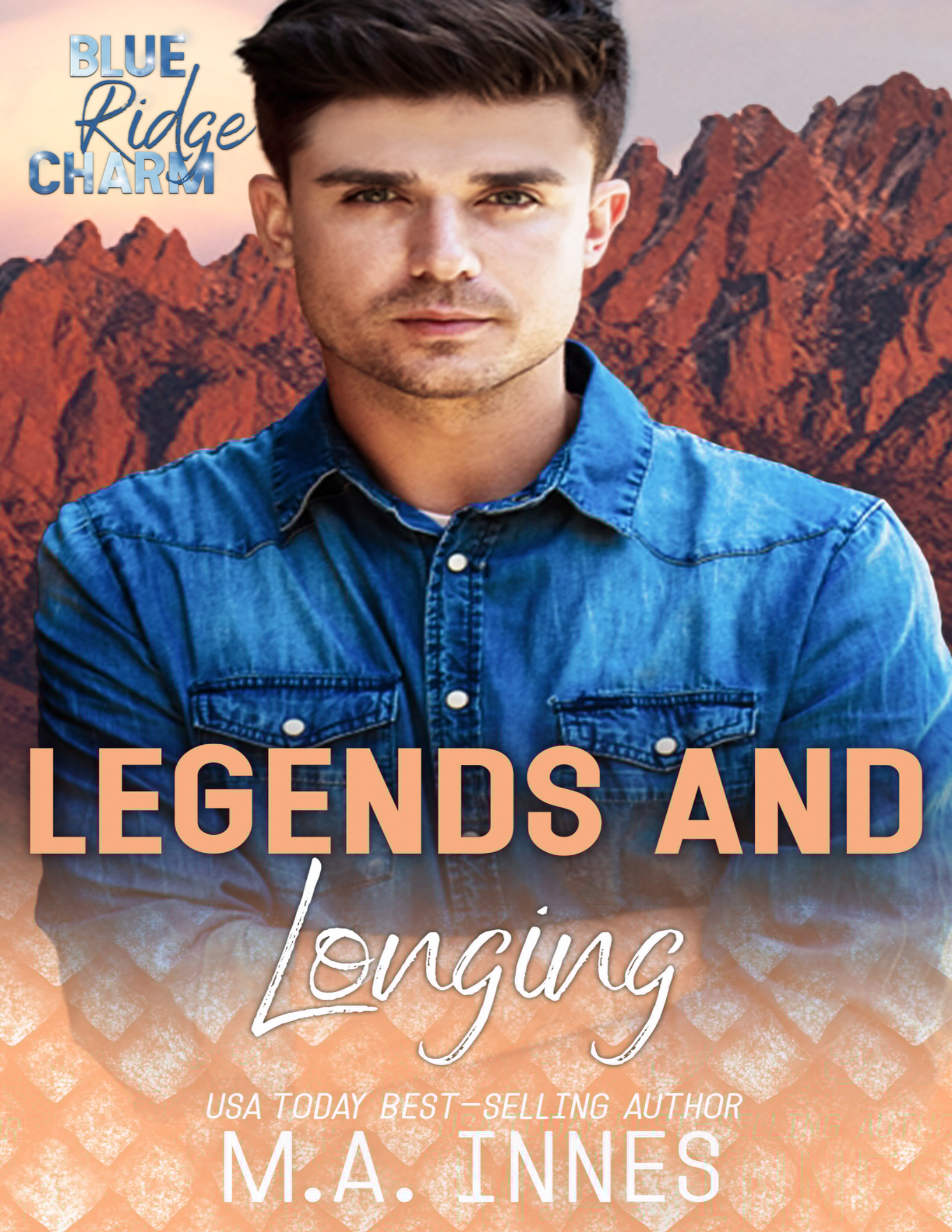

BLUE Ridge CHARM
LEGENDS AND
Longing
USA TODAY BEST-SELLING AUTHOR
M.A. INNES

LEGENDS AND LONGING

Blue Ridge Charm, Book 3

M.A. Innes

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This is a work of fiction. Similarities to real people, places, or events are entirely coincidental.

LEGENDS AND LONGING

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Legends and Longing

Shiloh

Ridiculous. Shiloh knows why he has to go through the portal. It's his destiny…well, the destiny he was given. Either way, what he doesn't understand was why the fates would give him two mates who not only don't understand what being a sub is, they don't even understand each other.

Zorin

Frustrating. Zorin has decided English has many wonderful words like frustrating and nuance. It also has many interesting concepts such as being a Daddy and caretaking a mate. What it does not have is an explanation for what the fates were thinking. Raxius?

Raxius

Confused. Raxius knew why he was confused…there were a variety of reasons if he was being honest. He also knew he had a confusing mate. Zorin? Really? What he didn't know was how to help his shy Earth mate or how to take care of two very different males.

Author's Note: This slow burn romance is the third book in the spinoff series from the original Blue Ridge Magic books. This takes place after the events in the original series and should be read in order for it to make sense. This series contains spoilers for the original series. (That's still obvious, but I'm going to remind you anyway.)

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I just want to thank my wonderful Patreon members, especially those in my top tier who give me so much encouragement and wonderful ideas.

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Chapter 1

Professor Zorin

They were…

They were so…

They were so horrifyingly wiggly.

Were they broken?

We weren't supposed to do that and the others around me knew it as well.

"Have they been damaged in some way?"

"Did the closing of the portal do this to them?"

"What are they talking about?"

Questions from the other academics buzzed around me like insects but I ignored them all as I studied the humans and tried to decipher what they might be saying. Nothing about their words was familiar, but the people of Earth used the language smoothly, as well as Klynn and Toman, which was good to see.

Occasionally they paused in ways the other people of Earth did not, but their sounds seemed nearly as smooth as I studied them. **"I think it is clear that the spell to obtain the Earth language was successful."**

Something about my words or our discussion had all the people of Earth focusing on us at once, giving them even more horrifying

behaviors. Their synchronized movements had me trying to decide if they looked like hunters or prey being stalked.

“Toman is not showing concern.”

“The Earth people may be showing concern, though.”

“Why do their eyes look that way?”

“What does an open mouth signify?”

“I do not know but they are all making the same expression.”

“Do you think the gate travel affected them mentally?”

Questions buzzed around me but I ignored them as I let my gaze scan the individuals from Earth. They had moved together in one large mass, making it difficult to see some individuals at the back, but I did my best to memorize their features.

Somehow theirs were softer than ours, which matched the historical reports of what the humans of Earth looked like, but we had not expected our people to blend in so completely.

They looked human.

They may have even been acting human and not damaged.

We should have expected it but somehow it was still confusing.

“They are watching us.”

The reason for that was obvious, but I showed my agreement before responding.

“They are as curious as we are. This is a foreign land to them.”

Reminders that we were supposed to be getting to know our long-separated families helped and we all moved closer to the

people of Earth as they continued to speak quietly and watch our movements closely.

Even Klynn and Toman were standing close to the people of Earth, so it was possible they required less personal space. However, we were missing context to their behavior because as one male spoke the others made odd verbal responses to him that varied in volume.

Was that supposed to be a happy sound?

Historic texts had described stern humans who were very quiet when they had to interact with our people. This did not match those stories. These moved in odd ways, made many sounds, and they were loud.

Well, most were loud but several voices were quieter than the others and sounded like what I would've expected to hear anywhere on this side of the gate. One was closer to what I would have described as pleasant, with a soothing tone, but the louder voices quickly drowned it out.

"Does anyone else think they speak faster than we do?"

"How does their volume affect their language?"

"Does pitch change the meaning of a word?"

Several of the linguists made logical points, forcing the rest of us to ignore the visual distractions in front of us. They did speak faster than our people here, so I gave him my approval as I did my best to sort through their individual sounds. The words were meaningless to me but I could differentiate many them.

"Yes. The way they say words all sound slightly different, as well."

Several of what I assumed were words seemed to be repeating but each individual sounded more unique than I would have expected. My response had the people of Earth focusing on us again, their tones and sounds changing again to indicate something.

But what?

Could their tones and pitches change the meaning of their words?

This was not the same style of language we had begun cataloging before the gate had closed.

We tried to be patient but the male standing beside Toman said something that had the people of Earth waving their heads back and forth and changing their facial expressions. Every movement they made was exaggerated and unexpected.

"What are they doing?"

My question to Toman had every person of Earth finally going still and responding with widening eyes that probably gave some other signal I was supposed to understand.

Toman gave me his focus and indicated confusion.

"I will need a more detailed question. They are doing a lot."

He was frustrating but correct.

"Yes."

They were doing much, so I paused and studied our visitors with their round features and wide eyes.

"Why are their faces so…so full of expressions?"

I wasn't sure that was the right way to ask the question but it seemed like a reasonable starting point since it was the most

shocking. Toman did not seem to agree but he quickly explained.

"They would call it being animated**. The native people of Earth use facial expressions to communicate more effectively. It is unfamiliar at first, but our people there became used to it living so closely with them."**

Animated?

They had a specific word for their quickly changing facial expressions?

"It is integral to their communication, but they do understand we are not used to behaving in that way."

Toman made it sound logical but the others around me were buzzing with questions as they started debating the new information. Discussing theoretical topics was not the best way to use my time, however, so I stayed focused on Toman and the people of Earth.

Something about the conversation or our behavior triggered more talking from them until the male beside Toman stood straighter as he spoke. Whatever he said had everyone else giving him their attention as if he were someone in charge.

As we watched their new movements, I tried to process what Toman had said.

"How completely did they integrate themselves into Earth society?"

Our past experts had decided that isolation would have been the most logical course of action for our people trapped on Earth. That did not seem to be the case and we may have misunderstood Toman's original report from the other side of the portal.

“Completely.”

Fascinating.

“That is interesting.”

So was Toman’s glance toward the wiggly, expressive male at his side, but he did not let the individual distract him entirely and quickly turned back to me.

“I have learned the native language of the people that live closest to the gate, but their world is very fractured and there are countless additional languages on their planet.”

Countless?

“The spell works but it takes time for the words to be fully assimilated and it must be done with someone who has a complete knowledge of the local language. Our first choice for the spell did not work out as expected. Her knowledge was very limited due to living in isolation and I was not fully able to follow other locals until I bonded with my mate. At that point the spell or possibly the mate bond worked much better.”

Mate?

He had found his mate?

Toman had a mate from Earth?

“You bonded? With one of our people from Earth?”

My question was unnecessary but it came out before I could pick one that would gain me more information. Toman was polite and did not point out the redundancy. My confusion was acceptable due to the newness of the information, and I was glad he understood.

“Yes. It was unexpected but they are able to make strong bonds and did not lose that knowledge. Understand that a lot of other information, both cultural and magical, was not passed down for a variety of reasons.”

What information had they lost?

“I know our people will be glad that they did not lose the ability to bond.”

If Toman had bonded to the male of Earth, were the others similarly paired? Had we affected them in some way by going through the gate? Would they have mates here? Did they understand bonding in the same way we did? Had they come looking for mates? What aspects of it were lost to them?

Swallowing back my questions, I indicated acceptance and tried not to startle the people of Earth as I responded.

“I and the others are looking forward to getting their language so we can speak to them more easily.”

Yes, acquiring their language was the first thing that needed to be done. Toman should have agreed easily but he quickly indicated displeasure of some sort.

He even performed some of the same purposeful wiggles as his mate.

“The spell gives a full accounting of the language…including what we would see as…mate-related topics. It has been discussed and they decided that the language should not be given by a spell to someone considered too young to understand the physical aspects of bonding.”

What?

That was…

They were…

What?

They physically bonded differently?

I was not the only one who had questions, but I had to admit, the other academics were more practical.

“Should we have brought a physician?”

“Did humans have those kinds of differences in the past?”

“What do the histories say about their mating habits?”

“Do some humans have different body structures?”

Based on their questions, many of my colleagues seemed to think Toman meant their bodies were different but that was not what he meant. Everything in our history said our human-looking bodies were structured the same as the traditional, nonmagical humans. Human evolution could not change that much in what was actually a short period of time without magic being involved.

What were they doing that was so shocking it was only for people of mating age?

Had that influenced the way Toman and Klynn seemed to be relating to the people of Earth?

Was it contagious?

Klynn was standing strangely close to a human from Earth.

Studying the people that had come through the gate, I knew without their language I would not be able to understand their behaviors. Their unfamiliar movements and actions left me without

context to be able to understand them…and their new mating practices.

"Please explain what they are doing that requires privacy of that level."

I knew my question was awkwardly worded but clear, however, Toman's face did something odd.

"They have learned additional nonmagical ways of bonding with their mates. Humans do not bond in the same way and have created…personal rituals to promote bonding. Our society does not have them."

Clearly.

"How are personal bonding rituals only for those of bonding ages?"

Most young individuals could watch animals and deduce how our people coupled after bonding. It was not confusing. Even the small sects of our people who had created unique beliefs based on their studies of the ancestors bonded the same way as everyone else.

How were humans so different?

"They promote emotional connections in ways we are not familiar with but once explained they will make sense."

Was he being deliberately confusing or overly polite in some kind of Earth way?

Did something about the Earth environment change our people?

How much had bonding with a male of Earth changed him?

What effects did bonding with someone from Earth have on our people?

I waited for someone else to shift the conversation but everyone looked to me and waited.

“Then please explain.”

I was highly intelligent and was thought to be the best individual to learn about the people of Earth. Was Toman not as smart as I had been told? One could not teach unless one understood completely. Could he not explain what the people of Earth were doing with their alternative bonding rituals?

“We do not have the same concepts in our language and culture.”

Toman physically indicated there was no other information he could give me then turned to his mate. Their silence made it clear their bond was strong. The human’s face even changed as their conversation progressed, using their nonverbal movements as he used his mind to speak with his mate.

“Then use the closest example to our culture as a reference point. I have studied the archives extensively.”

Of all of our people, I had the most knowledge about the ancients and the people of Earth.

Their new movements and expressions were unfamiliar, but I could learn to decipher them. I would learn their Earth language and customs. We would welcome our lost family home, but to do that we must understand them.

“They have role-playing relationships that we have not been exposed to. Please trust me on this.”

No.

He was confused and was simply not able to explain what seemed to be an unfamiliar ritual. Toman's mate made more excitable sounds before they seemed to shift into mind speech. I waited to see how his mate's thoughts would affect the situation and Toman's behavior until he turned his attention to me again.

"Let us take our visitors somewhere out of the sun and provide them with refreshments and then I will give you and you alone a full understanding of the language situation."

Interesting.

Was his stronger tone a change from having a mate or from being around the humans?

"There is a tent with food available for them behind the gate."

His plan was logical and walking around to the tent gave me time to study the changes in his behavior but it did not give me any additional information on the human bonding rituals. Toman was remarkably stubborn about the topic. It must have something to do with his mate because I was beginning to think the odd expressions he was making at me had something to do with the new information Toman was reluctant to share.

What had the humans taught our people?

We had always been more advanced than them because of our magic. How had they developed something Toman could not explain?

Waiting to get everyone settled with food and drinks was the polite way to handle the situation but that did not make it enjoyable. I was patient, however, even when Toman seemed to be deliberately delaying discussing the topic.

“Please follow me.”

Toman’s strange behavior extended to leading me away from the tent, but I followed as we left the rest of our people behind. Everyone was watching us, even those trying to be subtle, but he led us far enough away we wouldn’t be overheard.

“We do not have the same vocabulary, so this is not something that can be translated simply.”

Toman was ready to give me the information but reluctance was showing in his tone.

“Without magic their bonding rituals must be simple. I am sure we can find a way to explain it.”

Earth could not have changed as much as he seemed to be indicating.

Toman let out a long breath that was very Earth-like if I was reading their actions correctly.

“Next time I have to explain this, I’m bringing one of the *diner* **men.”**

Most of his words did not translate well and his other Earth mannerisms did not help me to understand the problem. Thankfully, he continued without making me guess his meaning.

“Many of our people on Earth have chosen to participate in relationships where one party is considered dominant and the other submits to them. There are rules and roles that define the relationships, much like those that focus on the ancestors.”

He paused but I simply waited because it was not enough information to understand what he meant.

Dominant?

One mate was aggressive and one was passive?

Dragons were rarely passive, were the mages always the ones to submit? The humans? What of someone with mixed ancestry?

“Submissive mates require rules and attention to feel fulfilled and content in a relationship. Dominant mates provide structure and attention that goes beyond what is considered typical of a mate bond.”

In what manner?

Our people had what I thought would be considered equal mates even when they were dissimilar.

“This is not enough information on the specifics of the rituals. Mates generally have different personalities to complement each other. Please give a typical example.”

Toman’s level of agitation was startling as his shoulders tightened.

“Mates generally do not require spankings or mate rules related to sexual behavior.”

What?

Was it possible we used that word differently?

Could the meaning of the word spank have changed?

“They also typically do not involve extensive role-play where they take on alternate characteristics in order to promote submission and emotional connection.”

What?

“They also do not typically involve toys, both child-like and sexual in nature, costumes, or restraints.”

It seemed like we had gaps in our information on Earth…and humans…and mates.

Yes, I was going to need their language as soon as possible.

For research purposes, of course.

As the highest-ranking cultural historian, it was my duty to understand as much of their behaviors as possible.

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Chapter 2

Raxius

What was the confusing male doing?

The way Professor Zorin circled the main group of Earth people should have made him look like a predator ready to attack.

It did not.

Instead, he moved back and forth like a bird looking for food…or possibly attention if he was domesticated. It was impossible to ignore even if that was what manners required. The people of Earth did not seem to understand local behavior rules because they kept tracking him and slowly rotating the circles they had grouped themselves into.

Were they doing it deliberately?

Was it a herd instinct they had developed on Earth?

The more I watched, the more I realized the frustrating professor had probably done something to make them wary. He did that to everyone he found interesting, but it was possible no one had told them.

Why had no one told them?

Searching the large hall where the people of Earth had been moved to after their arrival, I studied their behavior to understand what was strange about the situation. Council members and

academics alike were scattered all over the room in small groups but most were standing apart from visitors.

It took longer than it should have to realize the problem. Most did not seem to be able to speak to the people of Earth aside from one or two that were talking with Klynn and the visitor he was addressing.

Had the spell gone wrong?

Why were we not informed?

If I was supposed to help support gaining knowledge from the people of Earth, I should have been informed that we could not speak to them.

Studying the groups they had bunched themselves into, I found Toman off to the side and moved to address him. We had been previously introduced when he had been chosen to go through the portal, but he had made a positive impression in the quick meeting.

Hoping that he was still competent and less frustrating than Klynn, I paused near what seemed to be a mated Earth couple. It was good to see they could bond, but everyone went still as I stood quietly. It was much better than the way they had been circling, but it still did not give me any information.

They stared worse than Professor Zorin.

Were they as odd as he was or was it a behavior from Earth?

“Toman. Welcome back.”

Ignoring the newcomers, I focused on the familiar face and did my best to appear calm. It did not seem to be helping the people of Earth based on the way their speech increased in speed. They

sounded like the birds Professor Zorin was still doing an odd impression of.

Toman made some kind of long breathy sound that had the male at his side responding to it for some reason. I was fairly certain he thought something was funny but the excess of facial expressions made it difficult to process.

It was almost like watching large children, but even our youngest were not as excitable as the people of Earth seemed to be.

Why did they move so much?

Was the circling some kind of new instinct?

It made them difficult to focus on, like I was fighting to pick out one bird in a large flock, and it made it impossible to sort out their different behaviors. Some seemed to be trying to project strong emotions and others seemed to be trying to hide, but I could not sort them out quickly enough.

Was the hiding one upset or was it the typical range of behavior for them?

All I could guess was that he was trying to project stress or anxiety, but I did not know enough about their behavior to confirm my thoughts.

"I am Raxius, one of the visiting council members. Others will be here shortly to show the people of Earth to their quarters. Can you please explain the situation?"

His behavior indicated frustration but he stayed focused on the male at his side for several long moments.

Wait.

Interesting.

As Toman turned back to me, I gave an appropriate response for the occasion.

“Congratulations on your mating.”

It seemed like an obvious conclusion but conversations around us from the people of Earth sped up quickly again. Their expressions and the way they moved their hands made me think some were excited but others like the hiding one went even more still.

Someone needed to inquire about him.

“Thank you. I will make introductions with my mate once you have a shared language, but his name is Wren.”

Wren.

Wren.

The word was strange but not difficult to pronounce.

“Please extend my congratulations to your mate. I am ready to receive his language.”

Glancing around the room, I made my displeasure clear.

“It seems like more individuals should have already been given the language.”

Wren made another sound that almost seemed like the happy noise he made earlier. There was something different about it, but I didn’t understand enough about them to guess. I also did not understand what would be good manners.

More books to choose from.

Look up **Lokepub** on Google and find a novel you like.

Was I allowed to ask Toman about the sounds his mate made?

What level of interest would be seen as rude or too aggressive?

Toman spoke before I could decide.

"The others are conflicted about receiving the Earth language called English."

Why?

No.

It didn't matter.

"I cannot go home until I have met with the people of Earth and gained knowledge. I do not care why the academics are uncomfortable."

Everything made them react oddly.

Professor Zorin most of all because he had started moving nearly as much as our new visitors.

Oh.

"Did the language make Professor Zorin…uncomfortable?"

Something about my question must have translated wrong because Toman's mate's eyes went wide and he started coughing. It caused Toman to touch his mate's back but nothing in his behavior said he was concerned about his mate's ability to take in air.

"Yes. The people of Earth have interesting views on different types of bonding with mates. It seems to come from the humans.

Professor Zorin was startled and that has led to the debate about who will get the language."

Ancestors above.

The strange bird of a professor would not keep everyone else from fulfilling their duties. It did not matter if the information he learned from Toman's bonding was confusing.

"They do not have a choice. It was agreed that we would obtain their language since we do not know how their magic has evolved. The safety measure was implemented for a reason. We must be able to communicate with them."

Along with needing to gain information on the other side of the gate, we could not keep them safe or content without it. All people must be able to communicate in some way. That was the minimum of what we needed to do to have them stay with us for any length of time.

"I agree but I must explain that the language is only to be given to those of bonding age because of the information on their mating practices. Also, if you have questions about the information, you must come to me or my mate. He is knowledgeable about many of their practices."

Toman paused, glancing over at Professor Zorin who was doing his best to get closer to the people of Earth without actually being successful. I could not decide if the people of Earth were moving away from him or if he was simply pretending to get close to test them in some way.

"They are confusing but explaining their bonding rituals without context was not helpful."

Was Professor Zorin not intelligent enough to understand their customs?

What were they doing that made bonding confusing?

Was the knowledge the reason the professor was still circling the newcomers?

Had the spell shared too much private information from Toman's own mating?

How confusing was his mate's bonding practices?

The next time I was given a similar job, I was going to move to the forests and leave everyone else behind.

"Again, I cannot go back to my work until I have fulfilled my duty. I do not care what the humans have taught our people about mating. I do not care how it involves you personally."

His bonding was not my business even if the spell shared too much information.

Their social customs related to mating would not affect me. Therefore it was not something I was worried about.

"Alright. Please close your eyes and focus appropriately."

I glanced around at the people of Earth one more time, but instead of looking dangerous or worried, they were all making similar expressions as Toman's Wren.

No one radiated danger even with their constant movements, so I obeyed and cleared my mind as Toman began the spell. I focused on obtaining the language Toman called English and being receptive to his knowledge. Understanding the people of Earth was my main thought as the spell built and was finally released.

Oh.

Well, it seemed like the people of Earth were interesting creatures.

It was no wonder Professor Zorin was drawn to them.

Toman was doing his best to keep what I knew the Earthlings would call *a blank face* as I opened my eyes, but his mate was doing the sound of giggling, if I was processing the information correctly.

"Please be welcome, Wren of Earth."

Manners.

I was not going to act strangely just because the people of Earth were…unique.

They had definitely picked up odd habits from the humans of Earth.

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Chapter 3

Shiloh

"Why are you hiding behind me?" Hugh was smart enough to know what I was doing and smart enough to keep staring ahead so that he wouldn't draw attention to me.

I should've hidden behind Kaden.

He wouldn't have noticed, so I wouldn't have had to explain anything.

"Please don't make me answer that." I'd gotten to know him well enough to be able to talk to him without panicking, but not enough to be able to explain ridiculous things without panicking.

It was a fine line I hated walking.

"Is there something wrong with you?" He barely paused before shifting into lecturing me. "You should've had the panic attack about coming to another planet *before* we left our planet."

He was kind of weird for someone who kept insisting they were boring.

"Um, not technically and I'm not having a panic attack." His huff said he didn't like my answers. "I'm fine."

As long as his definition of fine was flexible.

"No, you're not." He didn't seem to be as flexible as my family when it came to that kind of stuff. "Do you need a doctor or

Toman?"

Great ancestors above.

"No. Neither." I managed to get the word out quickly, but I was so nervous my voice squeaked even though I was trying to be nearly silent. "Um, thank you."

"Try again…and this time explain what's going on." His voice got a Dom tone I wasn't sure he'd appreciate me pointing out.

There was no way he was as boring as he claimed to be.

"Um, well." I really should've made a better decision about who to hide behind. He was just so tall and broad it'd seemed like an easy choice. Easy was not better. I should've known that. "It seems kind of like…well…um…"

I should've gotten credit for trying but my stumbling answer got another sigh from him. I had every intention of trying again but he beat me to it. "Fates be damned. You too?"

He really was smarter than everyone thought.

"Yeah." I just wasn't sure how it'd happened. "Um, and there's two."

Two.

At least I was pretty sure there were two, and there was no point in hiding that because it'd come out sooner or later.

"I'm taking it that they haven't noticed you yet?" Hugh's tone was still even but some of the frustration had faded.

"I think they're both very distracted and that's working in my favor." Eventually they'd stop freaking out over the whole *the aliens from another planet were kinky* thing.

I'd thought I was screwed when we'd all been herded into what was basically a large conference room to start getting to know us better and eventually show us to our rooms. Professor Zorin still seemed to be taking in all the information he'd just gained, so I'd gotten a short reprieve, but it seemed like the fates had a terrible sense of humor.

How did I have two mates?

"You're trying to remain unnoticed? *By your mates*?" His thoughts on that were obvious but he didn't exactly spell them out as he shifted to make sure he was blocking my mates' lines of sight. "What is your goal here?"

Oh.

He'd turned out to be a lot chattier than I'd expected.

Someone should've told him that tall, dark, and stoic meant he was supposed to be the silent type.

"Time, I think?" I really didn't have a goal, a plan, or a lot of common sense when it came to mate stuff.

I'd never thought I'd get one.

My family just didn't get those.

How had I ended up with two?

I just couldn't understand it.

Hugh coughed and I was pretty sure he was trying not to laugh as he pretended to be focused on Agent Murphy walking out of the conference room with several of who I thought were higher-up council members. "Eventually they're going to stop overthinking the whole kink thing and then they're going to notice something is off."

Me.

I was off.

"I know." That didn't mean I had to like it, though. "There are two of them…and they're aliens…and they're…"

Weird.

And attractive in very different ways.

Okay, one was weird and the other was grumpy…but they were still cute if I forgot the whole *mates from another planet* thing.

How a nearly blank-looking alien could radiate frustration I didn't know, but my mate could do it really well. Well, mate number two could do it. Mate number one was still looking at everyone like we were old-fashioned sideshow acts.

I was starting to understand how Great Aunt Gertrude had felt when she'd been in the circus, and I didn't like it one bit.

I wasn't meant for this much drama.

I knew that.

My family knew that.

The fates should've known it too.

Hugh went very still before he groaned. "Fates above. The professor?"

Smart people were kind of frustrating.

"And I'm pretty sure the grumpy one that's talking to Toman. The one that just got English." And a shiny new kinky vocabulary.

"He's taking it better than the professor did." Hugh was right but I wasn't sure if that was good or not. My grumpy mate was still very

neutral looking for someone who had gotten a lot of very strange information all at once.

"Just because he's not freaking out like Professor Zorin doesn't mean he wants a mate that's…interesting." Hugh didn't like talking about anyone's kinks, and normally that didn't bother me, but it made the conversation slightly difficult.

His quiet groan said he knew it too.

He quickly shifted from drama to practical and business-like, though. "Thank you for being polite but I think you need to be more straightforward in this situation."

Really?

"Um, you don't like that, and I'm going to respect that." Just because he didn't like saying he had limits didn't mean I wouldn't respect them.

The man had a lot of invisible and still obvious limits…like refusing to go into the diner once he'd been classified as Team Badass kind of limits.

"This is not you oversharing or asking personal questions. This is a mate situation. That trumps everything else." His logical tone and even voice were making it hard to remember why I'd been panicking to begin with. "So we're going to try again."

Hugh let out a soft sigh, doing his best not to stand out. "But I'm going to start by reminding you that Professor Zorin was startled and curious. He was not horrified or offended."

Snorting, he rolled his eyes. "He's basically a brand-new diner man."

Okay, I could see his point of view on that.

I'd basically been talking myself in and out of that position for the past hour as I'd done my best to stay as far away from him as possible, so it was nice to hear someone logical point that out. "It's… it's a lot to process. I can understand that."

And it was kind of cute as long as I didn't overthink it.

He'd kept asking Toman and eventually Wren questions about everything from spankings to the definition of diner men, and when I forgot how much I was worried, he made me want to giggle.

"Yes, but they've got a mate who'll be able to help them process the new information." He was so confident about that I almost asked who was going to help them.

Me.

I was supposed to help them.

"I'd also like to mention that mates are always compatible." His dry tone made me think he was having a diner men flashback and a silly part of me wanted to giggle again. "You just don't understand how that will look at the moment."

My mates were aliens who'd never heard of happy spankings, much less Daddy stuff and wonderful things like that.

Mates.

I had two of them.

"The grumpy one hasn't reacted at all." It might be a good sign. Maybe? "He…he looks calm."

That would have to balance out the professor, right?

Hugh sighed again. "Calm is a good thing in that type of relationship."

Hopefully?

I wasn't going to ask how long he'd been thinking about those kinds of relationships to be able to have opinions.

Swallowing hard, I nodded slowly and kept my thoughts on my own issues. "And…and I don't need a mate that's as…well…I'm not looking to have a mate that's just like me."

Jumpy.

Easily overwhelmed.

Little.

Barely holding back laughter, Hugh pressed his lips together for a few seconds. "Mates generally balance each other out."

As he seemed to take that in, he let out a dramatically deep breath and frowned. "That means mine is going to end up very… excitable."

Oh.

That.

He.

"Mates are always compatible. You're right." He definitely needed the reminder too, and it got a hint of a smile from him that made me realize he was actually handsome when he wasn't growling at everyone.

"So that means he's supposed to balance you and the professor out." Hugh's gentle tone was meant to relax me and it was working more than I wanted to admit.

Because then I'd have to figure out what to do next.

“Professor Zorin seems like he’s got a lot on his mind.” He really had gotten a lot dumped on him at once even if he’d been too startled to feel our faint bond on top of it all. “What…what do you think I should do?”

Leave him alone probably, but Hugh was too nice for that.

Somehow.

Maybe meeting aliens had mellowed him out a bit?

“I’m not sure you’re the take-charge type.” He pressed his lips together again when I laughed quietly. “Assuming that, I think putting yourself in their line of sight and moving closer to them will go a long way in letting the next steps play out.”

Move closer.

Let them see me.

Maybe talking to my mates wasn’t going to be necessary?

“Since you haven’t given me any pushback with that plan, we’re going to move around to the side and put you in Grumpy’s line of sight.” Hugh ignored my giggle even though that had been his goal. “Depending on his reactions, I’ll either let you handle the situation or I’ll bring Toman and Wren over to help with the explanations.”

Toman and Wren.

Yes.

“They’re…they’re comfortable talking about…things.” BDSM things. Toman had been incredibly patient explaining it over and over to Professor Zorin. “That might be helpful.”

It’d be awkward, though.

Wren was so outgoing and open, I'd look even more shy and pathetic next to him.

"I'm not going to voice my opinion on that." Hugh's tone was dry but his eyes sparkled with mischief as he moved to stand beside me. "I've been told to work on my manners."

By who?

By whom?

Giving English to other people made me realize how bad mine probably was, but it didn't matter at the moment.

"I think you're nice." Surprisingly so. "Thank you for your help."

"You're welcome." Giving his head a slight nod, Hugh gestured toward Toman and the grumpy-looking man. I'd hoped he would've given me at least a hint about his personality at this point, but they really didn't do that.

Wren had basically said that personalities were for their mates and no one else. That was nice in a romance novel sense but it was stressful in real life. Hugh knew that too. "Let me know if you need us to leave and go…somewhere else for you to think."

For me to stop panicking.

"I can do this." Hopefully. "Mates are always compatible."

Mates were always compatible.

Mates were always compatible.

Mates were always compatible.

Playing the words over and over in my head, I somehow managed to follow Hugh to the edge of the crowd where my mates

could see me better. The professor's behavior didn't change much but he might've started moving closer.

My grumpy mate on the other hand blinked and shifted side to side slightly. It didn't mean much to me but Toman stopped what he was saying. Whatever he said to Wren must've been interesting because the bouncy sub started looking around like Santa had just walked into the room.

Oh.

Me.

I was the sparkly new toy in the room.

Air in.

Air out.

Air in.

Air out.

One thing I could smell…Hugh. He had on some kind of cologne that was nice.

One thing I could hear…the…the way they all spoke the language so smoothly.

One thing I could touch…my pants where my hands were rubbing my thighs…they were the soft ones that always felt snuggly.

One thing I could taste…

One thing I could taste…

One thing I could taste…panic.

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Chapter 4

Professor Zorin

Something was…

Something was off.

Strange.

Was something wrong with the people of Earth?

Obtaining their language also came with a basic understanding of their movements because the spell seemed to think they were a variation of their language. That was unexpected and something we had not considered, but I could master the physical language.

I just needed to watch them more carefully and then I could explain what alterations needed to be made to the spell.

Yes.

I needed to get closer and then I would understand what had changed.

The mated couple had moved again and the female was now making the laughter they called giggling. The changes in pitch and the duration of the sound indicated more than being happy, but knowing that basic information did not give me a detailed understanding of the nuances.

Nuance was a very good word when it came to the people of Earth.

They were brash and loud and used their physical language almost as much as their verbal one, but in between were subtle indicators that had to be taught over time. The only problem was that I did not have time.

Would they allow me to bring in a specialized mage to help produce visual recordings of their movements?

Oh.

They had a specific concept for that.

I needed to produce what they called reality TV.

The moving picture box which showed their visual media.

What were they doing?

Something had caught their attention and it was like watching a group of animals slowly shift to watch a predator. Their gazes darted around and their words came faster while they dropped to a whisper. It was so distracting it took me entirely too long to realize what they were focused on.

Raxius.

The frustrating dragon's only focus was to be able to leave the council and return to his home, so it did not surprise me that he had demanded to be one of the first to obtain the new language. The people of Earth were clearly watching to see how he responded to the information, so I had to move closer to see their behaviors as they watched his.

He was not important.

He was stubborn, rude, and uncommunicative.

It did not matter what he thought of Earth or the language English or even spankings.

The people of Earth were what were important, so I ignored Raxius and began cataloguing their responses based on the visual cues I could now organize. Surprise. Curiosity. Some kind of happiness that had markers of misbehavior.

Oh.

Worry.

Yes…worry but something else.

A young male from Earth was half-hidden by a taller male who almost seemed like he would blend in to our culture better than he did his own. It was nice to see his serious demeanor and calm behavior, but he was blocking my view of the male who was showing the visual cues for stress.

Why would the people of Earth want to share emotions like that with strangers?

Was it not dangerous?

Would humans change their behavior or adapt culturally to seeing stress signals?

Why did the taller male keep shifting his body?

The more they moved the more I had to adjust to keep them in my sight and somehow it was all visually exhausting. Information was more important than my own feelings, however. I had to remember that as I circled the group to see what the shy male was doing from another perspective.

They had changed position again.

Fates above.

Fieldwork…that was the word in English but I had no idea it would be so tiring with the people of Earth.

The sounds of excitement I finally understood had me looking around, but everyone's attention was focused on Raxius again.

Oh.

His behavior had altered.

Whatever I had missed startled Toman because he was searching the group of Earthlings before settling on the shy man.

Who squeaked.

The tall male he'd been hiding behind stepped to the side which put the shy man…the shy man… I quickly checked my notes. Shiloh. Yes. That was what the others had called him. Shiloh made another startled sound before there was just silence from him.

Something was wrong with the male, so I moved closer again to position myself beside him. His wide eyes were a clear indication of concern, so I focused on the tall male from Earth he had been hiding behind. "Is Shiloh upset?"

I knew I had asked the question correctly, but the male blinked oddly before addressing me. It was a symbol of something like surprise but I needed to think about it before I was confident. "Why didn't you ask him?"

Was that a reasonable response to my question?

"Sometimes the people of Earth stop processing thoughts clearly when they are startled. There are several words for it, but those are the symptoms he is exhibiting." I could learn to deal with them

correctly. “He spoke to you and you have shown protective instincts.”

Possibly too protective, but if Shiloh was designated as a submissive, the taller male was just following his role in a way I could not understand.

The eye-roll behavior was something I recognized but I didn’t grasp the meaning right away. “That’s logical but this is…”

It was what?

Shiloh shifted and somehow projected more emotion that I couldn’t define. “I must ask if you are a submissive so that I can accurately respond to your signals.”

He blinked as well.

The people of Earth did that a lot.

His head bobbed in the nod movement that signaled agreement. “Thank you for making that clear.”

I turned toward the frowning man. “See? I obtained information and was correct.”

His long exhale was confusing because it seemed like there could be several reasons for it. “You’re too focused on the details. Look at the bigger picture and then try this interaction again.”

It was my turn to do the blinking in confusion behavior, but I performed it well.

The man from Earth turned to Raxius. “You too. Please show me some of you have common sense. At this point, the diner idiots are smarter.”

Diner idiots?

Oh.

I did not have enough context to fully understand the frustrated-sounding words, so I ignored them and turned to Raxius. He was still focused on Shiloh as he also ignored everyone else.

Why was he focused on Shiloh?

The young male was now looking back and forth between us with a strange expression on his face, and after a few seconds, he made another squeak.

"Fates above." The tall male began shaking his head. "Show him you're smarter than this."

Show him?

Show who?

Shiloh.

The grumpy man moved to stand behind Shiloh and performed some kind of strong expression I could not immediately find the wording to describe.

"I'm never going to get back to work." Raxius had a good command of English but his poor choice of wording got another sound from Shiloh.

"Do not respond to him when he…pouts. Yes. That is the English word. He likes working and dislikes other obligations." The male Shiloh made another odd noise I couldn't describe but it was not a happy one.

He was very sad.

"Please do not be sad." Strong, confusing emotions radiated from the young male from Earth. "His manners are always lacking, so we

cannot let them make us sad."

Sad?

How did I know he was sad?

I knew he was sad.

Oh.

He.

That.

"Thank fuck." The frustrated man waved his hands between us. "Now someone needs to comfort Shiloh and let him know you're excited to have him as a mate. This isn't rocket science."

I knew that one.

"That is a form of science on your world and when you use it to describe something in that way it means the topic is not difficult." He was wrong. "This is…this may be rocket science. It is amazingly complicated and unknown to most people and incredibly precious."

Yes, this was like rocket science even if the stubborn Earthling did not understand.

Shiloh let out a long breath that I felt meant relief but I was not thinking clearly enough to process his expressions. When nothing else came out, I assumed it was still my responsibility to talk. "He does not like me, so as you would say…*in my defense*…this is unexpected."

Highly unexpected.

My Earthling mate let out a laughing sound that may or may not have been showing actual happiness. His emotions were confusing and I was not getting enough through our fragile bond to

understand his needs. “He also does love his work. He creates things with his hands and teaches mages how to understand the…the building blocks of construction.”

That did not sound right but it was as good as I could do in the moment. It seemed like the spell had difficulty when shock was applied to my system.

I would have to tell the mages about that problem.

Shiloh did more of the odd blinking before licking his lips. “They…the mages need to…to understand how to build before… before they can do it magically? I’ve…I’ve never seen that done.”

“Yes.” Had we found a topic he could discuss verbally? “In the same way higher-level healing spells cannot be taught until the mage understands how the physical body works.”

They’d tried using what the Earthlings would call *shortcuts* and it had not produced safe results.

“That…that makes sense.” His gaze darted around but he was still producing words. “I don’t really know anyone in medicine, so I’ve never thought about that kind of thing.”

“I spent time documenting how our health mages do their jobs. It was interesting.” But they were…difficult. “I am eager to learn more about your world.”

And about his needs.

When could I ask about his needs?

How much of the concept of privacy around his needs did he need?

No.

How much of the need for privacy did he have?

No.

"What's wrong?" My Earthling mate reached out a hand before going still. "Um. Sorry."

Touch.

The people of Earth liked physical contact.

Where did he want to touch me?

As I looked down to try to decide—the information I could access was too varied for me to know right away—the frustrated man of Earth sighed again. "Give him your hand or your arm."

He was very bossy.

What form of human bonding activities did he prefer?

"Don't look at me like that. Focus on your mate." His sound of groaning was confusing. "This mate. The other one's still kind of stupid at the moment."

I wasn't sure that was the correct word but I followed the instructions to extend my hand. I did not like being told what to do, but he seemed to be an expert and that must be respected. "I am your mate, so your instinct to touch me is understandable."

His smile indicated I may have either done something awkward or correct. "Thank you."

"You are welcome."

Well, at least dealing with one of my mates might not be as confusing as I'd feared…I wasn't going to deal with the other at the moment.

Doing the activity of putting my head in the sand was starting to make much more sense.

English was a language that needed to be explored in context.

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Chapter 5

Raxius

I was not stupid.

"What…what upset you?" The male named Shiloh, according to Toman, took Professor Zorin's hand. "I…I could feel you were frustrated."

What had the strange male been confused about?

"I did not like how I was constructing the English sentence to obtain information on how much privacy around your needs that you would like." The professor actually frowned. "I can perform the facial movements for you, but the sentence is confusing."

"Significant. He would like significant privacy around his needs." That should have been obvious. "I want privacy around his needs as well."

They both turned to me like they had forgotten I was there.

Zorin actually produced the facial movements to show his frustration in the form of a frown. It looked startlingly Earth-like on him. "Our mate is more important. He is clearly the submissive member of our bonding, and according to human customs, must be protected."

I could not argue about Shiloh being labeled as the submissive partner as defined by English, but I was not sure that made his needs

the most important. “Mates are equal. That means all our needs will be taken into account.”

Equal.

Individuals were always equal…our society was very clear about that and did not tolerate otherwise.

As Shiloh’s gaze went back and forth between us, Zorin performed the Earth movement of putting one hand on his hip. Before I could respond, Wren spoke up. “That means he’s frustrated…and possibly a bit sassy.”

Earthlings were very strange.

“Thank you.” I had manners. I had manners. I had manners. “Please accept my apology for our behavior.”

Zorin’s entire body tensed. “Shiloh has not done anything he needs to apologize for, and I do not think I have either. Asking questions is my job as well as my responsibility as his mate…and his…his something.”

The English word fuck seemed to be the most appropriate under the circumstances. If Shiloh was indeed a submissive Earthling of some kind, he would need us to be his counterpart.

Something, indeed.

My first reaction to that odd realization was to focus on Shiloh, but he may have taken it as aggressive because he made a squeaking sound and released Zorin’s hand as he stepped halfway behind the male Toman had said was Hugh of Earth.

“I do not think you have done anything wrong.” Zorin was still frustrating, at the very least, so I stayed focused on my Earth mate. “I am not…I am not displeased with my mating.”

Ugh.

As frustration built in me, Hugh groaned and looked back at our Shiloh. “How did you end up being the sanest person you’re mated to?”

Lifting his shoulders to perform a shrug, Shiloh spoke quietly. “That’s a good question.”

“There is nothing wrong with being quiet or easily…or shy.” There may have been another word that fit better but sorting through their extensive list of options was time-consuming. We did not naturally have this many variations of words. “Of course he is sane.”

“And he’s not grumpy.” Zorin made an Earth huff sound which had our mate trying not to smile if I was reading his expression correctly. “He has many good qualities.”

Unlike me?

“At least I know when to ask questions.” Ignoring Zorin, I did my best to produce a smile. I failed. However, it had the effect of making our Earth mate smile correctly at me. Expressing myself visually was not what they might label as my *strong suit*, so I focused on the faint beginnings of our bond and sent reassurance through it.

That worked.

I could see his immediate physical reaction to stand with less tension and the anxiety I realized I could feel decreased significantly. It also had the odd effect of altering Zorin as well because he stopped making the angry expressions of Earth at me.

Hugh was still watching us closely and waved his hand between us. “We’re being shown to our rooms. If I let you leave with Shiloh,

are you going to be nice to him? He's your fucking mate and you two seem to keep forgetting that."

Our Earth mate coughed as Zorin and I both went still at what must have been a comment on our behavior. It seemed to be a fake sound and had Zorin focusing back on Shiloh. "That indicates you are covering up laughter, correct? Wren has done that several times, although, I will admit that it confused me at first. It can sometimes be used to indicate rebuke."

This was not the right time for questions based on the way our mate's eyes went wide again. "Oh…that's…"

"Yes." Hugh decided to answer for him as the rest of the remaining Earth people studied us. "That's what it meant in this situation because you two are ridiculous."

Zorin was pleased with the information and ignored anything he did not want to hear. I knew that based on our previous interactions. "Thank you. Understanding our mate's visual cues are important because the people of Earth use them as a secondary form of language."

For some reason that had Hugh's and Shiloh's heads tilting to the side.

"That shows thoughtful confusion." Toman's words reminded me that he had not left. "Zorin made a point they had not considered and are now processing the new idea."

Encouraging him always ended up in a frustrating conversation, but it was possible Toman did not know that information.

"Thank you for explaining that." Hopefully it would not make Zorin think he was fully in charge of our communication. If our Earth mate was a submissive, that meant one of us needed to be his

Dominant. They were a paired relationship and I was not going to be left out.

"We will keep our mate happy and show him to his quarters." Zorin seemed confident about that until he was not and started taking notes on his tablet again. "Does he need his own quarters? How quickly do mates on Earth join together?"

That was not a normal color for our people, no matter what planet they were on.

As our mate turned red, the male Hugh made several more sounds in a row. "Lord. Yes. He needs his own quarters until you guys figure shit out and start bonding nicely together."

We were not bonding rudely no matter what his wording implied.

"There is no rush, so we will make sure he has privacy." My words had the professor's frustration increasing but I ignored it since I never made him happy. "We will work on our communication and bonding."

However the people of Earth actually did that.

Having a definition for what being a Dominant might entail did not give me any practical experience, and it did not tell me what Shiloh specifically needed in that kind of a partner. Zorin seemed to be having similar thoughts based on the way he gave Hugh a more professional expression of seriousness. "As I have already started discussing domination and submission with Toman and Wren, I feel I am informed enough to steer our conversations in this matter."

He was not going to steer me anywhere.

"This is a joint conversation as equals." We were mates. "Then we will make sure Shiloh has his private needs met."

Whatever those were.

Zorin looked at me, crossed his arms over his chest and then made the rolling eyes motion. "You are being ridiculous."

Me?

I was being ridiculous?

"I do not think you understand what that word means." I could not do the facial expressions correctly but I made a very well-done sigh that matched those Toman had expressed. "I will explain it to you once you have stopped being dramatic."

Watching him practice being an Earthling was not how I'd expected to spend my day.

"Remember what we talked about." Hugh looked at Shiloh again with an expression I could not decipher. "And remember first impressions aren't always right…neither are second."

Licking his lips, Shiloh nodded and produced the sigh sound as well. "At least they're fighting about how well we're going to communicate?"

There did not seem to be a good response to their discussion, so Zorin and I both stood quietly. It got another sound, almost like a laugh from Shiloh, but I did not think he was feeling enjoyment in a way I would have expected.

"They seem to be able to feel your bond and they're both looking forward to getting to know you. Hell, the professor over here was debating if he could move you into his place right away." Something about Hugh's words or tone had our mate's face getting red again.

It made me wonder if our faces had ever responded that way to stress. However, unlike Zorin, I knew not to interrupt the male Hugh while he was speaking to Shiloh. “And eventually having two mates will be very practical. You’ll never have to do anything on your own unless you want to.”

That was a reasonable point in our favor.

Wren opened his mouth, probably to agree, but Hugh did a quick motion and raised one finger as he frowned. “Don’t say it.”

Don’t say what?

Even the professor was glancing back and forth, but he had obviously had more time with the humans because he spoke quickly. “His words were going to be inappropriate, correct?”

Really?

Toman made the Earth sigh that time. “Yes.”

Wren shrugged, but if I understood his expression, did not feel badly. “Yes. But in my defense, it was just the perfect opening.”

There were perfect conversational openings to be inappropriate?

That concept did not translate between the languages or culture, but based on the reactions of the people of Earth, it was correct somehow.

“Shiloh?” Wren of Earth focused back on our mate without giving off excess expressions. “Are you okay with going with them or do you want to come hang out with us for a while? I’m going to be nosy and spend the next hour asking ridiculous questions to Daddy, so you’re welcome to come do that too.”

Daddy?

Daddy?

I understood there were caretaker references to that title and that it signified Toman was the dominant partner in their pairing, but a lack of what they called *firsthand knowledge* was putting me at a disadvantage.

Our mate understood the social implications of the words, but somehow they made his need to move increase significantly. "I…I think…"

He seemed to think too much but I may not have understood his problem.

After a few more seconds of breathing and staring and possibly worrying, he shook his head side to side. "I should go with my mates."

Wren's expressions were difficult to understand, and his words did not make the situation easier. "When in doubt, go full Deputy Talon on them and just call them fucking aliens. They're only one step removed from being diner men. Don't let the blank faces fool you."

That made no sense whatsoever.

However, it did make our mate smile and allowed him to speak easier. "Or I could be Lorne."

Wren's laughter filled the room and even made Toman give an Earth smile as he responded strangely. "Please do not tell me if your mates are crunchy."

Why was that so funny?

Most of the people of Earth were either performing laughter or doing their best to pretend it was not humorous because Hugh even

rolled his eyes again. The language transfer did not supply enough cultural context because simply knowing he had mentioned specific dragons of Earth did not help explain the humor.

I was not the only one who was confused. Professor Zorin produced the device humans would call a tablet and began making additional notes. I both understood and found it frustrating, so I ignored it. Everything about him produced confusing reactions from me and I wasn't sure if us being mates made it clearer or not.

"I'll behave." Our mate's quiet words made Wren smile and everyone seemed to decide at once the situation was not as stressful as it had been before. Even Shiloh's anxiety felt lower, but I didn't understand the reason behind it.

"We will give you a tour of your room and then of the community." Zorin stood straighter as he put his notes away. "Toman said that would make your people feel more comfortable."

"Yes. I will show you around." I could do that. Letting Zorin take charge would confuse Shiloh and make him think Zorin was his Dominant. "Would you prefer to touch or to be left alone?"

I looked down at my hand before studying his. "I have no limits against that."

If I was the Dominant, the basic information I possessed said I was supposed to have limits around behavior that I approved of. Shiloh seemed to agree based on his nod. "Yes…I…"

That may not have been enough information to satisfy limits but he indicated agreement, so I took his hand. Zorin had too quickly adapted to their sounds because he huffed and moved to take Shiloh's other hand. "He has two. We can share him."

Toman placed his hand over his mate's mouth and performed some kind of expression that may have indicated frustration. "No."

Wren's entire body seemed to deflate, but before I could figure out what had happened, Toman nodded toward the door. "There is a list of room assignments. My mate has lost his self-restraint, so please begin your tour before my mate makes yours uncomfortable."

Earthlings were strange because my mate was back to being the worrying red color and Wren was groaning. Both of their displays were confusing, and so was the laughing sound called a giggle that the mated female from Earth produced. "This is so much fun."

Why?

What was fun?

Were the people of Earth all this confusing?

"I have questions."

Ugh.

Zorin was adapting too quickly to the people of Earth.

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Chapter 6

Shiloh

How had I ended up in charge?

How?

Me?

My mates were…

Okay, positive things first.

Thinking negatively wouldn't help.

Through our faint, new bonds I could feel they both had positive feelings for me. I wasn't silly enough to pretend it was love but individually they both wanted a mate and didn't have a problem with me.

They didn't even mind my almost complete inability to talk when I got overwhelmed.

They should have, but we'd figure that out later.

Raxius was good at sending confidence and reassurance through the bond. He also seemed to have a good work ethic based on what Zorin had said.

Oh, and he wanted to make good choices for his sub.

Me.

There was no doubt from either of them that I was the sub, but the rest of it got confusing emotions from them and even odder arguments.

Zorin.

He was going to be the definition of an absentminded professor but also one that had a thing for manipulating people. He wasn't subtle at all but it was kind of cute since he wasn't aiming it at me. He was trying it on everyone else, though.

"The community is laid out almost like a square with…with an open space in the middle." Raxius seemed like he had to think about that one for a moment. "There may be a word for that."

Ugh.

I could help my mate.

Well, I could help him with English at the very least.

"I think…I think the word you're looking for is courtyard." We had a lot of words for similar concepts, though. "From what…from what Toman said, the language transfer starts out basic and then gets better over time. That…that might've been because of his bond with Wren, though."

"Toman indicated that the first human they obtained English from did not have a good vocabulary." Zorin's information was correct but something about his tone made me think he had questions about that. "There may be several reasons for the language transfer slowly developing accuracy."

Probably.

What else would they need to know?

"Oh, um, Wren said that he has a photographic memory. That… that means he remembers everything he sees, so he…he sends Toman pictures of what words mean." That *had* to change something about the whole transfer thing, but language magic wasn't anything I'd ever heard about, much less researched.

They both got quiet and seemed to be thinking about what I'd said, but it was weird not hearing any sounds to give me clues about it. I hadn't really thought of us as using noises and movements as another form of language but Zorin was right.

"We must make sure that information is passed along to the mages who designed the original spell." Zorin's confidence had me nodding before I realized it might not help them. "Toman is distracted by his mate, so he may not pass along the information in a timely manner."

A hint of frustration rippled through the thin bond with Raxius. "We are going to be distracted by our new bond as well."

Technically they were both right.

Was he just trying to pick a fight with Zorin?

My cute professor seemed to think so based on the quick glance and human-looking glare. "Our mate is not what humans call *a handful* and there are two of us, so we can more easily keep him happy and watch over him."

Divide and conquer.

Not a bad strategy even if things were crazy, so as we walked down the hallway with its oddly smooth, sandy stone-like walls, I squeezed his hand and mentally prepared to explain what it meant.

Thank the fates.

Zorin squared his shoulders and gave me the impression he was very pleased. “Our mate indicated his agreement with a physical response.”

And he was very proud of himself for getting it.

It got low, confusing feelings coming from Raxius, but he didn’t snip at Zorin, so I thought we were moving in the right direction. I wasn’t sure it would be possible to go more wrong, though. Mates might always work out in the long run but somehow these two had gotten off on the wrong foot.

But when?

What’d happened?

From what I’d heard from Toman, this level of hostility wasn’t reasonable unless they’d pissed each other off several times in the past.

“Then we will make sure we divide our time appropriately, so that he has as much…as much companionship as he requires.” Raxius went quiet and I could almost hear what had to be frustrated mental grumbles.

Before he could reorganize the sentence or change a word, Zorin jumped in. “As much attention as he needs. Submissive individuals from Earth need significant amounts of attention and caretaking, but my observations show they need it in different ways depending on their form of submission.”

Good grief…how had they managed to start fighting over what to call taking care of me?

“He’s not a…” Raxius used a word that definitely wasn’t English as his body felt like it got stiffer. “He is our mate.”

So maybe I wasn't a pet of some kind?

He was right about that even if I wasn't sure he understood why Wren would've laughed. I was a little not some kind of pup, but it made me wonder what they'd think of that kind of play. Toman clearly didn't mind anything Wren came up with because I'd heard him talking about having squirrel time, but my mates were a lot more interesting than Toman.

"You may have access to English, but I have already begun to extensively question Toman on what submissives need and the different ways they are cared for." Zorin loved knowing he'd started researching that kind of stuff before Raxius. "Our mate may need spankings or other form of physical attention that we must provide for him. There are a variety of different forms of submission and he may actually be a…when he submits."

Zorin was adorably dramatic when it came to being the current BDSM expert between them, but I really wished they'd slow down when they used that animal word. Wren's skill of sending Toman pictures of confusing stuff was something I was starting to get jealous of because it seemed that just because I could read the language didn't mean I could understand the spoken form.

That was frustrating.

"Is he?" Whatever Raxius actually meant had both of them turning to me. If he thought that would help get information from me, he was sadly mistaken because my throat closed up and my heart started to pound.

Cocking his head like he'd seen me do, Raxius seemed to admit defeat. "He may be."

So whatever animal they'd been fighting about was easily startled?

Great.

I was probably the local version of some kind of rabbit.

"No one indicated his exact form of submission." Zorin seemed pleased to provide that information as we stopped in front of some kind of blank-looking door. "However, when Toman explained his mate is what is called a little, Shiloh did not startle or look confused as he does when you talk about him being a—"

Going still, Zorin shifted his shoulders slightly before opening his eyes wider so I would see his surprise. "Oh, a small partially-domesticated animal."

So he'd finally realized I didn't know what they'd been comparing me to?

Well, that was a starting point.

Them both studying me at the same time wasn't helping that whole easily startled thing.

"As far as I know, there is an extensive list of options." Zorin focused on me like he was expecting me to just jump in with an explanation about what kind of kink I was into but I wasn't sure what they'd think of it.

More books to choose from.

Look up **Lokepub** on Google and find a novel you like.

Okay, well, Zorin would go into professor mode and ask questions. That much was obvious. But something about it would piss Raxius off or overwhelm him and he'd get snippy. Then they'd trade barbs for a few minutes. Then they'd change the subject to stop fighting.

Then we'd probably start all over again.

That sounded terrible and didn't make me think about being little at all.

Mates were always compatible.

Mates were always compatible.

Mates were always compatible.

"Let us show Shiloh his room and explain how to reach ours once his belongings are delivered." Raxius broke the standoff, sending relief through me. "Then it will be time to show him the…the community before we must report to our meetings."

Something about the way Zorin shifted made me think he wanted to pout or sigh dramatically. "Discussions with all the people of Earth would be more productive."

That'd get him the information he wanted at the very least.

"Plans were laid out." Raxius' response didn't give me any clue about what he was thinking but Zorin's comments before made me think Raxius didn't want to go any more than our professor did. "You are not the only academic who is asking for time with the people of Earth."

"We are supposed to be obtaining knowledge. I am better at that than others." And Zorin was more confident too.

And possibly more reckless?

"We are supposed to be showing the people of Earth around to help them get used to our community and then we are to learn about the many changes our people have made." Raxius sounded logical and matter-of-fact, but that might've been because he liked driving Zorin crazy. "Then they will rotate through meetings and provide their thoughts."

Technically that sounded like a reasonable plan, but mentally I was groaning and asking the fates to spare me from endless government and academic meetings. I was going to be passed around like some kind of zoo animal, but the only upside seemed to be that Toman had gone all Team Badass as we'd left the conference room, telling everyone not to gossip about our new bond because we deserved privacy.

They were the biggest gossips I'd ever met but the way everyone had peeked over at Raxius made me think they might actually mind their own business.

He did kind of have the Team Badass member thing going.

So if mates were always compatible, did that mean he would be a stern Daddy? A Dom?

"Answering my specific questions would provide more information." Zorin sounded like he wanted to shrug even though he wasn't giving off that many emotional clues. "However, I have agreed to comply with the decisions that were made."

Raxius actually sighed.

He sighed.

"Only because you demanded to be the first to greet them at the gate."

As I tried to decide if laughing would've been rude or appropriate, Zorin shifted topics and did his best to smile at me. "I will show you how to enter your space."

Okay, yeah probably time for that since we'd been standing in the weirdly blank-looking hallway too long.

They really needed paintings or more color…wallpaper, maybe?

He was watching me…verbal response…yes.

"Thank you." Ha. Did it.

Sir?

Daddy?

He didn't seem like a Master.

I'd met a sub once that used Captain instead of Daddy and he'd done this cute little salute but neither of my mates seemed like the Captain type. They were barely past the "hey you" phase, so we needed to start somewhere more logical for them.

Zorin was either easily pleased or didn't understand my mental debate because he gave me another smile. "You are welcome."

Then he had to get a dig in at Raxius. "That is the appropriate response."

Whatever he was…being a brat was definitely part of it.

"You only obtained the language two hours before me." Raxius was still but something had me imagining him shaking in frustration. "You are not an expert because you demanded answers to more questions."

Zorin didn't agree.

After a moment he very clearly cocked his head and then shrugged. "Yes, I am."

Part of me found the whole thing ridiculously funny in a weird way but another was ready for them to pretend to be nice again. I'd never planned on living through the enemies-to-lovers trope, and it was getting stressful.

If this was enemies to lovers like the books the dragons back in town liked, when would my mates get to the steamy sex scene part of their arc?

As I realized I should've read more of Lorne's dirty books, I paid attention as Zorin showed me the symbol next to my door that was basically the number for my room. I managed to open it on the first try but I'd never seen a locking system that only worked by magic.

"I've always carried around keys. This is nice." My apartment was nice too. "Wow, everything is magic."

I should've realized how much magic they would use in everyday situations but it just hadn't occurred to me. I'd spent most of my life living around humans in regular apartments, so this was weird. Cool, but weird.

"How does this work?" There were panels on the walls and a space with empty countertops that had to be a kitchen, but nothing looked the same.

My mates had gone strangely still as they watched me start looking around the apartment but they sprang back to life before it got weird watching me marvel over silly things. As always, Zorin had to go first. "I can demonstrate how to use them for you, but

Raxius would be better at explaining their detailed functions and answering questions on how things are made."

Hey, that was actually nice.

Practical questions equaled nice?

I could do that.

Eventually we had to figure out other stuff, right?

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Chapter 7

Zorin

My Earth mate could speak but only when it came to completely practical matters.

So we discussed practical matters…in extensive detail until our meetings arrived and we moved to separate. That was an unexpected frustration. Even Raxius did not appreciate being temporarily removed from our mate, but he was tempted by discussing building techniques with one of the older humans.

I would have had strong words for giving in to his temptation if one of the other people of Earth had not admitted to being a teacher and another having studied a variety of Earth cultures.

Being as tempted as Raxius had been was also frustrating, but our human mate seemed to find it humorous if I was reading his facial expressions correctly. “I’m going to see you right after our meetings and you’re going to help me make dinner, right?”

As we walked to the door, he glanced over at the counter where our heating elements would appear when needed. “The stove isn’t supposed to disappear. Nothing in a kitchen is supposed to disappear, but I’ll get used to it.”

Not anytime soon if I was understanding the meaning of his words, tone, and expression as he combined the two forms of their language.

Raxius was even watching our mate with confusion, so I knew I was not the only one who did not understand our mate's worries.

Something like worries.

"It keeps children safe." Raxius seemed to decide to share the most factual information he could with our mate. "Their magic is not strong enough or steady enough to work the…the stove until they are old enough to understand danger."

Shiloh nodded slowly and stood taller as he reached for the panel that would open the door. "Like those cover things that were on older stoves. Just magic. That makes sense."

I wasn't sure what kind of cover thing he was talking about because I had no object in my language knowledge to pair with that wording, but it made Shiloh happier, so I approved of the explanation. "Children are very curious here. Are they the same on Earth?"

I hoped it would be an easy question and I was confirmed right when Shiloh performed his head nod movement and smiled. "Oh, goodness. Kids are the same way everywhere, I guess. I have a cousin who's a bit older than me and his kid keeps hiding in the house because making everyone panic to find him was really funny the first time."

That did not sound funny but I had met children who would do similar things.

Raxius gave Shiloh the human sigh and performed a nod as well as we moved out into the hall and did the human movement of pointing to show Shiloh which way to go. "I can see that happening here as well."

“They’ve got a tracking spell they put on his clothes now, but his parents hadn’t thought to do that until the third time.” Shiloh’s expression was almost a frown. “Some people just aren’t that bright.”

We must have both looked confused because his face became pink as his arms moved oddly. “Um, that side of my family isn’t very smart. They’re very nice but they don’t always think of practical things.”

Ah.

“Intelligence comes in many forms.” I had been taught to repeat that phrase to make others content and it worked on Shiloh.

“He does not believe that.” Raxius performed the Earth behavior of *tattling*. “He is trying to be nice since they are related to you.”

“I *was* nice.” I learned that lesson very clearly. “I have to pretend it is factual and I did that.”

Shiloh was blinking oddly as he glanced between us but he did not stop speaking again. “We have social rules like that, so I’m glad you know how to be polite too. But…but we can make a rule that we don’t have to be polite about other people when it’s just us. If you want?”

Did I want?

Raxius made the Earth sigh sound. “He’s confused.”

“I am thinking about how to answer our mate.” I was not confused. “I need to decide what answer will please him.”

That was not confusion.

Glancing between us as we started walking again, Shiloh took a few seconds to respond. “It’s going to take us a while to figure out how to communicate with each other, but I promise I don’t want you to tell me what you think will make me happy.”

I could still try.

“Eventually our bond is going to get strong enough for us to know the…the facts of whatever we were going to originally say.” Shiloh paused but I did not have the right response, so I stayed as silent as Raxius. “We’ll figure it out.”

“Bonds…bonds move at their own pace.” Raxius gave words I had been thinking but he made them sound reasonable. “We just met, so there is no rush.”

Yes.

No rush.

No rush for my mates to tell me I was annoying too.

No rush to ask me why I was so odd.

No rush to ask me to leave so they could have quiet.

There was no rush to bond…every mating was different.

“Each bonding is unique.” Based on what Wren had said, the people of Earth liked being different, so I was glad when Shiloh smiled. “As is each of our schedules.”

I did my best to perform the sigh sound and frowned like Wren did when he wanted to please Toman. Shilo’s mouth twitched before he shook his head. “Don’t look so cute. That’s cheating.”

“It cannot be cheating if it made you smile.” I did the shrug movement which got a happy sound from him. “See?”

“I think you are teaching him to misbehave.” Raxius glanced between us, but his stern expression did not feel negative. Shiloh’s low laughter said he agreed with my assessment. “I refuse to participate in *looking cute*.”

I knew not to respond negatively to that before Shiloh peeked over at me. He nodded like I had done something correct and then smiled back at Raxius. “I don’t think you have a choice. I happen to have two very cute mates who are just different in their own ways.”

Yes, we were different.

Greatly so.

No.

Highly so?

I tried several more combinations before noticing my mates were staring at me. “English is distracting. I apologize.”

That got another laugh from Shiloh and made us almost appear as happy Earth mates. “It really is, but hopefully it will get easier in the long run.”

As we continued toward the meeting Shiloh was to attend, he asked questions about why we had not given them our original language. Our conversation went smoothly up until Shiloh approached the room and everyone of Earth turned to look at us.

He stopped talking.

Looking as if he had trouble swallowing, our Earth mate glanced between us and hurried over to take his place in a circle of leaders grouped to understand the changes our people had gone through regarding blending in physically with humans. I still maintained a

lack of efficiency and high levels of frustration, but I left our mate with several other Earthlings and walked away from the room.

Raxius walked beside me, giving signs of thinking about something. Part of me wanted to turn away but we now had the shared responsibility of tending our submissive mate. That meant I had to listen to whatever rude idea he was going to present. “How do we shift the conversations from practical topics to ones he would like to avoid?”

He was going to ask smart questions just to frustrate me.

“I have been thinking about that as well.” I was not going to let him forget I was smart as well. “It seems like our mate is more comfortable discussing practical issues. But I feel that is a place to begin.”

I just wasn’t sure if we could call it a good beginning.

“My first thoughts were to move us slowly to more difficult topics, but I do not understand why they are difficult.” Raxius was good to have us discuss this problem away from Shiloh, but he was rude for making me admit a lack of knowledge. “It seems as if some people of Earth speak very openly about their needs, but others are very…hesitant.”

English was difficult but I continued to practice it even away from Shiloh, so I would improve and please him. It also gave us an additional layer of privacy I thought Raxius understood given the way he was watching those that passed us in the hall.

“I think hesitant is a good word for our mate.” Raxius was careful with his tone and made it impossible to know if he was praising me seriously or not. “I also have to agree that I do not understand why they are difficult topics for him. If he participates in

the human bonding rituals for submissives, he should be able to explain his needs."

"I agree. We are his mates." The words felt like they needed a qualifier to show I was not positive about how that would affect the situation. If Shiloh had been with us, I would have shrugged. It was a good movement. "He understands that is an important role. The others of Earth explained they saw the mate bond in the same way we did."

There was no question about that.

"Understanding importance does not make it easy to bond to someone new." Raxius projected thoughtfulness with his body in a way I knew I must point out to Shiloh later. Our movements were much more subtle, so he may have missed them. "He may have fears about what our future looks like? Our work is here."

"I had not taken that fear into consideration." There were many issues to discuss. "I will discuss that with Toman."

"And we will continue with the sharing of practical topics with our mate." Raxius looked pleased with that decision, although I found I would have preferred the Earth way of expressing it.

Their obvious movements were confusing at first but having large visual cues as well as the verbal information was helpful.

Would the visual cues have been helpful with Raxius?

Our first meetings had not gone smoothly, in fact, I thought the human word *clusterfuck* would provide the best description of it.

He had not liked my attempt to gain information about him.

He had not liked my help in educating him.

He had not liked my attempt to engage him in questions.

He had not liked anything about me and that had not changed as we grew older.

I had accepted that but it seemed like changes needed to be made. Our mate had affected much about our life even though he may not have realized that yet.

"I will make a list for you to follow." Yes. As Shiloh's dominant mate, that task should be mine to lead.

"There is no need for you to make a list for either of us." Raxius indicated barely restrained frustration. "We are all equals and can have a logical conversation with our mate."

How was he already reacting this way?

"Please set your dislike of me aside." Our mate was more important. "Submissives from Earth are not unequal. They simply require additional caretaking. Dominants provide that caretaking and that should be something they require. I require giving him caretaking."

That was my role in our mating.

It did not make him unequal…it made him special.

My Earth mate needed caretaking from me and that would not frustrate him as long as I could get him to explain what form of submission his needs fell under. His classification would give me a direction of what kind of care to provide.

Then he would be happy.

Raxius was silent for several moments until we reached a branch in the halls. As he paused, he did the human deep breath behavior.

“Everything we are told about mates reminds us they are equal. I will not make my mate feel unequal.”

Turning from me, Raxius walked away leaving me confused.

He could not make Shiloh feel unequal but he could make me feel unwanted.

Somehow Raxius had lost all logic.

There were many things I had not been told about mating… Toman should be able to answer them, however. Yes. He was an expert in Earth matings, so he would provide information on the caretaking of humans.

If Raxius wanted to be equal, he could figure out how to take care of himself.

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Chapter 8

Raxius

"We were discussing the topic of meats and the various options in our food supply." Zorin's answer was so unexpected, based on Shiloh's giggle, I must have looked like a shocked Earthling.

Zorin had said his last discussion was to be about the geography of Earth and the different regions our people had spread to on that planet.

Clearly that plan had changed somehow.

"Humans have come up with a variety of products we do not eat. It seems like our…chefs…yes, that is the word…were very curious about *nuggets*." Zorin shrugged to get another giggle out of our Earth mate. "Wren of Earth was expounding on their importance but our scientists do not understand how to obtain the right meat for them. It seems to be a *protein texture issue*."

Shiloh shook his head like we were both what he would call ridiculous. "He has to stop confusing everyone with what he thinks is the most important foods. Your scientists have more important things to do than pick out nugget meat."

Several Earthlings had explained that because of what was called his *little side*, Wren found them to be very important.

Was this Shiloh's way of explaining he was not little?

He had not indicated any distinct food preferences and seemed to be enjoying our dinner which was what he said was similar to foods he called a pork loin and mashed potatoes. “He’s enjoying all the attention which is probably part of the problem.”

Our mate was so opposite from Wren, it made me question if their versions of submission must be vastly different. Shiloh had been pleased to quickly come back to Zorin’s home to enjoy a quiet meal, but the last I had seen Wren and Toman, they were both enthusiastically discussing the distinctions between their shopping places.

The people of Earth shopped extensively.

“Is the expression *attention whore* negative or neutral? It was mentioned several times, but when I asked for clarification, people left the conversation quickly.” As the question made Shiloh cough, Zorin cocked his head in the Earth movement to show confusion. “There seems to be missing context in the translation spell. How is he selling his attention?”

Was our mate choking or just showing surprise?

After a few seconds of coughing and silence, Shiloh blushed and swallowed. “I…I don’t think anyone means it literally. But I don’t know where the expression came from originally. It’s…it’s more about someone who craves attention so much they make questionable decisions on how to get it.”

“Ah. Money is not actually involved.” Zorin performed the nodding motion to get attention from Shiloh and looked pleased when our mate smiled. “That makes sense.”

“It’s…it’s not really a positive thing to say but sometimes it’s meant to tease a person you know really well.” Swallowing hard like

something was in his throat, our human mate's tone evened out but it felt forced. "I think it's one of those phrases you should write down for us to talk about but not use in casual conversation."

Were we moving away from practical and toward stressful things that would cause our mate to shut down? He was still doing a good job of communicating verbally with us, but his emotions were changing.

Zorin took in the information and glanced down at his data pad. "In the same way the Earthling Betty is called a *naughty slut* by her mate?"

When our mate groaned, Zorin glanced up to see Shiloh blinking oddly. "Does your expression mean it is offensive? My understanding of the word and his use of it do not align. She obviously saw it as pleasurable of some kind based on her expressions and movements."

Shiloh did not seem to be able to answer the question because he nodded, shook his head, and then groaned again all in quick succession. Zorin was so confused he looked to me for help, which was shocking in itself. "What is your impression of his answer?"

Was he being polite by including me or performing the Earth activity of throwing me under the bus? I'd seen that phrase used to discuss mating differences between our people, and I was not looking to experience it firsthand.

Assuming his behavior was neutral, I answered it as clearly as I could. "There is some personal connection to the question you did not anticipate."

If our mate could answer a question about attention whores, then logic said naughty slut should not shock him. It seemed like the

difference was in paid or unpaid labor, which was not offensive to the people of Earth.

Giving away something for free should not shock someone from Earth even if it was physical attention. From what I had been told many of them dated and had relationships that were outside a mating bond.

"What was the situation where you heard the phrase being used?" It seemed like a reasonable question for me to ask but it got confusing sounds from our Earth mate.

"They were kissing and showing mate affection in a corner they thought was more private than it actually was." Zorin shrugged as Shiloh closed his eyes. "They said they couldn't find a closet? I explained how to politely excuse themselves for…mate time."

The way Zorin studied our mate's reactions out of the corner of his eye said he was doing his best to find a phrase or word that would not upset our mate.

Shiloh's sounds were decreasing, so I indicated approval of the phrase which had Zorin looking pleased as he responded. "I think while we grew to have too much caution, they are more strongly impulsive."

Quickly looking frustrated, Zorin's change in behavior confused me until he sighed like an Earthling. "That sentence is wrong but English has too many words that are similar but not the same."

It may have been a deliberate shift in the conversation, but even if it was not, it let Shiloh function. He opened his eyes and sat up, swallowing hard again. "I'm…I'm starting to think the spell is doing something that lets you know when the word is wrong. Is that

possible? You guys always know if it doesn't sound right even if it feels like you shouldn't."

Practical versus submission had somehow engaged again.

His behavior around the words naughty slut indicated they were connected to his submission in some way. However, knowing the definitions of the words was not the same as understanding how Shiloh saw them.

Zorin was obviously pleased that our mate was speaking again and let him change the subject. "I have not been told that is part of the spell, but it would not surprise me that it is…*a side effect*."

"That's the right expression." Shiloh's smile looked strange in some way but I felt relief through our faint bond. "You're both very easy to understand even if you get frustrated with the language sometimes."

Was he praising us to push us to continue to change the subject?

"Thank you." Zorin was what the humans termed a *pushover*. "If our words are ever not clear, you must let us know."

"The spell is amazing. It's very easy to understand what you mean." Feeling more comfortable, Shiloh began eating again as he glanced around Zorin's home. "It's fascinating to see what things you do with magic that we've shifted to doing the human way."

If our bond was stronger, I thought I would've been able to feel the deception in his conversation choice, but at the moment, I could not prove manipulation. Instead of taking our mate at his word, this time Zorin studied him for a moment. "We should devise a panel to look into that in more detail. Would you help me put together an outline of how it would look?"

It was technically one way to get to know our mate but it felt fake or somehow dishonest. Zorin was easy to read in some aspects and hard in others. As he watched our Earth mate, I knew he was pleased to have a project they could work on together. But there was also something like disappointment that faded quickly.

He had lowered our bond down to a faint thread barely binding us together.

No.

It was not just me.

Shiloh blinked and took an unsteady breath before sitting straighter. “Where do you think we should start?”

With honesty and personal conversations, but the choice did not seem to be up to me.

****

Nothing in our mating was my decision.

“You…you invited…” Shiloh stumbled over the words but did not go completely silent. In the two days we had been slowly strengthening our bond, he still could not explain his desires but speaking had become easier. “Agent Murphy and…and Klynn…to… to dinner?”

Since I was shocked as well, I did the Earth movement of raising my eyebrow and practiced glaring at Zorin. Shiloh said I did those very well but that may have been because I had been given many situations to practice them.

Zorin went still before doing a small shrug. “Experts are required and they seem to be mates, although they are unusually private

about it."

I was not opposed to his idea but I was not pleased at the manner in which he handled it. "Did you consider asking us our opinion?"

Glancing between us, Zorin nodded. "Yes."

But he had discounted the idea?

Ugh.

The faint emotions I could feel coming through my bond with Shiloh made it easier to understand Zorin's decision. "Do we need to have the equal mates discussion again?"

It was Zorin's turn to practice glaring at me. "No."

Shiloh was projecting confusion but the signal from the door of Zorin's home prevented him from asking additional questions.

"They are not open about their relationship but they are both knowledgeable about Earth-based relationships and should be able to help us gain information." Zorin did not look at Shiloh as he explained his thoughts, but I did not appreciate the way he was watching me as if I were a problem. "I am sure they will be polite."

Shiloh was surprised but a soft huff before he quietly grumbled said he was not too shocked. "I think…I think we need rules on springing this kind of stuff on mates."

Before I could agree with him, Agent Murphy and Klynn were ushered into the room and Zorin started to speak. "Let me introduce you to the others who are having dinner with us this evening. The human Shiloh that came through the portal with you. The local Raxius who is a dragon."

Zorin pretended everything was normal as he continued to almost lecture the human. “I have been told you appreciate that information even if it is not necessary.”

Agent Murphy was doing his best to look neutral, which I appreciated, but showing more of his thoughts as humans usually did would have been helpful. “Humans in general don’t seem to be able to automatically sense that in your people, so thank you for clarifying it. The people of Earth classify ourselves in a variety of ways, so it seems to be almost an instinct with us to search for how to classify others that we meet.”

Looking as if he were addressing students, Zorin indicated he took the information thoughtfully. “As you would say, *right off the bat* I know we classify based on dragon or mage, and mated or unmated.”

A fleeting emotion of consideration or something close came through the bond before he turned to Klynn. “Can you think of other ways we classify ourselves?”

Was he attempting to be polite or did he want something from the dragon?

“We further classify dragons into our…regional history. There is a more specific English word for that. Ice. Water.” Klynn glanced between Agent Murphy and Shiloh. “Shiloh, I’m sure you have a better vocabulary for this conversation.”

Our mate only felt a short burst of panic before it shifted to a manageable level I knew indicated he would be able to talk and nodded slowly. “Yes, but you did a very good job of explaining it. Do…do you classify yourselves in terms of sexuality?”

Shock and additional panic radiated from him, but Klynn continued before Shiloh's emotions could become overly visible. "No. Not in the way people of Earth do. It is generally explained here as knowing your mate will be male or female."

Had he become familiar with our mate's emotional struggles while he was on Earth?

"Oh." Something curious came from Shiloh before he glanced between us, but I did not understand his thoughts. "That makes sense."

Klynn seemed to think it did. "The English words for describing sexual desire may not translate completely. The people of Earth, especially humans, break it down into many more classifications than we currently use."

Shiloh pushed through his shyness and continued to speak to Klynn, showing his familiarity with the dragon. "Do they just not exist here or you've never thought up words for them? On Earth anything beyond gay, straight, or bi seems to be mostly a human thing, but I wasn't sure if that was because of the mate bond or cultural."

How did this conversation fall into the logical category for him?

"That is an interesting question." Klynn showed he was ready to be seated, causing Zorin to perform a human-looking wave toward his additional chairs. He was very focused on learning to use the English hand movements as well as the language because he was convinced they were too closely aligned to be separated.

I wasn't sure what information they had been told about the invitation, but Klynn continued to give his attention to Shiloh as Zorin sat down on the other side of our mate. "I think it's a

combination of both, but I believe the mate bond is a larger influence. That is our primary focus and not exploring who we are in a larger sense."

Agent Murphy spoke up to give his thoughts. "The type of dragon you are and what type of magic a mage uses best seem to be something your people are more focused on."

Klynn's clearly Earth nod had Zorin studying him more closely. "You do that?"

Shifting his shoulders to show his frustration, Klynn indicated how he saw that question. "That is not a clear question."

Agent Murphy's face twitched but I wasn't sure what he was hiding until the faint feeling of laughter barely trickled through my bond with our Earth mate. Humor. Shiloh and Agent Murphy found Klynn and Zorin humorous.

Zorin would've performed the human shrug if he had been focused on Agent Murphy. "I require information."

Was it more frustrating or less that I was not the only person he attempted to manipulate?

Shiloh still thought it was funny but I refused to react and give Zorin what the people of Earth would call ammunition.

"I am not the right person to practice human manipulation tactics on." Klynn did not find humor in Zorin's behavior. "I attempt to respond in visual ways so that Agent Murphy understands my thoughts quickly."

His mental thoughts?

So they were mates but were not discussing it?

Was that a common trait in the people of Earth?

"It does allow for interesting additional ways of communicating." Zorin stayed focused on the topic at hand instead of delving into his language theories. "More study will need to be done."

It showed how much he wanted information from Klynn and Agent Murphy, but it did not tell me why they had been invited and exactly what information he was attempting to obtain.

Yes, as Shiloh said, we needed limits about springing things like this on mates and consequences for Zorin's inability to follow those rules in the future. Because I thought we all knew he would not be able to follow rules that restricted his behavior and his demands for information.

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Chapter 9

Shiloh

I blanked out as Klynn started talking about the importance of safewords, but unfortunately, my brain didn't let me stay stupid for long.

"What other points of that type of Earth-based relationship do you need help communicating?" Klynn's straightforward question startled my brain back into functioning.

We were just going to jump right into it?

God, they really weren't human in any way.

Well, Earthlings.

Before any of us could respond to the question, even my much more functioning mates, Agent Murphy spoke up. "Raxius? Have you consented to this conversation? Consent is important for discussions as well as actions, and it is for anyone no matter how they participate in those types of relationships."

Agent Murphy was handling this conversation a lot better than I'd expected and I couldn't help wondering if finding his mate had mellowed him. He'd even thought to make sure Raxius wasn't being held against his will…which after getting to know Zorin could've accidentally happened if my enthusiastic mate was curious enough.

I thought it was an easy question but my mates went very still. Instead of being worried like I was, Klynn looked like he wanted to

glare at them. “Consent is clearly explained in the language transfer and exists here. It is not confusing or surprising. Please explain your reaction.”

Zorin and Raxius both jerked but I couldn’t read enough through our bond to figure out why they were surprised.

Was Klynn being more confrontational than they were expecting?

Zorin finally spoke but it felt very cautious or neutral maybe. “There are a variety of types of relationships. Understanding those is…complicated.”

It wasn’t really about consent but I could understand why he’d brought it up that way.

Me.

I was complicated.

“Yes.” Klynn didn’t let the confusing response stop him from charging right back in. “The basic variations on the main dynamics are Dominants, submissives, and the people who are labeled as being a switch. They *switch* between being Dominant and submissive depending on the situation and their feelings.”

He was a lot chattier when we found a topic he felt confident lecturing people on.

“Once your main variation has been identified, you sort through secondary options. That is where the people of Earth have the most diversity.” Klynn’s gaze shifted between us like he was trying to decide something.

Probably who was the troublemaker among us.

Me.

I was the complicated one and the troublemaker.

Klynn didn't let his questions stop his lecture, though. "The intensity of pain and emotional preferences will also vary the options. A branching chart to work through might be ideal but I did not find a comprehensive one on Earth. They do what is called winging it. Do you need an explanation of that reference?"

I immediately shook my head but it was slightly startling when both of my mates practiced doing it too.

Was Raxius doing it just because Zorin kept practicing our nonverbal language?

"Those were both clear nonverbal signals and the correct ones as long as you were indicating that you did not need an explanation." Klynn just ignored us when we all sat there stupidly.

Ugh.

He turned to me.

I felt my face heating up as he seemed to get a stubborn look on his face. "You must explain to Zorin and Raxius if a response is not clear."

Klynn's expression got even sterner but he didn't back down, making me wonder how he was such a confident sub. "Our nonverbal signals are much smaller and usually more subtle than yours and we use cultural expectation in conversations far more than the people of Earth seem to. They may not understand something is confusing you or upsetting you until a safeword is used. Communicating early will prevent this."

Ugh.

He expected a response.

"I…I'm not really good at that." Getting the first part out made it a little easier to keep going. "Shutting down verbally when I get overwhelmed has been an issue in our communication."

A big issue.

"What forms of nonverbal communication can you use?" The way Klynn immediately jumped to that made me think he needed to sit down with Zorin and talk about it at some point even if that would annoy both of them. "They are smart enough to learn American Sign Language even if you sometimes question their intelligence."

Faint feelings of laughter came from Raxius. I knew why it was funny but I wasn't sure what he was thinking. Klynn's very flat delivery of making sure I knew my mates weren't as dumb as he thought they were pretending was ridiculous.

How was I supposed to respond to that, though?

"I…" I tried. I really did but the last thing I wanted to do was insult my mates.

"Some people shut down when they get overwhelmed." Agent Murphy was sweet and stepped in when I froze up. "It can be just verbally or it can be more than that. You just need ways of communicating physically if that's the only form of communication you have at the moment."

Barely pausing, his brain worked faster than mine when it came to problem-solving. "One finger up means green. You're fine with whatever is going on. Can you do that?"

Yes.

That was much easier than talking, so I put one finger up.

“Two fingers will be slow down.” He barely paused before I followed the implied instructions. “Good job.”

As I just soaked up the relief I felt, Zorin wiggled like he had ants in his pants and Agent Murphy shifted to focus on him, giving me a reprieve. “He needs some kind of praise to give him emotional comfort and to reinforce behavior that you like.”

I was basically some kind of puppy and the confusion I felt from Zorin had me wanting to laugh. It was almost distracting enough to keep me from realizing Raxius was feeling very differently. I just didn’t understand the mix of confidence and something else as he turned to me.

And just watched me.

What was I supposed to do?

The not knowing sent more panic running through me which made it even harder to know what to do.

Why in the world had the fates given me mates who needed me to explain what I wanted?

“Raxius.” Agent Murphy finally broke the silence. “I want to remind you of several things. It doesn’t matter if you’re a Dom or a sub, you safeword if you need to. Period.”

What was Raxius?

Was he a Dom?

Did he not know?

As I wondered what he was thinking, Agent Murphy continued. “Second, I know this is new to your entire society. Part of me is sorry we’ve changed your lives in such difficult ways but being a Dom is a

wonderful part of my life. It genuinely makes me happy and has given me ways of dealing with my emotions and needs in a healthy way."

How did Raxius see being a Dom?

How did he see being a sub?

"It's not always easy to talk about but everyone has to start somewhere. A submissive has to take the first brave step to let someone else take care of them. A Dom has to trust their sub enough to share what they want and what makes them happy." Agent Murphy paused, probably trying to give us a moment to think, but we were still silent and probably overwhelmed or confused, maybe.

"To get to that point requires trust and the people of Earth start with verbal and physical communication." His firm but still careful tone made me realize how much my mates needed to believe I could do it. "Shiloh might be shy but he's going to hold up one finger to show that it's okay for you to touch his head and shoulders while you verbally communicate with him."

One finger up.

Had to show it was okay for them to touch me.

Hopefully he wanted to touch me?

All I could feel was quiet confusion coming through the bond, but I thought that was because he was doing his best to block it. Still, I knew I had to do something if we were going to have a healthier relationship. A bonding couldn't function just having dinner together and talking like we were colleagues at a work event.

One finger.

I could do it.

As Raxius started reaching for me, one finger went up and something else flickered through the bond before both men went nearly silent again.

I wasn't sure if I wanted more or needed it or if it would've just been overwhelming, but I shivered as his hand finally stroked over my head sending tingly pleasure through me. It was so distracting I almost missed the odd feelings coming from Zorin, like he was mentally trying not to wiggle.

As I tried to figure out what he was thinking and feeling, Zorin sent what felt like a smile through the bond. "Good boy for sharing your thoughts with us."

I was his good boy?

Zorin reached closer, stopping just before touching me and waiting…

Oh.

Trying not to look as off-balance as I felt, I raised one finger.

The smile in my mind got brighter and his hand moved to slowly pet my head alongside Raxius. The fact that they'd found something it felt like they could cooperate on made me want to smile and turned my thoughts slightly naughty.

I wasn't sure if I was hiding those well enough, but Zorin stayed pleased as he continued to stroke my head. "We are very proud of you for adapting well to a new situation."

Oh that…that was nice.

"I am proud of you both for adapting well." Raxius finally spoke, sending another wave of pleasure through me with his low,

confident tone. “New forms of communication are difficult to adjust to.”

This…this was so much better than just sitting together and having dinner…and as I just soaked up their touch and the stronger emotions I could feel, Klynn spoke up again. “The people around the gate on the Earth side have a saying that they use when they are stressed or worried about finding their mates. They verbally remind themselves that mates are always compatible.”

Klynn almost made me smile because that was a phrase the people on the other side of the gate used a lot. If he saw how funny I thought that was, he didn’t show it, probably because he was focused on my mates. “For many years they were not finding their mates in great numbers but they still passed on the knowledge that mates were always meant for each other.”

Like my family.

“Our people here may need the reminder that even if their mates are from the other side of the gate, that truth still holds true. Our mates are the other half of us.” Something about Klynn’s pause made it feel like there was more he wanted to say.

Luckily for me, Raxius picked up the ball and didn’t make me figure out how to make words. “There is wisdom in that but sometimes the bond hovers just out of reach. New situations are not always easy.”

Was he thinking about it being difficult in general or was it something particular that was frustrating him? We’d spent the past couple of days talking about work and life on both sides of the portal, but we hadn’t actually managed to talk about intimate things.

We'd all even gone to bed alone in our own apartments, which felt normal to me but seemed to make my mates antsy.

"But they're worth it in the end." As Klynn spoke, Agent Murphy gave him a very mate kind of look. "You just need to find ways of communicating what you're thinking, the good parts and your worries."

"Communication comes in many forms." Zorin kept petting my head, but it felt like he was done mentally sorting through things. "Nonverbal signals are an interesting way."

Nonverbal signals…I could give them that.

"Three…three fingers will mean stop or red…but…but I'm green now." Hopefully I'd stay that way.

"Thank you for providing us with that information." Raxius kept running his hand over me, barely caressing me. "It is important that we know how you are feeling."

A quick glance at Agent Murphy and Klynn made me think they both wanted to roll their eyes at how obvious that was.

"We do not want to upset you." Zorin's tone was still even but his emotions felt like he was worrying again.

"Mates…mates are always compatible." Repeating the words made me feel slightly silly but also felt good in an odd way.

Klynn nodded, not looking at me like he thought I was ridiculous. "Whether it is the magic that made us or the ancestors looking into each heart and finding the perfect match, the outcome is the same. Mates are always right for one another. Sometimes it just takes us a while to remember that."

He and Agent Murphy both understood it was taking me, and maybe my mates too, a while to remember that, but I just hoped it wouldn't be a lesson we needed to learn over and over.

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Chapter 10

Zorin

"It's been a long time since anyone in my family found their mates." Our Earth mate felt calmer but I was shocked. "They've had happy marriages or found people to have a family with but not mates."

The only English word that felt right to explain my feelings was horrifying.

Klynn must have thought so too but his words were careful even for us. "I'm glad the portal opening seems to have changed that for your people."

Shiloh let out a deep breath and smiled, not seeming to understand our feelings. "Me too. But…but since I don't have any practical experience, I don't know what to expect."

That was…yes…horrifying was the correct word.

"Like…like how long to expect it to form and…and stuff like that." Our mate started out calm, but as his thoughts seemed to go faster, I could feel his anxiety growing.

He was shutting down again.

Would our finger safewords help?

"Raxius? Move your hand to the back of his neck and grip it firmly. You're just trying to hold him tight enough to remind his

brain that you're with him and you'll keep him safe." Agent Murphy was surprisingly good in difficult situations because his tone did not show stress at all as Raxius moved his hand to obey. "Yes, that looks right. Fear isn't always easy to manage, so we just have to help give him ways of feeling what we call grounded."

Klynn indicated agreement and kept his gaze on Shiloh. "Fear of this nature seems to be like flying without wings and without a way to control the power. You are holding him to the ground and making him feel safe."

Agent Murphy smiled but I did not understand the exact expression yet. "Yes. I like that explanation."

"Thank you." Klynn was clearly pleased with whatever he sensed from his mate.

My mate was the most important, however, so we waited as Agent Murphy showed him exaggerated deep breaths. It was interesting to see that Shiloh seemed to need a reminder about how to breathe, but it worked and was educational to watch.

But if visual reminders were helpful, a touch-based example had to be more helpful to someone from Earth.

Carefully moving my hands, I placed one on his chest and watched his fingers to see if he used his visual safewords. When they stayed still on his lap and he pushed his chest against my hand, I began making slow circles and soft sounds as low as I could.

As Shiloh's breathing evened out and I could feel his anxiety easing, Klynn spoke again. "The bond is different for everyone. I have seen it connect deeply almost instantly. The mates in question met at a planet-wide gathering we hold every five years."

I hadn't gone to one of those since I was very young and confident I would meet my mate. It seemed I had, but not in the way I had expected.

"They met. They said hello. The bond fell into place. That was it." Klynn shrugged as Shiloh giggled. "It was odd to watch. Like…like going to Walmart and coming home mated instead of with cereal."

The example did not make sense to me, but Shiloh smiled wider. "I take it that's not how it is for everyone?"

"No." Klynn looked as if he wanted to shake his head. "Most matings I have seen from the beginning go slower. The couple or group shows special interest in each other. They talk. The bond grows."

Pausing, he looked between us.

"If they are waiting for their third, for example, the first two that meet are sometimes…there is an English word…oh, in limbo." A form of waiting. Yes, Klynn was correct. "They are waiting to complete the bond until they find the rest of their family."

Should I have known what the feeling was?

Did it feel difficult to others who were waiting for their third?

"Waiting?" Raxius seemed to be as confused as I was but Klynn did not appreciate our difficulty.

"Yes. The bond begins to fully form when all the parties who will become one are present." Klynn was clearly frustrated, but I ignored it since that was his usual behavior.

"There is some belief that fear or emotions of that nature will slow the bond to give the parties time for discussion, but studying

that is difficult." Klynn paused again, but I was not going to discuss my past emotional difficulties with Raxius.

Glancing over at my frustrating mate, he seemed to be having similar thoughts. He might not be willing to open up either, but looking at Shiloh, I thought he might be ready to discuss his emotions and needs.

"Why don't we give you guys some privacy." Agent Murphy's suggestion caused us to nod, practicing their nonverbal language. Agreeing to have them leave so quickly was rude on our part, but they did not show any frustration.

In fact, they showed polite manners as they left, making sure Shiloh knew he could ask them questions and gave him others to depend on.

There was a small but loud sense of frustration that he would need others, but logically I reminded myself that when our mate had such high needs that he was given two mates, it was only right that we surround him with as much help as possible.

I was smart to understand that, but it did not help me to know what to say when we were finally alone and standing in what Shiloh called my living room.

Raxius seemed to be in a similar position, but it was possible he was more confused since he was used to working with his hands. This seemed to be a discussion issue, at least to start, but that also left me with questions about what would follow.

The people of Earth had an extensive variety of options when it came to submissive needs.

When the silence finally stretched out too long, Raxius spoke. "Can you show us the finger that means you are able and willing to

continue?"

Shiloh's breath was mostly even but I felt relief from him as one finger quickly came up.

"That's correct." Remembering his reactions, I reached up to stroke his back. "Good boy."

His face flushed and his eyes dropped to the floor in front of us, but there was pleasure coming through our still new bond. Instead of being silent and still, his face heated and he waved his finger around.

He was waving green?

Did the human stoplights the system was based on wave?

"You like being our good boy, don't you?" Raxius proved helpful with his physical knowledge because Shiloh's head jerked in the human nod movement. "You were a very good boy when you answered our questions and did your best to respond to Agent Murphy and Klynn."

Ah.

Waving meant an increasingly positive form of green.

"You were also a very good influence on two very cranky individuals." My attempt at human humor got a giggle from our mate. "I do not know what magic you performed but I approve."

Raxius gave Shiloh a long sigh and even shook his head. "Klynn and I have much in common when it comes to how we view others."

"I think that is what the people who speak English say is an understatement." They had many good words…good words that

made my mate make more happy sounds. “I do not think you have some things in common, however.”

Shiloh was still pink, but he glanced over at Raxius in clear curiosity. He had understood my subtle attempt to put the topic of Domination out between us. Our difficult mate was quiet at first but shrugged after a moment. “I do not understand how I am cranky and not submissive and he is cranky and submissive.”

Shiloh’s face was so red I worried about his health but he made a tiny laugh before he shrugged back at his grumpy mate. “It’s…”

Taking a moment, he tried again. “It’s not connected.”

“I wonder which traits are connected.” It was a legitimate line of inquiry and needed more research but both my mates looked at me with wide eyes. “Do not worry. This will take me time to come back to.”

I had much to research before I could examine the idea.

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“That does not make me less worried.” Raxius rolled his eyes like a person from Earth. “Your growing list of topics to research should concern anyone.”

I performed the Earth huff and focused on our giggly mate. “He will learn to appreciate my ability to research.”

As Shiloh tried to decide what to say, Raxius let out another long sigh. “That feels like a threat.”

“Some mates are more interesting than others.” I managed to sound like a cheerful human which made the situation even funnier to our Earth mate. “I have heard from several Earthlings that being smart makes me more interesting as well.”

I did not understand why that was so funny to Shiloh, and neither did Raxius judging by his expression, but all that mattered was how happy our Earth mate felt. His positive emotions seemed to make him more confident in his ability to speak, as well. “I like how interesting you are.”

“See?” I gave a pleased expression to Raxius, one that made him grumble low, and stood straighter. “Our mate likes me.”

After a few seconds, he huffed. “I cannot give my thoughts without potentially insulting our mate.”

Yes.

Shiloh giggled again before trying to stop smiling and look what I thought was innocent. “Both my mates know I’m always right on these kinds of things, so we’re not going to think about it too much.”

“I think extensively, so I am not sure that rule is possible to follow.” My seriously delivered teasing had more happy feelings coming through our bond, but Raxius had to do what the Earth people called one-upping me.

“I suspect he has a severe inability to follow all rules he does not like.” Crossing his arms over his chest like a male from Earth, Raxius raised one eyebrow. “Consequences should be given for not following rules.”

I shrugged. “The mates called Dominants make the rules, so there are no consequences as long as Shiloh is not upset.”

Our Earth mate was trying not to laugh but his emotions were giving him away. “Well, Doms have to follow the rules everyone agrees to and they do that because they’re trying to take care of their subs.”

“I will take very good care of you.” And make rules that did not require me to follow them. The wording would have to be precise, so practicing my English would be very important.

Raxius cocked his head like he was dramatically thinking. “A Dom would want to make good rules to protect every mate. A sub would want to follow the rules to please their mates. A switch sounds like the mate who would try to create rules, break them, and then explain why the rules did not apply to begin with.”

Ridiculous.

I had every intention of explaining why Raxius must be wrong but we both paused our…enthusiastic discussion when Shiloh’s gaze flicked back and forth between us. His humor had faded and he also appeared thoughtful but with much less drama than his cranky mate.

What had changed?

“I…” Pausing after one word, he licked his lips and seemed to be forcing himself to be still as he spoke. “Um, all the different types of needs are important and…and they all mean people need to be taken care of.”

Yes.

He would not have repeated the explanation without importance, though, so we both waited for him to continue his thoughts. Thankfully, he was able to give us more information. “I met a guy one time who was dating a Dom and another sub.”

Shiloh paused but he seemed to have an easier time talking about someone else. “He’d…he’d always had a hard time figuring out what kind of relationship he needed until he realized he was a switch. Some people could be happy with just one partner but he figured out he needed both types to be happy.”

Interesting.

“I know there are mate bonds of three individuals and I even met one of four several years ago. However, I never thought something like that would affect my life.” I could not help glancing between my mates. “I simply thought I needed to be patient.”

I was not a patient person, but forming a mate bond was not something magic or research could prompt to form faster.

“I can understand that. And who’d ever expect to get two.” Taking a deep breath I thought was supposed to be subtle, our Earth mate licked his lips and continued the conversation I knew he was leading somewhere. “I never expected to get one mate, but it’s got to be harder when you want to submit to one mate and dominate another.”

Before I could gather my thoughts and make notes about what our mate might be talking about, Raxius gave another sigh because he clearly liked pretending to be a dramatic human. “And with our people having no experience with domination and submission, emotional needs or responses that were seen as out of the ordinary would be deemed bad manners and…and corrected.”

Shiloh winced. “That’s terrible…it’s worse than just being confused on Earth until you found the right stuff online to explain what you needed.”

Online…their internet.

Glancing between us again, Shiloh turned to the couch. “Let’s… let’s go sit down?”

“Yes.” Having him between us had been very nice and I wanted to experience that again. “You must use your fingers if we sit too closely this time.”

I had every intention of finding the line between comfort and acceptance and sitting right on it. Getting close to my mate was important but so was his happiness, and I could find that balance.

Something made Shiloh giggle and shake his head. “I’m not sure I want to know what you’re thinking.”

“Something inappropriate or what the dragons from Earth would call ridiculous.” Raxius was the one being ridiculous, so I ignored him. “See? What did I say?”

“Nothing of importance.” Placing my hand on Shiloh’s back for a moment, I smiled at him as he pressed his lips together. “He is being silly.”

So I didn’t have to listen to him.

He was also practicing making sound effects that I did not have to listen to either.

“I…” Shiloh paused to think as he sat down in the middle of what he called our couch. “I think he might like teasing you to get a reaction, so silly might not be the right word. He’s your mate too.”

“He is.” Somehow. “Is this too close? Do you need space between us?”

Generally speaking, our people seemed to leave more separation between mates but that may have just been public behavior. Shiloh blinked before looking down at how we were seated with my leg pressing against his as I positioned myself sideways beside him. “This is nice. I.”

I hadn’t considered the questions difficult but something triggered his anxiety response and his mouth closed.

I could feel his stress through the bond, but it was not at what I had begun to associate as his unmanageable level. He simply closed his eyes and took a deep breath before slowly reaching out and placing one hand on my knee.

He’d touched me.

He also reached out with his other and patted the empty space beside him for Raxius, but he’d reached out to me first. Still, I knew he would like both of us around him, so I was patient as Raxius sat and slowly inched closer until their knees were touching as well.

Yes.

I had to remember they were mates and it was perfectly reasonable that Shiloh would find pleasure in being surrounded by both of us.

Yes.

I would be a patient and understanding mate…no matter how frustrating Raxius was.

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Chapter 11

Raxius

I was not as dumb as Zorin seemed to think I was, but he might've been as oblivious as I'd always thought he was.

My Earth mate on the other hand was smart and could talk about practical issue as well as about other people's needs…but still not his own.

"Even humans with two partners like being held by them both at the same time." Shiloh's words were about others but his desire was about himself. "It's probably an instinct for most people but I've met people who don't like to be touched."

Was he requesting information?

Giving random facts to make himself more comfortable?

"I have never spent a lot of time touching others, but I have no objection to being as close as you would like." I was doing my best to be as neutral as possible with my words, but Shiloh went very still again.

Even Zorin looked like he wanted to frown and some kind of frustrated curiosity came through the bond.

"We…" Taking another careful breath, Shiloh was still hiding behind closed eyes but he was doing his best to speak. "We should take turns with who gets to be in the middle. You…you guys need a chance to be cuddled too. That's an important part of being mates."

What?

He wanted us to take turns?

“Let’s time it for…oh…um I was told you guys have a slightly longer day so let’s say a couple of your minutes. That’s probably long enough to figure out if you like it.” Shiloh’s face scrunched up. “I don’t remember if anyone told me a better word to use for short units of time. I didn’t do a talk about time or anything like that yet.”

“We understand that concept.” Reaching up, I ran my hand over his head to stop the flow of confusing facts. “Once our mages understand how the translation spell worked in a practical way, we’ll be able to see if it’s safe to give you our language as well.”

Barely nodding, Shiloh took in a breath and then let it out slowly like the timing or style meant something to him. “That’ll be weird but probably good in the long run. We…we haven’t talked about that yet but…but well…”

Zorin moved his hand to stroke our mate’s neck before I could decide how stressed Shiloh had become. “We have many options, and while I cannot talk for Raxius because he is stubborn, I would like to see your world.”

I made a grumbling sound I thought was correct and got a giggle from Shiloh. “I’m starting to think you’re looking for a reaction from our more serious mate.”

Making an Earth sound that indicated his disagreement, Zorin continued to pet Shiloh. “We should have a discussion about where you will take us on Earth. I have already begun making a list of places to visit based upon my conversations with the people of Earth.”

Making a happy sound, Shiloh peeked his eyes open. “Nope, I’m not going to let you change the subject. That’s my job.”

Pausing for a moment, Zorin performed the huff sound and rolled his eyes. “No. Your job is to look sweet and worry.”

Making what I thought was a groan that was supposed to be dramatic, Shiloh slouched back on the couch and pouted. “I really don’t like how accurate that is.”

Was his current behavior better or worse than being overwhelmed into silence?

“You are the one who said we must have honesty between mates.” Zorin shrugged but did not look repentant. “I was honest.”

He was what Toman had called a pain in the ass.

Somehow it made Shiloh feisty, though. He crossed his arms over his chest and glared adorably at Zorin. “I changed my mind. Lie to me.”

“No.” Zorin seemed to be enjoying whatever they were doing. “You made a rule. The appropriate Earth response is for me to tell you *no takebacks*.”

He was using the strangest words.

When did he have the time for processing those?

Had he stayed up late just searching his mind for new English words and phrases?

Shiloh could not seem to decide if he wanted to keep pouting or laugh. I could feel his delight and the urge to still be dramatic through our bond, but I wasn’t sure if he knew how much he was projecting. “I’m cute. You have to give me my way.”

No.

That was not how rules worked, but Zorin knew that as well.

“Only certain submissive types need to be indulged that way.” Our ridiculous mate attempted to shrug and look innocent. “Without enough information to go on, I have to say we must stick with the original rule.”

Shiloh’s lower lip poked out and he whined softly. “I don’t like that. You’re a meanie.”

Meanie?

That was not a word typically used by submissives with an adult mindset.

If Zorin thought the word choice was odd, he did not give any indication. “You still have not given me any reason to change the rule.”

Even I could hear the *tempt me* tone in his voice but I wasn’t sure what our Earth mate would do. When had Zorin practiced that? He was entirely too good at projecting Earth mannerisms and expressions.

Shiloh didn’t seem to notice that aspect, but he did respond to the signals by whining at Zorin. “But…”

That was not a reasonable response, so Zorin’s shrug made sense. It also made Shiloh wiggle and make additional dramatic sounds. He was not reacting in his usual way but this peek into the intimate side of his personality was beautiful.

And the way he scrunched up his face to show he was thinking was very cute…which may have been his goal?

As I tried to decide what was part of his role and what was manipulation, he huffed and then pretended to smile and look very sweet. It was definitely designed to get his way, so I waited to see what he would do.

Oh.

He widened his eyes and slowly leaned in to brush his lips against Zorin's cheek. "Being right makes me happy. You like making me happy."

Well, our Earth mate was not wrong and his behavior was successfully devious because Zorin let out a long, Earth-style sigh. "When you are very sweet like this, I will consider lying to you in situations where safety and long-term happiness are not in jeopardy."

I was fairly certain I knew what the best English response would be…sucker.

Shiloh knew it too but it earned Zorin another kiss that the people of Earth called a peck. "Thank you, D—um, yes. Thank you."

A title…he had wanted to apply the Daddy title to Zorin.

Our confused mate blinked like an Earth person and I knew he needed help, so it was my turn to sigh and be dramatic to keep Shiloh in what I thought was his little headspace. "If you are going to be allowed to manipulate Zorin like that, he needs a title to match. I'm not going to agree to that silliness, so you have to differentiate us."

More practice was needed but Shiloh giggled. "You guys don't do titles."

But he did.

I shrugged and kept my gaze too serious for the situation which made Shiloh try to hide more giggles. “I have an Earth mate and I have learned that your matings sometimes require titles and nicknames. I want one. And if I want one then Zorin will demand one as well.”

He could not help huffing. “Of course I need one.”

The ridiculousness of our argument had Shiloh’s shoulders shaking as he tried to hide his laughter. Even when the sound did not escape, his body showed his emotions in ways that were uniquely Earth-like, but I thought I felt something from Zorin before his emotions disappeared from the bond.

“Our Earth mate has to give them. That is clearly the rules.” Shiloh didn’t find my idea upsetting judging by his sounds and wiggles. “The Earth mate always gives titles. I have seen several examples of it.”

So he either had to prove me wrong or give us titles.

That was the Earth rule as I had seen it.

Shiloh must have thought it was logical as well because his wiggles and sounds came faster. “What…what if you don’t like them?”

I pretended to look confused. “Not like something my mate gives me? Ridiculous. Unless you are trying to make me eat something yucky…I heard Wren describing yucky foods and I am not agreeing to the item called brussels sprouts.”

That got more giggles from Shiloh and he slouched back into the couch. “You’re so silly. Names aren’t yucky.”

Shrugging, I still maintained what I hoped was a confused expression. “Then the only negative option is that we discuss other titles. Klynn was speaking with Wren and they were debating the title of badass. I do not want to be called that.”

I wasn’t sure if the conversation had been a reason to argue or real, but either way, the two troublemakers expended a significant amount of emotion on the debate.

Shiloh made new laughter type sounds and put his hands over his face. “No, I’m your good boy. I don’t say that.”

“Then we won’t have a problem.” So good boys did not use the English words deemed grown-up? “He’s pouting. You have to give Zorin a title first or I’ll never hear the end of it.”

He was the type of mate to have a long memory.

“That…that means…that means he’s a Daddy.” Giggling through the sentence made it slightly hard to understand but he got it out well in the end. He even managed to stop hiding and didn’t feel worried as he explained why. “They…they need to go first ‘cause they have to…they have to give their littles ‘tention. Attention. Yeah.”

His cute shrug made it look like he didn’t have a choice in the matter. “That’s the rules.”

There were a lot of unwritten rules for these types of relationships. “I have seen those males give their mates whatever they want and they do require a lot of attention.”

Zorin could not seem to decide if he wanted to disagree with that or not, but eventually he sighed. “Daddy is a good title. I will not debate the other ridiculousness.”

That got more happy sounds from our Earth mate but Zorin was not done. “What is the title for a mate that is stern and frowns very well for someone not from Earth?”

Shiloh didn’t seem to know if he could laugh at that description or not, but it earned me a cheek kiss too and he smiled at me as he patted my head. “He’s a Master. That’s what they do.”

“I do that very well, so I will be a highly adept Master.” As Shiloh laughed at my response, Zorin sighed…loudly. “Daddies seem to be very dramatic.”

Shiloh thought that was highly amusing as well.

As his entire body shook from the effort not to laugh out loud, he did a happy wiggle. “I got two. One of each. One nice to sneak me treats and one naughty to do stuff to big me.”

Based on how he was using the word, big seemed to be a synonym for adult. Nodding, I tried to come up with a little-appropriate way to figure out what being naughty meant and what stuff might entail. “That’s right but I can give treats too. My treats will just be very different from your Daddy’s.”

Sending pleas to the fates and ancestors that my mate would continue to be chatty, I did my best to look innocent. “I might read you a book while he gives you cake. People of Earth like cake. Wren said so.”

That got more laughter from him and he tipped over into Zorin as he laughed. “Daddy…he…Master thinks his…his treats are books.”

Making what I thought was a scoff, Zorin shook his head. “Even I know that is not correct. He is being silly because he wants your attention. That’s cheating.”

“That’s cute.” I shrugged and got more happy sounds from Shiloh. “Besides, if Daddies can’t cheat then Masters can’t either.”

I had heard several stories about how the dominant partner couldn’t cheat when they shifted how rules applied in situations.

Still looking happy and little, Shiloh dropped his voice to a whisper. “Daddy. You got to tell him that Masters…they spank and do stuff. I can’t tell him.”

Why?

The only logical reason seemed to be the rules around what he thought a little could do, and it seemed Zorin at least understood based on his firm nod. “Do not fear. Daddy will help.”

He was going to like that title and use it obsessively.

“As a Daddy, I know that Masters are firmer in their rules and provide their mates with spankings and dominance-based scenes where naughty words and sometimes mild fear come into play.”

As a Daddy?

That was not a highly researched scientific designation.

“As a Master, I know exactly how to do very naughty things to a very good boy.” I shrugged and frowned in the way I had seen Agent Murphy do with Klynn when they did not think anyone was watching them. “But if my boy misbehaves or lies to his Master, I might forget all the naughty things I know.”

Or all the things I was going to learn from the books Klynn had brought with him.

Somehow everyone knew about those and were debating on whether or not they could be considered Earth research material. I

was starting to think my studious mate had something to do with that nonsense.

Shiloh's eyes went wide, but he was not feeling fear. I did not understand what the mix of shock, arousal, and laughter coming through the bond should be labeled, but he was not afraid.

"It would be terrible if all I could remember how to do was give pecks and hugs." Demonstrating let me give him a tiny kiss on his cheek which got a squeak sound from him that I did not fully understand. "Hugs are very nice but spankings are much better."

At least that was what Wren from Earth kept telling every adult who learned English through the transfer process.

Somehow that was always one of their first questions.

The others were always about chicken nuggets and Florida.

Earthlings were very strange, no matter if they were human or not.

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Chapter 12

Shiloh

Oh…Master was going to be a really good Master.

How did he know how to do it?

"Just hugs?" Oh dear. "I…I'm your good boy, Master."

Yes.

I could be good.

I could tell Master the truth and be good.

"I…" Oh, he was sneaky. "Daddy…tell him…tell him I'll be good."

Yes.

Daddy would fix it.

He made a thinking sound and shrugged. "I will try, but I told you…he needs attention."

"I forgot." I gave Daddy pats on his leg and scooted closer to Master until I was on his lap. "I like giving you attention."

And that would make me a good boy who got to do naughty stuff later.

Master wrapped his arms around me and nodded like a human Master. "I'm glad and I'm glad you like giving me attention. Your

Daddy will require the most right now because he's dramatic, but I need some too."

That made Daddy have to practice his groans and sighs, but it just meant Master was right. He knew it too and I could feel his giggles through the bond. Master liked driving Daddy crazy, but they were teasing nicer…kind of.

"I got lots of attention to give." They both liked kisses, so I gave Master another and felt his happies through the bond. That was neat. I liked knowing what made him happy. "See? I can give lots of kisses and hugs and do stuff with you."

Master made a thinking sound. "What kind of stuff? I need to know what kind of attention you're going to give me before I make promises about naughty stuff."

Naughty stuff.

I didn't giggle but I wanted to.

Master was going to do naughty stuff with big me.

"I…I can read you books and…and tell you stories…and…oh…" I knew stuff. It was naughty stuff, though, so I wiggled to put my lips right up to Master's ear and talked soft. "I know other places to give you kisses, Master. Like in Klynn's books."

Master raised one eyebrow and looked at me silly, but I could feel his happies still. He just looked like a Master but inside he was laughing like a Daddy. "I will accept that as good future attention, but we're not going to rush. I'm patient."

He might've been patient but he liked wiggles, so I did it again.

His happies got really big in the bond but I didn't giggle and give away his secret. I just wiggled and smiled and kissed his cheek

again. “Future attention. I won’t forget, Master.”

And I was going to remember to listen in my head really good to know what he liked.

Master was only gonna do naughty stuff with me and Daddy, so I had to help him know what he liked. I was going to be a good helper and wiggle and kiss and be so nice he got really-really big-big happy. He could practice with me and then be really good at naughty stuff he did with Daddy.

Once they stopped pretending they didn’t like each other.

They did.

I could feel it.

They were just big-big stubborn.

“I know.” Master kissed my cheek and gave me a Daddy-type hug. “I’m looking forward to it but what did I say?”

He worried just like Daddy.

“That you’re patient.” I was so smart he practiced outside smiling for me. “Patient Masters get hugs.”

And more wiggles.

Master really liked wiggles and even groaned in my head but his face still looked like a stern Master. It made me wonder if the other stern Masters I’d met were nicer than I’d thought. I didn’t like mean Masters but maybe they giggled on the inside too?

“I like hugs.” Master’s voice was different, like he wanted to groan out loud and I could feel Daddy’s brain wiggles start moving around again.

Daddy was always very curious.

"One more hug." And one more wiggle. "You're a good Master."

Oops.

Master gave me his suspicious look once I sat still again. "I am also a smart Master. Don't forget that my little Earthling."

He was so cute.

"Yes, Master." But smart Masters needed reasons to spank their cute boys, so I wiggled one more time then laughed as I hopped off Master's lap and onto Daddy's. "Don't forget. I'm cute, Master."

Daddy cocked his head and stared at me. "Then why does cute look very suspicious this time?"

"Because you're smart too." Master's dry response made me giggle and I laughed so hard I collapsed into Daddy. He held me tight just like he was supposed to and I got more happies from both of them. "He doesn't seem to understand the difference between giving hugs and giving…wiggles."

Master was so funny but Daddy was confused. "That is not as clear of an explanation as you seem to think."

Daddy didn't understand…so I was helpful and wiggled for Daddy too.

Ha.

Daddy groaned out loud. "Oh…yes…hugs and wiggles are very…different."

I was sooo funny I laughed and laughed, but that meant Daddy had to hold me tight and I got to wiggle more. Master thought Daddy's groans were funny too but he pretended to roll his eyes. "Trust me sometimes."

Nope.

Daddy had to poke and poke because Daddy didn't understand stuff. That was why he got me, though. Big me worried and worried, but little me knew the fates saw my Daddies needed help. Someone like Wren or Klynn would've made Daddy and Master even grumpier, so the fates found me.

I might've been far-far away but I'd come to give them someone to be nice to.

"It was not a matter of trust. I just…I just did not understand the implication and you were very stern." Daddy liked wiggles too but he had to poke Master. "A more obvious response would have been…helpful."

Master didn't want to be helpful.

He'd wanted me to wiggle on Daddy.

"I was trying to be polite but it seems our boy is doing what is called, *testing the limits*." Happies were still coming, but Master pretended to look serious. "He and I will have a discussion on that another time."

Oh…I knew that one.

I whispered to Daddy. "He's gonna spank my bottom 'cause I wiggled it on him."

I'd wiggled my bottom and made him sparkly happy.

"Oh." Daddy seemed like he was worried but his string was showing happies too. "Well, actions…actions have consequences."

He knew.

"I'm your good boy, Daddy." I gave him cheek kisses so he didn't think he had to spank me. Daddy was the cuddly kind and Master was my spanking kind. "We'll play toys and have treats and…and stuff."

Other stuff.

Daddy watched me close. "Naughty stuff?"

"*Nooo*…" Just other stuff. I tried not to wiggle that time but my squirmies escaped. "There's just other stuff we can play."

Daddy and little stuff.

He made a thinking sound and gave me a cheek kiss. "I am going to like playing all kinds of games with you."

Whew.

Daddy didn't ask.

He liked knowing everything but I'd given him lots of everythings already.

"Did you bring your toys with you, little Earthling, or do we need to find new toys for you?" Master frowned and looked very thinky. "We have blocks and books."

His frown got bigger. "We do not have enough toys."

Why not?

"Humans needed to create more specific toy objects because they cannot make magical things that entertain young children." Daddy wasn't frowny when he was thinky. "I have seen many of our young children being distracted with objects around the home or magical… visual entertainment."

Oh, Daddy found his frown.

“There has to be a word for that.” Daddy made grumbly sounds. “English has words for everything.”

Yep.

“You can show me later, Daddy.” Kisses distracted Daddy from his grumpies. “Can I show you my toys now?”

Yes. That would make Daddy forget the disappearing English words.

“I don’t know, he might get distracted asking you all kinds of questions about your toys and then we’d never get dinner.” Master pretended to be bored and frowny. “I’ll starve to death before he remembers we need to eat.”

“Oh, Daddy won’t forget you.” I leaned over and gave Master a cheek kiss. “Mates are important.”

They were gonna need time-outs if they didn’t stop poking at least sometimes.

I gave Daddy my bestest sweet face and my big eyes. “Right, Daddy? Master’s important too.”

Oh…

I got it.

I got it.

Daddy wanted to be grumpy because that was just what he did with Master but he had to be nice for me because that was what Daddies did.

I was so smart.

“Yes.” Daddy even nodded. He liked looking like an Earth person. “Your Master is important and he’s our mate.”

Good boy, Daddy.

Yes.

He'd get special kisses later too.

"I'm important and your mate and I got kisses." I pointed to my cheek and looked cute. "Master needs kisses too so he knows he's special."

I gave Daddy an *oh well* shrug. He knew what it meant because he'd been practicing his body talking. He even sighed because he knew he was stuck. But his bond felt like he had butterflies in his tummy, so I was right. Daddy just needed a tiny push and that was what he had me for.

"Then you can tell him what you're gonna make for dinner. His tummy might be empty." Or maybe he liked it when Daddy took care of him too? "You're good at helping empty tummies."

Master had gotten worried then quiet and now he was hiding his giggles.

He liked it when I helped and gave tiny pushes.

Daddy let out a big-big sigh because he really liked being dramatic. "You're right. Taking care of my mates is my role. Daddies are just…what did Wren say…*wired that way*."

Sometimes subs were wired that way too but their sub wanted cuddles and attention more.

That was okay, though, because two good caretaker helpers would just bump into each other. I'd take care of Daddy in other ways like giving him snuggles and kisses and making him be nice to Master. Those were important stuff too.

Taking Master's hand, I tugged him closer. "Special time, Master. Come closer."

I thought he should try to look cute but I knew he liked looking grumpy better. So that meant he had to frown and shake his head as he shifted over. "You are…a handful."

"Of course he's not." Daddy had to disagree with him because that was just what Daddy did. "He's just…just taking care of you?"

Daddy didn't seem sure of that but he couldn't back down. He was very thinky too and that distracted him enough that he leaned over and gave Master a cheek kiss. "He's very nurturing and we have to watch out for that."

Aww…I was nurturing.

I was amazing.

And they were so cute.

We were perfect.

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Chapter 13

Zorin

Being nurturing was a more interesting character trait than I had expected.

"See? I took care of your Master." That didn't mean I had to overthink it, though. "We're all getting special feelings and being cared for."

Something made Shiloh giggle, but his sense of humor was different in his little headspace. That made it difficult to understand what he found funny. "Two special mates."

He did not seem to be including himself, making me wonder what he thought special meant. A spike of something like happiness came through my bond with Raxius but it was gone before I could attempt to define it. Whatever he thought made him glare at our submissive mate. "Naughty boy."

How?

As Shiloh continued to giggle and shake his head like he was denying the accusation, I decided it was some kind of domination game I did not understand. If Raxius fell into the Master category, our relationships with Shiloh would look very different.

I just had to figure out what that meant.

Klynn was going to have to be more forthcoming about his research material…the English word stingy seemed to apply.

“I’m a good boy. Daddy said.” His words said good but his tone made me question him. “Kisses.”

We each got additional cheek kisses and he clapped his hands as he performed his wiggle. I managed not to groan that time, but based on the feelings coming through the bond, I thought that was seen as a challenge.

“I…I enjoy your kisses.” My response got a pleased smile from Shiloh but it had Raxius frowning deeper.

I had clearly missed some kind of emotional response or manipulation, but before I could look for behavioral clues, Raxius leaned closer to Shiloh. “Do good boys tease their Masters?”

What had Shiloh done?

Something he thought was funny was the most simplistic answer but it did not help me to narrow down the specifics.

“Yes.” He laughed as he leaned in and gave Raxius another cheek kiss. “Good boys are funny.”

What had he sent through their bond?

“I’m going to remember that later.” Raxius seemed to be doing his best to be subtle as he made threats, but Shiloh still thought they were funny and collapsed against me again.

“When you spank me.” Giggling, he hid behind his hands. “I’m Daddy’s good boy.”

Possibly?

“And Master’s naughty boy.” Raxius’ low threat further delighted Shiloh, so I didn’t feel worry about the direction their

teasing had taken. “I have a very good memory for that kind of behavior.”

I could attest to that, so I nodded. “He will not forget. He will remember for years.”

Raxius seemed to be inclined to hold a grudge, as the English language described the conduct. If we had that tendency, it was encouraged out of us, but Raxius had not accepted that cultural standard. It left me to wonder what other behaviors he had been using as a screen and not fully accepting.

Sitting up, Shiloh nodded and projected seriousness. “Did you say sorry to Master? Did he give you time-out? Spanks? Some Masters spank to punish naughty mates. I don’t like that. I’m a good boy.”

Raxius made a strange sound that seemed to be called a snort. “Your Daddy’s behavior is always questionable, and no, I did not spank him. I didn’t know that was an option.”

It was not an option.

It couldn’t be.

I…I was Shiloh’s Daddy.

“Spankings for punishments are not something I’m comfortable with.” For Shiloh or myself. However Raxius could try to justify that. “We will apologize and attempt to correct our behavior if something injures our mate.”

When Shiloh and Raxius both turned to me, it was my turn to express frustration with the long exhale. “Fine. Raxius, I apologize for my previous behavior. When we first met, I did not understand

the odd feelings you produced in me and I handled them incorrectly."

I could see Raxius accepted my words but I wasn't sure Shiloh did. "Do you see the way your Master shifted his hands and shoulders? That was indicating agreement or acceptance."

"Oh, your body talk is tiny." Shiloh frowned and attempted the subtle movements but they were the equivalent of shouting with his body. "That's hard."

"Only because the people of Earth like to be very clear and have more variation in their expressions and movements." Their behaviors were more helpful once they stopped being startling. "I will teach you, but let me be clear, I enjoy your Earth languages and do not want you to become one of us in that manner."

Raxius went still for a moment before nodding clearly. "You are our mate no matter how you behave, but I agree with your Daddy. An important part of who you are is how you react. We do not need or want you to change that."

Eyes widening, Shiloh's worry emotions came leaking through the bond. "What…what if my reacts are something you don't like?"

What could he want that we would find negative?

"I am going to remind you about the expression Klynn and Agent Murphy used…mates are always compatible." Raxius reached up and rested his hand on Shiloh's neck again. What seemed to be steady pressure was all that was needed to produce relaxing effects in our mate. "It just may take us time to understand who is the most compatible with that specific need."

Blinking a few times in what was obviously conveying his thoughtful confusion, Shiloh took a moment before he responded

with a slightly less stressful tone. “So…so some stuff might be a Daddy thing and some might be a Master thing?”

“Yes.” Raxius glanced between us but our bond was so low I could not clearly sense his emotions. “Like spankings. I think those will be a Master thing, not a Daddy thing.”

I did not need to apply pain to my boy to help him.

Keeping that thought to myself was smart and instinctual because I understood manners, but both my mates turned back to me. “I did not say anything.”

Shiloh shrugged. “Your bond thingy went squiggly.”

“I did not go squiggly.” What did that even mean? “Your Master and I are simply in agreement so there was no need to verbally respond.”

Raxius cocked his head. “You went squiggly.”

“See?” Shiloh threw up his hands. “I’m smart.”

“We are all highly intelligent.” Just in different ways. “What are your smarts telling you now, though?”

I was hoping for something cute or a distracting question about food, but the fates had other plans for me because Shiloh leaned closer and whispered again. “That you want to do other things to my bottom.”

Another story, whenever you're ready.

Come to Lokepub to pick your next novel.

Well, he was not wrong.

“You are right.” And he knew it. “You are very smart.”

Shiloh gave me a giggle that I knew Raxius wanted to label as naughty, but he sat up and did another wiggle instead of pushing me about his bottom. “Master’s tummy needs food, Daddy.”

Did he need the distraction or did he think I did?

Not sure if it mattered, I made a very thoughtful look and frowned. It had Shiloh giggling again and pretending to think as well, even tapping his chin for some reason. “Then we must feed him or he will get so cranky he’ll forget to spank you later.”

Ha.

I made him laugh so hard he nearly fell off my lap. Luckily for my wiggly Earthling, he had two mates who could quickly steady him. “Would you like to play at the table while I finish getting dinner ready or would you like to stay with Raxius?”

There were probably other options, but those were the two that came to mind the fastest. Raxius didn’t seem to have an opinion but Shiloh sat up and immediately changed moods. “Color. I got to color and make you pictures.”

Ah.

“Do you have crayons or should I get you something to color with?” Wren’s habit of pulling out crayons to silently explain that a meeting had gone on past the point he considered reasonable made it easy to understand what Shiloh needed.

“Can I show you mine?” Shiloh’s wiggles that time were from his own excitement and not trying to inspire mine. “I’ll make you pictures.”

“I think that is a wonderful plan.” But I was not the only one who needed input into our schedule. “Why don’t you ask your Master what he thinks?”

Ha.

I could be a good Daddy even if it shocked Raxius.

Shiloh didn’t notice our behavior and instead threw himself at Raxius. “Master, can we go get my stuff?”

Did that imply more than just coloring implements?

As I tried to understand the meaning behind his words, Raxius wrapped Shiloh safely on his lap. “Yes, then we’ll color while your Daddy makes dinner. He did a good job last night, didn’t he?”

Nodding enthusiastically, Shiloh wiggled off Raxius’ lap and stood up to take both of our hands. “Hurry. I got to show you my stuff.”

Considering how carefully he had guarded his possessions, this seemed to be a turning point in our relationship. “What stuff? You use that word in a variety of different ways?”

Making sure to look suspicious, I frowned and narrowed my eyes like the book had described. “Are you bringing naughty things over here?”

His Daddy was very smart and very funny because Shiloh giggled and fell against Raxius as the still-grumpy-looking man stood up. “He…Daddy thinks I’ve got naughty stuff.”

“Stuff…” I shrugged as I repeated the word, getting more giggles from Shiloh and a happy feeling from Raxius.

"You probably do have naughty *stuff*, but we're just going to bring crayons and toys this time." Wrapping his arms around Shiloh, Raxius stroked his back. "We don't want to shock your Daddy."

For a moment I worried that the teasing would remind Shiloh of his fears but our boy played along, shaking his head. "No shocking Daddy."

Giggling, he whispered loudly to Raxius. "He's sweet, so we got to be careful."

Making a thinking sound, Raxius pretended to whisper back. "Aren't I sweet too? Should you be careful of me?"

There was no question about the naughty tone to Shiloh's happy sounds that would probably be called a snicker. "No, you're naughty too. Daddy's sweet and you're spicy."

Like foods?

Raxius rolled his eyes, getting more happy sounds and feelings from Shiloh. "I don't know what you mean. I'm very boring and grumpy. Everyone says so."

I wasn't sure Raxius was as funny as Shiloh thought he was but it was not my place to tell the happy little he was wrong. "Well, the grumpy, boring male needs to help us get your *stuff*."

On the other hand, I was as funny as Shiloh thought I was.

When he finally stopped laughing, he straightened and frowned. "I'm going to be serious so we can walk to my place."

Frowning at both of us just like Raxius usually did, he huffed. "I'm suspicious too. My place is just down the hall."

He'd finally noticed that?

"Earthlings were placed in a variety of locations." And moving my Earthling to make sure he was closer to me was just good caretaking. "You do not need to look serious if you don't want to."

Shaking his head, Shiloh squared his shoulders to look like Raxius. "I do. We're serious in public. That's what Klynn does. I saw it."

Saw what?

"There are not social norms for this kind of role here." Raxius ran one hand over Shiloh's head. "We will set the standard for how society deals with this. How should we proceed?"

Shiloh scrunched up his face and shrugged. "Dunno."

It took a moment for that word to become clear but I understood his visual cues faster. "Then this time we'll be serious in the hall and then next time we might change our mind. Wren made it very clear he can be boring when he wants to be. I heard him give that lecture in a very loud voice."

Someone had made the attempt at being helpful and telling him how he should behave.

I was smarter than that but not everyone was as intelligent as I was.

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Chapter 14

Raxius

I was starting to understand why he had guarded his rooms so closely. Our Earth mate had toys everywhere. From the kitchen to the bed, each surface had some kind of decoration or was being used for a project. He seemed to be painting in the kitchen, using the table for some kind of art with small sparkly gems, there was fabric on the couch, and the bed was covered in stuffed animals.

The people of Earth found predators to be highly worthy of cuddling.

"Wren helped me make my stuff fit." Shiloh started wandering from one project to the next. "I got to bring all my stuff. I had to, so he made it fit in one bag."

All the things he labeled as stuff or all his things?

"I got most of my cute clothes in my bag still. I ran out of room here." That seemed to be sad but unavoidable if I was reading the emotions and faint thoughts coming through the bond correctly. "Oh, and lots of my boring clothes and grown-up stuff are still there too."

Questions were piling up in my head but it seemed like Zorin was in worse shape judging by the few that had already escaped through the bond. He was doing his best to keep them in check, as they said in English, but he did not like it.

“You have many wonderful things.” And it seemed like he wanted to show them all off based on the way he kept gesturing to them as he wandered around. “What are these?”

Pointing to the table got a wide smile from our little Earth mate. “My diamonds, Master. I make pictures. They sparkle. I brought lots just in case I got stuck here.”

Ah.

It hadn’t occurred to any of us to send Toman through with every object he owned just in case, but maybe it was one of the differences we had grown to have?

Was it possibly a little versus big issue?

“What else did you bring lots of?” Everything seemed to be the answer as he bounced and dragged me over to the kitchen counter. “You have paints.”

They looked messy.

“You can use your fingers with this paint, but I got the brush kind and the water kind too.” Smiling and bouncing, he released my hand and ran over to drag his Daddy closer. “I’ll show you. I got lots. I can share.”

“You brought lots because you thought you would get stuck?” Zorin seemed to think that was the best place to start and I had to agree with him. I also approved of the gentle tone he asked the question in. “That must have been scary.”

Again, a good point but Shiloh shook his head as he held up a tiny clear container of red paint. “No. I just knew. It’s my job.”

His job?

“Look, Daddy.” His mind seemed to jump to another topic as soon as he put the paint down. “Look at what big me did.”

Was it supposed to sound like he was two different people?

“What did you do?” Willingly letting our mate change the topic must have been difficult for Zorin, but I knew Shiloh would not have been able to tell from the tone. “Is it naughty? I’m still watching for that. I think you’re going to shock me.”

No, but our mate would probably confuse him.

Laughter burst out of our little Earthling, but he shook his head as he thought the question was hilarious. “No, silly. That’s for big me to show Master.”

When?

Zorin scoffed. “I think you mean that big Shiloh will wait for his Master to run out of patience and look for it himself.”

That was so funny and so accurate Shiloh collapsed against Zorin as he giggled. “I…that’s…”

Whatever he was going to say was too difficult to get out, but it felt like he was agreeing if I was understanding the feelings coming through the bond correctly. Zorin realized that as well because he made the sigh sound. “Do you think we need a limit around personal possessions? If we do, that would mean your Master would have to ask you for permission to look at your *stuff*.”

Shiloh couldn’t seem to decide if that was funny or horrifying, but after a few seconds of silence, he shivered and whispered softly. “No, Daddy. We’re not gonna do that.”

Did he think I couldn’t hear him?

Was his volume some kind of language in itself like the nonverbal signals Zorin thought should be labeled as a language?

"Alright." Zorin kissed his head which seemed to signify the danger had passed based on Shiloh's relief. "Show me which toys you want us to bring back to my place…my quarters."

As Shiloh nodded and moved everyone to the bedroom, Zorin turned to me. "English has many words for the places where we live. What word should we use for these dwellings?"

The question got a happy sound from Shiloh, but he mostly ignored it as he started organizing his fuzzy predators in ways I didn't understand. By the time Zorin and I had debated the merits of words like home, apartment, dwelling, and condo, Shiloh had three predators, two puzzles, a handful of books, and an extensive amount of coloring tools.

I thought it looked like he was moving but the sight pleased Zorin…probably because to him it felt like Shiloh was moving as well.

"If we spread your *cute clothes* as you call them between my quarters and yours…that is a very good word…then you will not have to keep them stored." Zorin did not mind holding all the toys and actively seemed to be looking for ways to add to his pile. "I would like to see more of them."

Because another way they seemed to bond was by discussing the concept of *playing dress-up*.

We were not supposed to worry, though, because Shiloh had no desire to be a squirrel.

Wren was a very interesting Earthling.

"I'll show you." Shiloh started out excited but it quickly faded into some kind of concern. "Some stuff. We…we don't have to look at all my stuff."

He liked that word but it covered entirely too much without being specific enough.

"Shiloh?" Zorin did his best to use his voice to mirror Shiloh's concern. When our Earth mate simply wiggled and stared at the floor, Zorin decided not to continue to wait. "There is nothing you could show me that would upset me. I have started extensive research on the different submissive variations. There is very little I have seen in the category of age play that I would limit."

That may have helped Shiloh's worries but Zorin turned to me. "Did you know some littles enjoy objects in their rectums? They can find it soothing. I have seen it listed several times as a type of binkie or pacifier. I think objects like that might be something he would enjoy in all forms of submission."

Interesting.

"Do you think his wiggling is trying to show visual signals of a need for attention in that part of his body?" I was half serious and half teasing, but it had the effect of getting a squeak from our mate as he went very still. "See? The amount of his wiggles changes as he reacts, as well."

Zorin nodded, studying Shiloh. "Yes. He also uses those movements to tease us, which is probably a signal as well."

"*Daddy*." Shiloh squeaked out the title before hiding his face against Zorin's shoulder. "I…I got to get…"

Stuff.

He had to get more stuff.

I sent a questioning feeling through the bond to Zorin which had him shrugging as Shiloh scurried to the bedroom. We both waited patiently but were still confused when Shiloh came back with what I thought was another form of pacifier in his mouth.

The bright yellow object was clearly designed for his mouth and not his rectal muscles, but it took several seconds too long to understand why it was useful in the moment.

He did not have to talk if his mouth was plugged.

"Our mate is very smart." My dry response to his behavior got a giggle out of him that was muffled by the object he was sucking on. It also had the effect of making him feel less worried and possibly littler because the feelings coming through our bond had changed.

"He gives good hints about how he is feeling." Zorin walked over and kissed Shiloh's head again. "He's also going to start reminding me that you need food again soon."

Not with the pacifier in his mouth, but I let him change the subject. "He would be right."

And since Zorin seemed to have a strong need to be the mate who provided meals, I did not offer to feed myself. The one time I had tried to suggest it had gotten hurt feelings coming through the bond that I had not expected.

Shiloh seemed to think his needs were the most confusing or stressful, but he would have been wrong.

Very wrong.

"Do you think he needs a reminder that he wanted to be boring in the halls?" Zorin glanced between us, making Shiloh suck on his

pacifier even stronger.

“I think he has weighed the options and has decided this is the safer one.” He would do anything possible to keep from having to talk about the objects he wanted in his rectum.

I was going to need to look at his belongings in more detail.

“We should respect his choices and just move quickly through the hall.” Somehow Zorin had made sure Shiloh was close to us, which could not have been a coincidence. “It is late enough that most individuals will be at their meal.”

Thankfully there were no official events tonight but we would not be so lucky going forward.

“I agree.” Looking down, he shifted the pile in his arms. “Do you think he needs anything else?”

Was that a leading question or a simple one?

Unfortunately, either way it was a question I had been anticipating. “That depends on where you would like him to sleep tonight.”

I seemed to have been the only one who’d thought of that based on how still they both went. Ignoring that seemed to be my best option, so I continued. “You don’t seem to be getting enough sleep, and based on what you’ve said about research that could only be happening at night. Littles need their Daddy to be relaxed and well-rested.”

More odd stillness.

“At the very least you will need to establish a bedtime routine with him and he will need to be tucked in.” It seemed logical but I was glad when Zorin started to nod like he was processing the topic.

“That is reasonable but I do not have to talk about my schedule.” His tone started out even but shifted as he finished.

I didn’t like how it sounded.

The word bratty felt like it would apply, so I found myself raising one eyebrow and sending disapproval through the bond. “Excuse me?”

I had heard several of the Dominants from Earth use the expression and it got shivers from both my males. After a few seconds of confusing emotions coming through the bonds from both of them, Zorin shifted to show apology. “It is possible that I have been staying up too late. It is probably a mate’s job to mention that.”

A mate’s job.

Yes.

That was all it was.

Zorin performed the Earth behavior of burying his head in the sand very well.

“Thank you for letting me take care of you.” It seemed to be the most neutral yet technically appropriate response I could give since anything domination-related confused him. “I have strong needs to make sure you are both taken care of, and this is one way you can let me do that.”

Shiloh blinked before his gaze darted between us, but he continued to suck on his pacifier to keep from having to discuss topics he found stressful.

Our frustrating mate seemed confused and like reality was not showing clearly to him, but he refused to ask any questions. “That is reasonable.”

Was he going to add anything else?

No.

He was stubborn, but at least he was not arguing with me?

"Thank you." Moving us away from the confusing topic, I glanced toward our little Earth mate. "Littles should not sleep without supervision, especially with the number of distractions he has readily available. He should sleep with his Daddy."

I was not going to get between a little and their Daddy, no matter how much I wanted to cuddle with my little Earthling. "I think it would be best if you looked at his clothing options and found something appropriate to sleep in and something for him to wear in the morning."

And I was back to getting odd blinks from both of my mates.

It was a completely reasonable suggestion for several reasons, so I stayed quiet as they realized how correct their Master was.

Their Master.

But we could come back to that later after…at the moment we had a different shock to work through.

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Chapter 15

Shiloh

I was going to sleep with Daddy?

Sucking harder on my binkie, I watched Daddy and Master.

That was it.

I just watched.

Daddy was really-really-really thinky for seconds and seconds. “I have not forgotten your desire to caretake me into an approved sleep schedule. This seems to be devised to make sure we are both well-rested.”

Oh.

Daddy was smart.

Master needed to take care of us.

“You are highly intelligent.” Master was getting better at dealing with Daddy. “However, I must insist that our Earth mate must not be left on his own when he is in this headspace. As his Daddy, you should have what English calls *first dibs* on caretaking time when he is little.”

Daddy was quiet then cocked his head. Daddy liked doing Earth moves when he thought. It was like a fun new game that made him feel really smart too. He might’ve liked just being able to wiggle more too.

Daddy liked wiggles.

"You have been clear that we are all equals, so I must insist you stay with us overnight. It would not be equal to remove you from your mate." Daddy sounded like he forgot he was a mate too but Master didn't fuss at him. "My proposal is that you will sleep with us in some way as long as you do not have a limit around that activity."

It was Master's turn to be quiet and thinky. He didn't do the head thing but he sent me happies through the bond.

Did he send Daddy happies?

"I do not have a limit that would contradict your proposal." Master talked to Daddy like they were big business people. "Spending additional time with my mates is something I would enjoy."

Mates.

Was he reminding Daddy that he was a mate too?

Daddy just went still then did the agreement wiggle he showed me before. He wasn't a tiny wiggle person. Daddy was a *big* wiggle person because he had big thoughts and a big personality too. Wren said Daddy was a brat but that was okay because Wren was a brat too.

He was just a happy brat, so people forgot about the brat part.

Daddy was a thinky brat and that was harder to forget.

Oh.

They both looked at me.

Suck.

Suck.

Suck.

I pulled my shirt up so it covered my face.

No more Shiloh.

He was all gone.

Master sighed. “We will continue to make the decisions for him until the pacifier is no longer in his mouth.”

Oh, I liked that.

“That is a practical decision, but I cannot tell if it is a reward for him or some kind of logical consequence.” Daddy made a thinky sound to make sure I knew he was doing his smarts.

“Both.” Master sounded serious but his bond was still doing happy things. “We will take good care of him either way, though.”

‘Cause I was their mate.

Me.

Yep.

Hiding made me really-really smart too.

Daddy sighed. “I will look for the appropriate clothing for him. Will you keep him…safe? Still?”

Master’s bond let me feel his giggles but his voice was boring because he liked being that way. “Yes. He cannot wander around like this.”

Oh.

Ups.

Master picked me up and that made Daddy grumble. He pouted with his sounds ‘cause he wanted picked-up cuddles too but his words were about Master being ridiculous. I heard him go to my room but Master took me on a walk before we sat down.

The weird chair.

It looked mostly like ours but the back was low like someone chopped off the top. “Come here, little ostrich.”

Master made me giggle but I was still hiding when I curled around him and gave him snuggles. It made him bigger happy and he started rubbing my back. “You’ve been a very good boy. You showed us your toys and your important *stuff*. You even showed us when it got too hard to talk.”

I hid.

I hid my mouth and then my face but my mates weren’t mad. They didn’t even tell me I was silly and being a shy grown-up wrong.

Master gave me snuggles and kissed my head over my shirt. “You knew the best way to send us signals that we should make the decisions.”

They were my mates…that was their job and they knew it. Daddy liked knowing everyone’s jobs, so I patted Master’s chest. His bond made more happies and I got another kiss. “I’m glad you liked it when we made decisions, but I want to make sure you understand that’s not something I’m used to. Our people have…have strongly reinforced equality.”

That…that sounded hard.

What if someone like Master needed to be more?

Him being more didn't make me less…it made him my balance helper…when I went down he went up so the scales always balanced.

I made big thinky thoughts and tried to send Master proud-of-him stuff. He was working hard at new things and that could give him big feelings. Hugs. Hugs. Hugs. I wasn't sure it worked until Master made a soft sound and I got another kiss. "Thank you, little Earthling."

Yay. It worked.

Master gave me more cuddles and even made a tiny laugh as Daddy's voice got louder and grumbled about Earth clothing. "He's going to worry about helping you get ready later, but it's a Daddy's job to get you a bath and put your pajamas on."

There were lots of parts of me that had lots of thoughts…some giggled…some worried…some were naughty…some were curious… I had too many parts.

Think.

Think.

Think.

Our bond was still tiny-tiny, so I sent Master my question feeling and my giggly feeling.

"I won't pretend to understand all your thoughts on this, my little Earthling, but I'm going to start by reminding you that you have your finger safewords." Master waited. I knew what he wanted, so I put one up. "Good boy."

I was Master's good boy.

"We are both going to take care of you and let you play in the bathtub. We're going to cuddle you and either pretend we did not see your body or we will tell you how cute your body is." Master was serious but he made me giggle. "How cute…yes, that is the option we will pick."

Master was going to think I was cute, so I wiggled and felt his happies get big and naughty again. "Eventually you're going to be grown-up enough for us to have a conversation about wiggles."

I shook my head and sucked harder on my binkie.

Nope.

Nope.

Nope.

No talking.

He let out an Earth sigh. "Fine. I will pick a time where I use my hand to remind your bottom what happens to boys who wiggle on their Master's lap and then giggle through their mate bond."

His hand was going to talk to my bottom.

He was so funny.

"What are you doing that is making him project laughter?" Daddy's voice got loud. "Why is he still hiding if he finds you funny?"

"Because I was reminding him about his upcoming spanking." Whatever Daddy did made Master shrug. "It was necessary."

Daddy huffed. "That seems highly unlikely."

They were quiet for a long time until Master kissed my head again and then talked so quiet I had to listen hard. "Your Daddy is

worried about spankings, so we are going to show him how excited you are for them."

Master knew…I squeaked around my binkie.

He did more laughs through the bond. "You are about as subtle as your Daddy, little Earthling."

Master had funny mates but that was because the fates knew he had big emotions that needed two mates to give them to. He needed to cuddle me and spank me and help me be safe. He needed to grumble at Daddy and probably help Daddy remember to be a good boy too.

Daddy had been a brat when they first met and Master felt bad for wanting to be a Master and then it'd all gone wrong.

Huge wrong.

But they had me and it was going to be okay because they had to be nice to each other so they could take care of me. I could be a good helper to show Daddy he didn't have to be afraid to want a spanking and I could be a good helper to show Master he didn't have to be afraid of his big feelings.

Yes.

I'd show them.

They needed me.

I sent happies through the bond and pet Master's chest. It made him let out a deep breath and he rubbed my back again before patting my bottom. I giggled around my binkie and that got more happy feelings from Master.

"I think you are doing your best to tell me that I should make the decisions regarding…let us call them naked-mate topics and you will use your fingers to share your limits if we run into them." Master sighed when I giggled. "You are quiet but that does not have any correlation to the handful rating for submissives."

Nope…he was smart to figure that out too.

But…

I waved my hand toward the bedroom and that got a huff before Master did his quiet-quiet words. "And the individuals called switches."

Yep…I had a very smart Master.

And a smart Daddy, but he was a really good ostrich too because he worked hard at everything he did, even when he shouldn't.

"Eventually he is going to realize more than one label applies to him, correct?" Master needed help but all I could do was shrug.

Even without my binkie I wouldn't have known what to say. Words were hard but I sent him warm feelings through our bond and nuzzled against him. Master was doing his best to take care of Daddy but having a stubborn mate was hard.

Daddy was very stubborn.

"I would ask an expert for help but I do not know if your Daddy would appreciate that." Master liked lots of privacy but he didn't know what Daddy would want.

Master had good worries.

"Right now, the best course of action is to let him take care of you and then we will slowly ease him into the idea." Master wanted to

sound confident but his bond let me feel all his questions. “Yes. We will approach this as one change at a time.”

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Chapter 16

Zorin

Not-meatloaf and not-rice were both good meal options according to my mate's enthusiastic consumption and strange wording, but as soon as he finished, his binkie went right back in his mouth. The signal of his unwillingness to speak was obvious but Raxius was not worried. "Being stubborn is just a sign of his intelligence. I'm sure you appreciate that."

No.

I did not.

"Our mate is very smart." And adept at getting what he wanted through manipulation and stubbornness. I had an unreasonable desire to explain that was how I was supposed to behave but that was not something a Daddy could do. "He is also sticky."

Somehow the sauce the not-meatloaf had been cooked with had ended up everywhere, from his hands to his hair. Even when he was not using verbal signals, his nonverbal ones had caused a mess. Raxius looked like he wanted to sigh but simply let himself nod. "He is in need of a bath."

A bath.

Raxius said it very confidently and everything I could feel through our bond indicated he was not worried about that activity even though it involved nakedness and intimacy. "Do you know the

spell to make bubbles more…more structured? Wren has endlessly bragged about Toman's ability to make bathtime fun, and we must be equal to that if not better."

He was very competitive with my skills.

"Technically yes, but I have not used it lately." I read. I studied. I wrote. I did not make bubbles. "I may have to research the necessary spells for playtime and relaxation."

Raxius gave a shrug. "I'd have been shocked if you had. You've been very busy with other research and then planning the trip through the portal. That kind of magic is not something you need."

I rarely used magic outside of archival spells to keep the ancient writings safe.

Most people thought that was surprising and would give me long explanations about how someone who was primarily a mage needed to put more focus on magical studies.

"No." I studied our sticky mate who was back to hiding under his shirt. "This is a new experience, so more research is necessary."

"You are an expert at research and study." Raxius let out a very dramatic groan that made Shiloh giggle around his binkie. "I will have to figure out other ways to help our mate."

The mate in question was still hiding but reached over and patted Raxius' leg. It made laughter roll through our bond. "Yes. That's a very practical way I can help you."

What?

Oh.

Their spanking teasing.

“That’s going to wait for another time, though.” Something about Raxius’ tone got a giggle from our hiding mate. “Right now you need a bath. You are surprisingly dirty.”

Turning to focus on me, Raxius indicated confusion. “Did you know to expect this level of mess from this meal? I did not.”

Returning the show of confusion, I also shrugged in case Shiloh could see me. “No, but I am starting to wonder if I should have.”

Shiloh’s giggle said he was not worried about our mess discussion but it was not helpful in general. As I rose, Raxius studied our mate again. “I think we will have to work out a schedule where during little times, an evening meal is immediately followed by bathtime.”

“It seems logical.” Cleaning up the kitchen quickly was also logical, so Raxius helped me as Shiloh alternated between hiding and peeking out of his shirt.

Which was even dirtier by the time everything else was clean.

“I think there is some kind of dirt magic at play here.” My exaggerated thinking sound got more giggles from our little mate. “He may be doing this to himself.”

Shiloh hadn’t talked much about his own skills. He changed the topic every time it came up, sometimes in oddly obvious ways, so I did not know how strong of a mage he actually was. “I may need to look for a spell someone has placed on him.”

“Wren did it.” Raxius’ well-timed response had Shiloh laughing so hard his binkie fell out. “Oops.”

Raxius had quick reflexes from his physical work and caught it in midair as it fell from under Shiloh’s shirt. “Here we go.”

“That was remarkable.” Being nice meant he needed praise. “I think the English term is good catch.”

They played games with balls and it seemed like their sports words had seeped into their everyday language.

Shiloh thought that was funny as well but his sounds shifted into a squeak as Raxius picked him up again. “You are a very dirty little ostrich.”

The hiding bird that did not actually seem to hide, if I understood the explanation I had been given from Beatrice.

“That is not how you would carry an ostrich.” Shiloh thought I was funny as well and hid his dirty face against his Master’s neck as we walked to the bathroom. “You will need to be washed too if we are not careful.”

That should not have been funny.

Raxius seemed to understand the humor based on what I was feeling, though. “Your tub is not big enough for that.”

I still did not understand.

Before I could ask for clarification, Raxius turned to me and I could feel his focus through the bond. It was almost like he was forcing it to stretch. For a moment it was wide and strong, and his thoughts came through to me. *“You need to be confident about his nakedness. He fears upsetting his Daddy. Your feelings are important to him.”*

His body visibly strained from the effort but it was back to being a quiet, thin strand of a bond before I could do more than jolt from the shock. I had no idea how he had done it, so all I could do was

send approval through the bond and give him the human nod since Shiloh was still hiding.

Raxius swallowed hard then sent back through a warm feeling that was nearly as shocking as hearing him. “None of these units are built for three mates. We will need to consider practical things like tub-sizing when we decide where to live.”

Something had Shiloh snickering again but questioning feelings flickered through the bond. “I can easily travel to my work. Yours is the most difficult to move. What the Earthlings call our *home base* on this planet shall be your home.”

He made a groaning sound that delighted Shiloh as he set our boy down in the bathroom. “My home is not big enough for his toys and your books. I’ve heard rumors about those.”

That had Shiloh’s head popping out of his shirt as he looked between us. It took a moment to realize what he was curious about, however. “My books?”

Distracting him seemed like the best plan, so as Raxius moved to change the shower into a tub for Shiloh, I frowned. “I like books.”

The vague answer had him scrunching up his face and stomping over like a frustrated little dinosaur. Raxius was struggling not to laugh but I had to do what was called *playing dumb*. I did it well, though, because I had done it in the past without having an Earth word for it. “What?”

It seemed like people from both planets would eventually get frustrated and leave when someone appeared unintelligent about a topic. The language English just had wording to specifically describe the action.

They had words for everything because they stole them from others.

It seemed like dragons had possibly designed English.

Shiloh would not leave because he was frustrated, however. He was still set on keeping his binkie in place, but he poked me and made grunts while sending more curious feelings through the bond. I looked down at where his finger was and pretended to look excited. “Oh, you like my shirt. Thank you.”

His groan was adorably dramatic, but my favorite part was the way his arms flailed making him look even more like a grumpy dinosaur, as the Earthlings called all of the reptile-like species that had originally come from Earth.

It was obvious he was telling me very politely that I was wrong, so I frowned and gave him a thinking expression. “Are you trying to ask if you can borrow my shirt?”

Raxius had to have been doing his best not to send his humor through his bond with Shiloh, but I got a clear impression of how funny he thought we were. He moved so carefully since his goal was to be unobtrusive as he added a soap that would form bubbles that we were assured were necessary for Earth-style bathing.

“No?” Tilting my head to the side, I frowned again. “Oh, was this still about my books?”

As the tub started to fill, Shiloh bounced and nodded, completely ignoring everything else. “Well, even though I have set up these quarters very nicely, it is not technically what you would consider my home. I have just spent several weeks here waiting for your arrival.”

As Shiloh seemed to understand, having my possessions around was relaxing.

Giving him another thoughtful expression, I sighed. “Well, I did not know you would come but I was waiting for the people of Earth. I would have been even more excited if I had known you were coming.”

That got giggles and happy feelings coming through the bond but he quickly moved to look out the bathroom door before coming over to me again. So as I reached for his shirt, I started to speak again in the manner they called rambling. “At home I have what you would describe as a library which contains…magical copies of our ancient documents.”

Shiloh was too fascinated by our discussion to notice his Earth-style shirt coming off or my slight hesitation on the wording. “The originals are held in special archives to prevent them from decaying, but my copies are accurate.”

Stronger feelings of curiosity flooded through our bonds as I knelt down to remove his socks. “I have what you would call diaries. They were more common in our ancient past but we also have accounting records that can show much about what life was like.”

Balancing himself with his hands on my shoulders, Shiloh made an excited squeak as he sucked on his binkie. “There is one long-ago record of a household and the notes in the margins are all complaints about how much meat they were consuming.”

Shiloh thought that was hilarious, so I did my best to find stories he would enjoy. “I also have a diary from a young man that has nothing but complaints about how he was being made to keep a

diary. His mother seemed to have insisted and it is pages upon pages of the young dragon complaining."

It was at once the most interesting thing I'd ever read and the most boring.

As I reached for the button on his Earth pants, Shiloh giggled, so I continued the story. "There are only two or three lines in all of it that are not him repeating he is being forced to write. Those are grumpy demands for food because he could not get dinner until he had done his writing."

If diaries were still common, I could see my family having done something similar. "We don't know anything else about him or his family other than his age and that his mother was very bossy."

In some areas we had countless records that had been preserved and in others very little. It was beyond frustrating and inspired Earth-level emotions in me and others who researched and documented the archives.

That seemed like it would entertain Shiloh, though, so I did my best to sound frustrated as I removed his pants and underwear. "Can you imagine a thousand years from now and all anyone knows about you was that you had the mental strength to do nothing but complain?"

Shiloh blinked and then shook his head as he stepped out of his clothing.

Since he did not give any indication that he noticed he was naked, I ignored his lean body and thick penis, even though it looked curious. "We know two meals he wanted to eat and that he wasn't going to let her win. That was a line at the beginning of the diary."

Some individuals were very interesting.

Some penises were interesting as well, but luckily for me, Wren had explained the changes most dragon males had made to their bodies.

"Do you think she ever knew what he was doing?" Raxius frowned thoughtfully as he took Shiloh's hand and led our naked boy over to the tub. He must have received the same lecture because he did not react to Shiloh's body. "My mother would have checked and then would have been…disappointed I think is the English word."

Hmm.

"Mine would have walked away and not talked to me for days to show her disapproval." She had done that a lot when I pushed back against her requirements. "I don't know what I would have written, though."

As Shiloh stepped into the hot water and made a sound that seemed half giggle and half moan, Raxius shook his head and guided our submissive lower. "That is not a way we will caretake a child if we become parents."

Oh.

"Catch him." My words were fast but Raxius' hands were faster. He caught our mate right before he slipped backward and almost went under the water. "He. That."

His head.

He would have broken his head.

I somehow ended up on the floor beside the tub, heart beating faster than I'd ever experienced, even when the shelf had fallen on

me. Shiloh was now sitting, but he had come too close to harm. “How are these so dangerous? Did no one think to put safety spells on these quarters?”

Raxius blinked several times as his hand continued to grip Shiloh’s shoulder to steady him. “I…I do not know.”

A startled sound had been the only indication of imminent danger.

That was. He was. The tub.

Raxius ran his free hand over my head and down my back as he lowered himself to sit beside me. “I know. But he is fine. We were watching him closely and the tub is not deep. You noticed as soon as something went wrong.”

He took a deep breath I knew I was supposed to mirror, and as I did that, Shiloh reached out and stroked my cheek with one wet hand. His bond was giving me a confusing mix of emotions, so I focused on just showing him we were fine. “You startled me. Little dinosaurs aren’t supposed to do that.”

Ha.

I made him laugh.

My heart was still beating too fast, but I thought I was doing a good job of not showing that to my little mate. “Let’s see what… what I can do to keep you safe.”

As a child I’d been required to learn a spell to keep me from falling off ladders to reach the higher shelves in the archives, so I used that to keep Shiloh stationary in the tub. “There.”

He looked down at himself and tried to wiggle his lower body.

Nothing.

He tried again, and when his legs would not move and he could not fall backward, he scrunched up his face and pouted around his binkie.

“Your bottom is…stuck. Yes, that is the word. I will release the spell once you have played and are safely on…dry land. Yes. That is an English word that fits.” I had seen that one in a book, so it was the first to my mind even if it was not perfect. Shiloh was too distracted to worry about accuracy, though. “I will keep you safe.”

“He is fine.” Raxius tried to project calm as he smiled at Shiloh and released his hold on our now safe mate. “He is going to play and then we will get him…clean.”

His frown was surprising. “Is unsticky a word adults use in English or is that a little word that has been added due to Wren? It does not feel right but it is an option.”

“I…” I would have to think about that. “They…they use variations of words to…to indicate their type of submission. We…we will have to see if the different styles of English can be indicated somehow? Separated possibly?”

When Raxius sighed, I knew he was trying to distract Shiloh but it was still silly to watch. “What if we go to the Earth store Walmart and use the wrong English? I would indicate being little without meaning to. That would confuse the people of Earth.”

“Especially the Earth people of Walmart. Did you hear the stories Klynn told?” He was difficult, but he had done a good job of collecting stories that needed to be documented. “He met a vast array of people there.”

Shiloh's enthusiastic nod and his attempt at a wiggle was a physical expression of excitement, so I knew he wanted the stories as well. "Klynn met a costumed human who was what is called a mascot. It is different than Wren doing his *playing squirrel* activity."

Humans were odd but their stories would distract both my mates so we could get through this trying time.

Bathtubs were very dangerous.

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Chapter 17

Raxius

"He is hiding again." Zorin's head popped up from the other side of the bed as soon as he sensed I was awake. "Our mate pulled the covers over his head so I could not see him."

It was entirely too early to take either of them seriously, so I pushed up on one arm and looked at both my mates. "Well, part of him is speaking very loudly."

Our shy mate was erect and possibly embarrassed about that based on his squeak and the way his knees immediately lifted.

My frustrated mate sighed. "I was enjoying that. Why did you point it out? Now he will insist on sleeping with underwear going forward."

Why wouldn't I?

"To make him squirm and react." My answer had Zorin going still and blinking like a confused human at me. "I was also making sure he knew I was not shocked by his arousal response. It is perfectly normal for mates to wake up that way."

Every time I thought I was the one that did not understand mate behaviors they made me question that worry.

Zorin did not seem to be what English called *a morning person* because he frowned and looked further down my body. "Are you aroused?"

How was that a question I needed to answer?

My first thoughts were what English would call snarky, but I held them back because I knew there was a reason for the odd question. “Yes. Part of it is just the physical reaction a penis does on its own. However, I am enjoying Shiloh’s arousal and I am enjoying being in bed with my mates.”

It had been nicer than I was expecting, but pointing that out seemed rude.

“Shiloh is a strong submissive. If I decide to refuse underwear while he is sleeping so that we can enjoy his body in the morning, I do not think that is something he will safeword over.” We both watched his hands, causing him to shove them under his legs. “See?”

Our shy mate squeaked but made sure he did nothing that we could interpret as a safeword or stop signal.

“Oh.” Studying the long lump under the bedding, Zorin frowned again. “When do you think he would tolerate or appreciate my touch?”

His question had my slow brain finally coming fully awake and a flood of questions pushed through to fill my mind. How submissive was Zorin feeling? Did he know he was feeling submissive? Those seemed to be the most important questions, but neither of them were ones I could ask.

“Now.” Hoping that taking charge would help the situation and their strangely similar emotions, I sat up and rose from the bed. “Move closer to him. I am going to lie behind you.”

That had Zorin going oddly still but he knew his only options were to ask questions or obey, so he obeyed. Questioning me was harder than whatever he thought I was going to do, but I hadn’t

really figured out what he thought that was by the time I had lain down behind him.

More thought should have gone into this plan.

The only place for my free arm was to be draped over Zorin but it seemed like I fit behind him perfectly as our bodies lined up well. I wasn't sure what my frustrating mate was thinking because his bond was clamped down very tight, but Shiloh wasn't as careful with his.

Probably because he wanted to see what I would do next.

All I could do was appear confident to both of them, so I did my best to make sure neither of them heard stress in my tone or mental feelings. "His erection is still tenting the bedding, so he would like your touch."

That much should have been obvious to the overly intelligent worrier.

"But he hid." Zorin was doing his best to hide his own confusion behind ridiculous logic. "That needs to be respected."

"No, that needs to be acknowledged as a stress signal. In this case, he is nervous about something we don't understand." There were too many possibilities to start to guess. "If he was little, he would have been giggling by now or trying to find his pacifier, so this is probably adult worries."

Which were probably sexual in nature considering he was from Earth, but guessing would be inefficient and probably make the situation worse.

"How do you know?" Zorin was desperately searching for something to worry about, so I used what I knew of Shiloh's

reactions and subtly tightened my hold on Zorin. “How…how do you know?”

Had that actually worked?

Agent Murphy’s words about grounding Shiloh came back to me as I pressed my body closer to Zorin’s. “I think this is a Dom instinct combined with what I am feeling from my mates.”

Zorin performed the human pout. “Shiloh is hiding his emotions from me.”

How had I ended up with such dramatic mates?

“Because he is worried just as you are.” I was starting to understand why the fates had put me with my two mates.

They would have never worked without me.

“I don’t like being worried.” Zorin was sounding remarkably Earth-like, but I did my best to ignore it. “Now what?”

A strong part of me wanted to declare spankings for both of them, but I was not positive that was the correct response to their behavior.

“Now you tell me what you want from our nervous mate.” We needed somewhere to start. “What were you thinking when you looked at him? Before he hid.”

After would not be helpful.

“I wanted attention.” Zorin had settled on pouting but I was glad to hear his honesty.

“I think you would like physical attention.” So did our very still mate judging by his reactions. “I would like to see my mates together, so you are going to kiss our boy.”

Making that declaration in a firm voice that said there would be no questions, I eased the sheet down and held Zorin firmly. He shivered but I could not decipher his mix of arousal and worry. "I…"

"Kiss." Delivering the order sternly got physical reactions from both of them, but even Shiloh's wide eyes only showed worry, not fear. "Now."

Shiloh's mouth softened but Zorin immediately followed the order. He leaned down, brushing his lips over our mate's in a soft kiss. As he tried to straighten, I made a disapproving sound. "No. I want to see my mates together. Deeper. Show me how beautiful my mates are together."

I needed to practice the right wording for this kind of situation, but I had done well enough based on their moans and the way Zorin brought his lips back to Shiloh's. As he licked and nibbled, Shiloh whined and his body arched up to beg for attention.

Zorin's hand moved without thought, stroking Shiloh's chest before he realized what he was doing. When he jolted, I tried another way of communicating, whispering against Zorin's ear and making sure he could feel my lips. "No, be my good mate. Touch our boy. I want to see you with him."

Reminding both of them of that fact had needy sounds radiating from my mates and Zorin's hand finally started to move confidently. Rewarding both of them with a pulse of need through our bonds, I did what the people of Earth called *testing the waters* and rocked my hips forward to rub my erection against Zorin's ass.

There was a chance he would safeword or express some kind of displeasure since we had not talked about this behavior, but I made

sure to give him warm feelings of arousal as I showed him my desire. “That’s my good mate.”

Zorin seemed to like praise even more than Shiloh based on the shocked pleasure that was rushing through him, but his feelings could have been about several things. No matter what he liked best, the way he moaned into Shiloh’s mouth had our boy repeating the sound.

It signaled agreement from both of them, so I continued to rock against Zorin and did my best not to join their overthinking chaos. My mates needed help being together, so that was what I needed to focus on. Zorin required a Dominant mate to help give him confidence and permission to enjoy our other needy mate. Shiloh’s worries seemed to come from how much he wanted us and whatever he thought might upset us.

Nothing would upset us, but he would see that over time. For the moment, he just needed someone else to take charge and start the intimate touch neither of them knew how to request.

Dominant mates were more important than I had ever understood.

While we might be equal, they would not be able to join together without me…and they would end up driving each other crazy, as the Earthlings said.

“His wiggles are his way of begging for more from his mate… touch his nipples…he keeps pushing up his chest.” Shiloh was very good at using his body to explain his needs, the only problem was with our ability to read those signals.

He kept forgetting this was a new language for us and the translation spell only gave basic connections between movements

and explanations.

It seemed I'd guessed correctly based on his shocked gasp and the whine he let out as Zorin finally pinched one nipple through the thin shirt Zorin had picked out. "Did you hear that? He loved your touch."

Reminding both of them that they were desired seemed like a good idea, so I kept my tight hold on Zorin's chest but pushed higher levels of desire to Shiloh. "My little Earthling, you made Zorin so needy he woke up wanting you."

The Earthlings seemed to perform heated mate talk more naturally, but neither of mine complained that I was doing it wrong. Shiloh was too aroused to think about complaints and Zorin was too excited to be getting the attention he had been craving.

Their lack of logical thoughts was probably for the best, so I continued to stimulate them through our bonds and Zorin by grinding against him.

When the need they were radiating continued to grow, I eased the sheet down more and pulsed pleasure through the bond. "Let me see you touch his skin…can you feel how much our boy desires your touch?"

Had Shiloh opened up their bond again?

Well, now he had.

Zorin's entire body stiffened and he moaned before rocking between us. "Yes…he…"

Was finally showing his Daddy how much he wanted him.

Thank the fates.

I also thanked them for the boost to Zorin's confidence because feeling Shiloh's desire stopped his second-guessing…and possibly his brain. Zorin smoothly slid his hand under the bright red shirt Shiloh was wearing and they both radiated pleasure as their skin touched.

So did I, probably.

I had been serious about wanting to see them together, but it was possible I had downplayed that interest without realizing it. Wanting my mates to enjoy being together was reasonable, though. Logical, even.

Yes.

This was logical for mates.

"Lower, Z." Releasing his chest for the moment, I reached for his hand and moved it lower so he was caressing down Shiloh's stomach. "Can't you see how he's begging?"

Our Earth mate's hips were rocking up to hump his clothing and his nonverbal signals were doing the equivalent of shouting for Zorin's hand.

And our boy's hands were still stuffed under his legs to make sure we wouldn't take any accidental movements as a safeword.

Zorin's confidence lasted right up until he reached the soft sleeping shorts that matched Shiloh's shirt. It gave my worried mate too much stress, causing him to pull away from Shiloh's lips and push his head against my shoulder. "His… I…"

Needed his Dominant Mate.

"Yes." Doing my best to let Zorin especially feel how much I wanted to see them, I brushed my lips under his ear as I took his

hand again. The combination pushed through his worries and he let me slide his hand under Shiloh's clothing. "That's my good mate. Feel our boy. He's still hard for you."

Both of you…

The faint thoughts coming through the bond had me pulsing warmth and desire back through to Shiloh.

Show your Daddy how much you want him, little Earthling. He needs you.

I wasn't sure how much Shiloh actually got from me, but whatever he heard or felt had him spreading his legs wider and pushing his erection up into Zorin's hand. It caused them both to moan and Zorin instinctively started to jerk off our needy boy.

"That's right…I can feel how much he loves that." Praising Zorin seemed to please them both but I thought Shiloh's pleasure was fromthe way Zorin touched him as his emotions soared higher. "You're going to make him come…can you feel that? He's shaking and whining just for you."

For his Daddy…but I wasn't sure if Zorin knew that title could be used when Shiloh was not little. The number of conversations we needed to have grew at an alarming rate, but it did not seem like the time to distract either of them.

"I…please." Shiloh's silence finally broke as his body shook. "Please…that's…I…"

Needed to come.

Taking what I could sense of our boy's thoughts, I whispered to Zorin again. "Harder. Let me see you make him come."

That had them both shaking and their bodies both worked faster as they rocked their hips. Zorin's was going just as fast as Shiloh's but I wasn't sure he realized he was humping our boy. "His cock belongs to you. Make him come for me."

Oh.

That worked better than I thought.

Shiloh's erection was still mostly covered but I could feel his orgasm through the bond and I could see his body jerk and thrust his hips up as he cried out. He was beautiful, but whatever he sent Zorin through their bond seemed to push his Daddy into his own pleasure.

All I could do was hold them both and keep sending my desire through our bonds until they sagged into the bed and each other.

Their utter contentment lasted one long amazing moment…until they both started worrying again.

Great fates above.

"The person who starts to panic after such beautiful bonding will be punished and will not get to orgasm for days." The firmly delivered threat had both of them going still. "Do not forget I work with my hands, so the idea of crafting something to keep errant penises locked away will not be difficult."

Appropriate threats were not difficult either and mine got two immediate and slightly forced smiles. But while they were both overthinking my threat, they completely forgot what they'd originally planned to worry about. I was just glad to see I had understood the threats I had overheard and that they worked on my mates just as well.

I was a very good Master, and once they were secure in our bond, I was going to remind them of that on a regular basis.

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Chapter 18

Shiloh

"Someone needs to be reminded that constantly changing the schedule is rude." Daddy's frustration had me trying to decide if I could laugh or not.

"You are just upset because you think that should be your job." Master's voice was very even but I could feel his delight coming through the bond as we got to the conference room just a few minutes behind everyone else.

He liked poking Daddy but after our…well…our cuddling session he seemed to be enjoying it even more. But what he hadn't liked was the way Daddy kept dawdling. He'd made us late because of…reasons?

I still wasn't sure why he'd been dragging his feet so much but it could only be mate related and that meant it was going to be confusing.

Everything with bonding was more confusing than I'd expected.

I kept those thoughts to myself as Daddy huffed, though. "Because it is my job."

Did he just *think* that was his job because he was a drama queen brat of a switch who didn't understand that yet because of his society? Was it actually part of his job description? Just something he wanted to be true, so he'd told himself it too many times?

The brain could do amazing things…especially with our species.

I was kind of curious about how Master would respond, but before he could come up with a ridiculous response, we got to the meeting and they both went quiet.

Manners were very important…and so was listening to Agent Murphy when he got that look on his face.

It was stressful enough that I automatically stepped back between my mates and let them close the gap in front of me. But I listened carefully because he was never as angry as he looked. "Do not ask the old dragon if he sold his soul to the Devil or a demon or to the ancestors or anything else offensive."

Maybe he was as angry as he looked this time?

What were we doing?

Before I could figure that out, I heard Wren speak up. "Um. I need to be put at the back of the group."

His admission was actually really funny but I was too confused to laugh. I was definitely going to let Daddy be a pain in the butt and demand answers for any meeting changes going forward…and Master's quiet sigh said he would agree with me.

Toman glanced at his mate, looking very serious. "I think that is a good idea."

Whatever he got from Wren said they needed to move to the back of the group right now because they quickly shifted to come stand by us as the rest laughed.

It didn't give Agent Murphy confidence about their behavior, though, because his expression got more serious. "I will tattle to

Boyd, Talon, and the council on anyone who upsets the ancient dragon. Understand?"

Yes and no.

Whispering as quietly as I could, I poked Daddy's back and stepped closer. "Who are they talking about?"

Turning his head, I had to strain to hear his mostly mouthed words. "The dragon sitting in the corner is the oldest dragon on our planet. There are odd speculations anytime someone tries to confirm his age and lineage."

Well, that was weird…even for us.

Before I could ask more questions, Agent Murphy nodded. "Thank you."

There was no way they could behave, but he didn't have a choice and had to pretend to believe them. We'd run out of time because I could see the old man waving us over as I peeked around Master.

"And then I'll tell Kenzie you made an old man cry." Agent Murphy's well-delivered threat had shivers going through the group.

"That's cheating." Beatrice giggled, making her attempt at complaining completely unbelievable and got her a glare from Agent Murphy. "We'll behave."

Agent Murphy looked at her like she was insane if she thought he was going to believe her. "Let's go."

I'd have rather not because everyone in the room was watching us, but it seemed like I didn't have a choice because we all moved forward to follow Agent Murphy.

“He’s probably just curious and wants to meet the people of Earth.” Klynn was trying to be quiet and logical, but no one believed him. “From what I was told, he likes telling stories, so I think you will enjoy speaking with him.”

Hopefully?

Wait.

He had stories?

“We haven’t screwed up yet, so I’m sure it will be fine. Do we know if he’s been given English?” Agent Murphy sounded very confident as the older dragon nodded.

I’d have probably jumped, but our grumpy human just smiled politely and nodded his head in the tiniest of movements. “Hello, I’m Agent Murphy of Earth. It’s nice to meet you.”

“Murphy of Earth, I am Baldron and I have waited a long time to meet you. Greetings.” The older dragon didn’t sound as old as he looked but that might’ve been a species thing. I just didn’t know because I’d only met humans that…well, ancient. “Dragons and mages of Earth, welcome home.”

That was the moment I could feel the weight of everything hitting our group. Half sniffled and the other half took deep breaths to keep their emotions in check. All we needed was to start bawling in the middle of the meeting for them to think we were all insane. They just didn’t do that in public…or maybe anywhere.

The old dragon wasn’t worried about us, though, he had other things on his mind because he actually smiled.

With his mouth.

Naturally, like he was human.

What the fuck?

"Thank you." Hugh must've realized no one else was in the right headspace to respond because he stepped to the side of the group and walked up to the dragon. "This has been an amazing experience and we can't wait to go back and share it with our people."

Yeah, that'd been a good choice because he was the least likely of us to say something offensive or freeze up.

Maybe I could pass Hugh a note and ask him to get the old dragon to tell us stories?

"I am glad we have given you appropriate hospitality." The dragon paused before actually shrugging like he was brushing off not being able to find the right English word yet.

"Your people have been very gracious. It's been wonderful getting to know them." Hugh sounded polite but I could see faint surprise on his face as he responded for us. "We never thought we'd have this opportunity, so it's been amazing to learn about our history."

"I am eager to hear about your lives, but I must ask a question first." As the old man looked around, we all held our breath… because he frowned…really naturally. "Who is the one called Shiloh?"

Shit.

Shit.

Shit.

Me?

“Me.” I swallowed past the lump in my throat as I made myself wiggle through my mates and the rest of the crowd. I’d kept hoping I’d be left alone but it seemed like I was wrong and my mother had been right. “I’m Shiloh of Earth.”

Unfortunately.

“Welcome.” Baldron studied me for a moment like he could see inside me…it was creepy and impressive in equal parts, but I tried not to show it. I had a job to do and I wasn’t going to fuck it up. “I am told you are the historian of family lines.”

“Yes.” I stood straighter and tried to look confident. I couldn’t have done it without my mates both sending me support through the bond. “I’ve studied as much of the family lines as we have access to.”

It would never be enough, but I’d done my best.

“My family was tasked with keeping track of the family records from when we were first separated.” And I was the one who was going to fulfill that destiny. That was crazy but I didn’t show it. “Some lines were lost because they moved away from the gate early on. We don’t know what happened to them officially, but that doesn’t mean anything bad happened to them.”

There just hadn’t been a good way of keeping track of everyone in the beginning. They’d tried tracking spells but after a while it’d gotten too complicated.

“I might be able to help with that.” Agent Murphy’s interruption was a surprise but it probably shouldn’t have been. “The American government keeps track of every dragon or mage on the planet. I know it sounds intrusive but you guys create chaos everywhere you

go and we need to be one step ahead of you to keep the weather working right."

Oh.

Yeah, that was probably a good idea.

"Ugh. I should be pissed the government is tracking us all, but hell, I'd track us." Wren just couldn't help himself but his smile and wave at Baldron had the old dragon smiling again. "Oh, um, sorry."

Maybe?

"That is because the only families who allowed their children to go on the portal adventures were the most outgoing…the ones who had the drive to travel and explore and to create chaos as you said." Baldron's confident response shocked everyone…well, everyone but me. I'd already known that part but we never really spelled it out. "The lines who were quiet and thoughtful and simply wanted to stay home never crossed the portal."

"Shit. We're the genetic troublemakers." Wren's grumble had everyone trying not to laugh. "I can't wait to tell Pierce and my mother."

"Shiloh of Earth, did anyone of the line of Anoth come through the gate with you?" Baldron didn't let us distract him, though, and I could feel the weight of the question as his gaze settled back on me. "They were five dragonlings…four girls and one boy."

How did he know that?

"Yes." Taking a deep breath, I focused on the information he wanted and gave him a summary of what we knew…thankfully that information hadn't been lost. "The children all survived until adulthood and several of them moved away from the gate in the

next generations. Kaden of Earth is a direct descendant, and there are still two strong family lines on the other side of the gate by the portal but they couldn't come."

Ignoring the people on both sides of the gate that started buzzing, I looked around. "Kaden? One of the girls married a mage and they generally all married that way, so his immediate family sees themselves as just mages."

Kaden looked stunned stupid, but he managed to step closer to Baldron, who smiled even wider. "Emala's line, correct? She was always the most interested in magic."

How did he know that?

Hiding the shiver that raced through me, I nodded and tried my best to sound neutral. "Yes. Her line produced strong mages."

I ignored how that made everyone press their lips together, but it was Agent Murphy that broke first. "Is he related to Kenzie or Lorne?"

The way Wren started to choke was what almost broke me, and made me forget how stressful the whole situation was. "Both."

That didn't surprise anyone.

I expected Baldron to have more questions but he focused on Agent Murphy. It was obvious he wanted an answer, and it made Agent Murphy swallow hard. "They're all…interesting."

Wren was going to choke to death or end up being punished by his Daddy if he didn't get his reactions under control.

Baldron didn't mind our bad behavior, though, because he laughed.

He actually laughed like a human.

Agent Murphy pressed his lips together so he didn't stand there looking stupid, but Baldron didn't mind the shock he'd created. "She liked what you would call pranks. I think she would have enjoyed her descendants. Come let me see you better, Kaden of Earth."

Even Kaden seemed to understand how weird things were, but he obeyed the strangely ancient dragon. "My family passed down a story about how our first ancestor coming through the gate snuck out to come when she shouldn't have. I don't know the details. Those were lost over the years, but do you know the story?"

I did…but no one else alive on this planet should've…shit…there were only two people alive on *my* planet that knew it.

But Baldron knew it and nodded softly. "She had pulled a prank the night before leaving for the trip and was what you would call grounded. The story won't make sense at this point but she…I think describing it as spray painting would be accurate if my knowledge of English is correct. She was supposed to stay home and fix the mess she'd made."

From what her writings said, she'd never been able to decide if she regretted that decision or not.

"From everything I know she had a happy life." Kaden looked over at me, wanting to confirm what he'd been told. "Right?"

I nodded before I thought about it. "Yes. There were some struggles, but overall, they all had wonderful lives…traveling and having big families."

Baldron sighed as his pleased smile grew wider again. "I have waited a very long time to hear that."

I still wanted to know how…but I was starting to realize I knew how.

"I would like to talk to all of you, but first, I will ask to sit with Shiloh and Kaden for a time." Baldron's smile looked just like Lorne's when the naughty dragon knew he'd get exactly what he wanted. "Then I will answer questions about other families."

Oh, I had questions alright.

"My family has always done their best to remember their stories and it's time I pass that down to a new generation." Baldron somehow made that sound very rational but it looked like only a handful of people realized how weird it was.

The only problem was that I was one of them and I didn't know if I could ask about it or not. My family had been sworn to secrecy… I was pretty sure by the same person who'd allowed the old dragon to live forever…so did the old oath apply any longer or not?

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Chapter 19

Zorin

Something was wrong…or weird…or strange…or some other Earth word.

The stories were not upsetting, especially not to any little in the room. They had spent the morning alternating between begging for snacks and asking Baldron to tell them more about the children and the time before the portal closed.

Baldron knew more about that time period than anyone I had ever met and he knew more than anyone else on the planet because I was one of the leading experts.

"Should I wait until we are alone to ask questions or do you think this is private enough?" Raxius asked the question quietly as we stood by the food but I wasn't sure I knew the answer.

"I…" Pausing, I collected my thoughts and spoke lower as the people of Earth laughed in the corner. "We need more privacy, but I will tell you that you are not *going crazy*."

Quiet laughter came through the bond as Raxius indicated understanding. "That is mainly what I was looking to confirm."

His feelings of curiosity and confusion had been growing over the past hour. I appreciated knowing my mate was highly intelligent but I did not have enough answers for him. That was frustrating. My thoughts about Shiloh were also puzzling.

That was a good English word too.

"At what point can we ask Shiloh…questions?" My role was caretaking, so it seemed like Raxius should be the one to handle difficult issues. "Did you realize how vague he has been about his skills and role among the people of Earth?"

A frustrated emotion came through the bond, causing me to push back soothing ones. I could feel him responding to my help which had the benefit of relaxing me as well. Seeing my caretaking actions working was far more pleasurable than I had ever imagined they would be.

Mentally feeling like he had taken a deep breath, Raxius finally sent calmer feelings to me. "We are going to ask questions as soon as we leave here. From what I can feel, he is expecting that. We are not going to needlessly upset him, but we must know the answers to our questions as his mates and as his Dominants."

Yes. I could not do proper caretaking without sufficient information.

"I am going to adjust our schedules after this meeting." Quietly and discreetly. "Then we will be able to go back to my quarters without issue."

More laughter kinds of emotions came through our bond. "The humans call that hacking."

I performed the huff to entertain him. "The humans would be wrong. I am being helpful."

I may not know the spell for making bathtub blocks, but I was highly knowledgeable on topics such as device management. Mostly because they only needed low-level spells to alter it. That did not matter at the moment, though.

“He’s very excited.” Raxius sent soothing happiness through the bond, and based on the way Shiloh relaxed his stance and aimed a smile at his Master, Shiloh got the emotion as well. It pleased Raxius and caused him to project calm. “He likes the stories.”

“But he has been careful about what he has sent through the bond and even though ours is still new, I do not like how tight he has made it.” I hadn’t realized how much it had grown until he felt the need to lower it. “Am I reacting wrong?”

“There is no wrong with mates.” Raxius slowly shifted closer and brushed his hand over the base of my spine. “Sometimes he is going to cause us strong emotions and we will react in unexpected ways.”

I appreciated his manners but I found myself wanting a firmer touch or to be cuddled. Going back to bed to restart our day sounded like a very good idea, even though I couldn’t explain why. “I do not like *unexpected reactions*.”

I also did not appreciate his mental laughter.

“You are handling them very well, though.” He aimed something new and soothing through the bond, but I could not decide what it was in the moment. “You are also giving him support and being patient which I know he appreciates.”

The Earth groan would have been very appropriate as well as their pout, but I settled for a mental sigh. “I do not like being patient. Questions should be answered immediately. That is the only way to gain knowledge.”

Otherwise people hid information and made gathering it difficult.

Individuals on both sides of the gate were difficult.

“You are trying to make me react like a human and I refuse to participate in that behavior.” Raxius’ low, stern voice did not match the laughter in his head, which was distracting in confusing ways. “Behave and do not pout.”

No.

I liked pouting.

It was a highly underrated Earth behavior.

“If you can continue to behave until we can leave, that would be a behavior I could reward.” Raxius had decided to practice being a brat because he said that in quiet English before walking away. I did not even have a chance to attempt pouting at him or stomping my foot as I had seen the people of Earth do sometimes.

He was a brat.

How did that happen?

Shiloh and I were so nice, but Raxius…he was difficult.

He continued to be difficult by giving me looks and walking away every time I got close to him to demand information. That needed to be a rule. If I wanted information I should get it and we were going to discuss that when we got to our quarters.

His frustrating behavior was so strong Shiloh was even pressing his lips together and doing his best not to look at us.

Even Shiloh thought Raxius’ behavior was highly inappropriate.

“Will you bring back more pictures when you return?” Baldron paused as he studied Shiloh’s phone device before looking up at our mate. “You will return?”

Yes, that was the place to start.

"Yes." Shiloh's smile was shy but he glanced over at us confidently. "My mates are here but…but the plan is to go back and forth."

Since we were in agreement and Baldron used Earth-based movements easily, I nodded. "We will work out a schedule and a list of what we should bring back from Earth."

Raxius sighed as he walked to stand by me. "Like chicken nuggets and more books."

Agreed.

Baldron chuckled. "I look forward to trying them."

"Several…several of the children talked about liking bread and strawberry jam." Swallowing, Shiloh looked nervous as he offered the information. "I'll bring those next time so you can try them. The…first generation on Earth wrote diaries about what they were learning and feeling but children…well…they mostly wrote about food and random things."

The ancient dragon tried to look pleased but I could see something I thought was pain in his eyes. I'd just never seen the emotion firsthand. "I look forward to hearing anything you can tell me."

The room was emptying quickly but Shiloh still looked around and studied those around us. "I don't know how to respond to that."

Because of privacy?

Admittedly, I did not use many spells but I could do that for our nervous mate. "One moment."

Closing my eyes, I focused on the magic I rarely used and built the privacy spell that was sometimes used when studying sensitive

matters. “We now have privacy.”

Raxius sighed…again. “Unless you would like Zorin and me to stand outside the shield?”

Oh.

No.

That would be unacceptable.

Shiloh giggled quietly but quickly looked to Baldron and raised one eyebrow questioningly. The old dragon smiled. “Mates cannot have secrets.”

“Thank you.” Looking and feeling calmer, Shiloh settled on the floor with his legs crossed the way the people of Earth always seemed to sit. “Most of the physical diaries were lost about a hundred years after the portal closed but I can repeat what they said if you would like. Those haven’t been physically transcribed, so I don’t have any actual book to give you.”

What?

How?

Raxius went physically still and mentally quiet, but I wasn’t sure if we were both confused about the same things.

Baldron let out a long breath and nodded. “Not everything. I know that’s not reasonable but sections from anything you have would be appreciated.”

He was downplaying his response if I was understanding the situation correctly.

“I don’t mind.” Sitting straighter, Shiloh projected worry and confidence I realized meant he had made some kind of decision.

“You’re their father, after all.”

Oh.

Well, it seemed I was right but that was highly unexpected.

It wasn’t often I expected to be wrong but it seemed like this time I was wrong about expecting to be wrong.

Baldron blinked before slowly nodding. “It has been a very long time since I was able to acknowledge that.”

Because we weren’t supposed to use those spells.

Ever.

They were locked away in the vaults…or at least they were supposed to be.

I did not say that out loud or even through our bonds, but the ancient dragon smiled as he peeked up at me from his chair. “My family helped form the vaults, young professor.”

Looking at Shiloh, his smile shifted but I did not understand how someone could smile and look sad at the same time. “It seems while I was gifted my greatest desire, your family was gifted something harder.”

What?

What was harder?

No.

I was smart.

I’d studied the archives and the vault.

Oh.

No.

We didn't use *that one* either.

Who had been allowing people to use the forbidden spells?

"That one is not allowed." The words burst out before I could stop myself and both the ancient dragon and my mate winced. "You. That."

"Are we talking not allowed as in naughty or as in forbidden?" Raxius' gaze jumped from each of us to land back at me. "Shiloh looks guilty."

Our mate shrugged. "Well, when the seers say do this…you do this."

What had the seers actually said?

Oh.

"When do you have an accounting of a seer?" Yes. That was a much better starting point. "Do you actually remember everything you read? How was that spell used?"

We were not supposed to use any of the spells in the vault because we could not be trusted to use good sense with them.

"Spell?" Raxius did not like being confused and I could feel his frustration rising. "Someone break it down very simply."

Baldron nodded slowly, probably realizing my grumpy mate was barely holding back growls. "In our past, the seers were the only ones allowed to give permission to use the restricted spells."

"Because we have the self-control of drunk squirrels." Shiloh's response was accurate but did not paint a positive mental picture if I was understanding his references correctly. "But sometimes they're useful."

“When the seers disappeared, it was decided those spells needed to be locked away.” After a few slight difficulties proved they needed to be used under strict supervision.

Yes…drunk squirrels may be the right comparison.

Raxius performed rolling his eyes and sighed because he liked how he did those movements. “I thought those stories were tales to scare children. We have spells to stop aging and to change the mind?”

Yes.

We gave language to others…that was also changing the mind.

“Well, slow aging.” I had never realized I was seeing it in person…which was probably another of the forbidden spells. “And spells to cloud people’s memories.”

Baldron grinned.

Now I could understand why I had not questioned anything about the ancient dragon. But as I looked at Shiloh, his hands came up in a defensive posture. “I didn’t use that on you. We just don’t talk about it. Honest.”

That was good to know.

“What is it that you don’t talk about, my Earthling?” Raxius used a firm, low voice that made Shiloh want to squirm.

It took several moments for him to stop shifting and to control his mental pouts, but eventually Shiloh sighed. “Um, well, there were seers that were trapped with us. Nearly all that were left. So they made my family keepers of well…our lineage. They knew how much we would lose, so the first-born child of each generation was the one who kept track of our stories and the different lines.”

He made that sound so easy.

Raxius was even starting to relax.

No.

No.

No.

So I did the only logical act…I stomped my foot and politely explained there was a problem with the information being given.

"Ask him how that spell works." My word had Shiloh groaning and hunching over as he rubbed his face. "Ask him, Raxius. Ask him."

"This is going to be interesting if you're being tattled on, my Earthling." Raxius shook his head and crossed his arms over his chest. "The full truth this time or Zorin's head is going to explode like in one of those Earth shows Klynn was trying to explain."

I was not a tune that was crazy.

I was a worried Daddy and they were allowed to be anxious and tattle…Agent Murphy said so…just in more boring Earth wording.

My mates were very fortunate I was not boring.

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Chapter 20

Raxius

Zorin was very close to what the Earthlings called *pitching a fit*. His questionable behavior was not appropriate but it was also not as bad as it was going to get if I was reading his feelings correctly.

My highly intelligent mate was also highly frustrated at the moment.

Shiloh continued to groan as Baldron chuckled. He was not feeling bad about the chaos he may have created. Somehow. When Zorin was ready to do another round of his performance, Shiloh sighed and straightened. “Okay, what…well, what our mate wants me to explain is the basics of how the spell works.”

The appropriate English word was *duh*, but it was not polite, so I kept that to myself.

“Then let us start there.” It was very hard to be the only adult in difficult situations. “Because our very smart mate is also very upset.”

Shiloh couldn’t seem to decide if he wanted to perform more theatrics or pout, but he did his best to take a deep breath and do what the English-speaking people called *charging right in*. “Well, what he’s upset about is that the spell uses my own magic to fuel the…the task. Most of my innate magic is channeled into remembering anything I’m told or that I read about our history.”

How?

Just how?

As I stood there confused and shocked, Shiloh relaxed and continued. “I don’t understand how it works but doing the spell almost killed the mage who put it on my ancestor. The seers said it had to be done.”

Probably because the seers knew how hard it would be to keep regular records intact. It took our greatest mages to put the archives together to keep our information safe and they had been a people with only a handful of adults.

They may not have felt they had another choice.

Zorin was slightly calmer with the information out there between us, but he was not a happy Daddy or a relaxed mate. “They took his magic. Ask about that, Raxius.”

Reminding myself he was not deliberately being obnoxious, I sent soothing emotions through the bond as well as a warning to help curb his impulses. Something lowered his emotions and had him nodding but I wasn’t sure what he actually felt from me.

“Shiloh?” Keeping an even tone was harder than my mates seemed to understand because my little Earthling was trying to smile sweetly at me. “What does Zorin mean?”

Zorin needed to learn to tattle in longer sentences.

“Um, I think he wants to make sure you understand that the spell uses nearly all of my internal magic that we all have.” Shiloh paused as he stood up, feeling slightly anxious again and seemingly like he wanted to wiggle.

When he was standing, he kept glancing between us as he tried to explain the depth of the problem to me. “I…I don’t do regular

magic in any way because the…I guess you could call it the well of magic I can access is always nearly empty."

Great ancestors above.

"He would be given the bulk of the knowledge as a child when his body was still forming. Our minds are not built to hold the amount of information the spell would have forced it to contain over time." Zorin finally sounded reasonable, or at the very least not like he wanted to continue to shout orders at everyone. "And with the portal closed, it would have been even more difficult for his body to maintain the spell."

Attempting to look positive, Shiloh widened his eyes and bounced onto his toes and then rocked back on his heels. "Yeah, I've felt great lately but it took me entirely too long to realize the connection."

Tired.

Worn.

Single words flickered through the bond with Zorin but I don't think he knew he was doing it. I didn't get the full thought but it was enough to give me a clue about how difficult life would have been for Shiloh.

Which explained his shyness and how easily overwhelmed he was in stressful situations…as a child he would have been too tired and his mind too strained to participate in those kinds of events. Adding in the studying he must have done and that would've made things more difficult.

"I'm glad you are feeling better but I'm going to have additional questions on this later." Once I could think logically and get Zorin to

do the same. “Now, is there anything else important that you might have put off letting us know?”

Like anything else life-altering?

Our usually adorable mate blinked a few times before shaking his head. “No, I don’t think so.”

If the fates had a sense of humor he was going to tell us he was part alien, but like the ones in Beatrice’s stories she was still trying to hide from everyone. Klynn might have stories about romance and mate relationships, but I heard she had stories about aliens and things called tentacle monsters.

Earthlings were odd.

But they had access to interesting information.

“Then we will organize our thoughts and come back to this discussion later.” I thought it was well worded but Baldron laughed.

When Shiloh showed confusion, the ancient dragon shook his head. “Your mates are very unhappy with you, Shiloh of Earth.”

Shiloh sighed before putting on his stubborn expression. “I’m going to pretend Raxius is as relaxed as he sounds.”

“I think the English term good luck applies here.” Still looking pleased, Baldron relaxed in his chair and let out a long breath. “I have also had good luck.”

No, he had *fucked with fate,* as the people who spoke English would say. They might not take that literally but we did, and Baldron was in for difficulties when he finally passed to the ancestors and had to do an accounting of what he had done with everything he had been given.

“Can…” Shiloh paused before wiggling to show nerves. “Can I ask if your people were like you…smiling and laughing? Everyone is…very different.”

His smile fading, Baldron nodded slowly. “Yes, we were a lot like the other people of Earth but after we lost our children, everything changed. The one thing we did not understand was how closely our emotion and our magic are tied together. We…I think the best way to say it would be that our inner feelings became our outer expressions.”

“Until it switched and the only place people could smile was internally with their mates.” Shiloh let out another deep breath to steady his emotions as he finished the explanation, and Baldron nodded. “Why didn’t you change?”

I think we all wanted to know that but it took Shiloh to ask.

Baldron swallowed hard and took a moment to answer. “Because my children loved to laugh and I used that to hold on to the hope that I would see them again.”

“And when the hope started to fade, you went to the seers.” Shiloh closed his eyes and steadied his emotions before opening them. “Are there any seers left here?”

That was another good question.

Baldron’s frown said he did not know before the words came out. “Possibly? At the time, the last of their children were on the other side of the portal and I do not know if they had any others later. They were…even more devastated than us because it was completely unexpected.”

That would have been heartbreaking.

“No.” Shiloh’s response brought all our thoughts to a stop. “Ulin knew but he was too young to understand what he had seen. From what he wrote later in life, his mother told him it was a dream because the seers don’t come into their powers until puberty.”

“He was so young.” Baldron closed his eyes and let out his first truly unsteady breath. “His mother…she never said but her life…”

Going silent, he took a moment before opening his eyes and forcing a smile. “He must have been an incredibly strong seer.”

Nodding, Shiloh looked as unsteady as Baldron, so I stepped closer and pressed my chest against his back. His breathing was still shaky but I could feel warmth coming through the bond. “He was the strongest seer of his generation, possibly more, but we don’t have those records to compare.”

“Because none of what you would call the librarians had gone through the gate.” Zorin looked steady and had stopped his outward anger but his emotions felt like they were tainted by shock. “I…I can help you organize that information when you are ready.”

My mates needed…something.

“We will work out a plan for that information later.” Pulsing warmth and positive feelings through the bond, I decided that as Master it was my job to bring the conversation to a stop.

Turning to Baldron, I showed respect as I took my mates’ hands. “Is there any other information you need at this time?”

He had been waiting a very long time to hear about his children, so I knew we couldn’t judge him if he was not ready for Shiloh to leave yet. Thankfully, he shook his head. “This was…this was more than I expected.”

"I'll pick out some of their diary entries and write them down for you, but…" Shiloh's voice trailed off as he smiled. "I'll warn you. Your littlest one…he only talked about food and girls in everything we tracked. So I'm going to be careful with his. I hope you're going to like hearing about his wife's bread recipe and the fruits they got from trading with some of the native people."

Baldron was still laughing as we took our leave and finally left the nearly empty conference room. Whatever spell kept people from noticing how odd his behavior was still worked because as we left, his caretaker was fussing over him like it was a perfectly normal council meeting.

Shiloh glanced back at the doorway as we left but kept his voice low. "That's weird. I'm glad that isn't part of my job."

His job?

He thought having his magic taken by force was his job?

Trying to sort through how he saw it, I nodded slowly. "He chose a difficult path."

I do not know what I would have done in his situation.

Zorin opened his mouth and closed it without any words coming out. It was the first time I had seen him like this and I didn't know what to say to make it better. Between us, he was the one who truly understood what had been done to Shiloh and it was eating away at the caretaker inside him.

Squeezing his hand, I tried to give him support and a moment to process how he was feeling, so I focused on Shiloh again. "I think you have been holding back on giving us good stories."

He looked over and blinked at me several times, but after a moment a smile showed on his lips and I could feel happier emotions in him. “Noo…that would make me naughty.”

“I agree, which is why I need to think about your behavior.” Narrowing my gaze at him as we walked earned me a naughty giggle. “Zorin especially loves stories and you have been hiding the best from him.”

Shiloh leaned closer to hide his face against my shoulder, but he was still laughing quietly as I slowed our walk. “Sorry, Master.”

Making a hum that was supposed to make me sound skeptical, I shook my head as we turned down our hallway. “I don’t know if that is going to be enough.”

Zorin still did not feel steady to me, but he was ready to play along as well because he sighed dramatically. “I could have been getting bedtime stories. Daddies love those and he hid them from me.”

His logic was always questionable, even when he was teasing.

“I think we’re going to need to come up with consequences for our naughty boy.” He was also our giggly boy but we had to behave as others passed us in the hall and studied our silly mate with wide-eyed confusion.

As we finally made it to Zorin’s quarters, Shiloh was smiling in what they called an ear-to-ear grin. “I don’t think people here are ever going to get used to seeing the aliens laughing.”

“Probably not but at least they seem to enjoy watching you?” I was not going to pretend it would be an easy flight to reach that point, but the trip should be interesting. “I have also been contacted

by people from my…village is probably the best English word…but they would like to know when they can come meet your people."

"Oh." Blinking oddly, Shiloh did not realize we were approaching our room until we stopped because he looked around and radiated confusion. "I hadn't thought about that."

How?

"You do not have to meet anyone." Our boy's worries immediately pushed Zorin into Daddy mode as Wren had called it. "You are doing a very good job of explaining Earth and the country of America you call your United States and that is enough."

Agreed.

"But I'm supposed to help the families and…well…I don't know what I'm supposed to do, but I can do it." Shiloh's earnest need to fulfill his duties pushed back his fear. "I'll be fine."

That was debatable.

Zorin looked like he was going to immediately rush to insist Shiloh did not have to do anything he was uncomfortable with, but that was not reasonable. Our mate had a great responsibility that had been placed on him and had to be handled carefully.

So before our worried caretaker could do his reassurances, I spoke and attempted to sound like my suggestion was perfectly rational. "Then we will come up with a plan that is manageable for you. One of us will always be with you and we will help with the organization as well. Zorin loves telling people what to do and managing schedules."

"And information. Don't forget that." Zorin's serious response was funnier than he seemed to understand. Shiloh's giggles had him

frowning and glancing back to me. “I am the perfect mate to help him organize what information needs to be provided.”

He was somehow correct and hilarious…and frustrating.

“You are.” He was also the perfect mate when it came to distracting our shy worrier. “But now we need to make sure he gives us appropriate attention and has consequences for his behavior.”

Thankfully, Zorin was able to switch back to our play topic and frowned exaggeratedly. “I did not get stories. He has stories from the original time after the gate closed. He had funny stories and I was not the first to get them.”

The pout was what seemed to have Shiloh fighting to keep what he called a straight face. Giggles were coming through the bond but he was doing his best to look serious as I let us into Zorin’s quarters. “You’re…you’re right, Daddy. I’m sorry.”

His expression needed work to be believable but the cheek kiss he gave Zorin started weakening our frustrated mate. “Well, I—”

“Have not gotten nearly enough of an apology. I know.” Shaking my head, I tried to look sad about the situation as we went inside and I engaged the privacy screen. “Let us go sit down and see how we will handle it.”

Both of my mates needed distractions and to reinforce our bond. Shiloh needed reassurance that nothing had changed and Zorin needed to see that our mate had a great destiny but that the weight was not too much to bear.

So it was time for cuddles, attention, and Shiloh’s first spanking as a mate.

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Chapter 21

Shiloh

Oh.

I.

Well, I probably should've told them a few stories just to be nice…they were my mates and Daddy would love to hear about the cake catastrophe.

Oh, Master would love hearing about the mage who wanted to build houses. He'd love hearing how the shortcuts always caused problems. Master didn't like shortcuts…Daddy said so.

And I…I'd like telling them the toy stories and about the naughty dragons. Even if the people here liked to pretend they were good, we'd always made terrible decisions.

"I…" Master distracted me by leading us into Daddy's bedroom. "I'll make up for it. Yes. I'll tell you stories."

I had lots and they were all filed in my head like a big mental library.

"I know you will, but we need to figure out consequences for not entertaining your mates." Master said it so logically I nodded without thinking about it.

Daddy sighed again but our bond was going between worries and happies and being very curious. "I can't believe I haven't gotten

stories."

That was half true and half silly because Daddy liked knowing stuff.

He also liked attention lots and lots, and I gave other people better attention.

Oops.

I had to fix it, so I went think-think-think like Pooh Bear as Daddy sat me down and took off my shoes.

Think-think-think.

Think-think-think.

"Who or what is a Pooh?" Master looked down at Daddy who thought that was a silly question.

"He is an important cultural icon to children and littles." Daddy thought Master should've already known that because he gave Master *the look*. "He is very nice but makes poor choices as a teaching tool for those still learning about good behavior. The people who live closest to the gate have several fictional males who make highly questionable decisions so that others can learn from them."

Master frowned as he took off his shoes and sat down on the bed. "I guess some people do not learn just by seeing facts in everyday use."

Master looked at Daddy, but Daddy just nodded.

Yep.

Daddy needed a Pooh Bear too.

"Then Shiloh will have to show us Pooh when we go back to visit Earth." Master said it like that was just what we were gonna do.

Daddy nodded as he took off my socks. “Have you thought about what you would like to see?”

As he helped me stand up, he gave Master his thinking face. “What Earth or American things would you like to see? I am interested in their bookstores but may have to settle for what they call audiobooks.”

Oh.

Words.

Daddy liked seeing the words.

“Once we bring back more reading materials for the mages to analyze, they can use those to adapt the spell so visual English can be processed as well.” Master’s confidence made Daddy less worried. “Besides, audiobooks will allow us to listen with you. That will provide family time.”

“That does seem to be very important to the people around the gate.” Daddy hummed and I could hear his brain go faster and faster. “Even families without a little will play games together. I heard it described.”

Hmm.

“Some people like games.” Did other people do that or was it just Americans? “I like games even when I’m big.”

Hmm.

“I’m big now. I thought…I thought I should tell you.” I was mostly big so that counted. “I like lots of games. I’ll pick some out and bring them back.”

I was going to tell them all about games but Master picked me up when Daddy sat down. He put me on their laps with my bottom on him and my legs on Daddy's. My squeak made them both have happy thoughts but their happies were kind of naughty, so I gave them cute cheek kisses.

Daddy liked his kiss but Master frowned at Daddy. "I don't think that was nearly good enough attention, do you?"

Yes, Daddy did, but Master was naughty and made him sigh. "Probably not, but it was a reasonable start?"

Shrugging, Daddy sighed. He did that good. "I don't know."

I knew.

I made my eyes big and tried to look like Lorne when he'd been really naughty. Then I gave them both nice lip kisses to show them I was a big boy.

A grown-up.

Yes, I was a grown-up.

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you stories, Daddy." He was having big happy feelings but he tried to look serious. He wanted more kisses and he wanted to make Master happy too. "You and Master are the most important and you get stories first."

I could do that.

He was going to help me with all the busy thoughts too.

"That's a good start." Master made thinking sounds before Daddy could tell me that I was his good boy.

Master was fast when he was being sneaky.

“I’m your good boy, Master.” Yes. I was very good. Most of the time. “I’m gonna give you big cuddles.”

He’d said he needed attention, so I wrapped my arms around his neck and gave him big snuggles. I rubbed my legs over Daddy’s lap to make sure he got attention too and all that ‘tention made them wiggle too.

Ha.

They groaned.

Master’s was inside and Daddy’s was outside, but I made them both grown-up happy. But I had to look sweet while I did it because that made it even funnier. So I petted Master’s chest and gave him sweet sounds. “I like cuddling with you and Daddy.”

Daddy kept going back and forth between thinking I was cute and innocent and then wondering about naughty things. I wasn’t sure if Master could hear them too but he wanted to spank my bottom so his brain was kinda busy.

“If you let our naughty boy manipulate you, I’m going to start thinking you need consequences too.” Master used his Dom voice and it made Daddy jump. “He needs to learn from his actions and the best way to do that is with firm responses.”

Firm responses on my bottom.

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Master was going to spank me…and might spank Daddy if he was too nice.

Daddy wasn't so sure about that because he went still and then huffed. "I don't know what you're talking about. He clearly needs consequences."

Yep…right on my bottom.

"I'm glad we agree." They agreed so much Master picked me up and set me between them on the bed. "He needs this."

Lots.

For big reasons and little ones.

"Some lessons are difficult to learn." Daddy felt like he took a big breath inside but he looked calm outside. "This will help."

Daddy had lots of different stuff in his head but he reached for my pants as Master helped me get on my knees. Master nodded seriously but his inside feelings were naughty. His outside face might've made me worry but not his inside.

I was really glad I had mates and not just boyfriends like on Earth because now I couldn't worry like before. Frowny outside didn't mean frowny inside. I couldn't tell when I'd tried to date before so that'd made me worry. This time I couldn't worry and that gave me new stuff to worry about when Daddy pushed my undies down.

My penis was happy too.

He just got excited. He didn't know how to play pretend and just showed them how excited he was. Big. He was big excited. Daddy pretended not to notice but Master looked at my naughty penis and raised one eyebrow. "Naughty boy."

Me.

I was his naughty boy.

“Sorry, Master.” Kinda because I had to pretend. “I’ll be your good boy.”

He sighed and shook his head. “We need to discuss what that word means.”

He’d like that but he was going to do it later because he put me over his lap. I squeaked but Daddy patted my bottom as he pulled my pants off. “This is important. You’ll be okay.”

Aww.

Daddy was so sweet.

Master was naughty because he spanked my bottom and got big happy feelings when I moaned. He made my bones go all squiggly except for my naughty one and I melted over his lap. Daddy even chuckled and fixed my legs so they were over his lap again. “I think he’s going to need more to make sure his behavior is impacted.”

Impacted.

Daddy was funny, and he was right because Master spanked me again and made it all even better.

Manners got better.

Happies got better.

My penis got better.

My bond even got better because I thought about Daddy and then I knew I could show him how amazing my spankings felt.

So I was a good sharer, and every time Master spanked my bottom, I shared with Daddy.

He was so happy for the new information he gasped and wiggled. “Oh. He.”

Master was distracted because he had to give me more spanks before he realized why Daddy kept moaning and jerking. “Is there a problem?”

No, but there was a situation.

A warm, squirmy, happy situation.

He was such a good Master. I got more spanks and once I was warm and tingly and floaty, he started rubbing my bottom. “I think our mate has almost learned his lesson.”

Maybe?

As long as almost got me a few more.

“He…that…” Daddy was making big breaths and squeaked. “He is…sharing.”

Yep.

“I’m…I’m a good helper.” Yes. I was their good boy. “Daddy likes…he likes…good helpers.”

I’d have been a better sharer if Master spanked me more or less or something, but my brain was fuzzy and my bottom hurt just right.

“My smart boy.” Master felt lots of happies and gave me another spank right in the middle of my bottom. It made me empty and wiggly, so he knew he had to do it again. “You’re a good helper for your Daddy.”

Yes.

I.

I was a good helper…and a good sharer because I made sure Daddy felt how wonderful special bottom spankings were.

"I…" I wiggled over them and rubbed my penis over Master's lap. It felt so good Daddy moaned too. "I'm your good boy, Master. Daddy. I'm good…I'll…I'll 'member."

I could do it.

Yes.

I'd be their good boy.

I'd share and talk and hide just with them.

So I hid my face against the bed and showed all my big feelings to Daddy, so he'd feel the story too. I had to share stuff with Daddy because I promised. So I shared and shared and shared until I had to share my explosion too.

Boom.

Spankings were…yes…they were so…being happy was hard work…

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Chapter 22

Zorin

"He…that…" Getting the words to form was hard enough, but verbalizing them was even harder. "He is…sharing."

I had to make sure Raxius knew what his naughty boy was doing and I wasn't sure what I was actually sending through the bond and what was just stuck in my shocked mind.

Shiloh was being spanked…and he loved it.

"I'm…I'm a good helper." He was remarkably clear even as he moaned and rocked his body over us. "Daddy likes…he likes…good helpers."

This counted as being a good helper?

"My smart boy." Raxius sent a bolt of pleasure through the bond causing both of them to overwhelm me. His focus was on Shiloh, though, because he gave a faint Earth-style smile and spanked right over Shiloh's anus. "You're a good helper for your Daddy."

The pleasure was somehow like fire and I gasped as my eyes would no longer stay open.

They really did not understand what that word meant.

"I…" Shiloh moaned and thrust against Raxius' lap as his legs rubbed against my erection. The combination of sensations was incredible. I was being pleasured inside and out and I couldn't hold

back the moans he pulled from me. “I’m your good boy, Master. Daddy. I’m good…I’ll…I’ll ‘member.”

This…this could not be good boy behavior.

And once I was done analyzing it carefully I would explain that fact.

The heat and sharp pleasure he flooded through me was incredible but feeling his orgasm finally explode through him was like nothing I’d ever imagined. My penis was completely untouched yet I could feel it thrusting against Raxius as his hand came down one more time on Shiloh’s opening…my opening…it was too confusing.

And too amazing to hold back my own pleasure.

The world went fuzzy as Shiloh finally stilled and I could feel his mind fade as the bond between us relaxed again.

He was asleep.

Before I could wonder what had happened and how he had actually made me orgasm, our mate was out and Raxius made a low hum from beside me. “May I touch your head? I do not know your limits.”

Limits.

Did I know them?

“I…I don’t know them.” Explaining that made me a good mate in some way, but I knew I had not given him enough information. “Yes.”

Ha.

That was information.

Something made Raxius happy because laughter came through the bond as he ran his hand over my head. “That was unexpected. How are you feeling?”

“Confused.” It was a good start. “He…that was…I did not know that was possible.”

Had Raxius?

Looking at my confusing mate took more energy than I possessed at the moment, but leaning into his touch was a reasonable compromise. It seemed to have the benefit of pleasing him as well and his fingers pressed against my head as he rubbed me. “Our people lost their ability to explore pleasure along with many other things.”

Was that the problem?

My brain wanted to take the problem and work through it, but it was as tired as the rest of me. “Shiloh is going to teach us to explore many things.”

Raxius laughed out loud that time. It was quiet but had Shiloh shifting on our laps. That was enough to make my eyes open without thinking about it, but he was still napping and barely radiating contentment through the bond.

Dropping his voice lower, Raxius moved his hand away and I found myself whining before I realized what I’d done. It made Raxius laugh quietly again as he scooped up our exhausted mate and deposited him on the other side of the bed.

I did not like that plan but Raxius was not taking my human expressions seriously. He actually smiled as he lay back on the bed. “Come here, brat.”

Me?

I was not a brat.

Oh.

As he opened his arms, I curled into him and found my head resting in the curve of his shoulder and torso. “I am not a brat.”

His laughter would get annoying at some point.

“You are the definition of a brat but it seems like the fates thought I needed that in my life.” Raxius sounded surprisingly pleased by that admission as he wrapped his arms around me. “How are you feeling? I know you didn’t expect to get his pleasure like that.”

No, I had not.

We would come back to that brat topic later, though.

“He shared the feeling of being spanked too.” It seemed important to make sure Raxius knew that. “He enjoyed it.”

Yes. That was also important knowledge to pass on.

Raxius made a pleased humming sound and went back to rubbing my head with one hand. “I’m glad he did. But I’m thinking about you right now because you are also my mate and equally important.”

Well, technically.

“But Shiloh—” A stern spank-like feeling came through the bond, stopping me mid-thought.

He was definitely the brat.

"You are my mate." His firm tone had me deciding to stay quiet and not qualify his words. "You are important to me and you just had a very new experience. That means I am allowed to provide you with additional caretaking."

How could he be correct and frustrating at the same time?

"You are my mate and had a new experience as well. I should be taking care of you." But how? "You spanked Shiloh for the first time. That is very new for you."

I could not do that to either of them, but we were all unique so that was understandable.

"So I need to ask how you are feeling." That was very important because Dominants had strong emotions as well. "You may not have remembered you could safeword too."

Just because I remembered didn't mean he had.

Raxius felt the need to sigh and show drama but he knew I was right and that came through the bond as well. "I was worried at first but seeing how you both reacted to the spanking made me very happy."

What version of happy was he using?

Laughter came through the bond so strongly I finally realized how wide open it was.

"I'm using both versions, brat."

I was not a brat.

"It aroused you? Shiloh uses happy in a variety of ways depending on his headspace."

Headspace.

That was an interesting word too.

"Yes, seeing both of your pleasures and feeling some of it made it arousing as well as it gave me a strong positive feeling of domination. I do not know a better word for that feeling. It is probably similar to how you feel when you are Shiloh's Daddy and taking care of him."

I wasn't sure about that but I could say I was glad they were compatible mates.

"Feeling some of it? Did you get the full sensations he was experiencing?"

Raxius shook his head.

"No, I just got what I would call echoes of the feelings. He was sharing that just with you."

Why had he thought to do that?

My question must've been louder than I expected based on the laughter he sent through the bond. I would work on that later after my head had cleared, though. At the moment it was fuzzy and I was using most of my effort just giving Raxius logical sentences.

"Because you are very curious, you love learning new things, he did not want you to worry, and I think part of it is because he thought you would like the sensation."

Raxius answered the question entirely too honestly.

"There is nothing wrong with gaining information about new topics."

He knew I was correct and sent agreement through the bond.

"There is also nothing wrong with wanting to feel your mate take care of you in new ways."

His tone made me want to behave like Klynn when he was at his most frustrating. But I would not behave that way when he was technically correct.

"I am not little."

I wanted to take care of my little, not be little with him.

"I didn't think you were."

Soothing feelings came through the bond, making me want to relax but I could not do that yet.

"But I do think it would make you feel good to be able to let your mate take care of you sometimes. It might feel…relaxing to know you didn't have to make all the decisions and to feel that help in a clear way."

Clearly on my bottom as Shiloh would say.

"I let you take care of me several times."

He needed that but it was hard to remember. I would practice until I found additional ways he could take care of me. Pointing out the obvious ones made sense first, so I was helpful and explained them.

"We're performing cuddling. That is a form of caretaking you are providing."

This was still about me, though.

"I should be giving you additional caretaking."

Yes. That would be much better.

"Oh no, you aren't going to change the topic yet."

Raxius sounded entirely too stern for my liking.

"There are many important things we should discuss."

I just wasn't sure what they were at the moment.

"We're going to finish the current topic first, brat."

I was not a brat and he needed to learn the definition of that word better. It was clear the translation spell had not worked right in some ways.

"You are the one who kept telling me our relationships would not be completely equal as I was told it should be. You are Shiloh's Daddy and primary caretaker when his little side is strongest. He needs that from you and you need to provide it."

There was a questioning tone to his voice that made me send him back agreement when he paused but I wasn't sure where the conversation was going. Agreeing with him was always dangerous because he was smart and liked to surprise me.

"You seem to think our relationship should be completely equal, though."

No…well, maybe?

"That is just logical?"

It had to be.

"What if you are two parts? One who provides caretaking to Shiloh in the form of being his Daddy and one who provides caretaking for me in the form of being my submissive when we are intimate."

Ignoring the part of me that was stubborn and immediately reactive, I focused on his question and his needs. He had strong needs to dominate and they might not all be satisfied finding ways to spank Shiloh.

"We are both strong individuals."

And that seemed to be associated with high needs because I knew many unintelligent individuals who were what the people around the gate called low-maintenance.

"Strong individuals have different needs. We just did not understand that before."

Raxius paused his thoughts as he continued to stroke his hand over my head. When he finally started to speak, his grip on me tightened.

"What if my original difficulties in getting to know you was because we were both strong but I did not understand my needs? I was told that my behavior was always wrong and I did my best to control it but that made me frustrating."

Yes.

Agreeing with him too strongly might provoke his dominant tendencies, though, so I tried to frame my words carefully.

"My caretaking needs have not always been appreciated, so I may not have explained myself well when we first met."

Having the additional information about our personalities had changed much about our relationship.

"You have very strong caretaking needs, so what if we practiced you giving me caretaking by submitting to me?"

Pleasure pulsed through the bond, but it took me a moment to realize what it was connected to.

My submission.

My mate desired my submission.

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Chapter 23

Raxius

Zorin was stubbornly blind to his own needs, but it felt like we were making progress as he let me talk him into giving me caretaking through submission. I did my best to keep my thoughts on that out of our bond, though. Sending him my emotions and deliberate thoughts kept me from confusing him by giving him too much to think about.

It was possible that the smarter someone was the easier it was to confuse them with thoughts of their needs.

Did that mean stupid people thought of themselves more?

Once he reached a full understanding of what he needed, I hoped he could help me sort through that mental debate. For the time being, I pushed it to the back of my mind and focused on Zorin.

"You do enjoy when Shiloh submits to you."

Zorin was talking himself into the idea, so I simply indicated approval and kept caressing him as his thoughts focused on submission.

"The need is so strong in you it probably requires additional outlets."

He was not wrong even if that was a simplistic way to see the issue.

"As long as I do not have to pretend to be little, it should be something we can practice."

Zorin had no desire to explore being little in any way. It was curious but not surprising. Part of me wanted to poke at his thoughts and understand what he was thinking but he was only sending random things through the bond.

"I do not need you to be little to enjoy your submission and I do not need to spank you either if you don't want to explore those sensations firsthand."

He'd enjoyed it but we also hadn't planned on it happening either.

"I understand how to safeword."

Zorin's answer addressed something I hadn't asked but it was good to know I'd read his earlier actions of shoving his hands under his thighs correctly.

Clearly both males were going to make sure they did not accidentally use hand safewords.

"You handled yourself well during an unexpected event. I would be a bad Dom if I did not bring it up, though. It seems to be one of the primary rules of engaging in dominant and submissive behaviors."

Instead of thinking about it in terms of our relationship, Zorin surprised me.

"The second is making sure submissives are hydrated. If I submit to you, we will both need water when Shiloh wakes up."

His mind worked in fascinating ways.

"Yes, that is also an important rule to remember."

Another would probably be not making a submissive be the one to handle the decisions. Before he could find some other random but still technically important information to provide for me, I rolled us over until I had him pinned under me.

Zorin's eyes went wide and he sucked in a breath, but his hands lay still on the bed. As he kept them flat, I settled between his legs and used my arms to hold up my chest. "That…"

Was not bad judging by the shocked pleasure flooding through him.

"I liked being behind you this morning but this position feels… powerful." Part of me pushed to revert back to mental speech or even our native language, but I kept using English because our little Earthling was being very careful not to draw attention to himself.

Zorin didn't seem to notice what language we were speaking but that was probably because his brain was much slower than he was used to dealing with. "This…"

Was still good based on his emotions, so I nodded slowly. "Makes me very happy, but you can feel that can't you?"

His head bobbed as he licked his lips.

When his silence continued, I shifted to move his hands over his head and pinned them to the bed. "What is the English safeword that stops the scene?"

It was still an odd phrase even if I knew I'd picked the right words.

Zorin blinked for a moment in an unnatural behavior but he found the answer. "Red. It is based on their vehicle traffic system."

“Good mate.” Holding his hands tighter, I leaned down and brushed my lips against his. Something got a low moan flowing through the bond and I could feel submission flowing through him. It gave me the confidence to continue and let me deepen the kiss without worry.

I took my time, nibbling on his lips and slowly exploring every inch of his mouth just as I’d seen the other mates from Earth do when they thought they had privacy.

They were never as alone as they assumed, but the education was appreciated and let me look confident as I used my tongue to imitate fucking my dramatic mate. That had him spreading his legs wider and rocking his hips up, but I ignored the demands and continued to slowly pleasure him.

Going with instinct and what I had seen, letting him take the lead would not make him happy in the long run or satisfy his submissive needs. Wren had described pleasure without submission as eating but always feeling empty.

He was never as alone as he thought either.

He was still just as educational as the rest of the people of Earth, though.

Eventually my mate moaned and I eased back to let him breath. He sucked in air as if he had flown from here to Ballas in one trip, but his gaze was filled with need and excitement instead of exhaustion. “Please.”

Please what?

Tightening my grip again, I raised one eyebrow and brushed my lips over his again. “What, my good mate?”

He had been very cooperative but I waited to see if his questionable behavior was ready to come out again.

"Let me help you." He honestly thought that was enough information. I could see it in his eyes and I knew he wasn't trying to frustrate me.

Keeping that in mind, I kissed along his jaw and whispered through the bond.

"How do you want to help me? How do you want to take care of me?"

Even at his most frustrating that seemed to be what drove him, as the Earthlings said, so it was a safe starting point.

"You need…to come. To orgasm. You've…you've taken care of us."

The words came through choppy but I could feel the need pushing through him. It was almost desire but it wasn't a need for himself.

He needed for me.

My frustratingly sexy mate needed me to come to take care of me in a way I knew I'd never understand.

"I got to see my mates come twice today."

I made sure he could feel the pleasure in my voice through our bond so he knew it wasn't something I felt slighted about.

"I don't think you can come again so soon even if you were sexy while you exploded for me." Whatever he told himself, submission and shocked pleasure had radiated from him in waves as he'd felt Shiloh's spanking. "Should I just use you to come?"

Oh, he liked that.

Wide eyes blinked up at me in confusion, but he was probably shocked and unsure. He'd never heard anyone ask him that before. He was one of the smartest people I'd ever met, though, and it didn't take long for the words to process.

"Yes." The one sighed-out word was filled with more emotion than I'd ever heard out loud from him and it was amazing. "Please."

"Such good manners too." Giving him one last kiss, I pushed up on my arms before sitting between his legs. "I want to see your body."

His cock specifically.

That got a few more confused blinks from him before his head jerked and words came through the bond again.

"Like you wanted to see me with Shiloh?" Zorin looked down at himself. "My penis?"

"Yes." He didn't seem to have an issue with that but something was unique about his reaction. The way he related to his body was confusing. I was going to have questions for Shiloh later as long as it wasn't something that would make him hide under the covers again. "I'm going to enjoy it."

Would Zorin?

He seemed confused about it for some reason, but I didn't have enough experience with mate behaviors to know what was typical. If there was a scale between what I would've considered typical to full human behavior, I would say Zorin was closer to human, but what did that mean for mate behaviors?

"Alright." He glanced up at the head of the bed as I reached for his pants. "Are you going to hold me down again?"

"Yes." Because that was something we both enjoyed. "Do you like the feeling of being helpless?"

Zorin was distracted enough with that question he didn't seem to notice as I released the fastener on his pants and eased them down far enough to free his penis. Once the air hit his body, though, he glanced back down. "Oh, yes. I…I enjoyed the feeling. I'm not sure how to describe it yet."

"I would enjoy hearing any thoughts you had." He'd like telling me them as well. "But if it takes you time, that's fine. Right now, all you have to know is if an activity is something you know you don't want to do."

Nodding slowly, Zorin's focus shifted to me as I freed my erection. "That's…um…yes. Knowing what I don't want to participate in is just as important as having a full report."

He found my penis seemed important too but I wasn't sure he realized how much he was staring. His own body wasn't that interesting to him, but mine was in a different category.

"Because it will help you establish limits and it will let me know how I can enjoy using you going forward." It would just be an interesting process to see how that would look.

Leaning over him and pinning his hands to the bed was certainly what Shiloh's people would call a *do again* because Zorin moaned as I held him down and his hips bucked up against me as my erection stroked against his soft, sticky cock, end barely peeking out of its hood.

"You…" Zorin sucked in a ragged breath as I rocked my hips to stroke our bodies together. "You can use me like this…like this going…going forward."

That was very good to know.

"I'm glad." It was my turn to moan as the pleasure built between us. "The next time I have you pleasure Shiloh, I'm…I'm going to rub it against your naked ass."

It seemed the best choice of word, but it was good to feel a bolt of pleasure coming from Zorin. English had many variations for what to call body parts based on how they were being used at the moment and the circumstances of the discussion.

Little Shiloh liked bottom but Zorin had pushed to show he was not little.

Hmm.

"I'm going to fuck my cock between your legs." And? What else would an Earth Dom say to a submissive who was not little? "I'm going to pin you against our boy and make you come all over him."

Well, he seemed to approve of my attempt at *dirty talk*.

Zorin sucked in a breath and his body jolted as his cock made a valiant attempt at getting hard again.

His cock.

Yes, that was a better mate word for him.

"I'm going to get you dirty this time." His clothing had absorbed most of his spend but he was going to end up wearing mine. "You're going to be a very dirty mate, aren't you?"

Surprise and desire were coming through the bond but his head nodded faintly as he tried to thrust against me again. "You don't get to come this time, naughty mate."

Hmm…he found that arousing as well.

It was interesting to feel his mind's strong desire when his body could not follow through on the reactions it wanted. Something about it made him feel even more helpless under me. Instead of feeling badly about that, I let myself relish the desires running through me.

"You're mine to use, my mate." My submissive. "Mine to mark as well."

Yes, I was what the humans would call a caveman, but for the first time, I understood what I had always felt for him and it finally had a word.

Mine.

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Chapter 24

Shiloh

Oh, that was…

They were so…

Daddy was…

But Master…

Oh, he came.

Best wakeup present ever.

Master's head arched back as he came, marking Daddy with his cum and making Daddy all googly-eyed.

Whatever Daddy'd thought they'd do, this was a surprise…a good one judging by the random stuff coming through the bond… but still a surprise.

Like a naughty present.

When Master finished coming, he stretched out over Daddy again and gave him another kiss. Then he turned to me. "Did you have fun watching, naughty boy?"

"Yes!" Snuggling closer, I kissed Daddy's cheek and curled up next to them. "But I was quiet inside and out, so I didn't distract anyone."

Like Daddy.

He'd have definitely tried to make their special time about me and that wasn't what Master needed. Yep, Daddy even tried to find his words to start being Daddy again, so I nipped that right in the bud by looking adorable. "Thank you for letting me be your good boy, Daddy."

He had no idea what to say to that.

I was going to owe Lorne a thanks at some point for giving me that idea, but he probably manipulated his mates so much he might not even remember that one.

Master tightened down the bond, probably so we didn't hear him laugh, but he widened it again as soon as he stretched out on the other side of Daddy. "He knows you wanted to be good and give us time together."

After a few seconds Daddy nodded. "You were very good."

Yay.

Problem solved…until Master told me to stop helping Daddy.

We weren't there yet, though, so I relaxed against Daddy and closed my eyes. "That was so much fun."

Oh.

"Um." Peeking my eyes open, I glanced between them. "I didn't ask about that. Do I need to say sorry?"

Master looked to Daddy and that made him blink for a few seconds until he realized what I was talking about. "Sharing your… sensations…well, I understand I have safewords too and you know how much I like exploring new information."

Yep, that was all he did.

Kind of.

Kissing him again, I stroked his chest and barely caressed Master's fingers where he was holding Daddy. "I'll ask next time. Well, if I'm big I'll ask. Little me just…he's kind of bossy."

And he had fun ideas but he was impulsive.

Oh, that was probably why Wren liked being a squirrel.

"I'll listen to safewords, though." I was their good boy. "And Master will listen and make sure we're all happy."

Daddy looked thinky again. "Yes, we will make sure we share through the bond during intimate times. That will prevent miscommunications."

"And if our words and feelings don't match, Master will ask our colors." He'd be helpful with that because he wouldn't forget to poke at me or Daddy. "We've got a plan."

Master's inside voice chuckled.

"Can you hear me, little Earthling?"

Master cocked his head to show me he was talking just in case, but I didn't need outside Earth stuff.

"Yes, Master, and I was your good boy too. I was quiet but I showed you I was awake."

I knew Master would want to make sure I was happy with them being happy, so I'd barely wiggled and then stayed quiet. Daddy didn't notice I was too quiet but that was okay because he'd been busy.

Master sent me sparkly feelings through the bond, like his inside person was giggly and laughing and naughty all at the same time.

“You were very good and I was glad to know you were happy.”

He thought that was funny too but he turned back to Daddy because Daddy still needed attention. “Part of aftercare is asking about your thoughts and what the Earth people call mental health.”

Yep, had to start there to remind Daddy that was just what we did, so he couldn’t argue.

“Yes…” Daddy was going to try to be a brat but his brain was still slow. I’d never seen Daddy have to force his brain to work, so it was fun to watch. “I think I am fine.”

It wasn’t enough information and Master looked like he wanted to stomp his foot and grumble.

“Do your wrists feel good?” I was Daddy’s good helper and I’d make sure he didn’t drive Master nuts. “Sometimes new stuff makes people think. Do you have new thoughts we should hear?”

Not worries or something like that.

Nope.

Daddy might have information.

Oh, I was smart.

Daddy blinked and glanced between us like he was confused, but after a few seconds he nodded. “Organizing information after a new situation is important.”

Master was trying to keep his grumbles very quiet and be a good boy too. “I think finding different ways to hold you down would be an interesting experiment to test. I’d like to see if you enjoy restraints.”

That.

Yes.

"Could you make ones for us, Master?" Smart. Smart. Smart. "We'd like to see what you could create. Right, Daddy?"

He nodded before he thought about it. "There are a variety of ways it could be done but I think physical restraints without any magic in them would be interesting."

Why?

Nope.

I'd figure it out later.

"Master would do a good job of that." I'd help him if he needed it. "Will you help him figure out how he should tie me up, Daddy?"

And now Daddy had an excuse for thinking about it lots and lots.

"Yes." Feeling happier since he had a new project, Daddy petted my head. "We'll have to come up with a list of options for other types of scenes, as well."

Yay.

"New things to spank me with too." Then I'd have new things to share with Daddy. "There's lots of stuff we can play with on my bottom."

And in my bottom, but I didn't think Daddy was ready for that yet.

He'd like it, but we'd go slowly.

Sharing first and talking second.

Oops.

Master coughed.

Little bond.

Little bond.

No tattling on myself.

“Daddy? Will you wiggle on me when Master wiggles on you?” Yes, distraction time so Daddy didn’t ask what I’d been thinking. “Master said he wanted to wiggle on you.”

Kinda.

Daddy did his blinking thing as he looked between us again. “I… that would put me between you.”

Yep.

“Like a Daddy sandwich.” He’d like that. “It’d be fun.”

Going thinky again, Daddy finally nodded. “Yes, that is something we should probably try.”

Daddy was going to like trying lots of stuff as long as he didn’t have to think about it too much first. He’d spent too much time thinking about work and not enough about mates and penises. We’d help him figure out what he liked best, though.

“That’ll be fun.” Kiss. Kiss. I flopped down on Daddy’s chest after giving both my mates cute kisses. “I’m gonna like trying stuff with you ‘cause you’re my mates and I like you lots and lots.”

Daddy outside smiled and got his feelings stuck in his throat. Master inside smiled but didn’t get anything stuck. “I think I can speak for both of us when I say we like you lots and lots too, my little Earthling. We also like getting clean.”

They were dirty.

“You guys got dirty.” Giggling, I wiggled on Daddy. “Then we can have a snack.”

Master scoffed before Daddy could tell me yes. “You had a very large first meal, my little Earthling.”

Maybe.

“But I got lots of exercise, Master.” Kiss. Kiss. I got both his cheeks and then gave Daddy big eyes. “We need water. That’s the rules too.”

Ha.

Daddy nodded as Master collapsed and pretended to be dramatic. “Fine. Water and snacks.”

Yay.

****

“Can I ask what you’re talking about when you’re doing that?” Their blinks and the overly still way they were watching me made me realize my question hadn’t been clear. “Um, the mate talk?”

Did they have a specific word for that?

No, had to stay on track so they didn’t think I was a squirrel too. “That’s what you were doing, right? Can I ask what you said or am I supposed to pretend I didn’t notice you not looking at each other?”

I’d never met a family like ours and had only seen mates a few times when I’d traveled to the different communities. “I can fake not noticing if that’s what I’m supposed to do.”

Raxius went even more still somehow where he was sitting across the table, but Daddy sighed at the stove. It seemed to tell

Raxius he could explain what was happening, so he jerked his head toward Daddy. “He was asking if he could ask you questions. I think the answer to your question would be…situationally dependent.”

“Okay.” So no poking around gift-giving holidays but everything else was fair game if I was confident or nosy. “I’m assuming judging by the careful way he was talking to you about it, he means stuff from yesterday?”

It felt like a thousand years ago instead of a single day but Daddy especially had been really patient.

That probably meant he was ready to pop.

“Yes.” Raxius seemed to slip into Master mode and leaned back in his chair as he studied us both. “That does not mean you have to be ready for our questions, though.”

Our.

Master had questions too.

I’d kind of hoped we could just skip over it since Daddy worried, but it seemed like that wasn’t going to work.

“I can answer your questions.” I’d made them wait long enough. “Daddy got stressed, though.”

The way he sighed again as he stirred something that he thought would end up being like spaghetti made me think we weren’t going to skip that part this time either. Master raised one eyebrow. “He is already stressed, so keeping him in the dark as you call it will not help.”

Answering him probably wouldn’t help either.

"Then let's just start." Because otherwise I'd think about that pasta and start worrying all over again.

It was the wrong color and every time I thought about it my little side tried to pop out and be dramatic. That wouldn't help the conversation and would probably make Daddy nervous, so I ignored the black noddles and focused on the discussion.

"I would like to clarify when you first started…your job as you call it." Master was sending me relaxing emotions through the bond, but I wasn't sure why he thought I was upset.

Maybe it should've gone to Daddy like some kind of emotional wrong number?

"This isn't a type of magic I've ever heard about." Master looked thoughtful but didn't feel upset which made things easier.

"Um, okay." That wasn't hard and it was probably a good place to start. "From what I understand the spell is passed down to the firstborn in each generation but it doesn't really seem to kick in until our magic starts to steady. So my mother thinks it…I guess activated in me at about eight months old."

For some reason they both twitched, but I tried to stay on track and not get distracted.

Black.

Noodles weren't black.

And good boys weren't supposed to say something looked yucky, so I had to stay focused.

Magic.

What would Master might not know?

"It's basically designed to be as strong as the magic user it's in, so since I was young, it was weak and I grew into it." And it grew into me. "I don't know how the spell originally started out on this side of the portal, but for my family, it comes with the knowledge from the previous…guardian, basically."

I was hoping Daddy liked that title but he was very carefully shielding the bond.

"I've always just known stuff but it was like background noise until I was old enough to start actively using it." When they nodded slowly, I kept going. "I knew a lot of it without thinking about it but learning to read helped the rest…well…come online."

It'd felt normal at the time. "When I grew up, I traveled to more of the remote areas where our people lived and did my best to read everything our people left behind."

Meeting all those strangers had been the hardest part, but I'd pushed through my shyness because I knew I needed to pass on as much as I could to the next guardian. "I added to the genealogical record as best I could, both written and memorized. But you heard me talk about that already. I'm hoping Agent Murphy can help us find any families that were lost."

With the internet, keeping track was a lot easier and some families had even sent digital copies of the papers that they had, but it'd been a lot harder in the past.

"The primary reason that spell was locked away was because our brains are not designed to hold that much information." Daddy's tone was so carefully neutral it made me worry what he was saying silently to Master. "How have you adapted and why does it not spill

over through our bond? Is there a…genetic change from the spell being passed down?"

I wasn't sure answering would make him happy or not, but lying wasn't an option. "From what records I have about it, the seers felt that the problem with the way the spell was used originally was because it was given to a fully developed adult brain. Those are not adaptable."

Honestly, that part made sense but the way Master physically winced said Daddy was just a bit frustrated…and probably loud.

"So they decided a child's brain would be more adaptable." Daddy's careful tone felt like a bomb clicking down, ready to explode any second. "A child."

How long did I have before he lost it?

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Chapter 25

Zorin

"A child, Raxius. An infant!"

I was an amazing Daddy and did not let Shiloh see that my emotions were fluctuating slightly.

"They gave that spell to infants!"

All I had to do was stir and breathe and ask questions in an outwardly neutral tone. I wasn't going to scare Shiloh or worry him. I just needed to get enough information to decide how to help him and our people.

"No one really knows if it's magical changes or if there's some kind of genetic component at this point." Shiloh shifted in his chair before standing up and walking into the sitting area.

He shrugged as he studied the wall shelf with the books and small decorations I had brought with me. "We're always really young when the spell starts to affect us so no one really knows how much is new and how much we might be born with…like how animals have instincts they're born with."

He was not an animal in that sense but pointing it out would be rude.

Or something like rude because my bond with Raxius seemed to be flashing danger signs like we were in an Earth movie.

Where had he seen those?

"What changes did your mother see when you were an infant?" Calm. Neutral. I was a very good Daddy that didn't scare my mate in any way.

"Um, she said she could feel a change in my magic and that she just knew." Frowning, he paused like he was working hard to pull up the information. "Yeah, the last couple of my relatives all described it similarly. Just feeling a shift in the baby's innate magic."

A baby.

"That's good information to know." Raxius was sounding much calmer than I liked. He needed to be slightly frustrated as well. "I think we need to start taking notes about those kinds of things even if we never show anyone else."

Something about the response had Shiloh nodding and smiling. "That's a good idea."

Logic.

I needed to give him logic and support.

"We can sit down after dinner and start figuring out what other information would be helpful to document." I could do that calmly and rationally. "But if we get to something you don't want to talk about, you just need to safeword or let us know."

Shiloh had been so calm about it, I wasn't sure what might upset him at this point. His smile was not helping me decide either. "I've always hidden this because we were told how important it is not to talk about it, so let me know if I'm not doing it right or something is confusing."

Air in.

Air out.

Air in.

Air out.

“Why did they only keep track of the lineage?” Raxius asked a good question but it seemed to be designed to give me a moment to think based on the soothing feelings coming through the bond.

He was getting a lot of practice doing that and had significantly improved since the first time he tried it.

“Weren’t there other things like our language and history that would be more important?” Raxius was very smart and I was going to have to remember how good he was at compartmentalizing, as English called it. “The decision just sounds odd.”

Nodding, Shiloh pulled out an older book on the area around the portal I had hoped would be helpful. It provided very little new information but I was glad to have found it anyway. “They picked two other families, one to pass down what they knew of the history of our people and another was probably cultural.”

Still wandering, Shiloh came back over to the kitchen and gave me a hug. “Unfortunately, the family that was given the history seems to have been wiped out in a hurricane about fifty years later. The area they were living was hit by a mudslide and no one survived.”

Fates above.

“We didn’t find out about the tragedy until it was too late and there was no one left who had the original knowledge.” Swallowing hard, Shiloh sat down on Raxius’ lap and snuggled into his Master.

“A lot of the documents they’d started collecting were also destroyed.”

That answered a significant amount of my questions in one short story, so it made me wonder what other questions would be easily explained.

“Since there wasn’t another generation for the spell to jump to, it didn’t have anyone else to pass the knowledge down to.” As he started leafing through the book, he shrugged. “I don’t have much information about the third family. They’re mentioned casually in letters and diaries but then they disappeared.”

Our people should have stayed together.

“The last Seer I talked to said that was why my family was never allowed to live in one town together. We could see each other in small groups but never everyone at once.” Studying something I thought was a sketch of the portal, Shiloh frowned distractedly. “Is this edited correctly? I’ve never seen this sentence written this way.”

What?

“Can you read our language?” He’d been confused anytime he’d heard it, so I’d never considered his ability to read.

Although clearly I should have.

“Yeah.” He perked up, smiling again. “I was hoping that would help me with the spoken language but it didn’t.”

Pouting dramatically, he sighed as he went back to studying the page. “Most people I’ve talked with only know specific words and phrases. One whole branch has taken to using Latin for spells and that’s just weird.”

Latin?

Latin American?

Latin as in the robed men with the collars?

"My family didn't want me to go through the portal but the seers said I had to." Frowning, he traced his finger over a sentence before huffing and going back to his slightly confusing explanations. "If something happened to me, my family wasn't sure where the spell would jump to. My sister's pregnant, so that'd be weird if it went to the baby. From what we know, the spell is supposed to go down the family line to the next generation, but we've been fairly lucky."

What?

It took me a moment to realize I'd stopped moving and to process what he'd said.

"Your Daddy is just a bit stunned at the moment because it sounds like you said you'd talked to a seer lately…as in recently?" Raxius was chuckling through our bond, making me wonder what I'd missed. "And yes, he also thinks the baby thing would be confusing…but weird might be a better word?"

Yes.

It would.

"Um, I told you guys we had the younger seers from that generation on our side when the portal closed. Right?" Shiloh glanced between us, looking confused. "We keep track of the lineages. So we kept track of as many of the seers as we could considering they usually like living out in the country."

The English word duh was the first thing that came to my mind.

Unfortunately, based on Raxius' laughter, he heard that as well.

Ignoring him seemed like my best plan, so I focused back on what Shiloh had said and did my best to respond neutrally. “We have not had active seers in our communities in generations, so it was a surprise. However, I should have realized that based on the other things you said.”

They had seers.

Live ones, not just their writings.

“I think that’s logical based on everything you knew.” Raxius sent a hug-like feeling through the bond. It was so clear it was like his arms were around me instead of our mate. “So we’re going to figure out what other questions we need to ask and how to document them.”

Shiloh wiggled on his lap, looking like he’d done something wrong if I was reading his expression correctly. “I’m not used to just randomly volunteering information.”

No, he documented and remembered.

“This is a new experience for all of us, so there will be what your people call a learning curve.” That really was a very good expression. English was highly enjoyable. “But I want you to remember that any facts, random or not, are appreciated.”

More books to choose from.

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“Your Daddy likes knowledge and he’s ready to turn you upside down and shake out everything you know so he can see it.” Raxius

sounded so serious I turned to glare at him, causing Shiloh to laugh. “Look at him. He’s upset I tattled on him.”

The word brat fit him very well.

“I do not know if shaking him that way would help. I need to do research first.” That should have been obvious. Even Shiloh thought so based on his giggles. “I need to document and process my questions. I haven’t even started writing them down. Research starts with questions that need to be answered.”

Raxius leaned closer to our mate and whispered loudly. “I’ll protect you if he starts shaking you upside down and calling out questions.”

Shiloh was shaking with laughter. “I…that’s…”

Very funny, evidently.

“It will not come to that because I will get you to promise him spankings.” Yes, bribes would work. The people of Earth loved those. “Does one spank per question seem reasonable? I do not have the right economic knowledge to know the exchange rate.”

I really should have broadened my knowledge before the fates allowed me to find my mates.

Raxius rolled his eyes, earning more laughter from our giggly mate. “We need a plan that will not have him following you around all day begging you to ask him questions.”

Why?

It was Raxius’ turn to laugh that time but he kept it inside my head as just his eyes sparkled. I shrugged, doing my best to look serious. “I do not see the problem with that plan.”

I would love having Shiloh around me like that. Raxius would probably drive me crazy as the expression went, but if he stood quietly and just glared, I could get used to his presence.

"You're…" Shiloh sucked in a breath and did his best to control his humor. "I can see both of you wanting that, but okay…um…how about we work out a plan for questions that doesn't involve shaking or spanking."

Really?

He must have understood we were both skeptical because he pulled his shirt over his face and groaned as he hid. "We can't do that. Eventually I'd get hard every time someone asked me questions."

Oh.

"Why are you thinking about a dog?" Raxius eased Shiloh's hands down and frowned at our shy mate. "That is a dog, correct?"

Alternating between laughing and groaning, Shiloh explained about the man with the odd name and his dog. It was…confusing… but we came to understand what he meant once he stopped laughing long enough to give us clear sentences.

"What do you think about teaching him to associate questions and pleasure?" Focusing on Raxius, I ignored Shiloh because his sound effects and muffled words made explanations difficult. "Do you mind the idea of him walking around thinking of special mate time?"

Raxius took a moment to think, which I saw as appropriate, but for some reason Shiloh's head popped out of his shirt. "You should tell him no. I mean, yes. I mean. You guys don't do that."

So the people of Earth did?

Just humans?

Who was walking around aroused and thinking of their mates?

The emotions Shiloh was cycling through were confusing, but in his intent focus on Raxius, it seemed our boy was not careful. Raxius lit up with a wicked kind of pleasure that he radiated when he'd spanked Shiloh, and by extension, me. "You like that idea."

Shiloh squealed and hid again. "Shoot."

His bond had tattled.

"When his emotions go from desire to worry to desire to surprise…which am I supposed to focus on?" He went very quickly through them. "It is hard to decide."

So I erred on the side of caution as they said.

Raxius shrugged but did not take long to answer. "I focus on desire and then check for fear or something more negative than surprise or worry. Our little mate is easily shocked and has many worries, so those are not strong signifiers."

"That is reasonable." And since all Shiloh could do was groan, he must have agreed with the logic as well.

Admitting his Master was right was harder, so we didn't make him go that far. I did not think waiting would help based on his level of ridiculousness. "You've got to stop saying things like that."

Shiloh's words were dramatic but not serious or a safeword, so Raxius hugged him again and kissed his head. "Look at it this way, little Earthling, you would know we were not jealous or easily

shocked, and we would enjoy you coming home from meetings wanting immediate pleasure."

As our dramatic mate started groaning and asking the fates to save him, there was a signal that someone was at the door and an Earth-sounding knock. Shiloh's head popped out of his shirt before I could even ask who might be at the door. "Saved by the bell."

What bell?

Nearly running to the door, he bashed his arm into the corner of the kitchen before making it to the door. "Shit. That hurts. Oh."

Wren of Earth.

His head cocked as he watched Shiloh bounce and grab his arm. "What are you doing?"

Our mate winced. "I ran into the wall."

Making a laughing sound, Wren shook his head. "I know this is last minute but we think we figured out how to make chicken nuggets. Wanna come have a nugget party?"

Nugget party?

Raxius seemed to mirror my confusion but Shiloh giggled as his face became red. "Um, what…what kind of party? I know you're… you're gonna have nuggets but…but…um…"

Did he need help or encouragement?

It wasn't immediately clear, so I sent the question to Raxius as I slowly made my way to the door.

"Encouragement."

His quick answer and confidence made my worries ease. Standing behind Shiloh and putting my hand on his back also

seemed to make both of us feel better and it got curious glances from Wren. He kept his questions to himself for the moment, though.

After a few seconds, Shiloh tried again. “Who will be there?”

It was a good starting point but Wren’s immediate listing of every known and suspected little had Shiloh’s face continuing to heat. His stress level was high but not to the point of hiding, so I did my best to remain calm and send him support.

“Would you like nuggets or to continue our discussion?” Raxius decided to be helpful in an unconventional way.

“Let’s go.” Shiloh immediately grabbed Wren’s hand before turning to give me a quick kiss on my cheek. “I’m gonna play with Wren and have nuggets. I’ll be fine, Daddy.”

I sighed as Wren giggled. “The question was not that difficult.”

“Yes, it was.” Tugging on Wren’s hand, Shiloh nearly ran out of my quarters. “Bye, Daddy. Bye, Master. I’ll be home before bedtime.”

As I just stood there watching them race down the hall, I heard Shiloh groan. “The spaghetti was black and Master is naughty.”

And he was dramatic, but at least he was making friends?

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Chapter 26

Raxius

“I still do not understand his reluctance to try the pasta.”

Zorin frowned down at his empty plate.

“I am positive this is the closest approximation of the dish based on the tastes he described.”

I was not going to try to explain Shiloh’s issue with the color again, so I shrugged and did my best to distract him.

“It was very good even if I am not used to the combination. We need to add tasting spaghetti to our list of what to do on Earth when we visit.”

Yes, his mate was amazing.

“Focusing on the way he is getting to know the others and how confident he was as he left shows he is stronger because of having his mates in his life…especially his Daddy **because he was almost youthful as he went to play.”**

And hadn’t worried about hiding it from Wren.

“Maybe.” Zorin’s frown shifted into one of thinking and not confused sadness. But the way he changed to English as he wiggled in his seat showed a lot about his emotions. “How long do you think we need to stay on Earth to make Shiloh happy to return?”

How were those topics related?

Seeing my confusion had him rushing to get out more words. “He said he will return with us. I’m not worried about that.”

Was he worried about something else, then?

Our conversation was missing context, but all I could do was answer the question he asked.

“A few weeks? He specifically talked about purchasing toys and a few food products that would be fun to have on occasion.” Glancing down at the remains of our dinner, I thought pasta might be high on his list. “He talked about wanting to show us their restaurants and some of their entertainment spaces.”

Thankfully, we had other means of transportation that would not require driving long distances in the objects they called cars. I had heard stories from Toman and I was not going to put myself in danger. My Shiloh might be a wonderful driver, but others could not be trusted.

“We know we would like to visit bookstores and I think picking out objects that they would call presents to give away as small tokens would be a good idea.” Their concept of giving away presents at every major event would become contagious. “I think I would like to at least visit a home under construction if that is possible.”

My mates might find it boring but I wouldn’t make them stay long.

Zorin blinked and cocked his head to show me he was thinking. “A human-style building site or a magical one? There have to be differences.”

There probably was but none of the people who’d come through the gate had built more than simple structures for storage or doing

what they called roughing it.

“If we only have time to visit one, I would like to see a human-style of building.” I could learn about the magical ones later. “That is something our people may not be able to explain fully.”

From what we had seen, they had taken to winging it as they called it on nearly everything, so the fates only knew what magical catastrophes they were constructing.

“That is logical.” His words and tone said logical but his emotions were much more reactive as he stood and started clearing the table. “Do…do you think he will want to see his family?”

Ah.

Were we finally getting to the problem?

“He saw them not long before he left Earth, and the places he’s discussed have nothing to do with his family.” My first thought was no, but I gave Zorin a shrug to show mild confusion. “His language has always been in terms of days or weeks as a visit, not longer. Some things will need to be pushed to additional visits.”

Like exploring adult-based mate spaces that sold spanking implements and toys Shiloh would blush at and call naughty.

I needed to find a way to do more research before that should be added to our list, though.

Everything I said should have made Zorin feel more at ease but his stress levels continued to climb as he moved around the kitchen. “I think…I think we can keep him occupied until it is time to return.”

I was starting to understand the statement one of the Earthlings used recently about his questions having questions.

"He will want to talk to his family and explain about our bonding, but a phone call should be a good start." That had Zorin feeling frustrated but not angry. "Once his family hears he is safe, we can share our plans to come back and do a longer visit next time."

Oh.

That was a new level of frustration even for Zorin, but it was the way he cracked one plate by slamming it into the sink that showed we had reached problematic levels.

It did not, however, make it easier to know how to respond to his newly unveiled emotions.

"I cannot remain polite when dealing with…with those people!" The mix of volatile feelings made it even harder to understand his words coming through clenched teeth. "They put my mate in mental and physical harm, and I will not do the human act of *playing happy family* with those kinds of people."

Oh.

Well, his emotions had a very rational starting point.

"How am I supposed to be polite to people who could have allowed his brain to be damaged?" His words said it was a question but his tone and volume said it was a lecture. "How can a good mate accept that?"

They could not…and they could also not sit by quietly while another was in pain.

"And a Daddy?" His tone broke as I rose and came up behind him. "No. We do not accept those kinds of behaviors."

Wrapping my arms around him, I pulled him away from the broken plate and stepped us back from the basin Shiloh called a sink. We both watched as it was cleared and the plate reformed, but Zorin closed his eyes as his breathing remained ragged.

Remembering Agent Murphy's words, I tightened my hold on my mate and pinned him to me with his back against my chest. "The only thing we can control is what happens going forward. He has given us his submission because he knows he can trust us to take care of him."

Shaking, Zorin nodded and swallowed hard. "We…we won't let anything like that happen to him."

"Because his is our mate and that's more important than any people, lineage, or world." There was nothing more important. "They lost mates. They lost everything and only had leaders who had to make terrible decisions to get through an unimaginable crisis."

I could not pretend to know what the seers had been thinking but I would never support a plan that changed our children.

"All we can do now is to help our mate." To Zorin, it seemed like it would never be enough and I could feel his emotions rising again. "And you already have. Do you think the scared mate we met on that first day would complain about the color of dinner and run to another little who promised him chicken nuggets? No. He would have suffered quietly and eaten food no matter what he wanted. You have given him the confidence to be silly and complain."

About pasta.

The food had been unexpectedly good considering it was basically putting fruit on pasta.

"You have given him the confidence to involve himself in little activities like chicken nugget time. Our shy boy would not have done that on the first day he arrived." He would have given himself a heart attack. "I bet he has never played with other littles before. None of his stories talk about friends."

Relaxing in my arms, Zorin's breathing slowly became deeper as we waited for his storm to pass. "He knows you will be there for him and he is gaining confidence. Who knows, eventually he might perform a fit just to get attention."

That had my stressed mate chuckling softly. "He also has a mate he knows will not put up with fits, but he might find a reason to get a spanking. He liked that."

They had both liked that.

"He loved that and he loved spending time with us after it." He'd also loved teasing his Daddy by sharing his spanking feelings. "He knows he is safe with us and he is slowly opening up. We know it will be a long journey but that was why he was given to us. The fates knew his flight through life would be so hard he would need strong mates to lift him up."

We would not fail our mate.

"You are one of the smartest minds on our world when it comes to our history and researching our past. If anyone can find the spells to understand what was done, it is you." I sighed to get another happy sound from Zorin. "And I am stubborn enough to support both of you, which the fates must have known as well."

Shiloh had been given two incredible mates to support him.

Zorin's faint shift had me relaxing my hold, but he only turned around to rest his head on my shoulder. When he was settled again,

he took a deep breath and let it out slowly as his emotions quieted again. “He doesn’t understand how dangerous it was. The spell was put in the vaults because while there were times it needed to be used in our past, those who received it always died in the end. Our minds were not meant to hold that much knowledge.”

There must be logic we were missing but they may have just felt that desperate. The area outside the gate now seemed to be a thriving country in a modern age, but it was not like that when the portal had closed. They had gone to what the Americans would call wilderness camping and were never able to find civilization again.

Magic would’ve made everything easier but they’d slowly lost much of that as the generations passed. Whatever visions the seers were given must have scared them into doing the unthinkable but that didn’t mean we had to support it now.

“I don’t know what they were thinking but what I do know is that we have a mate who is safe, healthy, and happy. That is an incredible place to start a bonding and to form a life together.” And one I would not let Zorin forget even when his emotions overtook him. “Think about our mate. Do you hear his giggles?”

I knew Zorin would have tightened his bond down as much as possible, but I could feel his mind brighten as he opened it up to our mate. “He finds something that is happening very funny.”

Zorin chuckled and nodded against me. “He’s very relaxed and feels steady.”

“And he knows that all he has to do is reach out to us if something makes him uncomfortable.” Zorin’s dramatic sigh made me wonder what he was thinking.

“Like pasta that is the wrong color.”

It was my turn to laugh but I let it spill down our bond. “He was trying to be polite, but yes, reality did not match his expectation of what the food should look like.”

And that was somehow very important.

“I think it must be what Agent Murphy called a little thing.” Zorin was still confused about dinner but there would always be issues that surprised us. “I will have to watch him closely to see which meals he truly enjoys.”

And I would have to make sure Zorin did not go overboard, as Shiloh’s people said.

“You are a wonderful cook and make very good meals.” I kissed his head, trying to shift the mood again. “I, for one, am very glad to have a mate who takes such good care of me.”

Eating regular meals again was wonderful.

“What did you just think?” Pulling back, Zorin aimed angry eyes at me. “Regular meals?”

Oops.

Doing my best to look innocent as Shiloh had shown, I widened my eyes and tried to project confusion. “I was thinking about how wonderfully you take care of me, and I was wondering what you thought about the muffins Wren of Earth described.”

Blinking, Zorin paused for a moment. “He also talks about something called pancakes. They sound like dessert but are for breakfast.”

That did not surprise me.

“Half of everything the Americans of Earth eat seems to be dessert with a different name.” I shrugged when Zorin let out a frustrated huff. “From what I was told in a meeting, their world has more fruit-based plants than ours and the main sweetener they use is grown in large quantities.”

Shifting to show me a thoughtful expression, Zorin was the one practicing looking cute that time. “Do you think it has something to do with a world with so many submissives? Our emotional differences might have something to do with it.”

“That is a good point.” I hadn’t really thought about it in detail, but I would if it kept him from asking me about my meals. “They are also very creative. Another council member was in that meeting… the older dragon that is always complaining…I do not remember his name, but he thought it might be related to how creative they seem to be.”

Their creativity seemed to flow through the people of Earth on a much larger scale. Ours felt smaller and more individually focused. If someone made a new dessert or developed new customs, it could be years before they shared it with anyone outside their family.

Spells would be shared quicker but that was because there were rules and a structured system to keep them safe. Otherwise those would probably be hidden as well.

“Do you think that is an emotion we are lacking or some kind of skill they are pushed to excel at?” Zorin’s hands came up to stroke my chest, but it seemed to be an almost absent-minded behavior. “Their children are given many specific learning toys and they do what Shiloh called crafts on a regular basis.”

"There are definitely differences in our child-rearing behaviors that need to be studied." I knew just the scholar to do that as well. "Should we purchase books on academic thoughts about child rearing?"

It would keep my wonderfully curious mate from focusing too much on Shiloh's brain and mental well-being.

"Yes. I think that is a good plan." Barely caressing me, his mind whirled faster as it sounded like he was making lists and sorting his thoughts on how the topic should be studied. "We…we should also get information on human mating practices. I would like to see how they can differ from us since they do not have the fates to give them mates."

That sounded stressful.

"I think I am going to need to expand our house when we get back." I made sure to sigh and sound dramatic, and I was rewarded with a laugh. "I'm going to end up with a house that is bigger than my workshop."

That got more laughter from Zorin. "I've seen your workshop and I can guarantee our house will never get to that size."

He had?

"When did you see it?" Taking his hand, I led him out of the kitchen and over to the couch. As we sat, Zorin looked down at the floor like it was fascinating.

"Were you spying on me?" Pretending to be a shocked human, I sucked in a breath and shook my head. "Naughty mate."

That got another laugh from him and he finally looked up at me. "I have a colleague who lives close to you and I…I would sometimes

fly over your home."

Fly?

Technically I knew he was part dragon in a small way, but I couldn't remember ever having heard him talk about it. His shyness said there was something I was missing, so I pulled him into my arms and lay back until he was stretched out over me. "Tell me about flying over my house."

When he could rest his head on my chest and hide his face from mine, he relaxed and went back to petting me. "I don't…I don't feel the need to shift. I can but…but that was the only area I ever felt the push to fly. So…so after my meetings, I would take an hour and make a wide circle that usually ended up going over your house."

Because he'd been searching for his mate.

"I can't believe I missed you." It was probably best that I had since my mood was not always pleasant. "How often were your meetings?"

Had I missed seeing him every week somehow?

"Once a year." His casual shrug left me shocked but I kept that feeling tight inside me. "The forest near your home is beautiful."

Fates above.

"I can't wait to show you more of it." On foot and in the air. "And I can't wait to figure out how much trouble you're going to be when you move in."

That got the silly laugh I was hoping for and he lifted his head to give me a sweet kiss I hadn't expected. It seemed like our night had taken an unexpectedly pleasant turn and I couldn't wait to see what happened next.

Having mates was much more interesting than I'd ever imagined.

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Chapter 27

Shiloh

"Why are you blushing?" Wren giggled as he leaned in closer to pretend to study my face. "Yep, you're blushing, that's not an allergy."

Groaning, I hid my face against my knees and blushed even more as everyone else laughed too. "Mate stuff. I'm gonna be a local, though, and say we don't talk about that kind of thing."

That got more laughter from the other littles and curious locals Wren had collected for chicken nugget experiments, and a snort from Toman who was pretending to hide in their bedroom.

"Luckily for everyone else, I'm a naughty Earthling." Even the handful of wide-eyed locals who I was pretty sure hadn't said their names giggled at Wren's declaration. "Blushing means Earth nonsense."

It was my own fault but I couldn't help lifting up my shirt and hiding behind it. "I opened our bonds a bit too much."

I was probably purple by the time everyone stopped laughing, but eventually they were down to just random giggles as I sighed. "They're kissing. I didn't expect it."

I wasn't sure if I should've talked about that or not, but I didn't think Master or Daddy would have a problem with it. No one else

seemed to have an issue either judging by the giggles and the fact that Toman hadn't told us to behave.

"What's it like having two mates?" Wren reached over and pulled my shirt down just enough to see my eyes. "You can tell me not to be nosy if you want to…I also work with safewords."

That statement didn't get nearly as many questions from the locals as it should have. It was obvious they weren't there just visiting for the nuggets.

"I don't need to do that but…" Goodness sakes. "Um, me lifting up one finger is green, two is yellow, three is red. I don't always do well with words."

Might as well get that out just in case Wren got too enthusiastic.

"Oh, that's a great idea." Sitting back on the floor, he grinned. "That's smart. Okay go back to hiding if you need to."

I couldn't decide if him being accepting and open was frustrating or not, but it had the effect of letting me sit up easier. "I think I'm fine."

For now.

The smirk he shifted into said he knew what I was thinking too.

"Um, having even one mate would've been weird but I don't think two makes it any stranger?" I shrugged as it felt like everyone wiggled closer even though that had to be my imagination. "I grew up in the middle of nowhere around mostly humans, so I never knew anyone that found their mates."

Someone needed to figure out why opening the portal changed the number of people finding their mates, but it wasn't my job, so I

wasn't going to worry about it. I wasn't sure how that kind of magic worked and I had other things to focus on.

"I'm not going to ask if it's fun *because that's not my business*." The way he glanced toward the bedroom and raised his voice at the end made it clear who that was for. "But I'm not easily shocked, so you don't have to worry about oversharing."

No, but he'd give me a lot of other things to worry about.

"Thank you for…for being understanding." I thought that was a pretty good response but it got more giggles as Wren pouted. "I'm… I'm enjoying it and I'll just say that mates are always compatible."

If they didn't stop giggling I was going to be the color of a tomato.

Ugh.

Tomatoes.

"Did you know they have some kind of black pasta?" I hadn't complained about that yet, so it was a good distraction to a room full of littles. By the time I finished explaining what Daddy had made for dinner and how weird it'd been, they'd moved past questions about my having two mates.

It didn't stop Wren from giving me a wicked grin as I finally left his apartment, though. He hadn't forgotten why I'd been trying not to blush and squirm, and neither had I because I couldn't decide if my mates needed privacy or company.

From what I could tell through the bond, they'd been kissing and snuggling for the past hour but I didn't think it'd moved past that.

So that meant they were either taking things very slowly or they were waiting for me.

Right?

We hadn't actually talked about intimacy when it was just two of us, but that was probably because it'd always been the three of us. If we were apart, we were working or having weird meetings about why we participated in Christmas like most of America.

I still wasn't sure I explained that one right, but I wasn't worried about it at the moment. I had sexy things and an inconvenient erection to worry about. My pants were loose enough it wasn't a problem but I'd never gotten turned on by someone else kissing.

That was probably because I could feel them both kissing, even though I was pretty sure they didn't realize how much they were projecting. It'd started out faint and had slowly grown as they'd gotten distracted.

Yes, rules and logistics around two-person intimacy were something we needed to talk about.

Once I stopped worrying and figured out if I could just go into the house or if I needed to give them some warning first.

Maybe I should go see if that restaurant place was open?

"Eeek!"

Fates above.

"Don't do that." I managed not to fall back on my ass as the door opened unexpectedly but my heart about leapt out of my chest. "That's…"

Fates above.

Daddy cocked his head and studied me from where he stood beside Master. "Does he need a hug?"

“I’m fairly certain he was imagining swatting us like a bug, so he might need a moment first?” Master said it so calmly it sounded completely logical. “Making more noise going forward is probably best for our safety.”

“Our mate is dangerous.” Daddy shook his head, pretending to take the ridiculousness seriously. “It must be related to his consumption of chicken nuggets.”

They were crazy.

“I wasn’t thinking about hitting you.” I was their good boy. “Next thing you know you’re going to be jumping out at me around corners and going boo.”

I’d almost made a scare-me-to-death joke but Daddy had seemed kind of tense earlier.

He was silly now, though.

“Please explain boo and the function of Halloween.” He said it so seriously I almost missed the teasing glint in his eyes. “Large fruits should not have faces.”

I kind of agreed with him but all I could do was giggle as I finally threw myself at them. “I had nuggets tonight, not pumpkins, so I’m not going to worry about that right now.”

Master made me squeak as he picked me up but Daddy made a tsking sound he must’ve been practicing. “Our boy always worries. Should I do my best to figure out if you have been abducted and replaced?”

“What have you been reading?” Something ridiculous judging by how funny he found the whole thing. Laughter was pouring through

the bond as he closed the door and set the privacy screen. “I’m not an alien.”

As we sat down on the couch with me on Master’s lap, he frowned at me and poked my stomach. “You are an alien. I have heard that conversation explored several different times over the past few days.”

Giggling, I hid against his neck and wiggled my legs over Daddy’s lap as he sat down. “You’re the aliens. You’ve even got alien ears.”

I didn’t really notice them anymore, but it was going to be weird seeing them blend in with the humans.

“I have elf ears.” Master huffed. “Those are better than aliens.”

“I have heard that tentacle aliens are the best, so I will have to research the rankings between elves and aliens.” Daddy might’ve actually been serious about that which made it even funnier. “Human logic has given me many new things to study.”

Aside from the whole finding his mates thing, I was pretty sure that was his favorite part of the portal opening up again.

“It seemed like you were studying something else while I was gone.” I hadn’t actually meant to bring that up, but the words jumped out before I could stop them.

My hiding instinct was right on point, though, so I found my face pressed against Master’s neck before I could think about what to do next. It’d been a good decision because they went very still.

Thoughtfully still.

“Were we distracting?” Daddy’s question was logical but I didn’t know how to answer it.

“I didn’t realize how much we must’ve been sharing through the bond.” Master was also really logical. “We’re going to need to decide the etiquette for that kind of behavior. Distracting is one thing but distracting and giving him an erection is another.”

I was going to die.

Yep, they were trying to give me a heart attack.

“He was projecting arousal as he was talking to himself at the door, so you have a good point.” Daddy wanted to make a point and reached over to stroke my cock through my pants. “Shock seems to have lessened it, though, so we will not be exploring the boo activity he discussed.”

Master let out a hum of agreement as he kissed my neck. “Yes, I prefer him aroused, not shocked.”

Oh…arousal…arousal was much better than shock.

I made sure they knew that by moaning and rocking into Daddy’s hand as he stroked my cock back to life. They both appreciated my agreement by opening our bonds wider and flooding me with desire and pride.

Daddy loved turning me on and Master seemed to love everything about the scene, including the way my ass was grinding over his cock, if I was reading his feelings correctly.

“This is much better.” Master moaned into my neck as I eased back and he kissed higher, licking around my ear. “Show me how good his touch feels.”

I could feel my face heating up but his kisses and the way their arms were around me kept my anxiety from taking control. The last

time I'd shared deliberately like that had been when I was little, and little me just jumped into things without thinking about it.

I wanted to be their grown-up mate this time, though.

Squeezing my eyes shut probably made me look silly but they didn't think so. Our bonds were wide open and I was soaking up their desire and all the random thoughts that flickered through.

Daddy wanted to make me even harder.

Master was imagining Daddy sandwiched between us.

They both wanted to hear every thought and desire, so I started with showing Master how good Daddy's hand felt and letting him feel the way his erection felt against my ass. His moan filled the apartment and had Daddy's wicked pride flooding through the bond.

He'd liked that.

It seemed like he'd found a fun new game because every time Master moaned, Daddy would change how he was jerking me off. Going slower made me and Master both frustrated for more, but squeezing me harder took both our breaths away.

Master loved that one so much his cock jerked under me and his teeth sent shivers through me. "I have wicked, wicked mates."

Yep.

Daddy agreed but he was naughty enough that he wanted more because he used his free hand to release the button on my pants and made a show of slowly easing my zipper down. Feeling his hand finally release my cock was amazing, but the way Master shook under me said I wasn't the only one sending feelings through the bond.

What was Daddy doing?

Whatever it was had Master groaning and his body clenched around mine as Daddy's hand tightened around my naked shaft that time. "Fuck."

Oh, Master sounded good using that English word.

Daddy snickered. "Do good Master's use that kind of language?"

Naughty Daddy.

Master thought so too because he glared at Daddy so hard he shivered that time. "Is cursing worse than imaging your mouth around my erection?"

Oh.

Daddy had been naughty.

My little side might've been giggly and dramatic but Daddy's sub side seemed to like pushing Master's buttons.

This was going to be interesting.

And yay for being the only one without a Dom side to worry about.

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Chapter 28

Zorin

Yes, being with Raxius had been wonderful and probably what Shiloh would call romantic, but having both my mates together was something special I didn't have a word for.

"Oh?" Doing my best to look confused, I frowned. "I thought you wanted to know what we were imagining? Did I get that wrong?"

It had been the most obviously arousing option that I could easily visualize, so it was good to see I had done it correctly.

Shiloh's giggle said he approved, but my favorite part was Raxius' grumbling pleasure. Our grumpy mate couldn't seem to decide how he wanted to handle the situation and that made it even more enjoyable.

"Be very careful, my naughty mate. My thoughts have been going in a different direction, and if you're not careful, I'm going to share them." Raxius was a brat for using my curiosity against me. "If you push me…"

His voice trailed off before he finished his threat making him even more of a brat. "You have to explain consequences. That is a primary rule in these types of relationships."

Everyone knew that, but Raxius shrugged.

"We'll see." His vague wording was both frustrating and arousing in a way I could not explain.

And I did not appreciate that at all.

Showing him that was my primary goal, so I pictured wrapping my hands around both of their erections and pleasuring them tightly. Shiloh squirmed and whined but Raxius groaned and glared as he thrust his hips up against Shiloh's lap. "This is what is called pushing your luck."

"Me?" No. I was studious and helpful. "I'm just following instructions and enjoying spending time with my mates."

Something about the scene or our teasing had Shiloh laughing again, but it was not his little side showing a need for attention. He simply found something funny and was thoroughly enjoying my acting.

He had a very creative mate.

Oh.

And…and a brat.

"That's…" Cheating. Raxius was cheating. "That's…"

New.

Very new.

I had never thought to explore there, but I had also never analyzed what kind of mate I could be given. Having two males would not have been my assumption even if I had been the type to wonder like some people were.

"Master." Shiloh's shocked tone had me both wanting to smile and groan as I squeezed my eyes closed and fought the urge to rub against Shiloh's legs. "That's…"

“Arousing.” Raxius growled out the word as his imaginary erection slid deeper into me. “It seems like your Daddy is going to enjoy that.”

Yes, it seemed I probably would.

“Do…” Squirming, Shiloh’s desire and his shyness were at odds. “Do you want Daddy in the middle like…like doing that?”

The middle?

Ah.

“Yes, sweet boy.” The Dom in his tone sent shivers through me as he made his imaginary erection pulse. Penises did not do that but the magical one was growing bigger like in the tentacle books. Those were educational no matter what Beatrice had tried to claim.

“I’m going to fuck your Daddy and he’s going to fuck you.” The tender tone Raxius used did not match the dirty words he said to Shiloh, but that did not seem to matter to either of us. We both moaned and rocked, making me wonder what Raxius was sending to Shiloh.

“When…” Whining, Shiloh shivered and I felt the muscles in his legs tighten as Raxius slowed his magical fucking. “When, Master?”

Raxius pretended to think about it, but we knew it was not a difficult question. He was just a brat and nothing he’d done since our mating would convince me otherwise. “We should probably go slow and make sure we get to know each other thoroughly before doing something like that…something intimate and erotic.”

Brat.

That would always be one of the best English words, even if erotic was another interesting one.

Shiloh's pout came through as a sound both inside the bond and out loud, pushing me to think about how to please my boy. And how to punish Raxius for being a naughty brat. My experience with mate intimacy was limited, though, so I would have to lean on Shiloh for help.

"Is there a way we can both use our mouths on our naughty mate? His behavior needs consequences."

I kept the question quietly locked down to just Shiloh, but Raxius knew something had changed simply based on the way Shiloh moaned. Our mate was adorable, but he tattled on himself on a regular basis, leading Raxius to make a skeptical sound. My curiosity was too strong and I found he was studying us both when I finally opened my eyes. "What are my mates up to?"

He was much more intelligent than I'd always assumed.

"Nothing, Master." Shiloh recovered enough to attempt innocence and kissed Raxius sweetly. "We've just got a surprise for you."

That was a very accurate way of describing our plan.

I approved of his adorable deception.

"Kneel with me, Daddy."

Shiloh's quietly whispered instructions came through the bond as he slid onto the floor. I joined him quickly, attempting the smooth movements he instinctively made. His body was beautiful without having to think about it, but mine was never that naturally graceful.

The pulse of pleasure and pride Shiloh sent through our bond said he approved of what he saw, though. He also found our bratty mate's skeptical glare to be highly humorous and barely held back

more giggles. It seemed his little and big sides, as he called them, were at war and I was fascinated to see who would win in the end.

At the moment, it seemed the mix gave him a sexual confidence and mischievous excitement that fit well with intimacy.

"What kind of surprise is this?" Raxius frowned but his bond lit up as Shiloh reached for our grumpy mate's pants. "A naughty surprise?"

My shrug was not convincing because of our placement and Shiloh's obvious delight, but it was not meant to be taken seriously. "You shall see."

Shiloh's giggle snuck out again but so did Raxius' erection as his pants were opened. "You're going to feel too."

He was not subtle in any way and his excitement had Raxius trying to decide if he wanted to laugh or moan as he lifted his hips to help Shilo. "I think I've got a guess about what might happen."

I should hope so, but I kept up my neutral expression as his full erection was released. "Are you trying to ruin our surprise?"

Raxius had no idea what to say to that, but he did not have to because Shiloh took that decision out of his hands and made him moan. "Fates…"

Kissing the end of Raxius' erection had the bratty dragon holding his breath and teasing words drifted from his mind.

Shiloh approved and smiled at me. "Your turn, Daddy."

"Kisses. Licks. Then we'll take turns sucking until Master wants to come."

I approved and sent agreement and approval of his plan through our bond as I leaned in and pressed a kiss to the end of Raxius' erection. There was a salty taste that was not unpleasant, but my favorite part was sharing the experience with Shiloh and making Raxius squirm. "Fuck."

He liked that word.

So did Shiloh because it made him giggle as he took his turn kissing Raxius' erection with an open mouth that time.

"We call it French kissing, Daddy."

I had questions about the label, but that would wait. It was my turn to kiss Raxius and to see if what I had learned from kissing his mouth was applicable to other parts of his body.

It was.

The way he moved and the sounds he made indicated I had done well, and based on Shiloh's emotions, he was enjoying watching. Knowing both mates were enjoying the experience made it easy to settle into the rhythm of sharing and kissing as we slowly deepened the pleasure we were giving Raxius.

It seemed the plan should have been described as licking, kissing, and then frustrated growls. Raxius was generally quiet when it came to his external sounds, preferring to practice glaring and scowls, but when pleasure was involved that changed.

He gave us moans and huffs and curses as he fought the urge to thrust into our mouths. "Fuck. Fates above. You've…"

Whatever demand he was going to make was cut off as Shiloh swallowed the length as far as he could then hummed softly. The song was unfamiliar because only the sound of the beat was coming

through the bond, but the vibrations were enough for Raxius to throw his head back. “I can’t…”

We had won.

“Yay. We did it, Daddy.”

Shiloh’s little side was back to winning his internal war. It seemed that competition pushed him to the front, which was an interesting dynamic I would have to analyze.

Later.

“Can you feel him shaking?”

Raxius was so lost in the pleasure he’d completely forgotten to torment us, which was another win in itself even though that aspect had been enjoyable. There was just something wonderful about knowing we had brought him to the edge, but we had both known it would not last.

As soon as Shiloh released his erection, nodding excitedly, Raxius lifted his head and glared at us like threats were right on the tip of his tongue. “You had a very interesting surprise, my naughty mates.”

Giggling through our bond, Shiloh tried to look polite and grown-up but it was not working as much as he’d hoped. “I’m glad you liked it, Master. We both are.”

Yes, that was very true…but I was not sure what should come next.

“There has to be consequences for teasing me, though.” It seemed as though Raxius knew exactly what should happen next. “Stand up.”

Having a helpful mate was wonderful, but what did he have planned?

He had the bond lowered until only the faintest emotions came through, but what I could feel was wicked and happy and had something like anticipation in it. But it did nothing to tell me what he actually had planned.

"Yes, Master." Shiloh did not seem to have the same demand for knowledge racing through him because he took my hand and immediately started to stand, pulling me with him. "Thank you for letting us give you a surprise."

Oh, Shiloh was very good at this game, so I nodded and did my best to look innocent as well. Raxius enjoyed whatever he saw or felt because his erection jerked, but the happiness coming through the bond had my body reacting nervously.

What was he thinking?

"I'm glad you had fun." His words and his tone did not match, but Shiloh's body responded with desire radiating out and filling us both with it. Raxius even smiled but it was almost like a character from one of Klynn's books. "I hope it was worth it."

What had he been reading?

Was this just his natural state showing?

I had questions.

"Master…" Shiloh moaned out a response that said nothing but pleased Raxius. Whatever he was feeling through the bond with our confusingly stern mate made Shiloh very happy, though.

"That's my good boy. Who's soon to be my naked boy because I can't show you consequences when you have your clothes on." He

said that very logically, and I agreed it was a reasonable next step, but it was only the barest of information.

I had to know.

What?

Shiloh reached out and put his hand on my mouth, smiling brightly at Raxius. “Daddy’s confused. It’s okay.”

No, I simply needed to know what would happen next.

“Don’t be naughty, Daddy.”

Politely requesting information should never be considered naughty, but it seemed like I needed to wait until our intimate game was over before I could explain that.

“Fine.”

There had to be social rules around this type of game that I didn’t understand yet. More research was necessary, but that would allow me to master the game of submission. I was very smart and I would be able to do it perfectly very soon.

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Chapter 29

Raxius

Shiloh was confusing his Daddy, but my boy was incredibly smart when it came to staying out of trouble. He smiled brightly as he sent Zorin some kind of private message to behave. Our confusing mate huffed and practiced looking dramatic by pushing out one hip, but Shiloh was not upset by the reaction.

He found it funny.

Our boy found everything funny and seemed to be barely in his grown-up side, but I had to wonder how long that would last…and if it mattered.

More questions should have been asked before we started Domination games but there were always so many other things to talk about that did not make Shiloh squirm.

"Oh, it seems I do have good mates." Nodding slowly had more happiness and desire flooding from Shiloh, but Zorin wanted to stomp his foot and demand I give him answers to every question.

He also seemed to think he was not broadcasting as loudly as he actually was. My mate's habit of talking to himself seemed to extend through our bond more often than he realized. It was fascinating and helpful at the same time.

It was also cute, but I couldn't show that at the moment.

The expression of giving an inch and taking a mile seemed to be very applicable to my highly intelligent mate.

"Shiloh, take off your Daddy's shirt. Maybe that will help him to remember his good manners." At the very least it would distract him from the bad ones.

It also distracted Shiloh, which kept him from getting nervous. While he was focused on Zorin, it seemed he could not focus on his own worries. I wasn't sure if it was a mate thing, a Shiloh thing, or a submissive tendency, but I used it to my advantage.

Yes, our usually nervous mate didn't hesitate to take his hand off Zorin's mouth and immediately start pulling off the comfortable shirt he had put on after our meetings ended. Shiloh had defined the soft pullover shirt as comfy and said he needed one so he could match with Daddy.

Matching clothing was not something I had any experience with, but I was thoroughly enjoying my giggly mate taking it off Zorin. "That's much better. Zorin, the same with Shiloh. He is entirely too covered up."

A pleased kind of excitement came through the bond as Zorin reached for Shiloh's shirt and started releasing buttons, but it took me a moment to understand he was excited to please me. Noticing our bodies was only a vague idea, but he was excited to show off Shiloh and to see what would happen next.

Shiloh, on the other hand, was much more focused on our bodies and I could feel his desire to run his hands and his mouth all over his Daddy. So the difference was not a submissive versus Dominant issue. It also did not seem to be an Earthling issue based on the

conversations I had repeatedly interrupted from most of the mated people of Earth.

So it was a Zorin thing, as Wren of Earth would say?

They were both still radiating positive emotion as Shiloh's chest was finally free of his clothing, but I did my best to focus on their actions as well as their random thoughts and emotions. It was a nearly overwhelming level of multitasking, but I appreciated anything that would keep me from orgasming too quickly.

"Very nice." Keeping my voice low and almost stern, I did my best to pulse desire and approval through the bond. "Shiloh, lick Zorin's chest. His nipples need attention."

Excitedly throwing himself at his Daddy, Shiloh completely missed the confused way Zorin looked down at his body.

"What?"

Random thoughts flashed through the bond but stopped completely as he felt Shiloh's lips around his nipple. Shock was the first reaction that came through the bond followed quickly by pleasure and confusion.

Zorin had never explored his body.

None of it.

He didn't even seem to have accidentally discovered areas that were pleasurable under specific circumstances.

Every time I thought I was starting to understand Zorin, he did something confusing and added to the questions piling up in my mind. I kept them tucked away, though, because the only thing I thought would come out of poking them was an unhappy mate.

He'd spent most of his life being isolated from others because of his intelligence and drive to understand questions, and I wasn't going to do anything to make him feel isolated among his mates.

"That's sexy, boy. Kiss the other and let's see if your Daddy likes your teeth as much as I think he will." The sharp feeling of being spanked had certainly agreed with him, so it was a logical guess on my part.

And I was amazing.

The first nibble of Shiloh's teeth had Zorin gasping and his head falling back. They were perfect together, pulling another moan from me without touching me. "My beautiful mates."

Focusing more pleasure and pride through the bond, I did my best to show them confidence and approval. Questions and confusion could wait until they had to be dealt with, and that might not ever happen. Zorin was the one who needed questions answered, so I'd wait until he found them.

We'd get there eventually.

"Suck harder, boy. Let me see how he likes that." Oh, he loved that. "Good boy. Did you hear his moan?"

Judging by the way Shiloh shivered, he'd felt it too.

I wasn't sure what Zorin was sending through the bond, but Shiloh's hips were rocking like lower parts of him were being pleasured. "Is your Daddy showing you what it would be like to be fucked?"

I knew I was right when they both squeaked like they'd been caught. So I made the disapproving noise I thought was called a tsk and shook my head. "Naughty mates."

Somehow the disapproval made it even more pleasurable for them, but I didn't want Shiloh orgasming until he was actually filled with his Daddy's cock. The bond was amazing but reality would be even better.

Hopefully.

Shiloh seemed to think it would, and since he was the only one with practical experience, I was taking his word on it. Well, his thoughts. He seemed to think he shouldn't volunteer information about the male in his past he called a boyfriend, so he did his best to tuck thoughts of the male at the back of his mind.

I had no idea what Zorin would think, but I was just glad our lonely mate had found someone who was nice to him for a while. Shiloh honestly never thought he would be given a mate. Vague thoughts that I had caught made it sound like he'd thought he didn't have enough active magic to be able to bond.

When I considered how few mated pairs he'd ever seen, well, looking for a human to stay with had probably made sense.

It was horribly sad, but it made sense.

No, we would wait until Zorin asked that on his own. He did not need another reason to be emotional about our mate's past. Jealousy didn't seem to be strong in him, but Shiloh's happiness was more important to his Daddy's emotional stability than either of them realized.

Shiloh's hips rocking again gave me another reason to sound disappointed. "Oh, I saw that."

Zorin must have been very curious about penetrative pleasures to keep teasing Shiloh with it, but I shook my head and sounded frustrated. "No more kissing."

Their dramatic pouts and sighs as Shiloh obeyed were adorable, but I kept that to myself as I raised one eyebrow. “Zorin, take his shoes off.”

Another story, whenever you're ready.

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Watching him kneel in front of Shiloh had my cock demanding attention, so I wrapped my hand around it and slowly stroked it as I watched them together. Shiloh was too distracted to notice, but Zorin’s gaze kept darting over to me.

“You can always use your hands on Shiloh because you’re his Daddy, but I’m the one who controls your cock, my naughty mate.” The shiver that raced through him was obvious to them both, and Shiloh ended up squeezing his eyes shut as he moaned.

Zorin’s brain seemed to have stopped working completely, so Shiloh let out a shaky breath as he held on to his Daddy’s shoulders. “He…he understands. He knows the rule. No touching. His…his cock belongs to you.”

“I’m glad. Otherwise I’ll have to think of consequences for his actions.” I was going to keep the threat vague to drive Zorin crazy and keep him distracted, but Shiloh must’ve filled in some of the options because Zorin’s eyes went wide.

“What?” Zorin froze, somehow making them both unsteady, but they had a Master with amazing reflexes and I caught both of them before Shiloh tipped over. Blinking and somehow not seeming to

understand what happened, Zorin frowned as he noticed my hand on his arm and that I was halfway off the couch. “Thank you?”

Shiloh’s giggles filled the room as he finally placed both feet firmly on the floor. “Sorry, Daddy.”

Yes, he had clearly been too helpful at the wrong time and his apologetic shrug said he knew that.

“I…” Looking around, Zorin focused on Shiloh’s feet and carefully helped take off the other shoe before finishing his thought. When Shiloh was steady again, Zorin let out a deep breath. “I will have questions about that later.”

Me too because I needed to know what Shiloh had teased him about that had gotten such a strong reaction.

Shiloh couldn’t help giggling again as he nodded and leaned down to give his Daddy a quick kiss on the cheek. “Okay.”

Whatever Zorin felt or heard through their bond had Zorin peeking over at me, not being nearly as subtle as he thought he was. Still, I did my best to give him the illusion that I had not noticed his behavior. “Shiloh? Are you going to fall over if I let Zorin take your pants off? Shoes should not be this exciting.”

He tried not to laugh but his grin spread across his face. “Shoes were more exciting than I thought. Sorry, Master.”

My stern expression had him pressing his lips together to keep his giggles inside. When he finally controlled himself, he stood straighter. “It’s Daddy’s turn for shoes.”

Raising one eyebrow, I sighed. “I’m going to have him sit down on the couch for that.”

I was hilarious, but Zorin was still too distracted to appreciate how funny I was. Shiloh seemed to give him a mental prompt that had him glancing around and quickly standing up, though. “Yes. My shoes.”

Shiloh had performed the Earth behavior of blowing his Daddy’s mind.

He did his best to look innocent as he helped Zorin sit down on the couch. Shiloh even widened his eyes and knelt sweetly to do his best to distract me.

Manipulating his Daddy was one thing, but it seemed like I needed to set boundaries around that behavior when it came to me. So I focused on the bond and mentally brought my hand down on his bottom. His wide-eyed expression and squeak were an amazing reaction but my favorite part was the way he fell back on his ass.

Zorin was still wonderfully distracted by whatever images he was hiding from our bond, so I kept my stern gaze on Shiloh. “Stop teasing your Daddy or I’m going to ask what you were telling him.”

Faint giggles came through the bond he tried to tighten but he wasn’t fast enough to hide them all as he scrambled to sit up again and focused on taking off his Daddy’s shoes. “I’ll be good.”

No, but he would try to be more subtle next time.

Zorin wasn’t subtle either, especially as his brain processed everything. He stared at me, clearly wanting to ask questions of some sort. We’d shifted into a type of distraction I couldn’t decide was good or bad, so I changed my plans. “Stand up, Zorin.”

Shiloh looked sheepish, but still aroused, so he liked whatever he’d said too.

"Sorry, Master."

His quiet words through the bond had me wanting to laugh, but I did my best to hide that from him.

"Little distractions for your Daddy. Not big ones where he will have questions."

His sigh was adorable.

"I forgot that part, but I didn't scare him."

For the love of the ancestors.

"I know, little Earthling."

Nodding as Zorin rose, I sent him a pleased feeling as he moved to stand in front of me. "Ask me your questions."

We couldn't continue with him stuck on whatever he'd been teased about. But asking him about it seemed to startle him even more, so I'd nearly stripped him completely by the time he blinked and the thoughts organized themselves. "Some Dominant partners lock penises away or even punish them when rules are not followed."

What had our little mate teased him with?

Ugh.

Nodding slowly, I wrapped my fingers around the base of Zorin's erection. "Yes, I heard a discussion and asked one of the Earthlings about those kinds of situations."

Agent Murphy had not been happy to answer my questions but he understood it was important. Going forward he would also understand the need to speak more quietly in public. He had to be one of the loudest humans ever, but he would learn eventually.

Looking down at his body, Zorin frowned at his erection. “Ownership can be an important aspect of happy domination.”

His mind was an interesting place…I was very glad I was not as smart as my confusing mate.

“It is and being owned can be an important part of submission.” Keeping my fingers ringed around his erection, I let him think for a moment before I continued. “Mates complement each other in many ways, so if I want to be the one to give you pleasure in that way, it makes sense that you would like to give me that control.”

His head jerked as something that felt like relief or confidence flickered through the bond. “It would be a good way of taking care of you.”

And he wouldn’t have to figure out when to use it?

Yes, my questions had questions.

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Chapter 30

Shiloh

Oops.

"I like being taken care of." Master kept a tight hold on Daddy's cock, even as Daddy started rocking back to feel Master tug on it. "I also like giving rules and structure. I also like knowing you will not think poorly of me because of it."

Yeah, it'd have to be hard in a world where everyone was at least confused into believing they were completely vanilla. A lot of people I'd met actually seemed to be sexually neutral, but for people like Daddy and Master, it would have to be hard.

Daddy sucked in a breath and seemed to get shocked back into reality. "I could never think poorly of my mate for explaining what he needed. That would not let me take good care of you."

Okay, he got shocked into more submission…or a different kind of submission, maybe?

"I like it when you take care of me." Master still kept a tight grip, but pretended not to notice as Daddy started rocking again. "You do a very good job of finding new ways to care for me, like picking out my clothes this morning. That was very helpful and made me feel good."

We'd stayed cuddling too long and Master had made sure we used the bathroom first, so Daddy had buzzed around picking out

clothing for Master, even making him some kind of tea drink that smelled like fruit and licorice had a baby.

I wasn't gonna drink that, but Master thought Daddy was really sweet.

"I…" Daddy was still caught between thinking about his penis and thinking about taking care of Master. "I find it to be very… fulfilling I think is a good English word for it."

Pushing away my thoughts and mental grumbling about only being able to read our native language, I sent Daddy and Master lots of happy feelings and sexy ones. I didn't want Daddy to have any worries about how I saw this part of their relationship.

Because eventually he was going to find a romance novel or dirty book that had a conflicted switch in it and then he'd find something new to overthink.

Yes, I was going to be proactive and make sure he knew I loved it.

They both seemed to relax even more, but Daddy was still barely rocking, just enough to feel the tugs on his erection. Master had a spark in his eyes that said he liked this game too, but I wasn't going to distract either of them yet.

Soon, though.

I knew to stay quiet as Master brought his free hand and started barely rubbing right under the head of Daddy's cock. Just because he was being soft didn't mean it wouldn't give Daddy big feelings, so I waited quietly while he figured that out.

"There are a lot of different ways you can take care of my needs." Master felt wicked but his face was still calm. "So you're going to

remember to use your safewords while we explore restraints and different ways to make me happy."

Daddy really wanted to make Master happy, but he liked rules even more. I could feel that in the bond, so I gave Master a tiny nod and whispered through the bond.

"He'll use them, Master."

Master sent me back feelings of being proud of me, making me fight the urge to shiver. But I was going to be quiet and still and not distract Daddy.

Again.

"Sometimes…" Daddy felt like he wanted to whine but he was really focused on Master's hand. "Sometimes that will be…will be difficult. Being…being challenged is not negative."

So he wanted to be pushed with the pain a bit?

I barely heard Master grumble through the bond that he should've asked more questions but he silenced it before it escaped too far. Daddy didn't get that part, but he'd started to notice the way the soft feelings kept getting bigger.

He blinked and tried to rock back but Master kept a firm grip on Daddy's naughty cock. "That…there are…there are many kinds of interesting…interesting sensations."

"That's correct." Making small circles, Master sent happy feelings through the bond. "And sometimes you will suffer for me because you know it will make me happy, but what will you do when the feelings get to be overwhelming?"

"I…" Swallowing hard, Daddy rocked again and something had his eyes nearly rolling back in his head. "I might…I might need a

different…different word."

A different word?

"You like overwhelming, don't you, naughty mate?" Master must've heard something from Daddy because he got that really fast. "When it gets close to being negative, you must tell me, but I love feeling you like this."

Oh…I wanted to know what Daddy was feeling.

Shoot.

I had questions too.

Ugh.

I was going to be a good boy.

I wasn't going to be distracting.

I was going to be quiet and patient.

"You'll…you'll pick out the restraint objects you…you approve of?" Daddy sounded like his English had wandered off. "You…you need to control it to be happy."

"I will." Master's finger did something to get a whimper from Daddy and fiery pleasure spiked through both their bonds. It was confusing because even Master moaned but he didn't stop caressing Daddy. "When we go to Earth, I will also pick out interesting ways to make me even happier."

Yay.

That was going to be fun.

Were there magical naughty stores too?

Maybe someone sold them online?

Ugh…more questions.

I was going to have to talk to Wren about that because he knew all kinds of weird stuff.

"That…" Daddy felt distracted and kind of confused, but not bad as he whined and tried to get his thoughts out. "That would make me happy. Care…caretaking is important."

Good grief.

No, keep your thoughts to yourself.

Inside thoughts.

Inside thoughts.

Inside thoughts.

"Because you love each other!"

Oops.

How had I gone from not being able to talk to not being able to shut up?

I clamped my lips together as they both turned to me. It was too much, so I grabbed my shirt off the couch and hid under it. As I tried to decide the best way to apologize, Master made a thinking sound. "Take his shirt off his head, my naughty mate. Our shy boy has turned into our impulsive one."

"Sorry. I don't know what happened." I squeaked as my shirt came off as my pants came down. "Daddy."

He shook his head and smiled at me as I opened my eyes. "You have become very chatty."

Kinda.

“Just with you and Master.” I kissed his cheek and tried not to think about hiding again. “You make me chatty.”

As I stepped out of my clothes, Master stood up and wrapped his arms around us both. “Do you know why you’ve become so chatty?”

The mix of soft laughter and more tender emotions flowed through the bond, but I couldn’t control the way my face heated up. “Probably?”

Daddy looked at Master and frowned. “Just probably?”

Ugh.

It was my turn to get teased.

“I think he’s trying to get attention.” Shaking his head, Master sighed. “Let’s go in the bedroom. I think I know what you both need.”

Huh?

Daddy coughed like he’d swallowed a bug. “Me?”

Master shrugged as he led us into the bedroom. “Yes, you’re ignoring something important and I think you need a reminder about who you belong to.”

Really?

What was Master going to do?

He had our bond closed down so all I could feel was faint signs of pleasure and something naughty. It seemed our Master had found his Dom side and he was going to make sure Daddy embraced his submissive side.

So what did he want from me?

Guessing seemed like a bad idea, especially when he gave both of us sweet kisses and patted our asses. “On the bed.”

Well, that wasn’t surprising.

I scrambled to obey quickly, but Daddy was slower. I wasn’t sure if that was because Master was getting naked or if it was him thinking too much, but eventually he sat down beside me in the middle of the bed.

Master was watching us closely, but as he pushed his pants down to the floor, he shook his head. “No. On all fours.”

Oh.

Daddy swallowed hard and somehow got even slower, but I was helpful and leaned closer to whisper to him. “Good spankings have to start with good behavior, or he might forget the best part.”

Orgasms.

Daddy blinked but rolled over faster.

His brain might’ve stopped but his body ran pretty well without it.

Master appreciated it because he barely chuckled behind us, but for him to do that out loud said he was feeling a lot. “Much better.”

Because he liked our asses or our submission?

“Both, naughty boy.”

Oops.

His laughter that time was wicked and inside my head, but he distracted me by running his hand over one cheek before moving back again. “I have one mate who needs a reminder about who he belongs to…”

Daddy yelped as Master spanked him for the first time, but he didn't feel afraid or anything scary.

"And one mate who needs help remembering something important." We both yelped as Master spanked me.

Master loved it.

Alternating between spanking both of us, Master made pleased sounds and hummed as we squeaked and shook. I loved the ache he gave my bottom and the way Daddy's brain had come back online. But all it could do was moan and roll around like a cat that was high on catnip.

Master loved that too.

"My naughty boy needs toys when we visit Earth, but my wicked sub needs a cage and a collar." Master radiated need and happiness and something like the best kind of control as he spanked us again. "Do you know where I'm going to collar you?"

Whatever Master did made Daddy squeak, so the question was definitely for him. "My…that…"

Oh, Daddy was going to get a penis collar?

"And you are going to get diapers and binkies and the clothing called onesies." Master got a squeak out of me that time because he spanked right over my hole. "Both of my mates will be happy because…"

Oh.

Daddy groaned as I lowered my arms and hid my face against the bed, but he was smart and knew the answer. "Because you love us."

“Such a sexy, smart mate.” Master nearly purred out the words as love came though the bond. “Let me hear you, my mates.”

Orders were wonderful things.

“I love you, Master.”

Closing my eyes, I reached over and took Daddy’s hand and found our bond.

“I love you too, Daddy.”

The emotions he sent back were almost painful, but he squeezed my hand and sighed. “I love you both. As mates. As partners in this domination. As…I don’t have the words.”

Master shifted behind us before his hand stroked over my wonderfully warm cheeks. “You’ll find them and you’ll spend this life and beyond telling me about every emotion you feel and every idea you discover.”

Aww.

They were so cute.

I might’ve sent that through the bond based on the soft laugh that Master let out. “And you my adorable worrier, you are going to make sure you share every worry and need and every fantasy hiding in your beautiful mind.”

Eep.

Ugh.

They both laughed that time, but Daddy’s turned into a strangled moan as Master ran some kind of cloth over my ass.

“Now?”

Whatever Daddy was squeaking about had Master sending wicked emotions through the bond. “Yes, now.”

Now what?

Oh.

Magic was cooler than anyone on Earth ever realized.

I wasn’t sure why mages kept fucking with flowers when they could do amazing things to needy asses.

“Right now…” Master moaned as he sank two fingers right into my somehow slicked and stretched entrance. “Because there is nothing that would make me happier than to have my mates under me.”

It was time for a Daddy sandwich.

Part of me wanted to giggle and part of me wanted to moan, but as my brain tried to decide who would win, Master found my button and fried my brain. “Oh…”

“Ancestors above.”

He’d found Daddy’s button too.

“I thought you might like that, my curious mate.” Master sounded very pleased with himself and did something that left Daddy gasping. “I can’t wait to explore all your questions in very hands-on ways.”

Master was funny but Daddy wouldn’t realize that until he stopped moaning and thrusting back on Master’s fingers.

Oops.

Daddy squeaked again as Master popped his bottom. “Naughty mate. You don’t get to come until I’ve seen you fucking our boy.”

Me.

"Yay."

They both chuckled through the bond as Master patted our bottoms again. "Shiloh, go lie down in the middle of the bed."

Now?

Yes.

Oh.

I had the sexiest mates ever.

They were both naked and hard and watching me like I was the sexiest mate ever. Even our little differences just made them more incredible. It was like one touch and I'd float away because it was just so perfect.

No fears popping up.

No worries about saying something wrong.

No hesitation.

"Move between his legs, Zorin." Master trailed his hands down Daddy's back as I spread my legs and he obeyed. "Beautiful. Let me see you kiss him."

I was already so turned on I was vibrating with need but Daddy took his time stretching out over me and brushing his lips against mine. Between the desire they were pouring into me, I could feel Daddy's awe and his love as he nibbled on my lips and made love to my mouth.

He was loving me inside and out, and it was like nothing I'd ever felt before. But it got even better as Master climbed on the bed and

sat behind Daddy. “That’s my sweet mates. I knew you’d be beautiful like this.”

His words were tender but his emotions were passionate and left me shaking every time he pulsed them through me. All I could do was moan into Daddy’s mouth and rock my hips up to rub my cock against his, but a chuckle floated through me before it felt like Master spanked me again. “Naughty boy. You don’t get to come yet either.”

Ugh.

“Spread his legs and push them up. I want to see your cock rubbing against his opening.” Warmth radiated from one of them as Daddy pushed my legs up and spread me wide, but I couldn’t decide who it was from.

I could tell whose cock was rubbing between my legs, though, and I pushed up to beg for more. Master chuckled but it was a wicked sound that had my eyes rolling back in my head. “Yes…I can’t wait until you have to wait for me to release your cock before you can fuck him with it.”

Oh.

That would be.

He’d.

Oh wow.

Daddy loved that idea too because as we both jerked, his cock slipped in my stretched opening and we gasped. “Oh, I won’t forget that later, my naughty mates.”

Whatever Master sent Daddy had his eyes rolling around that time, but the way he rocked into me and moaned said it would be

worth it.

"Slowly ease into him. Yes. Pin him to the bed. He doesn't get to come until you let him." Master leaned over Daddy and kissed his neck. "Your boy loves being filled with your cock. Look at him."

Me.

They.

Daddy.

He.

Moaning, all I could do was close my eyes and take whatever they gave me as Daddy pinned my arms to the bed. The trapped feeing they sent through me magnified every touch and sensation. But knowing Daddy was just as trapped between us made it even more incredible.

So I forced my eyes open and marveled at the shocked awe on Daddy's face as Master slowly slid inside him. It was like he was living for the first time and we'd given it to him. I wanted to give him even more, so I let him feel everything he was giving me as I clenched around his cock, loving the way he gasped, and then so did Master.

Oh, that was fun.

Their heads fell back and they moaned as each clench sent a wave through both of them. Daddy would gasp and thrust harder into me. When he rocked back, he'd fuck himself onto Master's cock. Master would groan and do his best to remind both of us who we belonged to by fucking Daddy into me. Then it would start all over again until I was so hard I was nearly flying.

When the world had narrowed down to Daddy's cock and Master's eyes, someone pushed my legs higher toward my chest and all it took was one more thrust for my world to go white as pleasure exploded through me.

As reality spun, Daddy cried out and then I heard Master groan like his dragon filled the room. It was the most incredible moment and I knew as soon as the world stopped spinning, I'd make sure they knew it.

But reasonable goals were good too, so when I could feel the bed under me and my mates wrapped around me, I found their bonds and sent a pulse of love through it.

Master kissed my neck and Daddy made a happy sound as he kissed my forehead. "There you are. I've been so patient."

Probably not.

Giggling about that had me opening my eyes. "Have you been driving Raxius crazy?"

Zorin shook his head but Raxius jumped in before lies were actually spoken. "Before he even opened his eyes, he wanted to know when he could start asking questions."

I managed not to laugh but it was hard. "I bet you've got a long list of very good questions."

Preening, Daddy nodded and went full professor mode as he shot Raxius a glare. "See? I knew he would understand. Our mate knows how special we both are."

And how funny they were.

"You're amazing." Doing my best to wrap my arms around them both, I closed my eyes again. "And you're sweet and sexy."

And they were mine.

It seemed all the nights I'd spent wishing for a place to belong, the fates had taken those desperate pleas and gave me mates, a whole new world to explore, and love that would never leave me empty again.

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Did you enjoy my delve into an alternate world?

While a lot of my books tend to take place in/around the same college town in the modern world, I do have a few "alt universes" I write as well.

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Non-Shifter Omegaverse - Contemporary Setting

Omegas are supposed to want equality, not submission and kinky sex. Society has spent the last two hundred years building omegas up to be pillars of the community, but these six men are ready to do whatever it takes to get what they want—the dominant Alphas of their dreams.

Each book can be read as a standalone, but they are best read in order.

Romance and Revolutions Series Keywords: D/s Relationships | BDSM Club | Kinky Group of Supportive Friends | Fast Burn Relationships | Low Angst | Humor | Knotting | Omegas Bucking The System

Romance and Revolutions Series on Amazon:
https://www.amazon.com/dp/B083DY3YDR

Romance and Revolutions Series on my website:
https://authorshawmontgomery.com/romance-and-revolutions-series/

Non-Shifter Omegaverse (with age play) - Contemporary Setting

With littles and middles, Daddies and Doms, this spin-off series from the Romance & Revolutions world will explore characters who are searching for love in the most interesting place they've ever imagined…a BDSM club.

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Love and Secrets Series Keywords: Age Play | BDSM Club | Kinky Group of Supportive Friends | Fast Burn Relationships | Low Angst

| Humor | Knotting | Omegas Bucking The System

Love and Secrets Series on Amazon:
https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08SDTG91X

Love and Secrets Series on My Website:
https://authorshawmontgomery.com/love-and-secrets-series/

Tentacled Aliens - Sci-fi Contemporary Setting

Aliens landing and asking for asylum was supposed to be the plot of a sci-fi movie, not a sexy romance that's hotter than anything on cable. But when the Doms are sweet, curious, and nearly psychic, maybe Mr. Right has tentacles.

Each book in this series is a standalone, but they're best read in order

The New Neighbors Series Keywords: D/s relationships | Tentacled Aliens | Electric Play | Tentacles as Sounds | Tentacle Bondage | Mates | Low Angst

The New Neighbors Series on Amazon:
https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08R66M8C4

The New Neighbors Series on my website:
https://authorshawmontgomery.com/the-new-neighbors-series/

Lactin Brotherhood - Contemporary Setting

The Lactin Brotherhood shared world is a series about men who naturally lactate and the guys who need them.

Books in this series are written by different authors and can be read as standalone stories. MA Innes' stories in this world are connected with character cameos but can still be read separately.

Lactin Brotherhood Series Keyword (for my books): Male Lactation | Age Play | Humor | D/s Relationships | Low/No Angst

The Lactin Brotherhood Series on Amazon:
https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0CXQ5YX2M

The Lactin Brotherhood Series on my website:
https://authorshawmontgomery.com/the-lactin-brotherhood-shared-world/

Natural Disaster World - Contemporary Setting

Donovan thinks his day can't get any worse. It can. With a tsunami coming for him, a hurricane hovering just off the coast, and his frenemy Trey along for the ride, bad things definitely come in threes.

This book series follows the same main characters throughout and is intended to be read in order.

Trouble Comes in Threes Series Keywords: Light-hearted | Forced Proximity | "Enemies" to Lovers | Age Play | Slow Burn

Trouble Comes in Threes Series on Amazon:
https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09WD9QBF7

Trouble Comes in Threes Series on my website:
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M.A. Innes and Shaw Montgomery are two sides to the same squirrely brain. M.A. Innes is the part of my imagination that leads to kinky and curious things like age play and puppy play. Shaw is the aspect that likes sweet BDSM but isn't taboo in nature.

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