made life better for everyone in our kingdom and spared so many people so much agony. I could have given my brothers the lives they deserved as well. I wouldn't be consumed with worry about what would become of me when there was nothing left for me to do but raise children and be a papa, someone I never imagined myself being .

But if I'd been born an alpha, I never would have met Diamant. If I'd been in charge of my brothers from an earlier time, Rumi never would have met Emmerich, and Emmerich never would have given us the doorway into the magical world. None of us would have met our dragons.

It just seemed like an unbalanced trade that I should have to become someone I wasn't certain I could be because I hadn't been born who I wanted to be.

"You are brave and strong, Leo," Diamant said quietly as we rode over the crest of the first hill. "We will find our way together, you'll see."

I sent him a sideways smirk, pretending I was more at ease with everything than I was. "I'm not certain how I feel about this ability of yours to read my mind," I told him with a wink.

Diamant laughed. "We'll grow used to each other. Or so I'm told."

We continued on for a few hours, as the sun rose all the way to its zenith. The work camp was half a night away, if my memory of the journey the night before was accurate. We had a while to go, and whether it was the strain of the endeavor or the egg growing within me and sapping my energy, I just wanted to get there and get everything over with.

I didn't have to wait as long as I'd thought I would for something to happen.

"What's that on the horizon?" Obi asked less than an hour after we'd resumed our journey after a quick midday meal, standing in his stirrups and pointing forward.

I'd thought the shadows near the top of the next hill were animals of some sort, but they were moving too fast and more of them continued to appear over the crest of the hill .

"They're people," one of Osric's deputies said.

He was right. The closer we came to the hill, the more we could see people running over it, looking like they were fleeing.

“I don’t like the look of that,” Diamant said, walking his horse closer to me. “They look like the villagers from the camp.”

I glanced at Diamant for a moment. His eyes were slitted like a dragon’s, which must have improved his vision.

“Perhaps they’re trying to return to their homes,” I said.

It was wishful thinking, and by the time we met the group of fleeing villagers, my hope that things would be easy and go our way began to fade.

“We had barely begun sorting ourselves and discussing how to return home when the soldiers returned,” one of the bedraggled betas from the group told us as Osric ordered his men to stop so that the villagers could be fed and looked after.

“They had more soldiers with them,” another said. “Men from a separate part of the army who had gone off on a mission but returned.”

“Could that be Rottum’s men and the others who attacked Berk?” I asked.

“They very likely were,” Diamant said, frowning. “Which means the battle you’ve been anticipating could happen sooner rather than later.”

It was a simple observation, but the emotions I felt in Diamant through our bond were anything but simple. He was concerned on a level I hadn’t known from him before, unless it was concern for me. As he watched more and more exhausted, dirty, and bruised villagers appear over the crest of the hill, I felt something in him that was both protective and...heavy.

When I’d first met my dragon, he’d only been concerned with dancing and feasting and flirting. He’d lived a life of luxury and he hadn’t thought very far beyond that.

Something had changed in my mate, something deep and profound.

“If I didn’t know any better,” I told him with a teasing grin, “I would say that my rake dragon has grown a conscience.”

Diamant twitched as if I’d caught him doing something he shouldn’t have done. “I’ve always had a conscience,” he argued, threads of humor returning to his emotions. “I’ve just never had a cause.”

I was so proud of my mate that I could have burst.

I would have to show him later, however. Osric stepped in to take charge of the suffering villagers right away.

“How many of you were able to escape before the soldiers returned and how many of you are still left in the camp?” he asked as more of his men came forward to help the fleeing peasants.

I was concerned when the flood of people coming over the hill petered out. Many of the villagers must have still been stuck in the camp.

“Only about half of us were able to flee before they returned,” the beta told us. “Those among us who were weakest and youngest or oldest were too slow to escape. Milosh stayed behind to care for them. I...I fear for what might become of them since the soldiers are furious.”

“No harm will come to them,” Osric promised, sitting straighter in his saddle and addressing as many of the villagers as could hear him. “At least, no harm will come to them once we’ve rescued them from the camp. ”

“He’ll make such a better king than Father,” Obi breathed out in admiration, gazing



fondly at Osric. “It’s too bad he’s our cousin, because he’s a very handsome alpha.”

The comment was so silly in the midst of such a fraught moment that I couldn’t help but laugh. Some people, like Diamant, were in the process of important changes to their hearts and souls. Some, like Obi, would always be who they were, even in the most difficult of circumstances.

“We need to move on,” Osric charged us. “Time is of the essence. A small contingent will stay behind to tend to these people.”

That was all there was to it. When a true leader gave orders they were followed quickly and without question.

“And here I thought dragons were meant to be the strongest and most valiant creatures in the land,” Azurus said as he rode up to Diamant’s side. “This young Osric fellow has all of us beat.”

“Only because Emmerich won’t let us use our magic,” Diamant bantered in return.

Emmerich was close enough to hear and said, “Laws are laws. And now you see that magic isn’t necessary to win in this world.”

Rumi nodded sagely at Emmerich’s words. Those two really were peas in a pod. I wondered when Emmerich would get on with things and claim my brother as his own.

Those lighter thoughts carried me through as the front of the army reached the crest of the last hill. Osric had us dismount and leave our horses far enough down the hill that they would be out of sight to anyone keeping a lookout from the camp. He and his most trusted deputies, my brothers, even Misha, and our dragons crept up the hill until we lay flat on our bellies, or at least as flat as I could with an egg inside me, in a

line.

We could just see the camp from where we lay. I noticed that Diamant, Emmerich, and Azurus all changed their eyes to dragon eyes so they could see farther than the rest of us.

“The camp appears to be in disarray,” Emmerich said, his brow knit in thought.

Osric glanced his way. “What makes you say that?”

I had the feeling he knew there was something different about Diamant, Emmerich, and Azurus.

“I see lots of movement,” Azurus reported, “but none of it is toward the fields or workhouses.”

“They’re trying to keep things under control,” I said, thinking out loud. “We need to attack now, while they’re still confused.”

“We need a solid plan of attack before we go in,” Osric said, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with me.

“Whatever we do, we can’t let the prisoners be hurt in any way,” Diamant said. I could feel his genuine concern for whatever prisoners might be left through our bond.

“You care about the villagers of this world?” I asked, trying not to give away that Diamant and his kinsmen weren’t from here.

Diamant glanced at me. “I didn’t realize how much they were suffering. They’re good people. Everyone in this world that I’ve met, with a few exceptions, are good people just trying to live their lives and raise their families. They don’t have half the

indulgences I've been privy to my entire life, but they still have so much happiness within them."

I smiled and reached out to take my dragon's hand. The more time we spent together, the two of us alone or us taking part in one epic battle or another, the more I could see how good his soul was. The more I could see how much I loved him.

"I've seen enough," Osric said, inching backwards and crawling down the hill to the point where he could stand without being seen. The rest of us followed suit. "I agree that we need to attack as soon as possible. There's no telling what my uncle's mercenaries will do to those innocent lives if we leave it too long."

"There are more of us than there are of them, aren't there?" I asked as our entire group moved to stand together in council at the bottom of the hill.

It was just my luck that within seconds of finishing my question, my insides cramped with the need to expel my egg and I stumbled.

Diamant was quick enough to catch me, but not to shield me from the eyes and concerns of the others.

"Cousin Leo, are you certain you're well enough for this fight?" Osric asked, stepping close and reaching out but not touching me.

"I'm well," I lied in a strained voice.

For a moment, everyone looked at me with worry. I had the horrible feeling that everyone knew the condition I was in. I even felt somehow like Osric knew I was growing an egg inside me instead of a human child, though I couldn't say why or if that was true.

“You know that nothing would make me happier than to have my cousins by my side for this fight,” Osric said. “This isn’t just my battle. This is all of your battle, too. I know the sort of cruelty my uncle has subjected you to.”

I caught sight of Misha flinching and of Azurus subtly slipping an arm around him as Osric spoke. Misha even turned to hide against Azurus, who closed him in a protective embrace.

“But if you’re...ill,” Osric went on, handling my condition delicately, “you shouldn’t put yourself at risk for this fight.”

I managed to stand straighter through my discomfort. “I have been at risk every day of my life,” I argued, “and it has all led up to this fight. I don’t know what will happen to me afterwards or who I’ll be, but let me fight for what I know is right. Let me be a part of this battle, a part of this family.”

That’s what we all were, after all. Even though my brothers and I hadn’t known definitively of Osric’s existence until that morning. We were family. Even the villagers with whom we shared no blood. Even Diamant, who was of a different world. We were all family in this struggle against a tyrant who sought to make our lives miserable for his own power and glory.

“Very well, then,” Osric said with a wise nod. He peeked at Diamant for a moment, but surprisingly, I didn’t mind that subtle charge for my dragon to look after me. “We will form a plan of attack, and then we will all go forward and take back what my uncle never had the right to take in the first place.”

“Hear, hear!” several people called out in support.

Already, I could feel the surge of battle beginning. I turned to Diamant, reaching for his hand and reaching for him through our bond. Fate had brought us together,

passion had united us, and now fighting together for what was right and good would forge our souls together forever.

Chapter

Eleven

Diamant

Who knew that after centuries of indulgence and living mostly for pleasure I had the soul of a warrior within me after all? Or perhaps it was Leo that I now had within me, within my heart. Whatever the case, I was eager to ride into battle with him as we helped Osríc with preparations to storm the work camp and free the remaining prisoners.

“We should make quick work of them,” Leo said as a group of us marched from where the bulk of Osríc’s army was camped back up the hillside to take a look at our objective. “We weren’t in the work camp long, but what we saw of it was pitiful.”

“I never thought I would say that I was glad for our father’s greed and his stinginess,” Prince Rumi agreed with a wry laugh. “He’s gotten what he paid for with the men he hired to carry out his cruel plan.”

“King Freslik is blind to his own capabilities and shortcomings,” Emmerich said with a fond smile for his someday-mate. “He gives important positions to those who bow to him rather than those who might actually carry out their tasks competently.”

“It definitely works in our favor this time,” Leo said with a nod. “This battle should be over and done with before nightfall.”

I firmly believed he was right and I was ready to play my part to make it happen, even if Emmerich still insisted we couldn't use magic.

Prince Misha had other feelings about the whole thing. He and Prince Obi walked behind us, along with Azurus, and as Leo spoke with relish about the battle proceeding quickly to its happy end, the poor young omega prince whimpered and fell back.

"What troubles you, sweet Misha?" Azurus asked, already falling head over heels for his fated mate.

We all paused our climb up the hill, but Azurus was the one who stepped back to rest a comforting hand on Prince Misha's back.

Misha stared up at him with large, watery eyes. If the young man could feel the bond he was destined to have with Azurus it was buried under the fear that even I could see in him.

"It won't be that easy," he said in a small voice. "Nothing is every simple or easy where my father is concerned. He's cruel and evil, and even if he isn't smart, he's crafty. Every time we try to thwart him, everything we attempt to help the people of this kingdom and to make things better, Father finds some way to turn it around on us and make us pay."

"We have help this time," Leo insisted, walking back down the hill to comfort his brother. "We finally have a champion with a claim to the throne who can save us all."

I believed that to be true and was as glad as anyone from the cruel world, but I also sensed that thread of bitterness within my mate that regretted he wasn't the chosen one.

More than that, I felt the waves of pain and urgency that continued to pulse through him as our egg begged to be birthed. It made me wonder if I'd made a mistake in not simply stealing Leo away, like I had in Berk, to finish what desperately needed to be done.

"I...I cannot do it," Prince Misha said, lowering his head and bursting into tears. "I know I'm a prince and I'm supposed to be strong and brave, like the rest of you, but I'm just not. I cannot stay in this world. I'm not a fighter, not a hero. I'm just an omega."

"Sometimes it is those who fancy themselves just an omega that rise to the greatest challenges and do the most good," Azurus reassured him, rubbing his back. "I will be with you the entire time. Nothing will dare to harm you while I'm by your side."

I'd never been so proud of my brother. We were both doing the same thing, protecting and supporting our fated mates, but in such vastly different ways.

Emmerich sent me a sideways look that hinted he felt the same way. For that quick, powerful moment, I felt a sense of belonging with not only my kinsmen, but our mates as well that made me feel as if we could accomplish anything together .

That sense of elation lasted until we all started up the hill again only to be met by one of the scouts Osric had sent to the crest of the hill earlier to keep an eye on the enemy rushing back down with wide eyes and a flushed face.

"There's another army!" the woman called out. "There's another army coming over the opposite hill!"

All of my good feelings switched to alarm as our group picked up our pace and charged the rest of the way up the hill.



“Good Goddess,” Emmerich huffed once we reached the top of the hill and saw what the scout had been talking about.

I rarely saw Emmerich shocked or taken by surprise, but as the new army marched over the opposite hill and down into the valley with the work camp, I felt the same sort of astonishment.

“Those are King Freslik’s banners,” I said, transforming to my dragon eyes so that I could see clearly across the distance.

“My father has sent an army to the work camp?” Leo asked, moving closer to me, almost as if he would be able to see through my eyes if he touched me.

Once he had better control of the magic he wielded through me he probably would be able to see that far if he wanted to. For the moment, however, the rest of the humans would have to rely on the word of dragons for reconnaissance.

“It’s definitely King Freslik,” Azurus confirmed what I was seeing. “If I’m not mistaken, that’s the bastard himself riding at the front of his men.”

I felt Leo’s alarm and excitement, which was a contrast to Emmerich’s almost teasing, “I’m surprised Freslik isn’t hiding at the back of his army. ”

“We need to attack now,” Osric said, striding up the hill behind us.

I glanced back and saw his entire army prepared and beginning their march up to join us.

“Are you certain you want to fight a battle like this today?” Leo asked him, still looking like he was ready to ride into the fight with him.

Osric answered with a grim nod. “If we don’t fight it now, we might not get another chance. As far as I am aware, my uncle doesn’t know I exist or that I have plans to take his throne. This might be the one chance we have to surprise him.”

Leo smiled. “Then I say we charge.”

“We’re ready to fight with you and for you,” Prince Obi added, stars in his eyes for his cousin.

“Form ranks with my elite fighters,” Osric ordered us. “With any luck, we can finish this today and win the kingdom back from despair and treachery now.”

One of Osric’s deputies whooped enthusiastically at that. The cry was taken up by others, and in short order, the entire army was shouting energetically as they picked up their pace and charged over the hill.

“Are you ready for this?” I asked Leo as we joined the charge.

“As I’ll ever be,” Leo answered.

His bloodthirsty smile faltered and he nearly missed a step a few moments later. I felt the pinch of pain in his belly from our egg. Leo might have been ready to ride to the ends of this earth for the cause he believed in, but our egg, as primitive as it still was, just wanted to make it out into the world as soon as possible.

The air in the valley with the work camp sizzled in anticipation of the coming battle as our army rushed to fill the space along our side. I had faith in Osric and his men, but the closer we drew to the work camp, the more I began to see that King Freslik’s army wasn’t as ill-prepared as the rest of the mercenary soldiers Leo and I had encountered in our last few days of fighting.

I didn't have time to wonder whether we were walking into a battle that might be harder than we'd anticipated before that battle began.

A swelling cry that was intended to intimidate us sounded from the soldiers on the other side as we all raced toward the work camp.

"Be ready," Emmerich warned us all, which was as close as he was going to come to admitting that we might not be as prepared as we'd thought.

"We need to find and rescue the prisoners first and foremost," Leo called out by my side. "They're innocent and shouldn't be caught in the battle."

"Let that be your mission," Osric shouted his order from one side, where his most trusted men surrounded him, ready to fight. "We came here to free the villagers first. Defeating Freslik must be secondary."

I felt a surge of approval from Leo right as we reached the palisades surrounding the work camp.

That was when the battle began in earnest. Though most of King Freslik's soldiers were still on the far side of the camp, there were enough of the old guards and mercenaries manning the palisades to put up a fight.

"This way!" Leo called out, drawing the sword he'd been given to fight with and pointing it at a gap in the defenses.

I followed him, my own sword drawn. The thrill that swirled through both of us was intoxicating. I'd always thought good food, fine wine, and the best omega entertainment were the greatest joys of life, but racing with my mate through the palisade and into a skirmish as we worked for a just and noble cause topped any of that.

Emmerich had insisted we couldn't use magic to bring a swift and miraculous end to the conflict, but no one had said anything about using it to shield myself and my omega as we smashed into our first, strong resistance. Making the space around us impervious and the guards we battled too clumsy to let their blows land anywhere near Leo's person was easy. We did clash with a few men, but each time, they dropped their swords without explanation or stumbled as they attempted to slash at Leo.

"You're helping me," Leo said, smirking beautifully as we left one group of guards to round the corner of one of the longhouses where we could see prisoners were trapped.

"Of course, my love," I replied with a wink.

Leo laughed and shook his head, but he didn't protest the help.

It was hard to see what was happening with the battle overall as we dashed from longhouse to longhouse, smashing open doors and helping the captive villagers inside to safety. We met resistance along the way, but nothing we couldn't overcome.

It was a little too easy.

"Don't bother with us," one of the prisoners we'd just freed warned us in a terrified voice. "King Freslik's men are all over the camp. They're lying in wait to capture you all."

Leo and I both grew serious, glancing at each other and then back the way we'd come, to the center of the camp.

Sure enough, a sudden, swelling cry, like a hundred men or more leaping out of hiding at once echoed across the chaotic space.

“We need to go back,” Leo said .

I nodded, and the two of us ran toward the noise. My dragon kin and the other omega princes saw us running and joined us. We formed a single group as we hurried towards the center of the conflict.

We arrived just in time to see a fierce battle between two sets of trained, hardened men. Neither side appeared to have the upper hand. Osric fought in the middle of his men, but he didn’t appear to be gaining any advantage.

And then the worst possible thing happened.

No sooner had our group run out to the central yard of the camp where the fiercest fighting was taking place than we were surrounded by at least two dozen men, some of them on horseback.

“Hold!” one of the mounted soldiers who had captured us called out. “We have the princes!”

The battle wasn’t quick to end, but the fighting gradually stopped.

“I knew this would happen,” Prince Misha wept as our group was herded straight into the middle of the battleground. “I knew he would capture us. He’ll kill us now for certain. We betrayed him.”

“Nothing will happen to you,” Azurus tried to console him.

“Are you willing to let me use magic now?” I asked Emmerich, sick with bitterness that we’d let ourselves be caught so quickly.

“Not yet,” Emmerich said, as if we were on a walk through the park instead of at the

endpoint of a battle, one we'd very likely just lost. "Wait and see what happens."

I huffed impatiently and could feel Leo's incredulity, too. Prince Rumi still gazed at Emmerich with trust, but I could see uneasiness in him .

"Father's coming," Prince Obi gasped as we were all pushed to a stop in the center of the battleground.

I wanted to open up a doorway and whisk my omega and his brothers off into our world so badly I had to clench my hands to stop myself from doing it. Emmerich was a fool if he thought this situation could have any sort of good outcome.

"Well, well," King Freslik said as he reached us in the clearing, flanked by far more men than he needed to keep him safe. "If it isn't my traitorous sons. I always knew you lot would rise up against me someday. Where you found yourself an army is beyond me, though. Did you enlist the help of that sorceress?"

I blinked, wondering if I'd heard the man correctly. He thought the princes were the leaders of Osric's army or that Saoirse, who was long gone, had helped them?

"Your reign of tyranny is over, Father," Leo began, stepping forward with more bravery radiating from him than all of Freslik's army combined.

His defiant words went unheard as the commotion of Osric and his deputies riding up through the panting, sweating, bloody soldiers drew everyone's attention. Even I had to admit that Osric looked every bit as powerful and regal as a king should.

Freslik definitely noticed. "Who are you?" he demanded, though the way his eyes widened and the color drained from his face told us all he had an idea.

"Don't you recognize me, Uncle?" Osric called across the gap separating them.

“Don’t you recognize the son of your own brother?”

“No!” Freslik gasped. His horse shied away, and for one, beautiful moment, I thought Freslik would take his entire army and run .

He recovered himself and nudged his horse forward instead, glaring at Osric.

“You are nothing!” he called out. “My brother died without giving birth. Even if he had, you are a bastard son of nobody.”

“I am Osric, the legitimate son of Lord Oberlin and his wedded omega mate, Florian, brother of Freslik,” Osric announced to one and all, including Freslik’s baffled soldiers. “I stake my claim to the throne of this land.”

“This kingdom is mine!” Freslik shouted in reply. “It is mine by right of birth and rule. But I see that you have all conspired against me, you and my wicked sons. You are the sorcerer!”

Leo swayed like he would step forward to join Osric. Prince Rumi and Prince Obi looked like they were ready to defend their cousin as well.

But Osric called out, “The princes? They are my hostages.”

A quick silence fell over the field. I understood what Osric was doing. He was trying to save the princes from whatever fate he might face as a rebel against the king.

“It’s not true!” Leo called out. “We fight with Osric. We will fight and depose you, and I, for one, will do whatever is necessary to?—”

A sudden pang stole Leo’s breath and doubled him over. More than that, I had the distinct feeling that his words had been heard by no one but our immediate circle.

King Freslik didn't tear his eyes away from Osric even for a second.

I caught a look from Emmerich that said he'd made an exception to his no magic rule for the sake of the princes' safety.

"How dare you take my sons hostage?" King Freslik shouted, apparently changing his tune. "I take any and all such attacks against me as a direct insult."

"Then take them back," Osric said, nodding to the princes. "Take back your beloved sons and keep them safe and sheltered from what is to come."

"What is he doing?" Leo growled in frustration. "We are here to fight with him. What sort of betrayal is this?"

"It isn't a betrayal," Prince Rumi said quietly. "He's trying to save us."

"I don't want to be saved," Leo raged on. "I want to fight."

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than he groaned in pain again.

"We need to get back to the magical world as soon as possible," I said as Osric and Freslik went on exchanging threats and challenges. "My omega needs to birth our egg."

"The best way you can ensure that will happen is by letting King Freslik take the omegas back to their bedchamber in the castle," Emmerich said.

"But what if he doesn't take them there?" I demanded, frustrated that I was being asked to entrust the thing that was most precious to me to a vainglorious tyrant.

"Trust me," Emmerich said, eyes trained on Freslik. "He'll take them back to the



castle, back to their bedchamber.”

He raised his hand toward Freslik, and a moment later, Freslik said, “Give my sons back to me! They belong in the castle, locked safely away in their bedchamber.”

A ripple of surprise passed through the armies witnessing the scene, as if no one had expected Freslik to make that declaration.

Osric frowned slightly, then glanced to our group. He didn’t look at the omega princes, though. He looked at Emmerich, then Azurus, then me.

The man clearly had some idea of who we were and what we were doing.

“Very well, then,” he said, straightening his back and tilting his chin up. “I will return the princes to you, and in exchange, you let me and my men leave here.”

“Very well,” Freslik answered so quickly that magic had to be involved. No smart ruler would let someone with a legitimate case to challenge him simply walk away.

“Emmerich, you devil,” I said, uncertain whether I was teasing or whether I was furious with him. “You said no magic.”

“No magic that would give any of us away,” Emmerich said as some of the guards holding us moved in to escort the princes away. “This magic is designed to protect the most vulnerable.”

“I don’t want to go back,” Prince Misha wept, clinging to Azurus even as the guards closed in to take them away. “I cannot bear it anymore.”

“It will only be for a short time,” Azurus reassured him.

“We’ll rejoin them in the magical world as soon as Father shuts the door on us,” Prince Rumi agreed. “I think we’re safe until then.”

He glanced to Emmerich in question, and Emmerich nodded to confirm it.

“I don’t want to be apart from you,” Leo said, grasping my hand and reaching out to me through our bond. “But if we must be parted for a few hours so that we can be together for the rest of our lives, then I’ll endure it.”

I grinned. “My brave omega. You’re so much stronger than I am.”

“Yes, I am,” Leo said, then winked .

I wanted to throw my arms around him and kiss him until we were both overheated and panting. I wanted to defy Emmerich and make a doorway to take us straight back to my lair.

Instead, I was forced to step back, cloaked by magic, and watch as soldiers poked and prodded my pregnant omega and marched him away from me.

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*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 7:31 am*

Chapter

Twelve

Leo

For the second time, as soon as I was separated from Diamant, I regretted it. Badly.

“Are you certain you’re going to make it back to the castle?” Rumi asked as he rubbed my back while I curled in on myself as the wagon our father had assigned to carry us home jostled.

“I’ll be fine,” I said through gritted teeth, not sure if that was true or not.

Even though my belly ached, the egg inside me felt bigger by the second, too big to make it out of me easily, and every fiber of my being cried out for my mate, I wasn’t the one of us who suffered the most on that long, depressing ride home.

“I cannot do this anymore,” Misha wept as he sat against the opposite side of the wagon, hugging himself. “I just can’t do it.”

Obi sat beside him, one arm around Misha’s back, glancing worriedly at Rumi. I didn’t like the feeling like the two of them were all that was left to be responsible for their weaker brothers. I wasn’t weak, I was just...indisposed.

I grimaced at the thought. I hated being sick in the best of times. What I felt now wasn’t sickness, it was a complete change in my life.

As soon as those thoughts pinched me, I felt a wave of stubborn indignation from inside me. It was faint and new, but the emotion of it was so precise that I almost laughed.

“You’re going to be a stubborn one, aren’t you,” I murmured, rubbing my belly. “Just like your papa.”

I caught my breath. It was the first time I had thought of myself as a papa on a visceral level, and it didn’t feel half bad. I closed my eyes and drew in a deep breath, pressing my hand against the bulge of my stomach.

Images came to me, whether of my own imagining or through some sort of profound sight. I saw a wiry young alpha boy with white-blond hair, like his sire, running through the garden brandishing a wooden sword. I saw him leading and entertaining several other boys, his cousins, as they staged mock battles against their friends.

The boy was happy, healthy, and strong.

That made my smile wider.

“Are you sure you’re alright?” Rumi asked, a hint of humor in his voice. “That’s a strange smile you’re wearing.”

“Yes,” I breathed out, opening my eyes. “I don’t think it’s going to be easy, but I think I’m going to be alright.”

We reached the castle in the middle of the night. Once again, my brothers and I were all so tired that we slept for a good portion of the journey, even though the situation was fraught and we didn’t trust our escorts. We were shoved and poked awake by our father’s guards as soon as the wagon rolled into the sheltered courtyard beside the castle.

“You’re to be taken to your bedchamber at once and locked inside,” Rottum, who was once again in charge of the four of us, sneered. “Your father doesn’t want to see you.”

“Thank Goddess!” Obi muttered under his breath. “As if we’d want to see him.”

I sent him a grin of approval as the guards shoved us into a line and marched us through the silent, cold castle to our bedchamber. Obi would be a warrior omega someday, too.

As soon as Rottum slammed the door of our room behind us, as the sound of it being barred and chained shut echoed in the hallway, the four of us ran straight for Rumi’s bed.

“One of these days, Father is going to realize that mere locks and chains won’t do a thing to keep us contained in this room,” Obi said as we all pushed the bed aside, revealing the door.

“One of these days, he’s not going to be content merely with locking us away,” Rumi said gravely.

We let that heavy thought sit between us as Rumi pulled open the door and we descended into the magical world. I feared Rumi was right. My brothers would have to be incredibly careful in the coming days and weeks.

All thoughts of my brothers were brushed aside when I felt and spotted Diamant marching toward us through the enchanted forest. As undignified and unbecoming of a warrior as it was, I let out a yelp of excitement and relief and jumped down the last few golden stairs to run to him.

“My fierce darling,” Diamant gusted out as I slammed myself against him, wrapping

my arms and my legs around him.

I didn't care who was watching. I was back in my dragon's arms, we were together in the magical world, and my body strained to complete the breeding that we'd started. I slammed my mouth over his, gripping the hair at the back of his head and kissing him like I could blend our souls together right then and there.

"Now," I panted between kisses, squirming as my body came alive with desire. "I need you to get this egg out of me now."

Diamant laughed and kissed me back. He swept a hand around my ass and immediately I felt my hole stretch and widen in anticipation and slick pooled and leaked out of me.

"Er, perhaps the two of you should return to your lair?" Emmerich suggested.

I yanked back as I remembered we weren't alone and turned to see Emmerich and Azurus striding through the glittering, gem-filled forest to join us.

"Thank Goddess you made it out of King Freslik's grasp in one piece," Azurus said, presumably for all of us, but looking at Misha as he spoke.

"I'm not going back," Misha declared with surprising strength. He started out his declaration looking at Azurus, but he turned to me, Rumi, and Obi as soon as the words were out. "I'm sorry. I don't want to let you down or abandon you, but I'm not going back into our father's world."

"It's alright," Rumi said, stepping forward and hugging Misha.

When he let go, Misha went on. "I know that it's important to be there for the people of our kingdom. Now more than ever, since Osric might have a real chance of taking

the throne from Father. I know that my duty should be toward our world and our kingdom, but I cannot do it. I'm not as strong as the rest of you."

"You're plenty strong," Obi said, his expression filled with love for our brother, as well as a touch of worry. "You could conquer an entire army all on your own with the power of your sweetness. But I understand if you don't think our father's world is the place for you anymore."

"It isn't," Misha said, wiping the tears from his cheeks. He tried to stand straighter as he said, "I will give you whatever help and support you need to fight against Father, but I cannot do it from that world. I don't want to set a single foot back in that world ever again."

"And you won't have to," Rumi said with a nod. He hesitated for a moment before asking, "Where will you stay in this world?"

Misha hiccupped, then blinked. "I...I don't know. I suppose Tovey or Selle or Leo will take me in." He glanced to me.

My first thought was that of course I would take my brother in.

My second was that I wanted to be alone with my alpha and our egg. This was an important time for us, and as much as I loved my brother, as much as he would always be my family, I had a new family, and our story was just beginning.

"You'll stay at the castle, of course," Azurus answered with a compassionate smile, stepping closer to Misha. "Emmerich is in charge of the castle, but I'm certain he wouldn't mind."

"Not at all," Emmerich said. "In fact, we should take you there now. Tonight's dance is just beginning in the pavilion, but you look as though you need a week's worth of

rest.”

“I could use a week’s worth of the food served at the pavilion,” Rumi said, deliberately cheery to make Misha feel better. “What do you say?” he asked Obi.

“I want to see if there are any new, handsome alphas at the dance tonight,” Obi answered with a wink for Misha.

I was more proud of my brothers than I could say. Prouder, in some ways, than I’d been of them in the heat of battle, fighting for what was right. Battling evil was one thing, but showing such loyalty and caring toward each other, especially when one of us was in a bad way, was what being brothers were all about.

“If you don’t mind,” Diamant said, his arm tight around my waist, “we won’t be joining you tonight.”

Emmerich laughed. “Of course not. You and your beloved have more important things to do.”

“Yes, we do,” I said on a heavy breath, my body aching with the need to finish being bred.

Diamant cleared his throat. “If you will excuse us,” he said, blushing beautifully.

We all said a quick round of goodbyes and parted ways.

“And now, delicious, ripe omega of mine,” Diamant said, turning to me with a rakish growl in his voice. “Let us finish what we started.”

I laughed. “I’m too far gone to lift a finger to fight you on this one,” I said. “Take me away and fuck this egg out of me, dragon.”



Diamant purred deep in his throat at my aggressive command. Then his entire body transformed into his breathtaking, glittering dragon form.

Heart in my throat, I climbed onto his back and gripped him with my whole body. My dragon lover leapt into the air, and as soon as we were above the tops of the trees, his form expanded and he picked up speed at such an alarming rate that I could barely breathe.

I wanted to enjoy the flight. I was certain there would be many more times in the future when I would love the feeling of soaring and swirling through the skies on my dragon's back. But with the heat and pressure increasing in my body with every moment, I just wanted to reach home. Our home.

"All will be well, my darling," Diamant reassured me as we flew nearer to his magnificent lair.

I hadn't really seen it from the outside before. We'd traveled straight into the interior when Diamant stole me away the first time. I was pleased to see that the home I would share with my beloved dragon and our brood for what would likely be a very long time was a magnificent mansion that stretched over a pretty hillside and was surrounded by pleasure gardens. It was the perfect place for a rogue like Diamant to live.

Even better was the private courtyard where Diamant landed. It stretched right outside his bedroom door, and as soon as Diamant had resumed his human form, completely naked, thank the Goddess, and flicked his wrist toward it, the doors opened.

I let out a vocal breath at the sight of the large, comfortable bed where I'd spent my short, eventful heat with my mate. It had only been days ago, but it felt like a lifetime and then some. I was so eager to finish what we'd started that my knees buckled as

soon as I slipped off of Diamant's back and my feet hit the flagstones.

"I've got you, sweetheart," Diamant said, so much tenderness in his voice.

I didn't think I liked tenderness, or being called sweetheart. I was wrong. As Diamant lifted me off my feet and carried me into the bedchamber, I reveled in the feelings coming through our bond. I was adored and cherished. My dragon would keep me and protect me forever.

Of course, along with those softer emotions were the hotter, carnal things I also wanted to feel.

"Are you sure you want to fuck a battle-weary, dirty, bruised omega, dragon?" I asked him as he set me on his feet beside his bed, one eyebrow raised.

Diamant laughed, low and almost menacing. "Oh, yes, omega. I'm sure."

He grabbed me and yanked me into a tight embrace, slanting his mouth over mine with all the force I needed from him just then. If my entire life had to change and I had to be a papa, then I would do it on my terms.

"First, we get rid of these," he said as he broke our kiss, his hands trailing down my body.

I expected him to unbutton my stained and torn shirt so he could toss it aside, but instead he grabbed the two halves of the front and tore them apart.

I sucked in a breath at the aggressive gesture and a shudder passed through me. What felt like a river of slick poured from my hole, and when Diamant tossed my destroyed shirt aside to tug and yank at the fastenings of my trousers, they came away soaked when he pushed them down. My cock leapt up, its tip already glistening with

readiness.

“You are beautiful,” Diamant growled, staring at my body and sweeping his hand around my hip over the top of my ruined trousers. His eyes seemed fixed on the bulge of my stomach, which had moved slightly lower, as if the egg knew its time had come. “Whether you want to be or not.”

“I don’t mind being beautiful for you,” I told him, splaying my hands across his broad chest and teasing his nipples. “As long as you don’t treat me like something fragile and precious.”

“You? Fragile and precious?” Diamant chuckled. “Hardly.”

He followed those words by pushing me back so I fell across his bed, then yanking my boots and trousers off. I laughed at first, and then, just for fun, I rolled to my stomach, gasping at the sensation of my egg heavy inside me, and tried to get away as if I’d been chased there against my will.

Diamant laughed as well and lunged after me, grasping me around the waist and tugging me back. “Oh no you don’t,” he said, shifting onto the bed and using his knees to wedge between mine. “You have something of mine inside you, and it’s coming out, whether you like it or not.”

My whole body went limp with acceptance for a moment. As frightening as the prospect of being a papa was and as huge of a change in my life as the egg represented, I was ready for it now.

Well, I didn’t think I would ever be completely ready for papahood, but I was more ready than I would have been.

“You can’t make me do anything,” I said all the same.

I was certain Diamant felt how desperately I wanted to feel him inside me through our bond. I pretended to fight him, squirming and struggling to get away as he braced himself on the bed, then gasped as he slipped his arms under me and yanked me upright, my back against his chest.

He shoved my legs apart as far as they would go using his knees, then with a heady combination of dexterity and force, he brought me right down onto his cock, impaling me with a single, hard thrust .

I cried out, not just with the sudden pain of being speared but with the intense shot of pleasure that filled me. My cock strained in front of me as I fought not to come until the moment was exactly right. I adored this sort of rough intimacy with my dragon and I hoped that we would have a lifetime of hot, intimate, ecstatic mating ahead of us.

“You are mine,” Diamant growled just behind my ear as his thrusts grew stronger and more insistent. “My omega, my egg, my own.”

I could feel him growing in me, the girth of his cock filling and stretching me beyond what I would have thought I could tolerate. I could feel the changes in him as that tiny but important transformation to dragon made me feel like he could tear me apart from the inside. My cries of pleasure turned into grunts of endurance as the most tender parts of me felt like they were being pried open.

Just as the pain began to grow unbearable, I started to come. Pleasure like nothing I’d felt before, stronger even than the breeding orgasm that had caused my beloved’s seed to take hold in me, washed through me. I cried out with it, coming so hard I thought I might turn my balls inside out. I fell into the abyss of that pleasure, swimming in it like I might lose my mind.

And then came the feeling of something large and heavy moving through me. A

different sort of pleasure entirely filled me. I felt Diamant slip out of me, and as he left me, something followed him. The pain was excruciating, but mingled with the pleasure Diamant had given me it confused my brain. I cried out as the pain grew pitched, shaking and momentarily panicked that I would be torn apart, but the moment passed.

A burst of joy, lust, and possessiveness, crashed through me. They were Diamant's emotions, but I wasn't sure where his started and mine ended. We were one, one heart, one soul, everything together. I knew in the most essential parts of my being that whatever we faced from now on, we would get through it together.

As the moment of perfection began to ebb, my body sagged back into Diamant's embrace. I was limp, completely without energy to do anything. My head dropped forward in exhaustion, and for the briefest moment, I closed my eyes.

When I opened them, the diamond-bright surface of my egg, my child, glinted back at me. I felt the cheekiest swell of emotion from it, and I laughed.

"Are you sassing your papa already?" I panted, beyond tired.

"I wouldn't put it past an egg of ours," Diamant laughed with me.

He eased me back even as I reached for our egg, and when he lay me against the deliciously soft pillows at the head of our bed, he scooped up our egg and moved it into my embrace.

I groaned with longing as I held my baby close, pressing its warm, bright, and yet somehow also soft shell against my heart. My baby might have been as cheeky as its father, but it was also just as exhausted as I was.

"Rest now, baby," I told it, curling in so I could kiss it over and over. "You were

conceived and born in battle, and you deserve a rest before you need to join us fully and begin to fight your own battles.”

Diamant shifted the bedcovers around and slotted in behind me, making a cozy nest for all of us. I appreciated his efforts and fully intended to tease him about being the one to do all the nesting later .

“So you’ve made peace with the idea of being a papa?” he asked as he cuddled both of us from behind.

I made a noncommittal sound and dragged my eyes away from our egg to smile over my shoulder at him. “I don’t think I could ever be the sort of papa that Tovey or Selle are, or that I’m sure Misha will be, once his time comes. But I wouldn’t mind learning to be my own kind of papa,” I finished, looking at our egg again.

Diamant tightened his arms around me. “Whatever kind of papa you decide to be, I know you’ll be magnificent at it.” He kissed my bare shoulder. “And once you think the time is right, I would love for you to join the battle to make your father’s kingdom a better place.”

I jerked to look over my shoulder at him again. “You would allow me to continue to fight for Osric?”

Diamant laughed. “I don’t see how I could stop you. And to be honest, I want to fight, too. I’ve never felt the kind of purpose that I’ve felt battling by your side for what is right.”

I smiled, then twisted a bit more so I could kiss him. “I’ll make a warrior out of you yet,” I said, then settled comfortably into his embrace.

I closed my eyes, hugging my egg as Diamant hugged me, satisfied with the new life

I'd set out on. It would be a life of adventure, that much was certain. My family and I would love every moment of it.

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Rumors that a challenger to King Freslik's throne had risen up along the western frontier of the kingdom spread like wildfire. Hope began to sparkle among the peasants of the kingdom as the lineage of Osric, King Freslik's own nephew, was whispered from village to village. For the first time in a generation, people had hope that things might get better.

In the castle itself, King Freslik stomped around, raging at his councilors and abusing his guards.

"I had that pretender, Osric, at my mercy," he shouted during one particularly horrible strategy session. "I had an army at my disposal. Why did I not take him then and there and destroy this potential rebellion?"

"You were attempting to show mercy, Your Majesty," the councilor Argus said with a shrug of his old, stooped shoulders. "Osric returned the princes to you in exchange for his life."

"The princes," King Freslik spat. "They are the reasons I am in this position. It's all their fault. I will visit them at once! "

The king and a few of his councilors and guards marched their way directly through the castle and up to the princes' bedchamber. The door was barred with three times as many bars now and chains over the top of the bars. It took three men five minutes to take it all apart and to move the bars so that the king could storm into his sons' chamber.

But when he smashed open the doors and strode in, expecting to find four of his sons



up to no good, he instead found only two of them, the eldest and the youngest, sitting at a table in the center of the room playing chess.

“What is the meaning of this?” the king demanded.

The two princes blinked up at him.

“We were just playing chess,” Prince Rumi said. “Would you care to join us?”

“No, I would not...” The king growled with frustration and looked around the room.

“Where are the others? What has happened to the rest of the princes?”

“You lost them along the way, Father,” Prince Obi said with apparent innocence.

“They all fell out of the wagon on their way back from the frontier.”

“They did not...that isn’t...you can’t convince me....”

The king’s gaze fell on the window that looked out into one of the castle’s gardens.

“There!” he shouted, pointing at the window. “That’s how they’ve escaped! They’ve climbed out through the window.”

The two remaining princes exchanged wary looks.

“Bar the window at once!” the king shouted. “I won’t have any more of my sons escaping.”

The guards were slow to obey, but they did eventually come forward with planks left over from barring the door to fasten into place over the garden window .

“You’ll live in darkness until I know what happened to the other omegas,” the king growled, glaring at his sons. “I’ll offer a reward throughout all the land for anyone

who can tell me where my omega sons are disappearing to. Whoever can solve the mystery will have the right to claim either of your next heats and every other heat after that.”

He grinned with glee as he left his sons to their fate. Not only would offering a prince’s heat motivate the people of his kingdom to tell him what had become of his missing sons, it would make the ones that remained miserable. It was the perfect solution to his embarrassing problem.

I hope you’ve enjoyed Leo and Diamant’s story!