The Dragon of Prophecy

by SqueezeBabe

Summary

Who will give birth to the Dragon of Prophecy, and will he be able to save them all?

Notes

Oh. My. Fucking. God.

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took the two most sweetest scenes in the entire thing and drew them. FALSE
ADVERTISING! Their amazing blog can be found HERE.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter One: Prophecy

There comes a day when clouds roar with fury, a forbidden relationship shall mark the return of dragons.
When the day comes that the True One reveals himself, a forced marriage shall usher forth a new unity and the beginning of a better future.
When the darkness rises once more, a duel shall bring forth the downfall of two kingdoms
Upon the day the last one is reborn, a broken man shall mark the rise of hope

Words that had seemingly existed for as long as anyone could remember. Words that were etched into memories of those who lived longer than usual. In the beginning, when there were many of them, those words didn’t mean anything. After all, how could they? But as their numbers grew few, the words became a chilling reminder of things to come and were at the forefront of their minds.

Histories came and went, and still the words remained. Their meaning ever uncertain, and mostly forgotten in the swirling mists of time.

But dragons never forget.

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There weren’t many of them left. That fact grew more obvious as the present became the past and the future was only a blink away. What was the point of being long lived, if it just meant that you were alive to watch your species die out; as you became the last of your kind…?

He shook his head, dark hair falling into eyes as blue as the sky at dusk, before violet leached in and gave way to the inky blackness of twilight. It wouldn’t do to have such maudlin thoughts. There was plenty of time, and time was something that he had plenty of; the days bleeding into each other, his life becoming a blur that only seemed to pause when something profound happened.

It hadn’t always been like this though, there were moments that shone through the passage of time, memories that made his long life seem worth it…

He was just lonely.

It had been a long time since he’d had a mate to share his life with. None of them could remember when the availability of suitable partners had begun to wane, only that one day they realised that there weren’t enough to go around.

That’s when they discovered they couldn’t breed.

Well, not entirely, but it seemed a quirk of the species that they couldn’t breed with someone who shared the same lineage as them, no matter how many centuries had passed since siring an ancestor. But of course they had found that out the hard way.

He imagined that as a species, they were never meant to stay in the one place; to always be roaming the land and living free.
But Men had other ideas.

They became idolised, revered as gods, and showered with gifts and tribute which they hoarded greedily. They had always had a weakness for trinkets and the precious objects that glittered with the fire of the earth that had birthed them… and they had decided that they liked this, not knowing at what cost it would come.

And soon enough, their numbers dwindled down to just a few. Those strong enough to carve out and hold onto their territory, and then those that followed them.

The Ice Dragon, Viktor Nikiforov, ruled the land that was cold with snow and darkness for most of the year, cradled within seemingly impenetrable mountains that separated his land from the gentle, more temperate climes of the meadow lands; with rolling hills and sweeping plains where the Wind Dragon Christophe Giacometti ruled. Those plains then gave way gloomy forests, and to the humidity of rainforests and the damp marshes and eventually the beaches.

This was the land that he ruled and the place he called home.

He was the third Dragon King, Jean-Jacques Leroy; the Green Dragon.

There were other dragons, of course. Those who had chosen to remain with the nomadic lifestyle of old, floating through each of their lands, tolerated as long as they didn’t cause any trouble, and then those that had allied themselves with the Ice Dragon.

Viktor had made himself a tenuous alliance with the Desert Dragon Otabek Altin, who had eked out a small territory in the dry rocky steppes, inhospitable except to the hardiest of life. They were joined by Seung-gil Lee, The Loner, who had perhaps gotten weary of being alone for a time and had sought out the company of the others.

To what end, none of the others knew. They weren’t a species that willingly sought out the company of their own kind. Their continued existence was a competition to see who could be the best by whatever standard of measurement applied, and in this Age, it was the wealth they had accumulated being at the top of their game; as Kings. The only way another dragon could be a king, would be to dispossess one of them.

There weren’t many times in a dragon's life that he was vulnerable, but perhaps he was most vulnerable when he didn’t have a mate, and now, those who were suitable to mate were few and far between.

A Dragon could only breed with an omega, that is, a human born with a special trait; a living birthmark on the small of their back in the shape of a dragon. This mark enabled them to accept their Dragon in his true form, allowing for the best chance for successful breeding and the birth of another a Dragon.

In times gone by, omegas and their marks were watched carefully, waiting for the moment when they were ready to be mated. If an omega was left unattended for too long, the omega would undergo a change and fall into a special state- a heat -one that released pheromones into the air, the dragon on his back crying for attention.

Chris had been lucky to find his omega. Georgi was the son of a gypsy family that had been passing through Chris’s lands when the change had come upon him. They had all felt it, the static in the air that had left them feeling irritable; the smell of an unbonded omega in heat.

The call for a mate.
A mated omega was a precious thing. It gave a dragon a sense of purpose for the relatively short
time they were bonded; short because unlike dragons themselves, omegas did not seemingly live
forever. Longer than most, but not long enough. In the end, it was the loneliness that killed them;
having outlived everyone they knew and loved, the bond not enough to sustain them indefinitely.

The offspring of their unions were human more often than not, and as the lines of genealogy
became blurred, the chance for dragon offspring grew smaller as the Ages passed. The chance of
finding an omega mate was even smaller.

Perhaps they were doomed after all.

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There was one thing that was always said about the North Country: that it was as cold as it was
beautiful.

It was winter for most of the year, with a few months of fleeting warmth to allow those that lived
there some respite from the bitter chill that would steal the warmth from your soul if you’d let it.
The people of the land were used to it. Their livelihood came from the bottomless caves within the
mountains; precious metals and jewels birthed in the liquid fire that ran far underground and was
the lifeblood of the land… but mining wasn’t the only way to make a living.

Nestled against the mountains, along the road that would take you further into the North Country,
or lead you away from it, was an inn with a hot-spring, a rest stop for weary travellers and traders,
as well as a place for those lived there to soak themselves in the steaming hot mineral waters that
bubbled forth from deep beneath the rock.

It was said that the water from the hot springs had healing properties, but whether or not this was
true, it certainly left the users feeling refreshed and full of energy, and it was for this end that
Dragons also occasionally came, and the inn enjoyed a certain patronage allowing it to prosper.

But ordinary travellers were few and far between, the journey to the frosty mountains often
perilous. Those making it were either seasoned trade caravans making the journey for financial
gain, bringing with them the fruits of the meadow lands or the tasty meats from the game that was
plentiful in the forests far south, or those desperate enough to face the hazards, to escape from
something even more dangerous, whatever that might be.

No one ever questioned a solitary new face, the guards either choosing to ignore a visitor or not
and the inhabitants likewise. If one made it this far north, through the ice and snow and deathly
cold, without the help of the caravans, then you deserved your hard-earned chance at starting a
new life.

And thus the inn became the place for gossip, for guards and locals alike. It was far enough away
from the Ice Dragon's palace that he paid it and it's inhabitants little attention, and over time, it
passed into the Katsuki family, where it remained for generations, to the present day.
Once a year, families needed to bring their children to the palace for an inspection of sorts.

The journey to the palace could be a dangerous one for those that lived in the outer reaches of the land, and a decision long ago was made that guards would be sent to patrol those areas and collect those children when their time came.

The children were required when they were young, at around the age of six. It was known there was a special mark that the Dragon was looking for, different than the usual mark of the omegas, but none save for Him knew what it looked like. So the children, one by one, were taken by the Dragon to be examined, and then and invariably brought back.

No one living could remember a time when a child was not returned to his family.

But there was one thing that everyone did seem to remember; that as the years passed, Viktor had begun to change for the worse. Each previous generation warning the one that came after it, that it hadn’t always been this way. Perhaps it was because he was a dragon, and this was the way that dragons became; losing their semblance of humanity, -because although they were humanlike, and could take human form, they were still a dragon- through the loneliness of being alive for so long. History couldn't even remember when Viktor last had a mate.

So he had became selfish and greedy. Demanding that the mountains be mined to the detriment of those who worked them. Conditions became harsh and dangerous, and still his wealth continued to grow. It seemed Viktor no longer cared about the people of the land as he grew colder with each passing century, much like the land he ruled. The people couldn’t even remember when the last time the country had warmed sufficiently enough to grow anything. So they relied solely on the wealth that came from the earth itself, and bought everything they needed from the surrounding lands.

The palace guards followed the whims of their Dragon Lord, and some had became cruel and ruthless in collecting the taxes that Viktor felt were owed to him, and even more merciless when it came to rounding up the children to be presented; returning them bruised and battered with the hollow look of terror in their eyes.

Hiroko Katsuki had seen how the other children had been rounded up like animals; her own daughter Mari had been treated much the same, but each year it seemed worse, the stories of mistreatment spreading like the fire that burned deep within the mountains, and she decided that if she were to ever have another child, that she wouldn’t allow the Palace guards to take them away.

Then Yuuri was born.

With an innocuous birthmark in the small of his back.

As Yuuri grew, so did the odd birthmark, seemingly taking the shape of an egg, and by the time he was five, the “egg” had cracked, broken apart, and hatched into the unmistakable shape of a fledgling dragon.

This was the mark that Ice Dragon had obviously been looking for amongst the children of the land.

“Ah Yuuri,” his mother had murmured into his hair one evening. “You’ve always been special, this mark just proves it. But we must never tell anyone, never let anyone see. If you can keep it a secret, then you’ll always be safe.”

It was a blessing in disguise that the Inn was far enough away from the palace that the guards who
frequented were different each time. When the census guard came to collect Yuuri to be taken to the palace, Hiroko just smiled and said that they must’ve been mistaken as her boy had been the previous year. The guard just scratched his head and shrugged, after all, how was he to know any different?

And thus Yuuri and his special mark had escaped detection.

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Yuuri was certain it was more than just the hot springs themselves that attracted the attention of the palace. There was no escaping the gossip; the inn the perfect place to pick up snippets of information about the world beyond the icy borders and from the Palace itself, the guards far enough away from the watchful eyes of the Dragon to loosen their tongues once deep into their cups.

Yuuri loved hearing the rare stories that came from outside. The traders were always willing to share a tale or two for one of his rare smiles and his family’s best wine, made from the produce that the traders themselves had brought with them. His dark eyes sparkled at the descriptions as they wove their narratives, and he could feel a yearning deep in his soul for something more than just snow and darkness, and the crushing cold.

It seemed the dragon on his back hungered for something different, too. It had grown larger, covered more of his skin, to the point where Yuuri could no longer remove his clothes in company, lest the mark be seen and his precious secret revealed. Not that the inn patrons minded seeing him clothed whilst they were not; he was able to use the excuse of it being improper as staff to be as naked as the customers.

And so it was very much in this manner that his life continued. The need to be ordinary and unobtrusive and safe, outweighing the desire for something more.
Chapter 2

It had been a slow day at the inn. Unseasonably bad weather had taken hold of the mountain passes making passage through them near impossible and extremely dangerous. Only the most experienced and seasoned of traders would even be attempting to move through them. Normally, bad weather encouraged patrons; those who were looking to warm themselves in the hot water that bubbled from deep beneath them… but this weather was different. The cold wind bit cruelly, icy fingers reaching to drag away every bit of warmth that it could and the falling snow was so thick that a person could only see a few steps in front of them, a wall of white blocking them off from the world around them.

It would not take much for a person to become lost and disoriented. It was the kind of weather that demanded a sacrifice and would not stop until it had been appeased.

“I can’t remember the weather being this bad before…” Yuuri was helping his sister clean out the inn. Moments where there were no customers were rare, and it made sense to use the opportunity to get as much done as they could before they were once more inundated with patrons.

Mari nodded in agreement, lips pursed slightly and a thoughtful look on her face. “I think there was one other time. The mountain passes were sealed with snow and ice for weeks after, but that was years ago. Like, seven years ago or something… but it definitely hasn’t been this bad since then.”

Now that his sister had mentioned it, Yuuri could remember. Not because of the weather, but what had come after it.

Viktor had announced that he’d found his true mate. A small boy had been discovered in a village far to the north, even further north than the palace itself. The child had been taken, his family duly compensated for having birthed a child worthy of becoming a Dragon’s mate, and brought back to the palace to begin his new life. This hadn’t stopped the Ice Dragon from still gathering up the new children every year, but now there was less urgency to it.

Yuuri remembered the boy in question, a small thing, blond hair and pale white skin, with green eyes the colour of emeralds; reminding him somewhat of a cat… a grumpy cat. Those green eyes glittered like the jewels themselves, with barely held back anger and contempt, perhaps just upset that he’d been removed from his family and then paraded about the realm.

The boy hadn’t been seen since his discovery, but perhaps that was not unusual. After all, he was now part of the palace, probably living in luxury and wanting for nothing until the time came for the bonding ceremony. If he was five then, he must be at least twelve now… so still a few years to go before they would hear anything more.

Nobody could remember attending an actual bonding ceremony, even the oldest of the old could only remember stories that were passed down to them by their own elders. It was said to be an occasion of great joy, for there could be nothing better than to be mated and bonded to a dragon; the mate wanting for nothing for the rest of their life. Children would eventually be born- and hopefully a new dragon -but it had been even longer since one was hatched... There was always hope, though it was unlikely that such an event would happen in anyone's lifetime still living.

They had just finished stocking the towels and robes in the changing rooms when there was a banging at the inn’s door, loud and insistent. Yuuri and his sister exchanged a worried glance. Who on earth could have possibly braved the howling storm that threatened to tear the tiles off the roof and dump a year’s worth of snow on top of them? They hurried through the inn as the banging
continued, stopping only when someone had obviously answered the door.

“Oh my!” Hiroko’s exclamation was uttered softly as Yuuri and Mari entered the anteroom. Standing in the doorway, against the backdrop of swirling white was the unmistakable form of a Dragon - humanlike, but not quite human, with varying animal features- , this one had the long dark hair on the top of his head swept up in a braid that went down his back like a horses mane. He entered the room, carrying a bundle wrapped in furs and shook the snow out of his hair, swishing it like a horse would it’s tail. It took a moment for Yuuri to realise that the bundle of furs that he was carrying, was actually a person. Tendrils of blonde hair had escaped from the confines of a hood, framing a face so pale that it might’ve been made from snow itself. Eyelids fluttered slightly before opening revealing green eyes that he’d only seen once before.

The Dragon cleared his throat. “I need a private room. Exclusive access to the spring would also be preferred.”

Hiroko nodded, motioning at Yuuri to come over. “My son will show you the way, if you need anything, food or hot tea, just let him know.”

Yuuri tilted his head in acknowledgement. He knew which room in the inn would be suitable. The spring actually had a private chamber with a personal hot spring. They charged folk accordingly for the extra privacy, but it was a little known secret that the waters of the spring contained within were the most rejuvenating of all the pools.

He led the Dragon and his bundle through the corridors of the Inn. Perhaps it was a good thing that the Inn was empty save for a handful of people; there was nobody to see them as they made their way to the more secluded part of the building. Most inn patrons liked to make small talk or ask about the various features of the inn, but the Dragon remained stoically silent, following along just slightly behind him. Yuuri reasoned that the journey through the terrible energy-sapping weather would have been tiring, even for dragon-folk.

The accommodation in question was one of the original lodgings from when the inn was first built, however many generations ago that was. It seemed the room was particularly important for a very particular type of guest, as evidenced by the ornate carving of a sleeping dragon etched into the heavy wooden door. Yuuri unlocked the door to the room, pushing it open and allowing them to enter. He gave a quick glance around the room, but it had been a long while since it was last used, and there was nothing out of place.

“I will get you some fresh robes and towels. Did you need anything to eat? Drink?” Yuuri gave a small, strained smile. The atmosphere in the room was getting heavy; obviously this wasn’t a visit for pleasure.

The Dragon gently placed his bundle down on the raised pallet that served as the bed before turning to face him, dark eyes flickering over him, regarding him with no discernable emotion. Yuuri resisted the urge to squirm under the scrutiny.

“Food. Something light. Fruit perhaps. Hot Tea. Something fragrant.” The Dragon's voice was low, a gentle rumbling. “And if you have something sweet…” he left the question hanging, and Yuuri thought he saw a glimmer of emotion, but what, he couldn’t tell.

Yuuri placed the key to the room on the small table that was near the doorway. “This is the key to the door. It is always locked from the outside, so if you leave the room, you’ll need to take with you. I’ll come back shortly with everything, but in the meantime, please make yourselves comfortable. The spring is through those doors... “ he indicated a set of large doors, beautifully decorated with more carvings, at the otherside of the room, “…which is completely enclosed, so
you need not worry about the weather. When I return, I will also prepare the fire for the room. Please forgive the stale air, being unprepared for your arrival, we weren't able to freshen it, however, it should clear soon.” He gave another small smile and bowed before leaving the room.

Once the door closed behind him, he let out the breath he was holding. There was something about the Dragon that made the mark on his back slither over his skin like a serpent. He swallowed thickly as he rolled his shoulders and arched his back to dispel the feeling of unease. His robe shifted slightly as he rolled his shoulders and arched his back to dispel the feeling of unease. His robe shifted slightly, threatening to slip off his shoulders. It wouldn't do to be caught out, especially at a moment like this, so he secured the ties to his robes more firmly, to ensure that it wouldn’t drop from his body and expose his skin and the mark that covered it.

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As the door closed with a soft click, Otabek let out a sigh. He trusted the discretion of the innkeeper's son; the Katsuki family had always been trustworthy when it came to affairs of Dragons. The fact that this room had been built all those generations ago was testimony to that. Dragons had discovered a long time ago; that the spring housed within contained special properties which allowed the accelerated healing of their kind. Though it had been even longer since an omega had needed to use the spring, he assumed- no, hoped -that it would work the same for them.

He crossed the room back over to where the simple bed was, and kneeling beside the bundle of furs, he reached over and started to gently unwrap the figure within. The normally clear porcelain skin was now marred by dark purplish bruises and angry red bite marks and the once clean bandages were already staining with blood. He clenched his jaw at the sight.

Viktor had gone too far.

The palace physician had prevented the little omega from dying; the list of injuries had been extensive. Broken ribs, a dislocated hip, an arm nearly wrenched from the socket. Stitches held together the flesh on his back and hips where Viktor’s claws had dug deep. Never mind the injuries that couldn’t be seen.

A growl rose up in the back of his throat at the memory. Viktor casually leaving his bedchamber with a “by the way” that left the attendants scrambling to save the poor broken mess that he’d left on the bed. Viktor could have saved the omega himself, through the bond… or at least he should have been able to. A vague memory rose to the surface; perhaps he actually couldn’t, because the omega he’d tried to bond with had been too young, and thus the bond had failed.

Yuri was twelve. Viktor should have waited at least another three years. Had the omega even presented yet? He couldn’t imagine Viktor stooping so low as to mate with an unpresented omega. What was another few years in a lifetime that stretched for what felt like an eternity? Regardless of the “why”, the deed was done, and now all they could do was hope that the little omega wasn’t too damaged from his ordeal.

He eased the semi-unconscious boy up from the pallet, choosing to overlook for now the extensive bruising that covered his naked form, and gently carried him out towards the adjacent room where the spring was. He ignored the slight shivering of the slender form in his arms; the spring would be plenty warm, and before the time they were finished with it, there would be a fire going to warm the room itself.
The room was as he remembered it. The ceiling was high, chiseled into the mountain that the inn was nestled against. The sound of dripping water faintly echoed, the steam from the spring condensing to weep down the stone walls. The humid air smelled faintly of the earthly depths where the water had bubbled from. Otabek took in a deep breath of the steam that filled the room and felt the tension he was experiencing ease slightly.

The original stone pool had been shaped and smoothed; tiles added for comfort and decoration. Still carrying Yuri, he carefully made his way down the steps into the mineralised water. It didn’t matter that he was still completely dressed, his clothes would eventually dry; he didn’t think that at this point in time, Yuri would appreciate waking up to find him naked. He would have enough to deal with as he attempted to process his trauma and the events that had led to this moment.

He settled into the water, sitting on the stone bench beneath the surface, supporting Yuri on his lap and cradling the boy to his chest. They would sit there for however long it took for the water to work it’s magic, even if it meant sleeping in there. He watched as the faint lines of torment on Yuri’s face began to soften, until he looked almost peaceful underneath the painful blemishes that marked his skin.

Otabek flinched when he heard the door open, not expecting company quite so soon. The innkeeper's son had returned and with him, the clinking of plates and the sounds of the fireplace being prepared. The Dragon didn’t want to call out; raising his voice would disturb Yuri’s rest, so he opted to make a small splash, the tinkling of falling droplets chiming gently. He was pleased when the man’s face appeared in the doorway of the room, tray in hand, an eyebrow raised questioningly. Otabek nodded at him, motioning for him to come closer.

He watched him approach, noting that he moved with a certain grace, one that came with the many hours spent practicing the arts. The man cut a pleasing form, and Otabek was certain that he’d attracted his fair share of the clientele that graced the inn. He was quiet and unobtrusive. The perfect host. Another old memory rose unbidden from the fog of things long forgotten, of being in this very pool and being attended to by another beautiful omega. He frowned slightly to himself. It was an impossibly long time ago, and this innkeeper's son was certainly no omega.

Tea was poured, Otabek grateful to note that it was indeed fragrant like he’d asked for, soft and floral; soothing and calming, with a hint of some healing herbs. A plate of fruit was revealed, containing slices of melon, pieces of orange that had been peeled and separated into segments, a bunch of grapes and a small pile of strawberries that had been carefully de-stemmed and cut in half. In fact, everything on the plate was presented in easy to handle, bite-sized pieces.

“I’ve also brought some broth for later. It’s not much more than soup stock, but I promise it’s very nourishing and easy on the stomach. I’ve left it near the fire so that it will stay warm for some time.” The man’s voice was quiet as he carefully laid everything out within easy reach. “I’ve placed some towels and robes near the door…” dark eyes flickered upwards fleetingly, “… and if you place your wet clothes in the basket provided, I’ll make sure they’re dried and taken care of.”

Otabek nodded his acknowledgement and watched curiously as the man got up to leave. “Wait,” he called out softly. There was something about this innkeeper's son… “What’s your name?”

The man smiled a little awkwardly. “Yuuri. My name is Yuuri.”

Otabek could only nod once more, and watched the man leave the room. There was something that seemed familiar about him, something that he couldn’t quite place. Yuri stirred in his arms, eyes fluttering open and blinked a few times, staring blankly up at him. It made him ache a little inside to see how worn out the poor little omega looked.
“Here,” he said, maneuvering a cup of tea from within easy reach, holding it gently to the boy’s lips. “Drink this. It should make you feel better.”

The boy made a face, eyes squeezing tightly together when even that much movement hurt, but he obediently opened his mouth, taking a small sip from the cup. That much effort seemed to exhaust him and his eyes fluttered shut once more, head lightly falling back against Otabek’s shoulder as the Dragon cradled him in the healing waters of the hot spring.

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It wasn’t until he was back in his own room, did Yuuri allow his hands to start shaking. Even though he had pretended not to notice, it was hard not to; the bruised and battered form that the Dragon was cradling to his chest was definitely Viktor Nikiforov’s omega.

How could the Ice Dragon let something like that happen to his mate? Unless… Yuuri was horrified to think that Viktor was responsible for the injuries that he had seen. Wasn’t a Dragon supposed to love and cherish his mate?

The mark on his back seemed to crawl across his skin mirroring the revulsion that he felt; then, a sobering thought that made him feel ill. That could have easily been him in there instead, if it wasn’t for his mother’s insistence that he be kept hidden. He couldn’t help but feel that his life, and the lives of those around him would be in grave danger if he were to be discovered now.

He let out a shaky breath. He would do his best to ensure that the little omega was well looked after whilst he was here, and use the time that he spent healing to find out as much as he could about the Dragons that seemed to inhabit the North Country… and the rest of the land.
So he’d made a mistake. It was a minor set back. The prophecy was still going to be fulfilled and it would be he, Viktor Nikiforov who fulfilled it. It would be him who would engineer the rebirth of the Dragons as a species once more. It was true that their numbers were few, but Viktor was certain that he could force the prophecy… and he nearly had, he was sure of it. He’d spent centuries gathering as much information as he could. He had the most extensive library in the land; he owned or had a copy of every book, scroll, or etching to do with Dragons and their history.

His obsession with the prophecy had caused him to become isolated and withdrawn from his brethren. Not that it mattered that much, they were a solitary species anyway, but where he had once spent his time travelling the lands, he now spent it poring over texts in ancient languages, dead and forgotten except for what he himself could remember.

The rage simmered beneath his skin. It was very unlike him to make a mistake, but was the mistake even his? It was hardly his fault that the little omega that he’d found living alone with his grandfather in the far north of the country, had proven to be unsuitable.

He was sure that he was on the road to seeing the prophecy through; that it was him that would save their kind from the extinction that they surely faced. This was even backed up by the terrible storm that had raged on the day the omega had been discovered, and again on the night he had taken him.

The timing had been perfect.

Viktor couldn’t help the delicious memory, of taking his omega, from rising to the surface of his mind. It made him hard again just thinking about it...

He’d watched the little omega out in the yard, going through the calisthenics that he seemed to enjoy, the boy bending himself into seemingly impossible figures. Viktor definitely admired the flexibility and grace in which he performed his routines. There was a suppleness to his body that quickened the Dragon’s blood… it really had been a long time since he’d had a mate, and he could feel his mouth literally watering at the prospect of bedding him.

He had sniffed the air carefully; could feel the ardor rising within him, and with it the smell of his arousal… and he watched as his little omega responded, faltering in his steps, his pale face flushing with colour, and then the unmistakable smell of liquid heat, and then the answering kick to his own groin.

He could feel his physique start to shift; fur, scales and skin blending and sliding together, rippling across his body, unsure of what form his lustful self should take. As a Dragon, he could crush that fragile human figure in just the grip of his claws, and as a Bear he was not much better… and that was just his physical size, never mind the size of… other things.

He could feel the other thing in question, swelling until he had strained uncomfortably against the confines of his trews. Barely repressing the shudder that had threatened to rip through him, it was then he’d made his decision to bond with the omega that night. And as if by coincidence, the moment of his resolution had been met with an answering rumble from the skies above.

He smiled, baring his teeth to the wind that had whipped up around them. It seemed that fate agreed. There was a storm coming, the likes of which had never been seen before, and would unlikely be seen again.
As the wind howled through the palace towers, shrieking with fury as it begun to fling snow and ice at the ancient stones, he’d stood on the parapets and watched the tempest swirl around him. Not even he could remember a time where the primal force of nature rivalled that of this instance. It seemed as if the gods themselves threatened to rain destruction upon the earth and bring about the end of all.

His omega was young, too young to be bonded...

There comes a day when clouds roar with fury, a forbidden relationship shall mark the return of dragons.

With his mind made up, and the heavens in agreeance, he had made his way to his omega’s bedchamber.

He was standing at the window, watching the tempest roll in when the little omega had burst into the bedchamber, chest heaving from the exertion of running up the flights of stairs. His face was flushed, and his hair was damp with sweat. Viktor had watched as the omega’s brow creased in confusion before the boy had dipped into an awkward bow.

“My Lord, um…” the omega faltered, obviously not sure what to make of the Dragon in his room.

Viktor’s pulse quickened; his scent prevaded the air. He could still smell the omega’s response to his earlier arousal which once more fed into his own. No wonder the poor thing looked confused. “Are you feeling all right, Yuri? I couldn’t help notice you stumble out in the courtyard…” he crooned, concupiscence lending itself to his tone and movements.

He had approached the omega, sliding a hand along his warm cheek, cupping his face so that he could tilt it upwards, thumb rubbing over the boy’s lower lip. He hadn’t missed the barely repressed shudder and the air around them had been flooded with the omega’s scent, immature but slowly ripening.

He had watched as the omega closed his eyes, lashes fluttering across those pale pink cheeks; had seen the quickening dance of his pulse in the hollow of his slender throat… and saw him flinch at the loud crash of thunder.

“Poor thing,” he soothed. “Still afraid of of storms?”

The omega had nodded, a different blush staining his cheeks.

“This storm is different, it’s a special storm. The storm of prophecy.” Viktor’s eyes had narrowed into slits. “We’re going to fulfil it tonight.” He had felt his pulse accelerate at the thought of what he was about to do. The omega might have been young, but he had smelled ready. “Do remember what you need to do?” Viktor had asked softly, “I’m going to say the words of bonding, and all you need to do is say ‘yes’. Can you do that for me?”

He watched carefully as the omega had nodded again, his fluttering heartbeat making the muscles of his neck twitch in time with his racing pulse. His omega was so fragile and small, yet so full of life and potential.

The potential that Viktor would now help him realise.

Softly, in a sing-song chant, Viktor had said the words of bonding, his eyes following every move the little omega made as he'd swallowed, taken a deep breath as if to steel his nerves, and say the only word required of him.
“Yes.”

An ominous sounding rumble of thunder had sounded, so loud it seemed to shake the castle to its very foundations. The omega had recoiled at the resounding boom, flying into the Dragons arms, seeking protection from the elements.

There had been flood of warmth, the temperature in the room rising… or so he had thought. Heat radiated off the omega in his arms, his upturned faced had looked feverish, firelight reflecting off the sheen of sweat that had blossomed across his skin… and the smell emanating from him had nearly been enough to send Viktor mad.

It had triggered a response he hadn’t had for so long, he'd forgotten what it had felt like.

His rut.

With a growl, he had lifted the little omega from the floor and thrown him onto the bed, advancing upon him hungrily, his skin shuddering like a beast was trying to climb out of it; in a way, there had been. The furs on the bed had given way under his additional weight as he had made his way across it to where his new mate was waiting, disheveled from his unceremonious tossing.

The little omega had reached for him, instinctively knowing that the Dragon would slake the thirst that was growing inside of him, but then he had hesitated, a look of consternation crossing his face. Viktor had paused, albeit impatiently. The Dragon within him was not used to being denied, especially not now of all times. His mate had seem flustered, but only the faintest glimmer had passed through the bond. Had it not worked properly? Surely he should be feeling more through the bond?

“What's wrong?” The words had been more animalistic growl than concern. The omega was definitely ready, the smell of his heat surrounded them, tinged with the scent of slick newly forming. His cock had begun swelling in response, more than just simple arousal fueling it; he knew the pheromones from his rut would begin to affect the omega soon.

His mate had whined and reached for him once more, arms twining around his neck, tugging him closer. “So itchy !” His brows furrowing in frustration.

Frustration that Viktor could only smell, not feel.

Impatiently, he had coaxed the omega out of his clothing, encouraging him to roll onto his stomach. Viktor had felt his rut intensifying at the obvious display of omega submission; the sight of his mate presenting to him, his face flushed with heat and need, the mark on his back slowly unfurling, and his delicious nectar damp upon his thighs.

The dragon within him had responded.

He had felt the change upon him, his skin shuddering as it gave way to scales, fingers lengthening and growing into claws. He wouldn't grow to his full size; an omega’s heat pheromones made Dragons became smaller versions of themselves when they mated. They still needed to be as close to their true form as possible for the best chance to breed true, without being so large as to make the act dangerously impossible.

A Dragon in rut was larger than they needed to be, only able to be calmed by his omega’s heat through the bond they shared. The stronger the bond, the less likely a Dragon’s rut would cause them to lose control of themselves and hurt their omega.

His omega had looked so small beneath him, within the shadow of his dragon. His claws had
begun to rend the bed covers, tearing the soft linens and furs as he grew around his mate.

He hadn't missed his mate’s eyes widening in fear as he had felt Viktor’s cock slide up against him, forcing apart his cheeks, gathering the slick as it went. He could feel the burn of the omega’s hole against the sensitive flesh, making him growl and shudder with need. It really had been too long.

He had pushed against that heat ardently, wanting to sink into its depths, the memory of its welcoming embrace spurring him on… however, his own omega had seemed less than welcoming, refusing to open up and accept him. The omegas mark had stopped moving, only partially unfurled and seemingly refusing to expand any further.

His tenuous control had snapped. He would not be denied! This was the prophecy!

Savagely biting into his mate's shoulder, cock forcing itself into the soft flesh, Viktor had ignored the screaming omega, intent on taking what was rightfully his. The gush of blood and slick had goaded him on; his hips pumping furiously, each slap of flesh tearing the omega open further. Claws had sliced into skin and muscle as Viktor gripped the omega hard, forcing himself in deeper.

By the time he had climaxed, the Dragon roaring it's triumph, the rut satiated, the omega had stopped screaming.

Viktor blinked a few times as he came out of his memory, before focusing on the thick ropey strands of white that coated his fingers. The omega might have proven to be useless when it came to the prophecy, but it seemed that he was useful for… other things.

Right now he was with Otabek at the Dragon Springs; it was nice that the other Dragon had offered to take him there and look after him until he was sufficiently healed enough to return, it meant that he himself didn’t have to. He didn’t have time to be worrying about the weak and obviously fragile thing, his time would be better spent working on the prophecy.

The Drachenrat would be soon, and he wanted to be able to tell the others that he’d worked it out, that he’d finally triggered the prophecy and that they would all be saved.
Otabek watched the steady rise and fall of the omega’s chest. It had an almost hypnotic quality to it; he was afraid that if he looked away, it wouldn’t rise again. It seemed that the healing waters of the spring had helped. The bruises didn’t look quite so angry and in some parts were already beginning to fade down to a dirty yellowy brown. He’d also managed to get him to eat some broth. The innkeeper's son was right; it had certainly put some colour back into Yuri’s cheeks that wasn’t a sickly purple.

Yuuri.

Otabek tested the name on his tongue. It wasn’t quite the same name as the little omega’s, but it was awfully close. Something niggled at the back of his mind; a random thought that was more shade than substance. He was startled out of his thoughts as his Yuri began to toss and turn, a small moan escaping from his lips.

Otabek laid a soothing hand on the slight shuddering frame, and began to croon softly under his breath, a gentle deep rumbling from the bottom of his chest. He watched as the omega quietened down, returning back to the shallow rhythmic breathing of sleep. His body wasn’t hot to touch, so the disturbance wasn’t caused by fever; the poor thing was being tormented by nightmares.

That… made Otabek slightly uncomfortable. Who was he to question the methods that Viktor used to bring about the prophecy, but surely there were some things that should never be done. Omegas were sacred, prophecy or no. They should be cherished. Not used so cruelly and in such a fashion that it scarred them. Being mated to a Dragon was no easy thing, that’s why there were rules.

Viktor had broken all of them.

This whole thing had left a sour taste in his mouth, and he was beginning to question, after all these years, if Viktor was actually right.

It had been centuries ago, from memory, when he’d cast his lot with the Ice Dragon. Back then, the cause had seemed far more noble; Viktor sacrificing himself, through time and effort in researching the prophecy, convinced that he would find the “right” omega, and save their species.

Every Drachenrat he would bring up new information, sharing it with the others, asking for their opinions, but their enthusiasm had begun to wane. Omegas were so few and far between, they would be better off securing their own mates as best they could, and hoping for the best.

The lack of support had surely made Viktor angry and resentful, had warped his personality. Otabek had noticed that the North Country had gotten colder and harsher with each passing century, seemingly matching the steady decline in Viktor’s personality. But Otabek had faith. Viktor believed with every fibre of his being that the prophecy would save them all, and so, he believed too.

The others, he wasn’t so sure about. Chris had found his omega, without the fanfare and portend of the prophecy, and whilst they’d all congratulated him at the last Drachenrat, Viktor had scoffed in private how no eggs would come of their union and that their mating would have no impact on their continued survivability.

It was obvious that at that point, Christophe really didn’t care about things like the prophecy. Otabek had seen the way that he looked at his bonded omega, like he was the most precious thing
in existence... and his omega, Georgi, looked back at him the same way. It was obvious the two were bonded; in love even, and any offspring of their union would be cherished no matter what they turned out to be.

He looked down at the omega who was now sleeping peacefully. The rumbling in his chest had continued while he’d been lost in his thoughts. A slow realisation crept over him, one fuelled by his thoughts on intimacy and bonding. Otabek sniffed the air searchingly. He could smell the omega’s personal scent, layered with the scent of Viktor’s possession. The little omega had certainly been bonded, but there was something missing... Otabek sniffed again, his heart heavy with the knowledge of what it was that he was unable to sense.

The rich scent of an omega ready to receive their Dragon; the smell of breeding.

There was a light tap at the door. Otabek eased himself up to answer it. The innkeeper’s son, Yuuri, had returned, carrying another tray laden with fruit, broth, and fragrant tea. Otabek stepped aside, allowing the man to enter the room, watching as he put the tray down on the table and began setting the bowls out. Again, Otabek was struck by how graceful his movements were, how no action was unnecessary or wasted as the tea was poured and the cutlery arranged. There was just something about him...

“Wait,” Otabek watched as Yuuri gave a small start, obviously not expecting him to have spoken. “Can you stay?”

Yuuri turned and blinked at him, a confused look crossing his face momentarily, before he nodded slowly in agreement. “Can I just let my parents know first? So they don’t come looking for me?”

Otabek signaled his approval. Of course, Yuuri was helping his parents run the inn, attending to them in this room was part of his job... he’d just thought that maybe the little omega would like some different company for a while.

“Can you look after him while I’m gone?” He needed to go back to the palace, to talk to Viktor about what was going on, to find out what his intentions regarding Yuri would be... it would surely be a few weeks before he would even be fit to travel again. Otabek had already taken a huge risk bringing him here in the first place. He could feel the growing discomfort of his anger. Things like this weren’t supposed to happen to omegas, especially bonded ones. It should be Viktor here, not him.

“Uh, sure? I guess? I mean, you’ll be back, right?” Yuuri’s look of confusion had been replaced by one of concern.

Otabek nodded again. “I’ll wait for you to return before I make preparations to leave.”

---x---x---x---

Yuuri couldn’t shake the feeling building up in his chest; the wave of calm and contentment that threatened to wash over him. He had been in the kitchen, preparing a tray of food to bring to the Dragon and his companion, when it had started. Since they’d arrived, Yuuri couldn’t help but feel on edge, the risk of being discovered constantly preying on his mind. He wasn’t sure what would happen to him; he didn’t want to think about what would happen to him should he be discovered. But now, it felt like he didn’t have to. That everything was right with the world, and that he was
He shook his head to try and dispel the feeling. There was no way he could possibly assume he was safe with a Dragon in the inn, but still the perception of warmth and assurance flickered through him, like a small candle flame in the darkness, and for the first time since the Dragon had arrived, the mark on his back quietened down, soothed by whatever was causing his sense of peace.

As he carried the tray of food with him to the room, he couldn’t help but notice the sensations seemed to increase in intensity, the closer he got to the room. It wasn’t alarming… how could he experience alarm when his chest felt all fuzzy and all he wanted to do was… a small noise of contentment vibrated at the back of his throat.

He stopped short, nearly dropping the tray in his surprise. He’d never made a noise like that before; he couldn’t even consciously reproduce it… but whatever it was, it had made the mark on his back shift, like a cat stretching out before curling up to sleep. It wasn’t unpleasant, just different. He could even grow to like it, if he could find out what was causing it…

Standing in front of the door to the Dragon’s room, he let everything wash over him, like he could almost feel the gentle vibrations swell within him. Steadying the tray in one hand, he reached out and knocked on the door.

Abruptly it all stopped.

Yuuri bit his lip. Did this mean the dragon was responsible for what he was going through?

The door opened, the Dragon standing aside to let him through. As he walked through the room to the table, Yuuri spared a glance at the sleeping form. The boy didn’t look as bad as what he had seen at first, when the Dragon was holding him in the hot spring.

He placed the tray down on the table, going through the practiced motions of pouring tea, finding a small measure of comfort in the familiar actions; comfort that scattered when the Dragon called out to him…

“Wait.”

Yuuri felt the first lick of real fear. Had he been discovered?

“Can you stay?”

x---x---x---x

Now that the Dragon had gone, Yuuri took the opportunity to look over the sleeping omega more closely, part of him looking for similarities between the two of them.

The little omega looked nothing like him. Where Yuuri had dark hair and eyes, the little omega was fair skinned, with hair like the colour of the winter sun. The boy looked so thin, whereas Yuuri, if he wasn’t careful, was able to put weight on quite easily. He made a mental note to try and fatten the poor thing up; perhaps if he had some more meat on his bones he’d recover faster.

The faster he healed, the quicker he’d be gone from the inn, and with him, Yuuri’s chances of
being discovered. Yuuri couldn’t help the worry that gnawed at him and made the mark on his back grow restless once more. He could feel the anxiety of discovery creeping up on him, forming a hard knot in the pit of his stomach; just the thought of the consequences was enough to make his palms grow clammy… he tried to center himself, focus on something other than his feelings of impending doom.

Which then brought him back around to his earlier experience of calm and safety, and his own answering response. He’d never encountered anything like it before, so surely it had to have been caused by their visitors. But how… and why? Yuuri chewed his lips in consternation. Perhaps the omega in front of him could answer his questions, but first, he had to recover sufficiently enough to do so.

Yuuri watched as the omega frowned in his sleep, his brows creasing as he tossed his head and mumbled something. A dream perhaps?

“No!”

The plaintive cry tumbled from the omega’s lips as his body flailed under the bedcovers, which began to tangle around his limbs.

Not wanting to see the boy hurt himself, Yuuri eased the covers away. “Hey now, you're safe, it's ok…” he murmured the words as soothingly as he could, swallowing hard when he saw the extent of the injuries the little omega carried. What on earth had happened to him?

The boy began to thrash, his face screwed up in terror, tears beginning to fall. A choking sob as arms reached out…

Yuuri found himself holding the crying omega who clung desperately to him, rocking the both of them much like his mother used to sway him back and forth when he was upset. He hummed tunelessly as he cradled the boy as great heaving sobs wracked his small frame, his cheek resting on the top of the boy’s head.

After a time, the sobs faded to hiccups, and still Yuuri continued to gently rock. Before long the boy shifted, didn’t cling quite so tightly; he’d obviously wrung himself out. Yuuri smiled into the top of the boy’s head, “Feeling better?” he asked softly.

The boy let out a strangled cough, weakly pushing himself away. Green eyes looked up at him, widening slightly. “Who are you? Where’s Beka?!” His voice was hoarse from crying for so long.

Yuuri gave a small smile and tactfully moved away, giving the boy some space. “I’m Yuuri, and this is my parents’ inn. The Dragon- Beka is it? -he brought you here. Our hot springs are famous for their healing properties. He said that he had something he needed to take care of, so he asked me to watch over you until he returned.” As Yuuri spoke, his voice low and calm, he had dished out a bowl of broth. “Here, you should eat something…”

Green eyes regarded him with distrust, but the boy gingerly moved so that he was sitting upright, supported by the bed pillows.

Yuuri placed the bowl down next to the bed, fussing with the blankets and pillows, the poor omega looked absolutely exhausted. “You just sit there, I’ll feed you. You need to save your strength for getting better…” he stirred the bowl of broth with the spoon. “Beka never told me your name.”

He held up a spoonful of liquid for the boy to take.

“Yuri.” The boy answered before leaning forward to take a small sip from the spoon.
“Oh my, that’s going to be confusing,” Yuuri smiled, “but I like the way that you say your name.”

---x---x---x---x

As Otabek took to the skies he couldn't help the worry that begun to build in the pit of his stomach. The weather had cleared, a few wispy clouds against the backdrop of a brilliant blue sky; almost as if the storm he'd flown in, risking everything, less than a day ago had never occurred.

Had he been too rash in bringing Yuri to the hot spring when he did? Could he have waited until the weather cleared and the journey less dangerous? It was unsettling to think that Viktor’s actions had provoked him into uncharacteristic actions of his own.

Despite his misgivings, he still believed he had done the right thing. A Dragon in rut was difficult to control; giving into their baser desires, the need to mate and breed was extremely compelling, soothed only by the appropriate response from their omega. Viktor may have gone into rut when he had forced the bonding, and Yuri was too young to satisfy the savage beast he’d become.

Violence would have simmered below the thin veneer of control, more instincts than outright cruelty. Anything could have triggered it… No. He'd done the right thing removing the little omega from potential harm's way.

The healing properties of the spring had worked wonders on the horrific injuries Yuri had sustained. The boy was at least able to sit up in bed unaided, but the water could do nothing for the nightmares that now plagued him. Only time and patience would help him now… but perhaps the calming nature of the innkeeper's son would assist.

He would talk to Viktor about sending guards to the hot spring; an omega should be protected no matter where he was, and while the occupants of the spring seemed trustworthy, there was no accounting for the other patrons. The idea of someone attacking or kidnapping the omega seemed almost laughable, but times appeared to be changing, and Viktor was most certainly not loved anymore.

If a human knew enough about the prophecy, they could bring all of dragonkind to ruin.
Chapter 5

Viktor was standing on the parapet waiting for him. In his human form no less. Did the Dragon think he was that invincible, or that Otabek was that weak, that he didn't need to bother to see him as an equal? Otabek tried to hold back the building resentment. It was none of those things; Viktor was simply the fastest shifter. In less than a blink of an eye he could either be his Dragon form or his animal form.

Otabek was sure it was more to do with age than actual power. If one “practiced” enough at something, it became almost second nature to do, and Viktor was certainly older than the rest of them. There were only two other Dragons who were older, the Ancient Ones; so old that they never bothered themselves with Dragonkind, preferring to live in isolation wherever they found it. Yakov had been Viktor’s mentor in a way, possibly even his father… but that was so long ago that none of them could reliably remember, the information lost in the fog of time.

“You’re back.” A statement rather than a question. Viktor seemingly unperturbed at the sight of the large rust-coloured Dragon landing, his long silver hair whipped around by the downdraft created by gold-tipped wings.

Otabek’s large frame shuddered like a fly-bitten horse, scales sliding and blending as he shrunk down. In a few moments he was as “human” as Viktor. He rolled his neck and shoulders, loosening whatever residual stiffness he felt from the change as he approached Viktor, using the interlude to gather his thoughts.

“You’re mate is recovering from his injuries. The Dragon Spring is still as potent as ever.” Otabek looked out over the snow-covered mountains as he spoke, looking for Viktor’s reaction from the corner of his eye. Except there wasn't really one.

Viktor smiled, pressing a finger to his lips as he tilted his head, seemingly in thought. “Oh?” he offered. “And?”

Otabek swallowed. He wasn't sure how Viktor would respond to what he had to say next. He shifted slightly, preparing to defend himself should Viktor finally lose the plot and fly into a rage. “The bonding was successful. He smells… Like you. However, the mating…” Otabek paused, looking for the right words.

“He's no longer receptive.”

There was a slight narrowing of those turquoise blue eyes, but Viktor’s face remained thoughtful looking, the finger against his lips tapping softly. “For now… that could change as he gets older. It could have been because he's a little… young.”

Otabek turned and faced the older Dragon, not quite believing the complete disregard he had for his mate’s condition. “So why didn't you wait then? Has it been that long between pairings that you couldn't control yourself?” Anger lent him an eloquence he wasn’t prepared for. “Viktor, you could have killed him! He can't fulfil the prophecy if he's fucking dead!”

Viktor rolled his eyes. “No need to be so dramatic. I've got everything under control. Get everyone together. It's time we had a Drachenrat, that way I don't have to repeat myself, and it means that we can work together towards saving Dragonkind. You'll go get the Forest Dragon Jean-Jacques, and I'll send Seung-gil to get Christophe; we should probably reacquaint ourselves with this mate of his, the one who seems to be unable to drop anything useful...” he paused, his eyes glittering
strangely. “And we will meet at the Dragon Spring, that way everyone can meet my new mate too.”

Otabek bowed his head stiffly. It had been nearly three hundred years since the last meeting. They had heard about Christophe’s mate Georgi, Otabek had even paid a visit, but there was something to be said about the air of ceremony that came with an official presenting. It made the mating seem much more… real.

Before he could turn to leave, Viktor snapped his fingers to get his attention once more.

“Before I forget, send some guards to the Dragon Spring. The omega is still mine and I can’t have anything else happen to him. He still might trigger the prophecy after all…”

Otabek nodded his acquiescence once more, leaving Viktor to find his Marshal to make the necessary security arrangements, working out the logistics in his head as he went.

It would take him a few days to reach JJ, his territory included the ocean at the far edge of the continent. It would probably take Seung-gil just as long to reach Chris… and a few days back for the return journey; would give Yuri more time to heal and look less like something that had been found on the doorstep, and more like a mate should. Healthy.

x---x---x---x

Yuuri was trying to coax the little omega to eat more, with limited success. He didn't seem to spend much time awake, so his opportunities to eat were few, and what sleep he did get was plagued with nightmares unless Yuuri held him close and soothed him through it. He had tried to leave earlier, to allow Yuri to rest, but the moment he took more than a few steps away, his brows would crease and he would begin to fret. Sleep was just as important as nourishment when it came to healing, so Yuuri stayed.

He didn't want Otabek to return and find the omega’s condition worse than what he'd left him in. The wrath of a Dragon was not something that he wished to chance, considering the state Yuri was in when he'd arrived. The mark on his back seemed to ripple with agreement, even as he tried to force the omega to take another bite.

“C’mon Yuri, just one more mouthful…” he held the spoonful in front of the obviously struggling omega. “One more and we can go for a soak in the hot spring.”

Yuri opened his mouth, more for a yawn, but Yuuri took the opportunity. “There you go!”

Smiling, Yuuri put the half empty bowl aside, giving Yuri a few moments to gather himself before gently lifting him like he would a toddler and carrying him to the spring, not bothering to make the effort to disrobe either of them. Settling on the stone seat within the pool of hot water, the two of them let out a near simultaneous sigh of contentment, Yuri straddling Yuuri’s lap and resting his head on the older man's shoulder, and within moments was sleeping peacefully.

Yuuri eased away a damp strand of hair from the omega’s face, taking care not to disturb the sleeping form. As he did, he wrinkled his brow in confusion, an out of place smell tickling his nose. He sniffed the air again to be sure…
Over the mineral smell of the hot spring, was the unmistakable smell of baking bread.

“Viktor wants to call a *Drachenrat* because…?”

Christophe was more than just a little suspicious. Seung-gil’s arrival seemed a little too coincidental for his liking, not that he would tell the Rainbow Dragon why… though if his sense of smell was sensitive enough, he might be able to discern the truth for himself.

They were seated in what he liked to call his “sun room”, a large greenhouse arrangement that was a special wing of the oversized mansion he called his home. It allowed him to partake in the warmth of the sun without having to worry about the elements. Viktor could have his stone castle in the icy mountains, he much preferred his own sprawling estate of gardens and orchards.

“He wants to present his mate.” Seung-gil shrugged, the rainbow coloured feathers lining his shoulders rustled with the motion, his slim fingers smoothing them back into place. “It’s tradition.”

The Wind Dragon resisted the urge to snort, but he didn't argue. Viktor only believed in tradition when it suited him; Otabek was more of a traditionalist than the Ice Dragon. Viktor was all about the surprise; the shock value. If he was calling a meeting it would be because he was about to drop half a mountain on their heads, not because he was adhering to the Old Ways.

He couldn't hide his annoyance completely though, the tip of his tail flickering like that of a bothered cat. “Tell Viktor that we will be there, we wouldn't want to miss the *ceremony* …” he couldn't help the sarcasm that dripped off the word, “… do we need to prepare a gift for the occasion or is his seed as dried up and as useless as what he is?”

Seung-gil just smiled, if the slight upward twitch to his mouth could be called that, and made a show of sniffing the air carefully. “Shall I tell Viktor that he needs to make some.. *special considerations* for your arrival?”

Chris’ tail finally ceased its annoyed twitching. The air seemed to grow still as the two dragons faced each other. Fingers turned into razor sharp claws that slid out from massive paw pads, digging into the hard wood of the chair he was sitting on, the cracking of splintering oak sounding ominous in the silence.

Seung-gil continued his caricature of a smile, even as the subject of his concern entered the room, a worried look on his face.

“Is everything all right? I felt…” Chris’s omega stopped in his tracks, his face going slightly pale at the sight of the other Dragon.

“It’s ok, Georgi my love, come here.” Chris beckoned his mate over, patting the seat beside him, mindful of the splinters of wood that were protruding from his own seat. “Seung-gil was just telling me that Viktor wants to call a *Drachenrat*; he wants to present his new mate.”

When Georgi got close enough, Chris reached for his hand, his claws disappearing to be replaced by his long delicate fingers once more. Pulling his mate into his lap, he nuzzled the side of his neck, “You remember me telling you about the *Drachenrat*, right? The last one was just after I found you, so you may not have remembered it. This will be a good opportunity for you to meet
the others again… and for them to meet you. You'll be able to meet another omega this time!” He was all too aware of the sense of isolation his mate had felt, being the “only one” of his kind.

His mate relaxed in his embrace, but he could still smell the fear and uncertainty, and under that, his own special scent that was tinged with the evidence of a somewhat successful mating… it wasn't going to be a Dragon, but he was still going to be a father. It was the little moments such as these that made his incredibly long life worth living.

Seung-gil cleared his throat, startling him out of his thoughts. “You're still here?” Chris all but snarled at him, making Georgi flinch in his arms. “Don’t you need to go running back to your master or something?” He couldn't help be rude; his mate’s condition made him feel overprotective and Seung-gil was certainly not someone he could trust.

The Rainbow Dragon just chuckled. “I can see that you would much rather be fucking another pup into your mate, shame you couldn't actually manage that the first time around… or is this your second attempt?” He made a dismissive gesture, “Either way, I'm sure Viktor would rather give you his condolences in person.”

Chris narrowed his eyes, his tail lashing angrily.

“Fuck off.”

x---x---x---x

He sniffed the air with a wolf's nose. Someone had just entered his territory, carrying with him all the smells that came with someone else's. He sniffed again, sorting through all the different smells until he found the familiar one.

Otabek.

He set off at a ground eating trot, more content to travel as a wolf than as a Dragon. To be fair, he was the biggest wolf that anyone was likely to see. Despite being as large as a draft horse, his shaggy dark fur allowed him to blend in with the gloom of the forests that made up his territory. Perfect camouflage for stalking and hunting his prey.

Which incidentally, was what his territory was ‘famous’ for. The best furs and skins came from his hunting grounds, and the meat was dried and cured, perfect for travelling, and certainly the tastiest. It was hard to trade in fresh game meat, the other territories settling for farming their animals. However, all who came and visited could agree, that nothing anywhere else could beat a freshly killed and roasted wild boar.

It wasn’t long before he found the Desert Dragon. Otabek had chosen to travel in his horse form, presumably to attract less attention to himself. The Green Dragon resisted the urge to chuckle; whilst he might have been the biggest wolf anyone had ever seen, Otabek looked a bit… small, for a horse.

He sat there, tail wagging and tongue lolling from his mouth as he panted. The horse in question narrowed its eyes at him before it began to shift, features blending and shaping until Otabek stood in front of him as a man.

“You better not be laughing at me JJ.” Otabek gave his head a shake and rolled his shoulders, the
long flowing hair of his mane rippling down his back as he did so. It was an old joke between them, one that had started when they were much younger, and Otabek had decided to stay with him for a time. He’d gotten sick of calling him by his name, and thus shortened it to “JJ”, Otabek calling him pretentious for having the name “Jean-Jacques” in the first place.

JJ began to shake himself vigorously, much like he would when he was wet after a swim, standing up as he did so. When he was done, he was in his human form, grinning at his friend. “I would never laugh at you,” he chuckled. “Well, maybe a little bit; you haven’t grown very much.”

Otabek rolled his eyes at him, but returned a small smile, the difference in their sizes apparent even in their human forms. “Some of us just stopped growing earlier, perfection reached.”

They both laughed, falling back into their easy friendship. “I don’t suppose you’ve just come for a visit?” JJ asked.

Otabek stilled, his face growing serious. “Viktor wants to call a Drachenrat. He found what he thinks is the omega of the prophecy… and then bonded him.”

“Wait, what?” JJ’s eyebrows shot up under his hair in shock, “But isn’t he, wasn’t he…?”

Otabek looked away, refusing to make eye contact, “He was too young, and now it seems that Viktor has broken something inside him. The omega can’t…” He ran a hand through his hair, his distress obvious. “I took him to the Dragon Spring. The water still works as well as ever, and he’s recovering.”

They walked in silence for a moment, as JJ mulled over what Otabek had said. Viktor should have known better; rules existed for a reason. Sure it was a little different maybe, back when Viktor was as young as they were, but the decline of the omegas literally meant that they couldn’t afford to take any chances with the ones they had, and now Viktor had gone and…

“Do you think he’s gonna be ok?” he asked his friend, softly.

“Physically, his wounds are healing. The physician who attended to him initially probably saved his life. Mentally, I don’t know. There are… nightmares. I can only begin to imagine what he must’ve gone through. A Dragon in Rut loses control, can only be soothed by his omega. Yuri wouldn’t have known what to do, nobody does… it’s instinct.”

JJ chewed his lip, it was obvious how troubled Otabek was, his reply was a far cry from his usual succinct way with words. Did the Desert Dragon know just how much those words actually revealed? To JJ, it sounded as if Otabek was far more invested in this omega, who wasn’t his, than he should be.

“C’mon, let’s go for a run, it will do us good. I can’t imagine you get much of an opportunity for a gallop in the snow country.” He started to change down into his wolf form, “And there’s roast pork waiting, I know you’re dying to have some…” the end of the sentence disappearing into a growl as his transformation completed.

With a howl he was off at a run, not bothering to check to see if Otabek was following, but buoyed by the sound of hoofbeats nonetheless.

x---x---x---x
The sun was setting by the time the pair had made it back to JJ’s lodge. It was a unique structure in the way it was perched at the top of a cliff; a wooden hunting lodge against the backdrop of the sky. But the building was much more than that, extending underground and into the cliff face, with a path down to the beach below. He felt that it encompassed all aspects of his territory, and of himself. The cliff was the perfect launch pad for his dragon form, and deep underground was like a wolf’s den with another entrance hidden in the forest that trapped the lodge between it and the cliff.

“Still as rustic-looking as ever.” Otabek commented as they shifted back to their more human form.

JJ chuckled, “I don’t need a palace and hundreds of servants to remind me that I’m King. The same family has been taking care of my lodge for centuries. I’ve kinda grown attached to them. The country itself oversees all the trade and commerce, they don’t need me interfering with their daily lives. Every now and then, someone comes to the lodge to petition for something, or make an offering.” He grinned at his friend and winked. “It also means that I can entertain my future mate at my leisure.”

Otabek just rolled his eyes at him, but didn’t hide his answering grin. “Gotta find one first!”

The meal was a pleasant affair, but after the plates had been cleared away and the two Dragons were left alone, JJ broached the subject of the Drachenrat once more. “So Viktor wants to have it at the Dragon Springs? It’s been a really long time since we’ve had one there. Do you remember when that place used to be full of omegas, all in attendance…”

Otabek grinned, his face flushed from good food and company, and a little from the nostalgia. “The place hasn’t changed much, and soon the only omegas there will be bonded ones. Did you go visit Christophe when he first found his mate? I thought about it, but Viktor said that there was no need; that we’d all meet the new omega at the next Drachenrat” He took a sip from his cup, swallowing the mouthful slowly. “Do you ever get lonely JJ? Like, did you ever think about just taking an ordinary human for the companionship?”

JJ raised an eyebrow at his friend. “I don’t know if anyone’s tried to bond an ordinary human, I’m pretty sure the process would kill them, besides, you could never mate with them, they just wouldn’t be able to cope with…” he looked downward and gestured to his crotch. “Would you just be happy to spend time with them, just cuddling, as fleeting as it might be? We would blink, and their life would be over.”

He leaned back in his chair, studying the Desert Dragon for a moment. “At least bonding with an omega extends their life, so that we can at least spend a little more time with them. Long enough to know what it’s like to have a mate, and a family, and if we’re lucky, then we get to repeat the process all over again a few centuries later.”

JJ stared at the dregs at the bottom of his cup, the two of them sitting in maudlin silence for a few moments. With a loud sigh he drained the last of his drink and gestured to his friend. “C’mon, I’ll show you my den. If you’re lucky I’ll let you sleep on me.” He gave Otabek a grin, knowing what the response would be.

Otabek didn’t disappoint, rolling his eyes, his voice dripping with sarcasm and feigned enthusiasm, “And wake up smelling like wet dog because you drool in your sleep? Wouldn’t miss it for all the omegas in the world!”
With a wag of his tail, JJ led his friend to the one place he was truly comfortable.

The den was warm, cozy even. Soft fragrant cut grass carpeted the floor, cushioning the hard packed earth. The only light to be had was the soft phosphorescent glow of burrowing insects, lending the den a very ethereal feel.

“It's almost romantic,” Otabek drawled as he flung himself down onto the comfortable grass. JJ could see that the alcohol had warmed him, his face taking on a rosey sheen in the low light. “This isn't a den, it's a love nest.”

“You're just jealous that you don't have a place to do the same.” Blue eyes twinkled with mirth as JJ threw himself down next to his friend, rubbing against him good-naturedly.

“Are you sure you're not a cat?” Otabek gave him a scratch behind his ears, his face softening with affection.

JJ closed his eyes in contentment, tail thumping softly against the ground, “Careful now, you know where too much of this will lead…”

Otabek’s hand stilled for a moment. “Maybe that's not such a bad thing…”
Looking up into the Desert Dragon’s face, JJ could see that he was heart sore and troubled. He wouldn't press, Otabek would tell him when he was ready to, but that didn't mean he couldn't help him feel…

“Did you want to… like we used to? Like, it's been a while and all…” JJ's voice trailed off. The darkness and warmth of his den, and their affectionate actions towards one another were creating a more intimate atmosphere.

It had been centuries since they had felt the need to comfort each other other. It had started out as two young Dragons “practicing”; their opinion was that omegas were far too precious to be subjected to the clumsiness that came from inexperience. It wasn't until one of the Ancient ones
had pulled them aside and explained that whilst such things weren’t considered taboo as such, it was beneath a Dragon to “relieve” himself with his own kind.

There was a comfortable silence, Otabek had already resumed rubbing his ears in reply, dexterous fingers smoothing the fur back. JJ didn’t know why it felt good, only that it did. He let out a quiet groan and pushed his head into his friend’s hand, seeking out more contact. “Such a cat,” the Desert Dragon murmured. “You sure you haven’t been taking lessons off Christophe?”

“Ha!” JJ snorted, “If I were, don’t you think that I’d be getting more from the base of my tail?”

Otabek smiled, his features shadowed in the comparative gloom of the den, as his fingers gently trailed down JJ’s back, stopping to rub small circles across the base of his spine, just above his tail.

JJ couldn’t help the sigh that escaped from his lips, nor the answering arch in his back. Easing himself into a better position, he straddled his friend, leaning forward to nuzzle the side of his neck, knowing that the spot was just as sensitive as his ears. Otabek wouldn’t make a sound, but JJ knew that he was affected by the way his breath slightly hitched. JJ nipped lightly, nothing more than a grazing of teeth, grinning to himself as Otabek’s hands clutched at him in response.

What JJ wasn’t prepared for was the scent of omega that clung to his friend; Otabek would have had to have spent more time than what was appropriate in close proximity to Viktor’s mate. There was more to the situation than what the Desert Dragon was prepared to admit, and JJ began to have a glimmering of understanding of what might have been plaguing him.

“Just lie back and relax, you don’t have to do anything,” he breathed into Otabek’s ear.

He watched as Otabek settled further into the bedding, dark eyes clouding with a longing wistfulness, and JJ knew that his friend wouldn’t be thinking about him this night.

Using feathery nips, he slowly made his way down Otabek’s body, moving carefully until he was positioned comfortably between his firm thighs. In the low light, JJ could see that his cock had begun to swell, and was now pushing against the confines of his clothing. His friend might have been comparatively small in stature, but the growing bulge was most certainly not.

The easy quip about where all his growing had gone went unspoken. This moment felt like it could do without his usual teasing. With a smooth motion he freed the slightly throbbing flesh, pausing to take in the sight.

It was thicker and longer than his own, the bulbous head rounded before tapering off ever so slightly into the shaft, every inch like that of a stallions. JJ couldn’t help but lick his lips in anticipation, before opening his mouth to take it in.

The flesh was warm and velvety, tasting faintly of sweat and the Dragon’s own personal musk, and not at all unpleasant. Otabek let out a quiet exhalation, his body arching slightly to drive his cock further into JJs wet mouth, as his fingers threaded through his dark hair. JJ spared a glance upwards; Otabek’s eyes were already closed as his mind went wherever it needed to.

He started slowly, with the Desert Dragon’s almost impossible size he had to, licking and nibbling the responsive flesh, each small hiss of breath letting him know that his friend was slowly coming apart under the attention.

The scent of arousal filled the air, JJ could feel his own cock swelling painfully, the base beginning to expand into his knot. He shuddered as he loosened his clothes, his skin overly sensitive as the fabric slid against it. He wrapped a hand around his own aching shaft and hollowed out his cheeks,
and in tandem with each glide of his mouth over Otabek’s cock, he pulled against his own. It didn't take as long as what he thought it would, before Otabek’s hands fisted into his hair, and he gave into his release with a shuddering breath.

Breathing heavily, his cheek resting on his friends thigh, JJ suppressed a whine. He wasn't done yet, and his cock was still painfully hard. However, the fingers twined in his hair had stilled and a faint snore sounded in the gloom. He buried his smile in the firm skin, still catching his breath. The Desert Dragon must have been extremely pent up for it to have ended like this, not that he was one for pillow talk anyway.

With as much grace and silence he could muster, JJ eased himself away from the sleeping form, careful not to disturb him. Otabek’s only response was to snuffle in his sleep, much the way a horse would, and to roll over. JJ was sure that given half a chance, he could probably sleep standing up as well. The Green Dragon made his way through the tunnels of his subterranean den, until he emerged into the darkness of the forest that was behind his lodge.

Leaning up against a tree, he made short work of his arousal, dreaming of the day when he would finally have his own mate, one that would take his knot and give him the offspring that they all wished for. With quick motions he continued stroking himself until his own release came with a jerky tremor.

JJ stared at the spatters that were slowly soaking into the earth and wondered if his dream would ever come true.
Chapter 6

The bedding was warm and soft underneath his body, but as Otabek had pointed out the night before, it did indeed smell like wet dog. With a groan he opened his eyes, his face buried in the warmth of JJ’s fur as he slept on in his wolf form, paws twitching in his sleep like he was chasing rabbits or something. A soft smile played across his lips as he watched his friend dream... if only he could feel as carefree. The weight of his self-imposed responsibilities felt particularly burdensome right now.

He would have to return to Viktor, let him know that JJ was coming to the Drachenrat and check on Yuri along the way. He assumed that from there, he, Seung-gil, and Viktor would then make their way to the Dragon Spring, and at some point Christophe and his mate Georgi would join them.

He hoped that the presence of five dragons wouldn’t alarm the innkeeper’s family... he remembered previous meetings would sometimes extend for months, as the Dragons told their stories, but there had also been a few more of them before. He couldn’t imagine this meeting taking any longer than a week at most. Viktor was likely to save his prophecy revelation until the end, giving the whole thing a bit of a dramatic flair, as was his wont.

Leaving JJ to his dreams, he made his way out of the den, quietly impressed that his friend had managed to dig into the ground underneath the lodge, and into the cliff itself to create his subterranean home. Exiting out into forest, the lodge behind him in the distance, he transformed into his horse form and began to trot back towards the North Country. Once he got to the edge of JJ’s territory, he would have to transform into his Dragon form, to make the journey quickly through the icy mountains, but for now, he was content enough to be a horse and enjoy the feeling of the ground beneath his hooves and the wind rushing through his mane.

x---x---x---x

Yuuri was pleased that the little omega seemed to making huge progress with his health. The Dragon had only been gone for a few days, but Yurio (he’d started calling him that to avoid the confusion with his own name), was already able to leave his bed for a few hours at a time, happy to explore the inn itself and spend time with Yuuri as he did his chores. Sometimes Yuuri would let him help, but mostly he was just content to watch and be his companion, asking questions about the daily running of the inn.

He’d noticed, but kept it to himself, that as Yurio’s health had improved, the odd smell of baking bread wasn’t as noticeable, but once he’d smelt it, he couldn’t not smell it. He noticed that it got stronger when the little omega seemed overly emotional, be it excitement over a new discovery, or the fear during the nightmares that still seemed to plague him. He didn’t want to bring it up lest it was something that would reveal his secret, for as much as he liked the little omega, he couldn’t really trust him.

He was Viktor’s mate after all. He didn’t know enough about omegas or Dragons to know whether or not his secret would be safe.
Otabek arrived at the inn, pleased to see that the guards that he’d sent there were still on duty. He hadn’t wanted to leave Viktor’s mate vulnerable and unguarded. Without a Dragon’s protection, an omega was as fragile as an ordinary human, still able to be kidnapped, or harmed— not that he could imagine anyone risking a Dragon’s wrath by harming his mate, but it had been a long time since Viktor’s last omega that the old ways could have been long forgotten by the human population. More likely, if they were going to harm Viktor’s mate, it would be in retaliation to his increasingly tyrannical rule.

Otabek hoped that it would never come to that. He’d grown increasingly fond of the little omega, admiring the determination and strength he’d shown over the years. It couldn’t have been easy knowing that he was ordained by prophecy and destined to save them all… well, according to Viktor anyway.

“Beka!” The little omega’s eyes lit up when he saw him, and he couldn’t help the returning smile. “How are you feeling? You must be better if you're up and about. I hope you haven't been giving…” he paused for a moment as he remembered the name of the innkeeper's son. “…Yuuri any trouble?”

Blond hair swished as the omega shook his head. “He even gave me a nickname Beka, he calls me ‘Yurio’. His sister came up with it, because she said she was going to get confused with two ‘Yuris’ around.” The little omega was brimming with happiness at his newfound friendships.

Otabek resisted the urge to ruffle the omega’s hair. With the Drachenrat coming up, he felt that it wouldn’t be proper to show outward affection towards someone else’s mate. “Yur-… -ah,” he paused, not sure which name he should be using.

Green eyes glittered at him. “Say that again Beka, that sounded… nice. But only you can call me that…” A faint pink coloured the omega’s pale cheeks.

There was a moment of awkward silence, neither knowing quite what to say.

“ Yura .” Otabek said softly, “There’s going to be a Drachenrat here. I don't know if anyone has told you about them… they're a gathering of sorts, like a special meeting. About every four to five hundred years, Dragons come together to share information and meet new mates. Viktor will be coming, as well as the other Dragons, ones you haven't met before. You’ll even get to meet another omega. Viktor also wants to do the mating ceremony, so I’ll be going back to the castle to bring you back some extra clothes, as well as your mating garments. Will you be okay for another day or two?”

Yuri nodded at him, the pink of his cheeks deepening slightly. Otabek swallowed a groan as the little omega’s scent filled the air between them; almost, but not quite, overpowering Viktor’s scent. The acrid undertone reminding him just who the omega belonged to.

“Excuse me?”

Startled, Otabek turned to find the innkeeper’s son, looking sheepish at the interruption. “Did I hear you say that there’s going to be a… gathering of sorts?” Yuuri asked softly.

Otabek nodded, clearing his throat. “Uh yes, Viktor has decided to hold the Drachenrat here, so arrangements will need to be made. We will be using the room with the private spring, so we won’t
be in the way, or disrupt business.”

Yuuri nodded slowly. “I’ll let my parents know to be expecting extra guests then.”

“What?” Yuuri’s mother looked at him worriedly. “One Dragon was enough, but now you’re telling me that there’s going to be some sort of gathering, and they’re all just... going to show up?”

His family were gathered in the kitchen, Mari washing dishes while Toshiya and Hiroko were organising meals. Yuuri figured that it was best to tell them somewhere out of the way of possible eavesdropping guests as the Dragon Otabek had impressed upon him the need for privacy. The last thing they needed was a bunch of gawking locals who might have been used to the idea of their own dragon, but were certainly going to get excited at the prospect of five of them.

Yuuri tried his best to assuage her fears. “They’ll be here for maybe a week, and they’ll keep to the private room at the back of the inn, so it’s not like they’re going to be rubbing shoulders with the guests. We won’t even know that they’re here. Otabek said that when we deliver their meals, we just leave the tray outside the door; they really don’t want to be disturbed... it’s, I dunno... secret dragon business or something.”

“Yuuri,” his mother said, a serious look in her eyes, “we’ve been able to hide you from them for so long because they never come here. Now you’re telling me that all of them are going to be here? Do you have any idea what might happen to you should you be found out? I don’t know about these other Dragons, but if Viktor found out that you’ve been here all along...” she left the sentence hanging, her eyes beginning to shine with unshed tears.

It was a sobering thought. His mother was right. The little omega in their care was evidence enough that Viktor would be capable of dealing very real harm, either to himself or his family.

“I’ll leave for that week... maybe it’s time for an adventure or something...” Yuuri finished lamely, the words ringing hollow in his ears. “Or, if I just stay in my room and don’t come out, then I can’t be discovered... right?” He could feel his hands start to shake, the trembling reminiscent of when he was younger and the panic of being found out would make him unable to sleep at night, and make him fearful of spending time in the common areas of the inn.

“You'll need to finish today's work, so as to not arouse too much suspicion, we can at least say you woke up ill tomorrow morning, and then you can stay in bed. Everyone knows that mountain fevers creep up on you, seemingly fine one day and not the next, and then we can go from there. Mari can babysit the omega until they all arrive, after all, we don't want to make him sick too...” Hiroko took one of his hands in hers, looking up into his face, her dark eyes, much like his, filled with concern and love for him.

He could feel his eyes starting to fill with tears. “I didn't want any of this... I just wanted to be normal...” He choked back a sob as his mother pulled him close and hugged him, rubbing a soothing hand across his back.

There really wasn't anything they could do other than place their trust in fate and hope for the best.

With a sniff, Yuuri pulled away from his mother, wiping his tears away with the back of his hand. “It’s ok for now ma, the Dragon Otabek has already left to go back to Viktor, we’ve got a little bit
of time at least. No point getting sick ‘now.’” He grinned weakly. “Still have a few days to get properly ill, and then it won't seem so sudden.”

His father chuckled at him, patting him on the shoulder. “It will all work out for the best. It always has.”

With those gentle words of reassurance, Yuuri made his way back out to the common area, carrying with him the trays of food his parents had been preparing in the kitchen. Speaking with them had made him feel a little bit better, but the undercurrent of fear that he felt now, made his hands shake just a little and distracted his thoughts.

Placing one of the trays down in front of a group of soldiers, nodding absently at them in acknowledgement, he was jerked around by the sudden tug on his sleeve, the shoulder of his robe dropping down his arm to expose it and half his back. Whilst this normally wouldn't be any cause for alarm, the icy grip of terror seized him as he realised that he wasn't wearing his usual undershirt.

He had taken it off after it had gotten wet when he was looking after the little omega.

The mark on his back felt like it moved across his skin, seeking out the cool air that moved gently across his now clammy flesh.

Time felt like it stood still.

With one hand, he reached to pull the robe back into place, nonchalantly, like there was nothing to hide, and turned to face the person who had demanded his attention in the worst way possible.

“Wait! Isn't that…” one of the guards spoke up.

Yuuri went pale as his entire world narrowed down to a single point in front of him and he swallowed hard.

“I don't think…” he began.

“That's the Dragon mark!”

Yuuri felt the bottom drop out of his stomach, the fear and anxiety wrapping itself like a fist around his heart. “It’s a mis…”

A guard grabbed him, pulling his robe down and exposed his back for the whole inn to see. There was no mistaking the shape of the dragon that had unfurled itself across the expanse of his back.

His secret was out.

The inn erupted into chaos around him. The guards scrambling to their feet, attempting to detain the inn patrons; another, the Captain and a few of his men, had seized his family, dragging them into the centre of the common room. The ensuing struggle knocked chairs over and upended tables; broken ceramic and pottery pieces strewn across the tatami mat floor.

Yuuri’s eyes went wide as he saw the group of soldiers that were detaining his family, draw their swords, standing over them.

“NO!” He shouted, breaking free of the guard who was holding him.

Time slowed, his eyes tracking the blade drawing back, his own hands reaching out to stop it as he
stumbled in his haste to get there in time.

His arms wrapped around his mother, as he squeezed his eyes shut, waiting for the blow. The blade pierced his shoulder. The sword was sharp, he barely felt it, until the his brain caught up with his injury, and the burning sensation took his breath away. The pain didn’t matter. All that mattered was that he’d protected his mother.

There was a faint gurgle. Yuuri realised that there was a dampness spreading across his chest, perhaps more than what there should be for a shoulder wound. Perhaps the blade had sliced something vital on the way through, perhaps he didn’t have long to live…

He pulled back slightly, opening his eyes to look down at himself. His mother’s panic stricken eyes looked up at him, blood bubbling forth from her lips, a crimson tide flowing from her throat, soaking into the clothes between them.

The sword had slid through his body, and sliced through his mother’s throat.

“Run,” the word was a weak gurgle, the bubbles erupting from her throat with a faint pop.

His own injury forgotten in his panic, he turned, shoving the shocked guard away from him, fear lending him a strength he didn’t know he had. A ringing in his ears drowned out the screams of his sister, then abruptly they were cut off. It was hard to tell who was who over the shouting, the crying.

There was the little omega, his green eyes round with fear and his face wet with tears. His hands a bloody mess as he desperately tried to staunch the flow of blood from his sister’s chest. Mari had been trying to protect him, and in the ensuing scuffle, old wounds had reopened, his robe blossoming with the discoloration.

He followed his mother’s dying wish, and ran.

Outside the inn, people were still making their escape, the outside guards milling about in confusion. He didn’t know where he was running to, only that he had to get away from the carnage that he’d just witnessed. His shoulder wound continued to burn as his blood ebbed and flowed, if the shock didn’t kill him, then the blood loss would. He had to find help, but now that his secret was out, it would be like harboring a criminal.

Would he really rather die than be mated with a dragon? He shook his head to clear his muddled thoughts. Not any dragon, just the kind of dragon Viktor was.

His steps faltered as his resolve wavered; he looked back towards the inn. His home.

“Stop him!”

The Captain appeared in the doorway, pointing his bloody sword directly at him.

An outside guard looked between him and his Captain, and drew his bow, nocking an arrow and letting it fly.

The arrow struck him, just above his hip. The jolt forcing him a few steps backwards, towards the edge of a cliff.

He lost his footing, the snow collapsing from beneath his feet to shower into the nothingness beyond.
He fell.
Chapter 7

The three Dragons were seated, Viktor had his chin resting in his hand and a bored expression on his face as the other two gave their reports.

“The Wind Dragon is bringing his mate, though I'm not sure how they'll journey here given his condition.” Seung-gil allowed a small, sly smile across his lips, his eyes never leaving Viktor’s face.

Viktor resisted the urge to scowl. He knew the Rainbow Dragon was baiting him; throwing in his face the fact that Christophe had managed to plant his seed, not that this was a surprise—he usually couldn't keep his hands off his partners and he was virile enough, just not where it counted.

Viktor feigned a yawn. “Human pups are of no interest to me. You'd think that with the number of opportunities he’s had to fuck him that he'd get at least one Dragon pup in him.”

Otabek snorted, turning it into a cough.

“Got something to say there Desert Dragon? As far as I'm aware, you haven't managed to put your seed into anything except the Forest Dragon’s mouth. Tell us how that's working out for you?” Viktor’s eyes narrowed down to slits.

Otabek rolled his eyes. “Don't try and talk like you never did the same thing back when you were younger. Or was that so many centuries ago that you've forgotten? Perhaps the problem isn't so much the quality of the omega and more the fact that the seed is too old to sprout properly.”

Viktor opened his mouth to put the younger dragon in his place, and then stopped, his body stiffening. Over the bond he shared with his omega, came the feelings of pain and distress. He hissed in anger, the Dragon in him rising to the call of his omega’s suffering before he took back control.

“It seems that my mate is in trouble, and it was you who left him there at the spring and in the care of the family that owns it.” He bared his teeth at the Desert Dragon like an angry bear. “Best we go find out what all the fuss is about, especially considering that the Drachenrat is taking place there. If I find that you were responsible for this in any way, I’ll make your existence more miserable than you can possibly imagine; don’t think I haven’t noticed the way you look at MY mate!”

Otabek fought the urge to bare his teeth back. There was nothing to be gained from posturing with the Ice Dragon, especially not if the Dragon in him was responding to the call of his mate. He doubted that Viktor’s bond was strong enough to allow for anything other than the most desperate feelings to come across, which meant that something terrible had happened to Yuri.

Viktor stood. “You two are coming with me. Now. We will go and find out what my mate is busy fussing about,” he turned to face Otabek, blue eyes glittering like the ice that surrounded his home, “and you better hope that he’s still alive when we get there.”

x---x---x---x
It hurt. Everything hurt.

But he was alive. For now.

The sky was a brilliant blue above him, clear of clouds, and so surreal, that it felt like it had been scrubbed clean by the mighty storm a few days ago. Those few days now seemed like they belonged to a different person, in another lifetime.

It hurt to move, but he tried to anyway. Slowly and carefully, he tested out his limbs. It didn’t seem like any bones were broken, which was a miracle in itself, given that he’d just fallen from a cliff, but the wound in his shoulder still bled, and the arrowhead was still lodged in his hip. At least that wasn’t bleeding.

He struggled to his feet, peering up at the cliff from which he had fallen. It seemed the deep snow drift at the bottom had broken his fall, and all he had sustained from his ordeal were a few scratches and some new bruises. He didn’t know how long he’d been unconscious for but the fact that he hadn’t been found meant that they either thought he was dead, or that they hadn’t started looking for him yet.

He couldn’t stay where he was, the cold would kill him as surely as his blood loss would. His only hope was to make it out of the North Country and hope that he’d be found by someone that didn’t have ties with the palace… or someone who wasn’t a Dragon.

There was only one way out from where he was, and he hoped that it would be in the right direction.

x---x---x---x

The sight of one Dragon is usually enough to unnerve a man, but the sight of three descending from the skies was enough to make the soldiers fall to their knees and the common folk to quake in terror and supplication. As he landed, Viktor roared his fury, the sound echoing off the mountains around them, before he changed to his human form, the others following suit.

“Just what exactly is going on here?” He demanded. “Are you all so terribly useless that I can’t leave you unsupervised? That you can’t be trusted to do your jobs? Where is my omega?” His face elongated to that of a bear’s snout as he snarled out his last question, his whole body seemingly growing bigger to match.

Otabek and Seung-gil just watched impassively, as the Captain of the Guard attempted to pull himself together sufficiently enough to answer the question. “It was the innkeeper's son…” the man swallowed hard and tried to continue, “He had the Dragon Mark on his back, O’ Great One. A fully shaped dragon… there was a struggle. I believe he was injured, and… well…” He closed his eyes. A man condemned. “He fell into the ravine and we haven’t been able to locate him.”

Everything stilled. Even the wind dared not blow. The three Dragons just stared at the man.

Viktor strode forward, lifting the man off the ground by the throat. “Impossible! There is no way another omega could be in my territory without me noticing!” He snarled, casting the man aside before whirling to face Otabek. “How could you not notice? You were here! Or did you think that you could keep him from me and take him for yourself?!”
Otabek balked. If what the man said was true, then that would mean that the omega had been right under his nose the entire time. “Forgive me if I was too busy taking care of your mate to notice!” Little pieces of a puzzle that he had been bothering him subconsciously started falling into place. “That's why we're here isn't it? Because you felt something from the bond?”

Viktor let out another snarl of rage and frustration, his body shuddering as it transformed fully into that of a bear. He stood over the hapless captain, mighty paws on either side of the man’s shoulders. “What happened?” he growled out, jaws open and teeth bared.

The man haltingly relayed the events at the inn, knowing that each word could very well be his last.

And they were.

Viktor cleaned his claws on the snow, the man’s shredded body staining the ice red. His body shimmered and grew as he changed back into his dragon form. He fixed an icy blue stare at the Desert Dragon. “You sort out the mess here. My mate is still alive; all that fuss for nothing...” he whipped his head around to face Seung-gil. “You're coming with me. We will find this supposed omega that has managed to evade detection all this time, and when we do…” he left the threat hanging in the air.

Otabek watched as Viktor and Seung-gil took to the skies, banking sharply to dive over the edge of the ravine and disappear from his sight. He signalled to the soldiers who were nearby, giving them instructions to clean up the carnage Viktor had left behind as best they could, and made his way inside the inn.

He wasn’t sure what he was expecting when he entered the inn, taking in the upturned furniture and spilled food. Two bodies were laid out, covered in blood stained sheets. The innkeeper himself was restrained, tied to a chair and flanked by soldiers. The man didn’t look like he could put up much of a fight, his face the look of desolation as tears continued to roll down his cheeks.

“Where is the omega?” Otabek asked quietly.

“We took him back to the room O Great One. We didn’t want him to get hurt any further.” His voice trailed off. “It was an accident... he was... he got in the way...” The man looked decidedly uncomfortable as he realised that he’d just admitted that things had gotten out of hand. “We can’t say for sure what actually happened… it was all so quick… didn’t think the peasants would react like that…”

Otabek fought the urge to do what Viktor had done to the Captain. “Outside is what is left of your Captain. Best you go and help clean it up and perhaps consider that it will be your fate, too, depending on what condition I find the omega in.” He looked around once more before turning to the men guarding the innkeeper. “And for fuck’s sake, untie that man. He’s not going to do anything in his current state. Let him grieve his family properly. There’s a good chance that when Viktor returns, he will be joining them. At least allow the man some peace.”

The soldiers rushed to do his bidding; no doubt they had heard Viktor's fury from inside the inn and feared to share the same fate as their Captain. At least the man had died quickly and quietly.

He moved swiftly towards the Dragon Spring, the smell of distressed omega getting stronger the closer he got to the room. “Get away from me, you smelly old man!” Yuri’s voice could be heard down the hallway. “I don’t want you touching me!”

The crash he heard from inside the room gave him pause outside the door. He didn’t have the key
to the room anymore and the only way he’d be getting inside short of breaking down the door, was if someone let him in. He knocked loudly and called out. “Yuri? Is everything alright?”

The door flung open with a thud, the small disheveled and blood stained omega standing on the threshold, breathing heavily. “Beka!”

Otabek looked past Yuri to see the field medic standing behind him, and expasterated look on his face, his hands full of bandages.

“You need to sit down so I can have a look!” The man paled when he saw the Dragon standing in the doorway.

“Beka. You need to get rid of this man! You need to get rid of all of them!” The omega’s green eyes were glittering with a swirl of emotions. “They killed those people Beka! They didn’t even do anything! They were helping me, and these… these… arseholes just killed them!” Yuri whirled around to face the medic. “And you! Will you stop fucking touching me? I don’t want you anywhere near me!”

The Dragon entered the room with the omega moving behind him, putting him between the soldier and himself. He fixed the man with a steely look. “What’s going on here?”

The medic drew himself up and squared his shoulders. “He wouldn’t stop screaming and trying to fight the soldiers, so the Captain decided to have him detained here. He was covered in blood, but it appears to be mostly not his. I was trying to get him to sit still so I could dress the wounds properly… but he obviously refused.”

Otabek studied the man for a moment. It was evident that the man was a seasoned medic, unperturbed by the status of his patient and more concerned with doing his job. “You can go, I’ll make sure he’s looked after. There are men out there that need your help.”

The medic looked relieved as he gathered up his tools, leaving a small bundle of bandages on the bed, before hastily making his way from the room, not even sparing a glance at the omega who glared his fury at him throughout the exchange.

The door closed with a soft click. Otabek indicated the stool that the medic had been trying to get Yuri to sit on. “Sit.” His voice was soft. The omega probably had enough of being shouted at.

Yuri took a hesitant step towards the stool, “They’re dead Beka, they didn’t even do anything and they’re dead!” There was a tremor in his voice that wasn’t there before. “They were shouting and everyone was running, and the guard took his sword, and Yuuri got in the way, but his mother died anyway, and then I was running, because I wanted them to stop, and then I thought they were going to stab me…” Yuri was beginning to babble as he took small halting steps towards the stool.

“Blood. There was so much blood Beka… and screaming, everyone was screaming… Why did they have to do that Beka, why? Nobody was helping, nobody helped them, nobody was there.” Yuri’s eyes took on an unfocused look. “Blood, and screaming, and they wouldn’t stop, and there was just so much blood, and… and…”

Otabek could see the colour slowly leeching from Yuri’s face, and noted how his hands trembled, even while they were balled into fists. “It’s okay now Yura. You’re safe now.” He rumbled, deep in his chest. Hoping that the sound would soothe the omega as it had once before.

The omega sat down heavily on the stool with a dazed look. “Safe? Nobody’s safe Beka. It’s a lie… it’s all been a lie.” Yuri began to sob, great heaves wracking his small body. His litany of
horrors becoming an incoherent mess.

The Dragon gathered the little omega up in his arms, Yuri clutching at his clothing as he poured out his grief. The physical damage that Yuri had sustained was nothing compared to how heart-sore the poor boy was. He’d survived the terror that was his mating to Viktor, only to be be put through the fear and panic of watching people die in front of him.

“C’mon, Yura. Let’s get you cleaned up.” He soothed, lifting the weeping boy and carrying him to the spring and sitting him on one of the stone benches. Gently he helped the omega out of his torn and bloodied clothes. He was relieved to see that most off the blood did in fact belong to someone else as some of his wounds had indeed reopened, and would require rebandaging.

He filled a small basin with the hot water from the spring, and began sluicing the blood away, all while the omega continued his keening. When he was clean, Otabek patted him dry and redressed his wounds before carrying back into the room and setting him upon the bed.

“Beka, Beka.” Yuri sobbed, holding tightly to him. “Why? They didn’t even do anything…”

Otabek watched as the omega stiffened, his eyes, red from crying, widening with fear once more.

“Beka! Yuuri! What happened to Yuuri? I saw him get stabbed, and then… and then he ran outside. Was he outside Beka? Was he there?” Yuri was still clutching at his clothing, his body beginning to tremble again.

“It’s okay Yura. Viktor and Seung-gil are out looking for him.”

“No!” The omega cut him off, “You can’t let Viktor find him! You just can’t!” The omega’s fear was perilously close to tipping him into hysterics once more. Yuri struggled against Otabek, began to push him away. “Nonononono! He can’t find him. Have to save him!” The omega started babbling again, his eyes wide panic.

“Yuri, calm down!” Otabek caught the omega’s wrist, pulling him back into his chest. “Yura, you need to calm down. Your wounds will open again!”

The omega pushed against him weakly, his eyes filling with tears once more. “Beka,” he sobbed. “He can’t… you can’t let him!”

Otabek wrapped his arms around Yuri once more, letting the omega cry himself out. The mention of Viktor searching for the innkeeper’s son seemed to make him more distraught. Surely Viktor wouldn’t do anything to the injured omega? A gnawing feeling opened up in the pit of his stomach as he remembered Viktor’s thinly veiled threat. He took being thwarted personally, and whilst he wouldn’t kill the him, he’d make sure that Yuuri would forever regret hiding himself.

Yuri continued crying, hiccuping with sobs as he continued repeating himself. It only made the feeling in the pit of his stomach worse, a feeling of dread was beginning to form. Viktor had already proven to be cruel when it came to the prophecy. This certainly would be the tipping point for them all.

“Yura, I promise I’ll find him, but you need to stay here.” He cupped the tear-stained face in his hands, forcing the omega to look up at him. “I will find him.”

The grip on his clothing tightened once more, a moment before the little omega pulled him forward, pressing his lips against his own, catching him by surprise.

It was clumsy and inexperienced, and tasted of salt.
The scent of anxious omega filled the air, and he could feel the Dragon within him stirring to respond.

Gently, but firmly, he pushed Yuri away, coaxing Yuri into the bed, repeating his promise to look for the innkeeper’s son. He couldn’t allow himself to stay with the little omega any longer, his tenuous grip on his self control was beginning to crumble and he soon he wouldn’t be able to trust himself to be alone with him.
Yuuri was moving faster than he’d anticipated, or perhaps he’d fallen further than what he’d thought, but the ice and snow was gradually giving away to tufts of green and patches of brown muddy earth. It squelched between his toes with each step he took. He felt light-headed, he could swear that he was delirious, the dragon on his back writhing and twitching and making him feel like he wanted to peel his skin off to be rid of it.

It had brought him nothing but suffering.

He was cold. His teeth had stopped chattering, and he’d stopped shivering a while ago. The only thing on his mind was to put one foot in front of the other and get as far away from his home as he could… except that it was getting harder to lift his feet.

He stumbled, the ground had begun to slope downwards and he wasn’t prepared. He fell, sliding and tumbling to the bottom of the hill. He’d cry if he had the strength to spare; it took all his effort just to heave himself to his feet once more. He took a few more stumbling steps before his strength finally gave out, collapsing beneath a large tree, the trunk wide enough for him to lean his back against, using the last of his reserves so that at least his face wasn’t in the mud.

It hurt. It hurt to breathe, even the tears that leaked from the corners of his eyes made them sting. Everything just… hurt.

I’m going to die… but, I don’t want to. Please…

It was a silent plea to the world. Was death really better than being found by Viktor? He couldn’t forgive the Dragon for the murder of his family. If there was any doubt that his rule was cruel, it had vanished when the little omega had been brought to the inn.

There was no choice.

He hadn’t been given a choice. The soldiers had killed his mother out of hand. He would’ve gone willingly if they’d promised not to kill anyone…

He knew his mind was wandering, the delirium of blood loss setting in.

Was this what dying felt like?

There came the sound of sniffing and huffing from beyond his vision.

Great. Eaten by wild animals instead…

Fear gripped him, his heart thudding painfully in his ears as they began to ring. The sounds around him felt like they came from far away. His vision began to shrink as he slumped, no longer having the strength to remain upright. The last thing he saw before the world went black was the biggest wolf he’d ever seen.

x---x---x---x

There came a scent on the breeze, faint. He sniffed again, not quite believing what he was
smelling. There, on the wind, over the smell of damp and earth was the scent of blood, and under that, so faint he couldn't be certain, was the smell of omega.

If his nose was to be believed, somewhere out in the wilderness was an injured omega, and by the smell of blood, close to death.

JJ broke into a run, his wolf form eating up distance between him and the omega. He had no idea who the omega might be; he certainly didn't smell like the omega that Otabek had been babysitting. This omega smelled older… and almost dead he reminded himself.

Speculation wouldn't get him there any faster, but his blood still quickened. For the first time in over a thousand years, there was more than one omega, in fact there were three if you counted Chris’ mate. Perhaps there was some truth to the prophecy Viktor had been obsessing over after all.

The trees that were part of his territory were beginning to thin out the closer he got to the border he shared with the North; there was a bit of overlap in the terrain, between the forest of his territory, the hills of the Wind Dragon’s territory and the altitude of the North. The snow had melted and made the ground muddy, but it wasn’t quite enough to cover the smell of blood that was getting stronger the closer he got.

Making it over the rise of the hill he was climbing, he finally found what he’d been tracking. Slumped against a tree, and covered with scratches and bruises. He sniffed again, the smell of decay and death lingered underneath the smell of blood. He trotted over to the lifeless looking body, sniffing it all over, before changing into his more human form, kneeling on the ground in front of him.

He shook the man gently by the shoulder, “Hey there, can you hear me?”

The man was still breathing, shallow and laboured. Alive, but for how much longer? JJ sat back on his feet, and chewed his bottom lip in consternation. This man really was an omega. He had to do something to save him; he looked too far gone for more conventional means of rescue. If he tried to take him anywhere, he’d most likely die on the journey…

There was only one thing he could do.

It had been a very long time since he’d bonded with an omega; he didn’t know when he might get the chance to bond with one again… but it was the only way he could save this one here and now. The only problem was that the man was unconscious; there was no way he could give the required consent for the bond to work.

Leaning forward, he gently took the man’s head in his hands, rubbing his thumbs over the pale cheeks, brushing away some of the dirt. Eyelids fluttered and the injured omega let out a soft moan, giving the Dragon a small sense of hope. It was now or never. If he waited any longer, it would be too late.

He spoke softly.

“You are my heart, my life, my one and only thought. From love; life. May it last forever.”

They were the old words of bonding, all dragons remembered them. All the omega had to do was say ‘yes’.

JJ waited, holding his breath. The man seemed to slump in his arms, his breathing growing shallow.
“No, no, no! C’mon, all you have to do is say yes …” He patted the omega’s cheek, trying to rouse him as he repeated the bonding phrase once more.

There was no response.

He touched his forehead to the omega’s and closed his eyes. He repeated the phrase a third time, pouring everything he had into the words; his fervent wish that the omega would live.

“Yes”

It came as a breath of air passing through cold lips. But it was enough.

JJ pressed his lips against the omegas slightly parted ones, with the same feeling of intensity.

*Live.*

Eyes closed, he waited. Was he too late after all?

The omega took a shuddering breath, and JJ watched as colour flooded back to the omega’s face. Flesh rippled and wounds began to close over. The omega’s eyes flew open, his hands clutching at the Dragon’s arms as he took another gasping breath.

JJ held onto the omega, tried to calm him as the feeling of terror slammed into him through the bond. He winced. Whilst he was prepared to begin receiving emotions through the bond, he wasn’t prepared for the intensity of them.

“Hey now, hush.” he soothed. “It’s gonna be alright, this bit is always frightening if you’re not prepared for it, but you’ll be fine, just a little longer…” Ideally he would have had a chance to prepare the omega somewhat, warn him that the bond would make his body change; make him more receptive to the Dragon bonding with him. The physical changes were normally limited to the reproductive system, but the bond enabled the body to almost be reborn. Any ailments that the omega might have suffered from, any physical injuries or deformities, were cured with the bonding.

Which is why he’d done it.

The omega sagged against him, breathing heavily. JJ held him in his arms, rocking him gently as he rested his cheek on top of the dark hair, “Shhh, all over now…”
He breathed in. The omega’s scents were starting to come through, stronger now. It never ceased to amaze him just how much information could be gleaned through smell alone. His omega. He could smell his scent, the scent of the bond, mixing with the omega’s own...but something wasn’t right.

They didn’t seem to match. With a sinking heart he realised why. He pulled the omega’s robe off his shoulders to reveal the mark on his back. The dragon undulated across the pale skin, its scales revealing a unique pattern.

*His* pattern.

They were related. He had just bonded with an omega who shared the same lineage as he did. There wouldn’t, *couldn’t* be any offspring from their union.

Another scent slammed into him like a punch to the gut. Soft. Sweet. *Alluring*.

The smell of an omega going into heat.

JJ groaned as he felt the Dragon within him respond. It wouldn’t matter that nothing would come of their union, the pull of an omega’s heat was too strong to resist, even more so that they were bonded.

He drew back, looking down at his mate. Pupils dilated, and face flushed with more than just the vigor of life, his mate stared back, and a wave of need hit him through the bond.

“*Shit.*”

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He was alive.

His mind was a swirling mess of thoughts and emotions, and his body felt like it was on fire, but he was *alive*.

He took a deep breath. He could smell forest smells of pine and cedar; *my mate*, the thought came unbidden. He felt an anxiousness that wasn’t entirely his own coupled with *desire*.

Having a Dragon this close to him made him feel like his skin was itching, like he wanted to crawl out of it. The mark on his back was moving, curling up into a tight ball into the small of his back. He closed his eyes and shuddered, the prickling of heat and tingling of nerves making their way up his spine and into his scalp, making it feel like his hair was going to stand on end.

He *purred*.

Reaching upwards he slid his arms around the Dragon’s neck and brushed his cheek against the Dragon’s own, the slight scratchy sensation of barely concealed scales sending shivers down his body. He took another deep breath, letting it out in a slow exhale that blew gently along the Dragon’s ear, making it twitch.

The Dragon groaned into the side of his neck, his hot breath making him shiver, “I don’t even know your name…”

He pulled back, looking up into eyes so blue that the resembled the sapphires the miners brought
back from deep underground, watching them slowly darken as the pupils went from narrow cat-like slits and begun widening, and smiled seductively. “Yuu-ri” he drawled, licking his lips as he continued to stare, not missing the hard swallow the Dragon made.

Yuuri moved against the Dragon’s body, the hardness brushing up against his stomach made his knees feel weak and his mouth water. The heat emanating from the dragon’s body carried with it a scent that made his head feel cloudy and intensified the growing ache he could feel building low and deep in his belly.

He could feel how much his mate wanted him, hunger roaring through the bond and making him feel short of breath with it’s ferocity. The dragon stood still, taut as a bowstring as he dropped to his knees, burying his nose into the place where the smell was the strongest, and mouthed over the thickening bulge he found there.

Fingers slid through his hair, digging almost painfully into his scalp as he looked up. The Dragon was wearing an almost feral expression, as he watched him greedily, lips curling back ever so slightly to reveal an animalistic grin, before the dragon caught himself, his eyes closing and his head tilting back. Yuuri could feel him trying to control himself, the swirl of emotions that were coming through the bond was like the flood from a broken dam, threatening to sweep him away.

He felt himself throb, and an answering trickle down his thighs.

The Dragon hissed above him, the fingers in his hair tightening, and the bulge grew even bigger underneath his lips. Yuuri curled his fingers into the hem of fabric sitting low over the dragon’s hips and tugged downwards, revealing the straining flesh that he’d felt growing in size.

The reddening tip glistened with beading moisture, and Yuuri watched with a strange feeling of yearning as a drop made its way down the thickening shaft with a slow jerky trickle. With a shaking hand, he tentatively reached out, fingers encircling it. It felt warm to touch, the skin velvety smooth. He could feel the dragon’s erratic pulse through the vein that ran along the underside of it, and his own pulse beat wildly to match.

x---x---x---x

The sight of his omega mouthing over his straining cock was nearly enough to make him lose all semblance of control. We shouldn't be doing this here… it should be somewhere nice… it shouldn't be like this… not in the middle of nowhere and not in the dirt…

His fingers tightening in the omega’s hair, JJ couldn't stop the thoughts from circling, his mind was growing hazy as each breath the omega made seemed to send more of the delicious heat-scent his way, and every throb and answering pull could be felt through the bond.

Had it always felt like this? Was the bond always this strong? He couldn't remember a time when he could literally feel his omega’s physical responses…

Warm wet lips closed over the head of his cock, causing him to throw back his head, biting his lips to stop him from howling his pleasure, hissing instead. The Dragon in him was impatient, the need to quickly take his mate was going stronger with each hesitant swipe of the omegas tongue across his cock.

He watched mesmerised as the shaft disappeared into his mate’s willing mouth, only to emerge
glistening with saliva, before disappearing once more. He could feel his balls tightening and the base of his cock start to swell into his knot.

“Nonononono!” he rambled, pulling the omega off him, wincing as his cock left his mate's mouth with a wet *pop*. If he allowed himself to knot here and now, he wouldn't have the time to take his mate properly. Regardless of the location, he still needed to satisfy the omega’s heat before any other Dragon did.

He gently pulled the omega into his embrace, head tipping to capture the slightly swollen lips with his own, tongue probing softly until the omega opened his mouth and accepted him. With a muffled growl, JJ deepened the kiss, hands wandering over the omega’s hips to cup the firm flesh of his bottom, and as his mate answered with a desperate moan, he slid a finger between the cheeks to probe at the swollen opening.

The smell of slick lit a fire within him, and from the bond his mate must have felt the same, their connection providing an endless sensory feedback loop.

JJ thought that he would go mad from it all.

The omega trembled in his arms, pushing back against the finger that was now inside him, exploring gently. He watched intently as the mark on his mate’s back began slowly unfurling, the little dragon emerging to take its proper place to allow their mating.

He coaxed the omega get down on all fours on the cool hard earth and present himself. JJ swallowed hard as his hands slid along the firm flesh, pulling the muscle apart to reveal the puffy bud of the omega’s entrance. The scent emanating from his mate, and the sight of the slick that imperceptibly leaked from his pulsing hole made the Dragon within him shudder, the beast fighting for control. He could feel his scales forming across his skin, his body slowly changing into his true form.

His tongue flickered out, tasting the slick, testing his mate's readiness. The omega mewed loudly, pressing up and back, and with a grunt JJ gripped the omega’s hips and buried his face deep to lap at the sensitive skin, the slick starting to flow more freely, coating his lips and chin, and tickling his senses with its seductive call.

He slid a finger around the opening, gathering up slick before pushing it gently against the quivering hole. The muscle gave way easily, the damp warmth welcoming him in as the omega clenched around him. Through the bond, he could feel the desperation his omega was feeling and the uncontrollable heat building within him.

It made his Dragon ache.

The more aroused his omega became, the more mark unfurled, and the more his entranced opened, accepting more fingers as JJ continued to tease and lick, the omega a sobbing mess beneath him, until with a strangled cry, his mate spasmed, slick gushing from the throbbing hole.

JJ licked the slick from his lips, as his skin shimmered, giving way to his bright green scales, his body changing fully into that of the dragon, and through the bond he could feel his omega’s building anticipation; his true form was free and the mating could take place the way it should.

He was poised on the precipice, the point of no return; dragon form crouched over the body of his mate, his cock glistening with slick, the tip nudging at the beckoning entrance of his omega. It would just take one thrust, and they’d be connected in every possible sense. He could feel the neediness through the bond, the *demand* that he take what his mate was offering; what was
rightfully his … with each gentle push, he could feel his omega opening up further to him; he watched the omega’s mark unfurl and settle over his mate’s back like a second skin. A little more, and his omega would be ready for him.

He willed the change to happen with each heavy throb of his aching cock.

Slowly, the last part of the mark slid into place, the dragon’s head disappearing into his mate’s hairline at the nape of his neck. His mate let out a needy whine that went straight to his cock, making it swell even larger; it didn’t matter how big it was now, his mate was ready for him. He rubbed it along his omega’s entrance, coating it in even more of the slick that was dripping from his mate. He steadied himself, the head of his cock resting against the pulsing opening.

Too engrossed in his task, too wrapped up in the scent of his mate, he failed to notice the change in air pressure, the whistling of wind displaced.

With a snarl and a flurry of wings and claws, Viktor crashed into JJ, tearing him away from the omega, the momentum carrying the both of them down the hill, colliding with trees and boulders alike, in a flurry of wings and limbs.

JJ savagely bit into Viktor’s shoulder, his claws scrabbling for purchase on the hard scales of Viktor’s back. The Ice Dragon roared his fury, beating at him with his wings, the battering making him lose his grip.

The two Dragons came apart, circling each other looking for an opening.

“You DARE !” Viktor thundered, “To take what is MINE!”

JJ shook his head, baring his teeth. “MINE! ” The pull of his omega was distracting, the smell of his heat was strong, bewitching even. If he was affected by it, then Viktor would surely be as well. JJ knew they were evenly matched in terms of strength and skill, but this time he had an edge… he was fighting for his mate.

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Yuuri was confused. He arched, seeking his mate, his body felt like it was burning up and the mark on his back itched like crazy. There was just cold empty air above him were there should’ve been the strong bodily warmth of his Dragon.

He ached. He felt empty. His fists bunched into the tattered remains of his clothing that he was kneeling on in frustration as he whimpered. He needed his mate! He needed to be mated.

Then, just as suddenly as it was gone, the comforting presence of Dragon was back. Yuuri closed his eyes, lowering his head to rest his cheek on ground as he presented himself, widening his stance to show his mate how ready he was, breathing a sigh of relief…

His eyes shot open.

The smell was all wrong. Through the bond he could feel the dragon’s fury at being denied.

This wasn’t his mate.
Seung-gil couldn't believe his luck—or maybe he could. The precious omega, the one that Viktor had ruined his life over was in heat and presenting himself. JJ had obviously done all the hard work, coaxing the mark into place, making the omega as receptive as possible to the mating. To mate an omega in heat, it was most satisfying done in a Dragon’s true form, but it required patience… of which Viktor obviously had none. He’d already ruined one omega, Seung-gil wasn’t about to let him ruin another.

The omega’s smell tempted him, lured him in. His cock swelled in response, as he licked his lips at the sight of the omega’s glistening hole.

Before the omega had a chance to escape, he pinned him in place, his dragon’s body crowding the smaller omega. The omega’s feeble struggles only served to fan the flames that were rapidly building within him, small beads of precum were already forming and dripping down his shaft. He steadied himself, one clawed paw holding the omega down. He pushed his hips forward and let out a growl as the tip of his cock pushed against the waiting heat.

It felt so good.

With a swift thrust, he was inside, buried to the base of his cock as the omega spasmed around him.

The two Dragons were breathing hard, neither giving the other any quarter, both injured but not mortally so. They circled each other once more. Brute force was not going to win this battle. JJ narrowed his eyes as he dodged a swish of the Ice Dragon’s tail.

It was the opening he needed.

With a roar, JJ charged at Viktor. He was going to end this fight and go back to his mate!

A wrenching pull in his gut dropped him to his knees.

Through the bond he could feel it; his omega’s terror and revulsion. Another Dragon was taking advantage of his mate’s heat. With a howl of righteous fury, he turned away from Viktor, his rage building as his need and instinct to protect his mate took over.

Viktor took advantage of his distracted state, and with a snarl backhanded him, the force sending the Green Dragon crashing into the side of a boulder. Battered and dazed and fighting the tide of emotions that stormed across the bond, JJ desperately struggled to his feet. He needed to protect his mate!
Each thrust into the pulsing wetness of the omega brought him closer to the edge. Seung-gil increased his pace, grinding his hips into the omega’s own, chasing his release. The cries and protests of the omega beneath him spurring him on to dizzying heights. Taking an omega had never felt so good.

With a shuddering groan, he felt his cock swell, the bumps and ridges digging into the soft flesh of the omega, locking him into place as the first burst of his seed spilled from him. He could feel each convulsion of his cock emptying more and more of himself into the receptive omega.

A little longer and he’d be able to tell if it had taken root in the omega’s belly.

Seung-gil felt the change in the air that heralded the approach of another dragon. He wouldn’t make the same mistake JJ had and be caught in such a compromising position. With a small tug, he disengaged himself, the muscles of the omega’s walls gripping at him as he slid out despite the wailing coming from beneath him.

He took a few retreating steps, backing away from the omega, watching carefully as the Desert Dragon landed. If he didn’t control this situation, Viktor would surely kill him for mating with the omega before he did.

x---x---x---x

He was too late. He’d spent too long making sure his Yuri was safe, and now the innkeeper’s son, the other omega, had been…

Otabek could hear the sounds of battle, the angry cries of Viktor and JJ as they fought each other.

“What have you done?” he hissed at the Rainbow Dragon.

Seung-gil lashed his tail warningly at him. “Me? I didn’t do anything! It was Viktor!”

Otabek stopped short. “You mean to tell me that Viktor told you to… what, rape the omega?”

“It was Viktor!” The Rainbow Dragon insisted, baring his teeth at him. “You know that this is all part of the prophecy he keeps raving on about! He said that JJ couldn’t be allowed to mate with the omega, even if it meant this. Viktor commanded me to do this! JJ tried to stop me, but Viktor got in his way. I think he might kill the omega anyway once he’s finished dealing with JJ!”

Otabek growled in anger and frustration. He couldn’t tell if Seung-gil was lying or not, nor did he want to potentially face Viktor if the Ice Dragon was victorious against the Green. If Rainbow Dragon was telling the truth, then this was proof enough that Viktor had finally lost his mind.

Scooping up the shivering semiconscious omega, Otabek took to the skies. He had to find a safe place for him. Somewhere far away from Viktor, but somewhere where JJ could still find them…

The scent that assailed his senses made him nearly drop the omega, before he gripped him tighter, clutching him carefully, reverently almost.

The omega was pregnant.

And with a dragon.
Chapter 9

Viktor stood over the dazed Green Dragon, watching as he shimmered and slowly slid back into his human form. He hadn’t missed the change in his fighting style; he was obviously distracted by his mate’s heat. It had worked in his favour, and now that JJ was in no shape to perform his duties, Viktor would step in and fulfil the prophecy. Just like he was supposed to.

Leaving the semi-conscious dragon where he lay, he made his way back towards where they had left JJ’s mate. The thought left a sour taste in his mouth. It had been a struggle not to be distracted by the scent of the omega’s heat, his only advantage was that he wasn't affected by the bond that the upstart Green Dragon shared. However the sight that greeted him as came over the rise and into the clearing just filled him with anger and dread. The omega was gone. All that remained was a damp patch of earth where he had been lying.

With a shriek of righteous fury, he sniffed the air. It was rife with the smell of spilled seed, and omega slick, overpowering the various Dragon scents, including his own. There was no way of telling whom the seed belonged to. He vowed that he would find this omega and fuck the pathetic creature until the only seed that remained in him was his, and then he would find out which Dragon was responsible and...

Perhaps Seung-gil had taken the omega back to the springs, readying him for his return. The seed spilled might not have been in the omega, after all, the desire that a heat generated was a nearly palpable living thing that could cause any dragon to lose himself without having even touched the omega in question.

Viktor could still have the omega after all. The prophecy was still within his grasp, and he would stop at nothing to make sure it was fulfilled.

x---x---x---x

Everything hurt.

But nothing hurt more than a Dragon who was unable to protect his mate.

JJ thought that the pain would literally unhinge him, the only thing keeping his tenuous hold on sanity intact was that Yuuri needed him now more than ever. If he were to abandon him now and leave him to his fate, he would be no better than those animals; the animal that took his mate against his will and the one that prevented him from saving him.

He had felt the whole thing through the bond, Yuuri’s rise of emotions distracting him, causing him to falter. Viktor had taken advantage of his anxiety over his mate, delivering blow after blow until JJ could barely stand. Falling to his knees, Viktor standing over him as victor, his omega’s feelings washed over him. The fear of the unfamiliar, of a Dragon unknown. The fear that his own mate felt as he had failed to protect what was his.

The shame of an omega giving in to the biological need; the drive and imperative to breed. His body craving the touch of a Dragon and the revulsion that it wasn’t the one it should’ve been, all over-ridden as a traitorous body did what it had been designed to do. The change in his omega’s hormones had almost been instantaneous as new life took hold.
It should’ve been him.

It should’ve been his.

He felt the pull of the bond. His omega needed him, still wanted him despite everything; required his protection now more than ever before.

He closed his eyes, raising his face towards a sky that was slowly darkening as the sun dipped below the mountainous horizon. A breath of wind caught his dark hair, feathering it away from his upturned face; natures gentle caress like a balm over his soul.

He let his feelings rise up from within him, scouring away the pain and anguish until all that was left was the surety that his mate yearned for him to return to his side.

Hair and skin gave way to scales and wings, his body pausing to gather itself before taking to the air. The cooling night air surrounding him as he climbed past the whisper of cloud, gaining height before banking slowly, gracefully, as the ground disappeared beneath him and he allowed the pull of the bond to guide him to where Yuuri would be.

Wait for me.

x---x---x---x

Otabek flew as quickly as he dared, the wind whistling past him as his mind raced. Where could he take the omega? JJ’s lodge was out of the question; it would probably be the first place Viktor would think to look, and there was no way he could subject JJ’s people to the wrath of an unstable dragon… because it was definitely clear now that Viktor was unhinged.

He hoped that JJ’s bond with the omega was stronger than the one Viktor shared with Yuri; it would mean that he could use it to track them wherever they went. The pull of the bond would guide him.

Wrapped up carefully in his massive claws, Yuuri stirred. Otabek would need to find somewhere to hide them quickly before the omega woke up and subsequently panic when he found himself hurtling through the air, thousands of feet off the ground.

Forest trees thinned out and began giving away to the rolling plains of the Meadow Lands, giving the Desert Dragon an idea. Banking sharply he turned towards the Wind Dragons mansion.

Chris would be able to hide them, and two Dragons- even three, when JJ found them -would be in a better position to protect the omega from Viktor than just him on his own. He’d never defeated the Ice Dragon in a one on one fight. The others had come close, but hadn’t won either…

The sprawling mansion grounds came into view, and he began his descent, watching carefully as the Wind Dragon appeared. He landed as gently as he could, breathing heavily, and hoping that the omega he was carrying wasn’t any worse for wear from the flight. His form shimmered as he changed to his human form, still holding JJ’s mate close to him.

The Wind Dragon looked at him questioningly. “What on earth…” He paled as the scent of the omega reached him. “Is that—?”
Otabek huffed, still slightly out of breath. “It’s an omega. JJ’s. It’s a long story, but right now he needs somewhere safe from Viktor.” The Desert Dragon took another breath. “He’s carrying a Küken”

Chris fixed him with a steely glare, his tail lashing. “I can smell that. Who fucking sired it?”

Otabek bared his teeth a little, the anger of finding the Rainbow Dragon taking what was not his still fresh. “Seung-gil. He spun some story about how Viktor ordered him to do it. I don’t believe any of it… it doesn’t matter anyway. What’s done is done.”

The Wind Dragon held his gaze a little longer, seizing him up. Otabek hoped that it wouldn’t come down to another fight; he had no quarrel with Chris, but the Dragon was also protecting his own mate and offspring. There was no telling what Viktor might decide to do in his revenge.

“Come inside. We can find somewhere quiet in the mansion; one of the unused rooms. Considering that this is the first time the rest of us are hearing about this new omega, I’m assuming the poor thing has no idea what’s happening to him?” Chris clicked his tongue.

Otabek could only nod, adjusting his grip on the omega and following the Wind Dragon. “I’ll fill you in on everything once we get him settled, but hopefully JJ will be here soon… as long as Viktor hasn’t killed him.”

x---x---x---x

It was dark and warm, the blankets surrounding him like a soft fluffy cocoon. One that he wished he would never have to leave. His body ached in ways he previously hadn’t imagined possible, and with every beat of his heart, he could feel an answering one forming. The mark on his back hadn’t been able to keep still and the sensation of his skin literally crawling was making him a little wild-eyed.

Of it would if he actually had the energy to go crazy.

He could hear voices from beyond the darkness and warmth, catching half formed words, but unable to gather enough focus to discern much more than that, but there was one word that seemed to stand out more than any of the others: offspring.

Yuuri wasn’t sure what it was supposed to mean for certain, but in his current state, he could make a good guess. He knew that there was something growing inside of him, but what… He snuggled further into the warmth of the blankets, not wanting to ever leave the illusion of safety that they were offering.

Faint smells were starting to filter through his blanket nest; the smells of apple and cinnamon, almost like someone was going to bake a pie. Every now and then, he’d catch the smell of the fragrant tea that he served at the hot spring. It should be impossible to be able to smell anything to do with home as not even the clothes he was currently wearing came from the hot spring…

It made his heart ache to remember his last moments with his family, tears welling up unbidden to fall silently down his face. He didn’t even have enough energy to sob.

Yuuri slowly curled in on himself, as any sort of movement short of breathing made even his teeth ache. He wrapped his arms around his belly, and brought his knees up to his chest; a physical response to protect the life that was now forming within him from the pain he was feeling. The weight of the blankets seemed to press more heavily around him, adding a comfort that he didn’t
realise he needed.

So much had happened in such a short space of time.

There was a ghost of a scent, the smell of cedar and pine, and the sound of approaching footsteps startled him from his painful memories. He could feel a tug, deep within him, just under his ribcage, it seemed to pull at him, compelling him to move. He could feel emotions that weren’t entirely his own; a simmering rage, and an overwhelming desire to protect something… and a small sense of uncertainty coupled with the fear of rejection.

It was too much, an overload on his already strained senses, and he felt a small sense of relief as consciousness slipped away.

x---x---x---x

“You won’t be able to stay here for long,” the Wind Dragon’s tone was sympathetic, his voice quiet, but his tail and ears were that of a nervous cat’s. “It won’t be long until Viktor finds out where you are, and you’ll need to keep him safe.”

“I’m not sure how much help I can be. Viktor will probably be out for my blood as well as yours.” The Desert Dragon was resting against the wall, arms folded across his chest and a tired expression on his face.

JJ took another peek into the darkened room, with its mound of blankets and covers in the centre. The pain and the hurt rolling off it was like the ocean waves, ebbing slightly, but not quite disappearing, before welling up and crashing over him. He squeezed his eyes shut against the onslaught of emotion that was coming through the bond.

“You can smell it, right?” The Wind Dragon was looking at him questioningly.

“Smell it? I can feel it! I haven’t had a bond this strong before… I can feel everything.” JJ didn’t expect the others to understand. The bond was there so that the pair could communicate without the need for awkward words. The stronger the bond, the more intense the emotions; having a bond this strong meant that they could almost sense each other’s actual thoughts, feel each others physical pain and discomforts.

JJ could sense through the bond, the life slowly unfurling within his mate, long before he could even smell the change.

Otabek cleared his throat. “The smell is only going to get stronger. I was surprised I was able to scent it so soon. It was nearly instantaneous. Maybe Viktor has been right about this Prophecy all along… he could be carrying the Dragon that saves us all.”

The Green Dragon snorted, a caricature of his usual grin playing across his lips. “And I’ll have to do my bit in all of this right? I’ll have to take the egg and keep it warm and help it do its thing… and it’s not even mine…” He fought down the wave of bitterness that threatened to overcome him. It wouldn’t do to have his mate sense his feelings.

The slap echoed off the walls and his face stung to match. Hazel eyes glittered angrily at him, pupils narrowed down to mere slits, as Chris glared at him. “It shouldn’t matter if it’s yours or not. It is a life, and the omega in there is your mate! And by whatever set of unfortunate
circumstances, his offspring will be a dragon, something that you wouldn’t have been able to do anyway! If your bond is as strong as you say, he will feel your jealousy… and is that really fair on him?”

JJ at least had the decency to look contrite. The Wind Dragon was right; it was unusual to see him so serious. “No, it's not,” he mumbled, eyes slightly downcast, “What do you suggest I do? Out of all of us here, you're the only one who has the most recent experience…”

Chris smiled awkwardly. “Some things never change. You need to go in there and talk to him. You can't rely on the bond, he probably doesn't even know what it means. All those emotions that aren't his, swirling about in his head; you'll have to teach him the things he needs to know, he literally knows nothing about what it means to be an omega, or mated to a Dragon… and as for the Küken, well, your instincts will take over and you will be learning together.”

With a sigh, JJ ran a hand through his dark hair. Parenthood was a sobering thought, but the Wind Dragon was right. Whatever the outcome, the deed was done and it was now up to him to make the best of it and to help his mate through it.

Gently he tested the bond, his mate seemed to be asleep and now seemed a good a time as any to check on him without disturbing him.

Quietly he entered the dimly lit room. It seemed his omega had already built himself a nest out of the materials available to him: the blankets and coverings. He sniffed the air discreetly, he didn't want to appear rude in the wake of the Wind Dragon’s hospitality. The room smelled faintly of Chris’s mate, and a little of the Dragon himself. They had at least tried to give his mate a room that was little used to ensure their own personal scents didn't overwhelm him.

Another scent tickled his senses, wrapped itself around the part of him that was Dragon and called to him. The scent of his mate.

Slowly he approached the mound of woven fabrics and furs, staring intently at the slight rise and fall it made as his mate moved within. A corner of blanket fell away, revealing his face, allowing JJ to get the first proper look at the omega he was now bonded to.

His mate had pale skin, though not as pale as those who came from the far reaches of the North Country, being closer to the warmer southern border, it seemed his skin was a touch darker, the hue warmer than that of the snow and ice. Short dark hair framed a slightly rounded face, and JJ had to resist the urge to brush away an errant strand. The omega stirred, his face turning away from the Dragon and a wave of pain came through the bond. His mate was still injured from his ordeal, and whilst he couldn't do anything about the mental anguish, the Dragon could certainly do something about his physical suffering.

He trailed a finger softly down his mate's cheek, unable to stop the small smile as the omega turned his face towards the contact. It felt like a small, but important victory; even in his slumber, his mate sought him out for comfort. JJ closed his eyes and focused on the bond between them, drawing out the feelings of pain and discomfort. He began to rumble, the sound coming deep from his chest, the vibration comforting to the both of them.

He willed his mate's injuries to heal. It might not have been magic in the truest sense, such little of that remained in the world, but it was something unique to the bond: being able to take on your mate's pain and minor injuries, and lessen the severity of the more serious ones. In desperate circumstances, he could even keep his mate alive by taking on his vital functions until he could be saved by more conventional means… but for now, it was enough to just to shield his mate from injuries until he healed.
“I'm not as good as the Dragon Spring… but I can at least do this much” he whispered, watching as the lines eased and his mate's expression slowly became more peaceful.

Being this close it was hard not to miss the personal scent that was his mate, and the special note that meant he was pregnant… and not just any ordinary pregnancy, his omega could very well be carrying the Dragon of prophecy. Even if he hadn't sired it himself, he would still be required to do his part, though it was new territory for all of them.

Normally an omega would carry the Küken up until a certain point, where he would then birth him. Then the Dragon would take over, the Küken residing in a special pouch on his body where it would continue to grow until it finally hatched. He wouldn't be able to move at this time, forced to remain in his dragon form until the hatching, and completely reliant upon his mate who would need to feed him and calm his overprotective urges. A Dragon looking after his Küken was a territorial creature and quick to anger; his mate the only thing able to calm the savage beast protecting its young.

JJ couldn't be sure that it would be the same in this situation, he had never been cuckolded before, and couldn't remember any Dragon who had been. Would his own body even respond and form the pouch? Would a Küken even survive without it? All he knew at this point that the Küken was inevitable.

After that, it would be up to fate and the gods themselves, if they even existed.

The Wind Dragon was right about one thing; they couldn't allow it to happen here. The safest place would be back in his own territory, in the subterranean tunnels that formed part of his den. Viktor could find his lodge easily enough, but he'd never be able to find them underground; the earth would hide and mask their scents and provided his omega kept him calm, they'd remain undetected until the Küken hatched.

As he continued his quiet introspection, gaze fixed upon the soft features of his mate, a memory rose to the surface of his mind, a memory that was old as time itself…

_There comes a day when clouds roar with fury, a forbidden relationship shall mark the return of dragons._

_When the day comes that the True One reveals himself, a forced marriage shall usher forth a new unity and the beginning of a better future._

_When the darkness rises once more, a duel shall bring forth the downfall of two kingdoms_  
_Upon the day the last one is reborn, a broken man shall mark the rise of hope…_  

… and the one who is born to make History
Glossary and World Building

Dragon Society is a strange set up. Young Dragons are practically unheard of; they’re too busy learning about the world on their own, and the Ancient Dragons have stepped away from the world at large, preferring to live out the rest of their years in quiet, unassuming solitude. They’ve had their chance in the forefront of history, and believe that the younger generation should be allowed to make the same mistakes they have, in a past long forgotten by anything living.

Once they reach a certain maturity, Dragons feel the need to prove themselves, both to the world, and to other Dragons, that they’re the “best”. This generation of Dragons have accidentally fallen into using material wealth and the love of “their” people as success markers.

When the novelty wears off and history has run its course, the next generation of Dragons will step up, and no doubt something new will be the pinnacle of the species.

Dragons are immortal. Though, they maybe be killed through violent means, dragons do not die of old age or natural illness. It can happen, however, that elder dragons, may grow tired and disillusioned with life. This leads to a form of hibernation referred to as The Long Sleep. Dragons may spend decades or even centuries in this form of hibernation. Eventually, A dragon who remains in this state will begin to petrify, slowly becoming a part of the world itself.

The current world that these Dragons live in is very much a large continent divided into specific regions. Yes there are other continents, but they are not mentioned in this particular story, so for now just imagine one giant landmass surrounded by ocean.

The North Country is a land of snow and ice, and ringed by impenetrable mountains. There is nothing beyond the mountains to the extreme north, the rocks providing a barrier to going any further; the edge of the world if you will. There are pockets of civilization, but for the most part it is uninhabitable. It seems a mystery as to why anybody would want to live there, but generational tradition is a difficult thing to shake as is greed. The land is rich in mineral wealth which offsets the harsh living conditions more than enough. Inhabitants are able to trade with the other countries for everything they need.

The Meadow Lands are based off the Alpine regions of Europe, which are perfect for fruit orchards. There is still winter, but it’s not as long and harsh as that of the North Country. As elevation declines, the alpine region gives way to more hilly country and plains full of grasses. The Meadow lands makes its wealth from exporting the fresh produce it’s able to grow and the products it makes from them such as wine and jams. The Meadow Lands is like the breadbasket of the Dragon World.

The Forest Lands encompasses all manner of forests, from temperate to tropical as the land itself includes the beaches. It’s chief source of economy is meat from the game that inhabits the forests, and the fish from the sea, and from the wood itself, but the most precious commodity of all is the salt that it harvests from the ocean.

The is a fourth territory slowly being formed from the more inhospitable parts of the land. The Desert Country is modeled off the Rocky Mountains in a way. Desert Mountains, not much greenery, and only the hardiest of life chooses to live there. This is where the Desert Dragon is slowly making a name for himself. The people’s of the Desert Land are largely nomadic and have yet to establish a formidable economy like the other lands, however, as a more spiritual people, they have little need for material wealth, managing to trade enough for essentials to ensure their
continued survival.

The world and economies would still be able to continue without the input or interference of Dragons, but for now we can imagine that they control everything in their territories and make all the important decisions.

**Special words.**

The special words in this verse are derived from German.

**Drachenrat** - Dragon Council.

This is a special gathering of dragons that occurs once every few hundred years. It's at this gathering that information is shared and new omegas are presented. Depending how far along the current generation of active dragons are, this is also where the new parameters for success are decided.

**Küken** - baby dragon that hasn't hatched. (German for chick).

Baby dragons are formed in stages, the first being formed inside a soft shelled egg inside the omega. They are then birthed and the Dragon parent takes over, incubating the egg in a special pouch much like a male seahorse. The shell then grows and hardens allowing for continued growth until the Dragon is ready to hatch.

Whilst this world has omegaverse elements, it's not strictly omegaverse in the true sense.

Dragons are “Alphas”. They have three usable forms. Their true Dragon form, their animal form and their human form. Whilst in their human form, they still retain some of their animal characteristics, notably their ears and tail.

Viktor is the Ice Dragon and his animal form is that of a polar bear. In his human form he retains the bear ears and tail.

Otabek is the Desert Dragon and his animal form is that of a horse. In his human form, his hair forms part of his mane, and he retains the ears and tail.

Chris is the Wind Dragon and his animal form is that of a great cat, such as a mountain lion or puma. In his human form he retains the ears and tail of his feline self.

JJ is the Green Dragon and his animal form is that of a wolf, and in his human form he retains the wolf's ears and tail.

Seung-gil is the Rainbow Dragon and his animal form is that of a bird. He's different in that he only retains some of his feathers in his human form.

Other notable Dragons are “The Ancients” - in this book, only Yakov is mentioned. The Ancients are elder Dragons that have chosen to separate themselves from the affairs of both humans and
other dragons, allowing younger Dragons to take their place. They are not part of normal Dragon society but may be called upon for advice - If they can be found.

There are no Betas in this particular world/verse which then leaves us with omegas.

Omegas are special humans, born with the Mark of the Dragon which is like a living tattoo. It grows with the omega and is a visual representation of their maturity, and in the instance of mating, of how “ready” they are. At this time it covers the omega like a second skin, otherwise it moves and flows depending on the omegas mood and seemingly as a life of its own depending on the situation.

Georgi, Yuuri, and Yuri all have this mark.

Heats in this verse are triggered events rather than regular occurrences. The trigger depends on a number of factors such as the omegas mood and his proximity to other dragons. A bonding is a guaranteed trigger for a heat and thus can only happen once under those circumstances.

When an omega goes into Heat, Dragons are hard-wired to respond, after all, this represents a small chance for the continuation of the species as a whole. The bonded Dragon is the least able to resist the call of the Heat, as he can feel its effects through the bond that they share with their mate.

Mating is a complicated affair. True mating occurs when the omega is in heat and the Dragon is in his true form. This is facilitated by the special omega mark, which allows the omega to accept the Dragon and offers the best chance of a Dragon being born. Other matings can occur in their other forms, but these are more recreational in nature and if pregnancy occurs, the offspring is always human.

Smell plays an important part in this verse and a wealth of information can be conveyed through scent alone. Dragons are able to determine emotions, mood changes and certain physical characteristics such as if an to omega is ready for breeding or is pregnant. Each Dragon and omega has his own unique scent and Dragons are able to identify each by their own personal smell.

It's important to note that omegas perceive smell in a different way to Dragons. Omegas express scents by using things that are familiar to them, and so will describe what something smells like. I.e “smells like apples” rather than what the smell itself represents.

Viktor’s scent is that of menthol and mint

Otabek’s scent is that of “herbs” - nothing specific, but perhaps a kitchen garland is a close approximation; a mixture of basil, rosemary and thyme.

Chris’s scent is apple.

JJ’s scent is that of forest woods such as pine and cedar.

Seung-gil’s scent, although not mentioned, is a floral blend: orange, bergamot, lemon, lilac, jasmine, rose, and sweet musk.

Georgi’s personal scent is cinnamon

Yuuri’s personal scent is that of floral tea, most notably cherry blossom.
Yuri’s personal scent is baking bread.

There’s the idea that the scents of the Dragon and their omega should “match” as this increases the chance of there being a dragon offspring. If the two smells don’t match, or clash with each other, then this tells other Dragons that they’re too closely related for there to be any viable dragon offspring.

The smell of a mated omega is considered off putting to other Dragons. This acts as a deterrent. As a result, acts such as cuckolding or “affairs” rarely occur. However, the smell of a Heat overrides this.

Interbreeding also rarely occurs, the offspring of such unions are also, almost, always human offspring. This is also why there aren’t many Dragons. At some point, they’re all going to be related to each other, what this verse does is allow for an extremely long period of time, think millennia, to pass so that the genetic code is sufficiently diluted before “related” pairings can happen once more.

In this narrative, JJ and Yuuri are still too closely “related” but perhaps dear reader, that generational separation is teetering on the edge of what is acceptable.

With all these “rules” that make it seem that breeding is impossible, can leave you thinking about how such a species can possibly survive. Being fiction, a small amount of belief suspension is required, and perhaps just to simply sit back and enjoy the narrative for what it is without thinking too hard about the specifics.

End Notes

Whew. You made it this far.

I hope you enjoyed it!

Please leave whatever comments you think you need to.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!