Chapter 13: Tana

Pregnant? I look down at my stomach, laying my hands over my flat stomach where Ishir says I have a baby.

"I'm pregnant?"

He leans in, sniffing deeply. "If I'm not mistaken, that would be Cedric's baby."

He looks at me closely, his eyes narrowing as mine fill with tears. "And based on the dragon's lament that I followed to find you, he's not here."

I shake my head, unable to say anything with the huge lump in my throat.

"Do you have a place where you are staying?" He asks me gently.

I nod and turn, leading him to my cave. He checks it out, like I did, before looking at the fire. "Have you eaten?"

"No. I was out looking for food when I heard you. I tried to call on my dragon, but she won't come forward."

"That's because you're pregnant. You'll have to wait until after you give birth to shift, otherwise, you will kill the fetus."

I suck in air, my hands automatically going to my stomach again. I didn't even know I had a child growing inside me an hour ago, but now, I feel extremely protective of the baby growing inside me.

"I'm glad to see that you are willing to keep your child, even if Cedric left." He strokes the fire before looking at me. "Do you want to tell me about it?"

I look at him for a long moment. There has always been something about Ishir that I've liked. It's not just that he's strong and stoic, his personality matches well with dragons. He said he had befriended Avani

and I know I would be willing to call him my friend as well.

"I'll make a deal with you. If you catch dinner, I'll tell you anything you want to know."

"Deal, be back shortly." He says before standing and heading out of the campsite area. He turns back to me. "Everything will be okay Tana. I'll help you if you want. I won't leave you." 1

"Thank you, Ish." I say, deciding on a nickname for my friend. He smiles then jumps into his tiger form and runs off to catch us dinner.

While he's gone, I blow more fire into the fire pit and prepare to cook whatever animal he brings back. He returns with a wild hog. 2

"Bacon for breakfast tomorrow." He says and I laugh.

We clean the hog, pulling out both racks of ribs and both back flanks. We cook them over the fire pit and while they cook, I tell him about what happened with Cedric, how it marked me and then his anger at not knowing what I am before he left. 1

"Is that why you ran when I found you a week ago?" He asks me.

"That was you? I couldn't smell you, I just heard you and knew you were a supernatural, so I flew away. I didn't want to risk it being Cedric or another werewolf." 1

"Thankfully, I have an amazing sense of smell, so I was still able to track you."

"So, what happened to you?" I ask him.

"After I let the others go, I stayed with the little Kestrel. She was injured after that hawk threw her from Cedric's cage."

"Where is she now?" I ask, worried about her. She sacrificed herself to save us. 1

"I found a safe place for her while I came looking for you. I'll make sure she's okay."

He pulls the meat off the fire. "What about you, what are your plans?"

I hadn't thought about it. As a dragon, I would have been fine on my own, but now...now I have a child I have to consider. And not a dragon child that could protect itself immediately, this will be a hybrid child. I have no idea what to expect. But, I can't walk around the forest until I have my child and then hope all goes well. I need to create a life for him or her.

I look at Ishir. "I have no idea."

He nods, focusing on the meat he's pulling apart before handing me half. "I have an idea. I know someone that may be willing to hire you. Is it true what they say about dragons being good with numbers?"

I look at him. "You were in the arena for 382 days. During that time, you fought in 54 battles. Of those battles, you fought 16 coyotes, 10 wolves, three bears, two birds, four panthers, two monitor lizards, five foxes, four hyenas, two rhinos, five leopards and one lion." 2

"Damn, even I didn't know that. I'm guessing you could spout that off for Cedric and yourself as well?"

I just nod. It's not something that I consciously do, I just count. Everything. The numbers stay in my head and there's something about them that makes sense and is easy for me to keep track of.

"Yeah, I definitely think my friend would want to hire you. But it's in the city. You'd be stuck in a place with not only shifters, but also humans. There is pollution, congestion, high rises and lots of noise. But it pays a lot and would give you some stability, especially with a baby on the way."

I look down at my stomach. "Do you know how long I have before this baby will be born?"

He looks at my stomach. "Werewolf pregnancies last about five months. I'm guessing, since you got pregnant while in your human form, that it will follow that length of time rather than a typical dragon pregnancy."

"Well, since I'm growing a being inside me versus laying an egg, I'd agree." 1

"Do you have any money?" He asks me.

I look at him, giving him an 'Are you kidding me?' look. "I'm a dragon. If you know anything about us, you must know that we hoard treasure. I have money." 1

Ishir smiles at me as he finishes his food. "Well, if you have money, I have someone that can get us jobs and...." He looks at me, "I have someone that also needs a job, and would make a good babysitter."

"Who?" I ask him, frowning. This man is connected to all sorts of people.

"The kestrel."

He smiles at me, knowingly. "How about we go get your money, pick up the little kestrel and head to the city. We have some planning and settling to do." 1

Cooper Author

Thank goodness for Ishir! And the kestrel survived! Updates Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

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