

# Somewhere Out There - The Last Song

By Bartan Tirix

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It was cool, borderline cold through the apartment. Even under the warm blankets. Like the sun was missing and the bed lacked its main source of body warmth. Yet, he could still feel it. Wrapped in his white arms... Smaller than usual, thin in frame and scent. Not even getting that usual cinnamon that the bear has gotten used to over this past week. "Are you awake?" The scaly body in his embrace asked, higher in pitch than he expected as well... Male, but borderline female at the same time. "You've been shifting for a while."

His eyes slowly opened, those brown circles being cautious about threatening lights, but none were found. It even seemed a little dark outside. "Looks like it's going to rain all day." The blue one in his hold said. Nearly child-like in size, and taking a few moments for Bartan to recognize who it was. "Everything okay?"

"...M'yeah..." The white one slowly answered, nuzzling against that cyan neck and giving it a lick of affection. "Just... Tired in the mornings lately."

"So you've said." The dragon shifted around to touch noses with the polar bear. Seeing the exhaustion in those eyes as they looked past the smaller one for a moment. "It's the late afternoon." A sleepy noise in question as he rested on the pillow again. "Bryce let me in, said it was okay with you." Bartan slowly opened his eyes.

"...Today is his day off." The smaller one smiled at him in response.

"He got called into work. Said they were getting backed up." A slow blink from the bear. "Are you sure you're okay? I could always call him for you." It took several moments for the white one to respond.

"I'll be... It'll pass." Bartan muttered, getting a sad smile from the small wyrm.

"Let me make you some tea then. I brought some with me just in case." A small kiss on that furry cheek. "Feel free to take a shower first if you like, it might get you more awake." A tight hug from the dragon, then he climbed out of the bed. Once again noticing the colder difference. Something the bear really liked, but felt rather off. Then again, he's only really seen the summer of this area. Maybe the autumns are quite cool like this.

Still, a warm shower did seem nice. Slowly getting up, Bartan attempted to shake the fog from his head before going into the next room. Still feeling like this was all a dream. Yet the waters felt so real, the warmth still relaxing. The towels still soft and damp as ever. Barely soaking up the moisture from his fur that usually left him smelling faintly like a wet dog. It made sense to him though; in a world

mostly occupied by scaly dragons, most of the water would fall off them quite easily. But there were special towels for the more huggable kinds.

Still, the bear did what he could. Feeling a little better as he followed the soft pawsteps to the kitchen. Getting greeted by the smaller dragon with a smile and soft yellow eyes. "Better?" A faint nod as the dragon offered him a cup of tea, and lead him to the living room. "Has this strange sleep been a constant thing lately?"

"...A little." Bartan mumbled, not drinking the tea, but holding it for warmth as they sat down on separate couches. "It worries me."

"How come?" No response. "I think you've been having a little too much fun with others. You need a day or two to recharge." Another several moments of silence as those brown eyes stared into space.

"I remember..." A noise in question from the cyan one. "This... Scientist in my old world... He discovered that he was sleeping in every day... Exactly ten minutes later than the previous day." A gesture to go on. "He eventually calculated how long it would take him to sleep for a full day, and predicted that when it happened, he would die."

"...Did he...?" A slow nod, and the bear took a drink. Taking a moment before staring at the brown liquid in his cup, being able to see his own reflection in it.

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The warm rays of light seeped into the room, melting the day away like a slow burning candle. Eventually hitting the mirror just right to reflect into the drake's eyes and get him to grunt a bit awake. At least, enough to shift around to hide from it. However, that started waking his body up to meet certain needs. Including one in his lower region the required a release of sorts. As much as he didn't want to move, Bryce would eventually have to tend to it.

The brown one shifted on the large bed and nearly stumbled off of it. The mistake in his muscle memory nearly shocking him awake enough to start paying a little more attention to where he was going. Leading into the bathroom and relieving himself, turning on the sink to lap at it instead of washing his paws and face. It was still too early to even consider getting up-wait. What time was it? Judging by the sun's angle, it would be late afternoon.

But that moment of study made him realize something... He's never seen this room before. This apartment, the large bed that was just slept in, it didn't look familiar to him. Why was the drake here? His mind only fogged up when he tried to recall the events the past few weeks. Remembering work... Murders and a serial killer... Remembering the suspects and apprehending them. The rest of it was

black, all his leisure time blanked out.

A shake of his head and he snorted loudly. Odds are he just drank until he blacked out, yet that still wouldn't explain this place. Foreign, yet comfortable. Almost at home, more pleasant than his current living quarters. More than it was just for a vacation. Still, something came to mind; he walked towards the living quarters towards a phone that he knew somehow exactly where it was, and dialed. "Officer Sebastian speaking."

"Seb?"

"Everything okay, Bryce?"

"Kinda. Did you rent an apartment for me to sleep in last night?"

"Nooooooo?"

"Maybe Zhong did, but that's unlikely, even for him."

"So, you just woke up there?"

"Yeah... I just can't remember why. Maybe I was drinking last night-"

"Nope, you said you were going straight home to-" The runner cut himself off. "Uh... I..."

"Can't remember?"

"...Not in the slightest, sir." The two pondered for a moment. "I remember catching you..." A whimper that time from Sebastian.

"Y-yeah... I remember some of that, but-" The doorbell rang getting their attention and passing the awkward moment along.

"Was that the door?"

"Yeah... I'll call you back." The earth dragon hung up the phone and opened the door, only to see the small blue delivery wyrm. "Hey."

"O-oh, hi Chief!" A bit of an awkward silence. "Was... Your door unlocked?"

"...Yes." Another strange pause. "Do you...?" A noise in question. "Have something for me?" A blush and embarrassed whimper from Lorem.

"I-I..." His ears lowered as his mind raced trying to recall why he came here. "I-"

"Don't remember...?" Bryce asked, a little strangely. Like it was barely a question, and getting a look from those yellow eyes. "Come in." The drake scanned the outside area with his eyes.

"What's wrong?" A strong look from him and the blue one obeyed regardless. Hearing the door

shut behind him and lock, then watch as the earth dragon studied it for a moment.

"That doesn't feel right..."

"What doesn't?"

"This door being locked." His golden eyes overlooked Lorem until he whimpered a bit. Almost intimidated by both his size and position. "Bryce, by the way."

"L-Lorem."

"Alright, Lorem. Can you remember why you came here?" Several moments of thought, but all the smaller one could do was blush a bit. "I woke up here, unable to remember why or how I got here."

"A-aren't you usually at the bar scene-?" Bryce tossed his snout.

"I wasn't drinking last night. Even my co-worker stated so." The blue one lowered his head a bit. "Why are you blushing...?"

"I..."

"It's okay, you can tell me." A loud swallow from Lorem.

"I actually... Don't remember. But coming over here I felt... Excited."

"Like you were coming to meet someone?" A shaky nod. "And you got the right room, correct?"

"Positive. I remember delivering something here before to-" There it was again, that sudden cut off.

"You don't remember..." A whimper from the smaller wyrm as the drake looked over the room. "I don't remember who was in this room either... But I knew them, I'm sure of it."

"What do you mean?"

"That bed felt empty. It looks empty... The shower, the kitchen...!" He quickly moved into the other room and Lorem followed him. Looking over the cabinets and seeing a loaf of melon bread that was nearly empty. "I didn't eat all of this."

"And?"

"All rooms are freshly packed with food whenever someone new rents them." The blue one pondered, looking over the trash can and digging inside. Seeing several items like wrappers and some fruit peelings. "They wouldn't stock it with fruit either, it's too perishable."

"Exactly-" A faint gasp as he dug a little deeper. Pulling out a small stem of something. "Is this-?"

"What?" The younger wyrm flutter up to the cabinets a bit and browsed through them quickly.

Picking out a box of various colored clays. "What would that be doing in a kitchen?" Lorem opened the box up and let Bryce take a look at several tea leaves. "...Tell me those aren't drugs."

"No, but they're leaves I grow for tea." An eyebrow. "I... I remember giving them to someone to try out because they were stressed. Ipsum, my roommate, suggested it and they said..." A grunt to try to remember. "They said it was amazing. His words-

"His?" Another whimper from the smaller one, and Bryce took a breath. Looking back at the bed. "...It fits. So we're looking for a missing male."

"Missing...?"

"Someone who we can't remember." An awkward noise in question at the statement and the drake took a breath. "It's not just us. Sebastian couldn't remember him either."

"Sebastian...?"

"My co-worker I mentioned earlier. Runner-

"Beige?" A solid nod. "He was here with..." Another look at the tea leaves. "But I..."

"Where else do you remember having these missing memories?" The two pondered and Bryce's eyes glanced over at the white toaster. Almost being able to barely see a reflection of someone through it. Someone the same- "That librarian...!"

"Librarian?"

"What was his name... The clumsy one."

"Remy?"

"Yes! ...But that's not right..." Another look at the bed. "It doesn't quite fit with him, but it's close. Damn close...!" The earth dragon almost growled. "Still..."

"He might know something." The two gave each other solid nods as they made their way out. Bryce stopping at the phone for a moment and dialing. "Who are you...?"

"Seb? I got us a case."

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"You're not Lorem." The blue dragon's ears perked at the bear's statement.

"What are you talking about, Bartan?" The smaller one chuckled. "Of course I am."

"No... No you're not." A look down at the cup again. "This tea's off." And the wyrm sighed a bit.

"Sorry, I'm not used to your kitchen-"

"It's not about that." Another small sip to study it. "...You missed the honey."

"You don't have any-"

"Yes I do. The first place Lorem would look- the first place he has always looked." Those cyan ears went back. "Who are you?" A sigh from the dragon as he took his own drink for a moment.

"I try, you know. But there's just so many of them, I can't get them all perfect." Within a blink, 'Lorem' changed into a pink and white runner. "Even with your cluttered mind it's hard to get all the facts straight."

"It's not hard when you care about them as much as I do-"

"Is that why you did this?" She snorted, letting those brown circles study the creature that looked like Anna. "I see gears turning."

"...I know." A slow blink and a deep breath. "That's why none of this feels real, why it feels colder. We're not there anymore."

"Correct."

"I don't know you. I know what you are, but..."

"Which is somewhat amusing, really, when you think about it. Considering what you've done." She took another sip. "Did you really think such a drastic change would go unnoticed?"

"No." He replied, getting slightly thicker with his voice. "But that doesn't make what you were planning right-"

"*Define* that." 'Anna' tossed her snout. "Right for who exactly?"

"Right for them-"

"Them? You mean the ones created by humans to begin with? To serve them without question? That's like saying that machine lives matter-"

"They're not machines. They're living creatures-"

"Creatures programed to think and act a certain way. Their instincts are manipulated without them even realizing such things, do you really think that makes them any different than-?"

"I know they fucking do." A chuckle from her.

"Well put, really. Considering you've been getting under nearly all of them." No response from

the bear. "Is that what all this was to you? Some sexual vacation to feed your urges-?"

"This isn't about me-"

"I think it is. And you're so determined to believe that what you're doing is better, when it's actually far worse for everything else in existence." Silence, but that thick stare didn't let off her. "Did you ever stop to think about that?"

"...Yes."

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The three approached the white dragon's house, meeting Maverick nearby as he landed. "It's all clear so far, nothing suspicious." A nod from the chief.

"Is all this really needed?" Lorem asked. "Remy never harmed anyone-"

"After all the events I've witnessed these past few weeks, I'm not taking any chances." The larger grey one almost growl.

"Easy, Maverick. I think Lorem's right, but I want to be cautious." An exhale from the larger one, but he nodded at Bryce regardless. "I'm surprised you even came."

"Trust me, *anything* is better than paperwork today." The grey dragon tossed his muzzle. "And..."

"You can't remember either...?" The cyan wyrm asked, seeing the faint nod of admission.

"There was... A few days which I just can't remember. Let alone, during Reza's visit..." It was a dark subject, they all knew. So just waited to see the runner come along in the distance. Letting Bryce barely notice two large towers in the distance.

"...What is that?" He gestured towards the landscape, getting all of them to look for a moment.

"You mean the portal?" The little one asked.

"Yeah..."

"What about it?" Maverick looked at the earth dragon for a moment, waiting for his answer and seeing that same effect. Almost stalled as he attempted to remember.

"It's... Not supposed to be there..."

"What isn't?" Sebastian came along, glancing in the same direction.

"The portal. But it's always been there, hasn't it?"

"Yeah, but it hasn't been there for the last week or so... Has it?" Bryce asked the blue one, getting a faint shrug, but that same look. A series of familiar giggles caught their ears as the yellow wyvern opened the door with a pair of wyrmlings. Remy right behind her and double taking at the group outside his house.

"Oh, hi guys." She greeted as they came over.

"Everything okay?" They all shared a look.

"I'll be blunt." The grey one started. "Remy, you are a suspect in a missing person report-"

"Missing person?"

"Maverick..." Bryce started. "Someone is missing, Remy. And I know you were involved with them somehow."

"What do you mean? Who is missing?" He asked a little worried, then more so when they all started sharing looks again. Seeing Lorem step forward.

"That's the thing, we're not sure who it is." Those wavy ears perked as his head tilted. "Being a suspect is a bit of a harsh extreme," A grumble from the grey one. "more of a relation to them."

"That still doesn't..." The white wyrm looked around a bit, seeing Bryce overlook the wyvern for a few moments.

"I... Seen you yesterday, right Adine?"

"Yes. We met, and..." A bit of blushing.

"Who were you with?"

"With? Oh! I-... Um..." The familiar response even got Remy puzzled as they shared glances. "This is embarrassing, I don't-"

"Remember?" The rest of the group answered her, getting strange looks all around.

"This is what we're talking about." The runner said. "None of us can remember, yet we do know someone has been around." A grumble from the chief.

"This is starting to sound like a bad sci-fi novel." He snorted. "But I remember you were involved with them somehow." A look at the librarian, as he pondered a bit.

"The only one I was really with lately are these three, besides work. And nothing exciting really happened there, aside from the new additions of the PDAs."

"Where did those come from?" Maverick asked, a bit thickly and getting another 'Take It Easy'

glare from Bryce.

"The human that came through about a month ago, I believe."

"Reza? Because I searched him. He didn't have any PDAs on him." A strange look at Sebastian.

"But Maverick was escorting him around. You..." A grunt from a few of them as Lorem tried to remember. "Bryce woke up in his apartment. All we know is that he's a male and exists... Yet..."

"You can't recall anything about the person? That does sound like something I've read before."

"Please don't tell me it's science fiction." The chief grumbled a bit.

"N-no."

"Good."

"But it's Science Fantasy." A louder grumble. "How do I possibly put this..."

"They disappeared?" The grey one snorted.

"Well, yes, being blunt. But think of it more as if they were plucked out of existence." A series of head tilts from everyone, including Vara and Amely. "A-as in..."

"They were taken, and removed nearly all traces of ever being around?" Bryce asked, trying to sound smart.

"More like altered our memories enough that we-"

"Don't ruin this for me, bear-" A sharp double take from everyone there, as if a large bandaid was ripped off their memories. "Did I...?"

"Bear?" Sebastian asked, nearly echoing through everyone's mind.

"That's..."

"Right...!" Maverick finished Lorem's sentence. "That sounds right, it was a... He was..."

"A white bear." Adine stated. "I remember painting..." Her and Amely shared a look. "We painted him-"

"Pink!" She chirped.

"Yes! But I..." Another grunt.

"Can't see his face yet..." Remy said, almost looking at the others sadly. "Maybe there's something else that can help us remember. Someone else he interacted with."

"Like who? That human-"

"Those humans." Maverick interrupted the runner. "There was two of them. But the bear..." They shared a look and pondered, that is until the grey one spotted the librarian's tie. "Blood... Blood!" Their ears perked as his brain stalled a bit again, shaking it like he had a large sneeze. "ANNA!"

"What about her? She-"

"Had a trial recently for..." Sebastian interrupted Remy. "Something to do with blood."

"His blood...! And Reza's..." They all looked at Bryce. "He was at my Barbeque as well..." Another shared look. "I'm going to get Zhong, Maverick and Lorem, go get Anna. The rest of you, I want you at the portal once you take these two home, alright?" A couple of nervous nods. "It's got something to do with that, I know it...!"

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"This isn't about me-"

"I think it is. And you're so determined to believe that what you're doing is better, when it's actually far worse for everything else in existence." Silence, but that thick stare didn't let off her. "Did you ever stop to think about that?"

"...Yes."

"Really now?" The pink runner asked, not getting any relief from those brown eyes. "Yet, you say that like you've known it from the very start."

"Maybe I have." A breath from the furred one, as he took another drink out of the tea. Grumbling a bit before taking it to the kitchen. "They had their chance-"

"Yet, they created the species." The creature in the other room replied, now sporting Remy's voice.

"That doesn't give them the right to sacrifice-"

"There's that word again." A breath from the bear as he returned, honey now in his tea. "They don't require permission for such things."

"Which is something you expect out of humans, I'm sure."

"Bartan..." The white dragon sighed. "You know more than you let on, you always have." No response from the bear, nearly ignoring the baited statement. "You realize how important they are for survival, why this event needed to happen-"

"Because that's how your **Traditions** work, is that it?" A bit of a hurt look from those blue eyes. "It's no wonder you cling favor to that species, you're the same damn thing as them."

"Hardly-"

"What's so different between you and humanity, hmm?" A crossed look. "I get it, your job is to forge a path for the future, and in order to keep the lights running everywhere, you need to sacrifice something. But that doesn't mean you need to farm them for their negativity just to feed that thing." A chuckle from the wyrm.

"And there it is... Almost as if you've done this before."

"You're mistaken."

"So sure of yourself, aren't you?"

"I am, indeed. Eventually you'll figure it out." Another drink of that tea as Remy studied him for a few moments. "So much better. Seriously, you literally create the fabric needed for the future of everything here, but you can't make tea to save your own existence."

"Would you rather converse with one of the others? I could get Reality, or Death. But I thought maybe you can be reasoned with. I'm doing this to give you a chance, Bartan. A chance to explain yourself-"

"No, you're giving me a chance to apologize and say I'll be a good little cub, letting you reset all the damn work I've made here-"

"Without my permission! Do you know the backlash that you created when you saved them!?"

"Whatever suffering you could've gotten from them you can get from those who doomed themselves over distrust! You cannot deny that-!"

"You're thinking too small, Bartan! I have the entire road ahead to look after, the future of everything else in existence! Yet you want to jeopardize everything for a few-!"

"Non-humans?" The bear growled, getting a snout toss from the dragon. "Is that what you were going to say?"

"Humans-!" He exhaled a wall of heat. "Humans are essential! -Needed! They are **Perfect** for what we need to keep this cycle going! How can you not see that!?"

"I have! A long time ago! Why do you think I'm against them!?"

"How else are we expected to feed that thing if not from the pain and suffering of others!?"

"**Don't!!**" Bartan roared at him. "There are other ways of getting around this! You've heard of them! They work-!"

"That is not a decision for us to make and you know it-!"

"Then convince your architect of it!" Another growl. "I've seen it done, first-hand! You do not need a Terrasque to power your universe! No matter how great the energy output of it is! Feeding that thing is only going to force it to grow, and you're stuck trying to feed it more and more! What happens when it gets out!? And it will get out!"

"It's encaged, it can't escape-"

"It doesn't need to!" A breath to calm down. "Fate, I understand. I really do. But you really need to trust me when I explain that it has found a way into a universe that hasn't even been discovered before. One not even connected to fuel it! You literally have doorways that flow directly to it!"

"It can't get out through those-"

"But it can send others." A concerned look from those blue eyes. "You've heard of Blackstars, yes? They're it's scales, fractions of them sent to infect what you've created. And they're not easy to get rid of. Be it in your County or not." A head tilt at the word. "Think: area of your own control. They're not affected by your abilities and denialism, but they can infect others. Drastically." A long silence, and the wyrm sighed.

"I can't believe you. I'm sorry, but I cannot take your information seriously. There's been no reports of such things ever happening underneath me-"

"That doesn't mean they're not there."

"Bear, that's not a good argument." The furred one took a breath, drinking the rest of his tea. "I've already taken the liberties of undoing everything-"

"No wonder you're not listening to me-"

"And I'll escort you out of here safely. But you are not allowed to return-"

"Who says I'll go quietly?" A thick stare from those now golden eyes. Tensing the bear's jaw as he looked over that scarred muzzle.

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The brown one entered the store, nodding at his old friend at the counter. Currently serving someone as Bryce looked around at the selection. Seeing if anything stuck out for him to trigger another critical memory. The melon bread and toaster was a good start, but what did they have on it? Butter? Not quite... Peanut butter? Yes, but what else...?

A grunt as the drake closed his eyes and shook his muzzle a bit violently. "Is everything okay, Bryce?"

"...Yes and no." He looked sadly at the green runner. "Zhong..." A look around to make sure they were alone. "Someone is missing."

"Missing?"

"I woke up in his apartment, but I can't remember who they were." A strange look from the dark green one. "I know it sounds weird, but they've bought stuff here before. And I know you've been with him at some point during these past two weeks."

"I've met with a lot of people-"

"They were at the barbecue." A neck curl from Zhong. "Unable to light a fire because they were not a dragon, but a bear."

"Bear...?" A grunt from the green one as he faintly started to remember. "Y... Yes. There was someone there. And with you-"

"At the bar, yes. Which we-" A grumble against the faint pain that time. "Which we... Agreed didn't happen, or at least was trying to let on that we didn't as a joke." Those golden eyes looked over the green one's, now seeing him blush a little bit. "Something wrong?"

"I... Never told anyone, but one night I remember inviting that bear to the bar, and..."

"You got intimate?" A faint whimper. "I get the feeling that furball has done that alot, but I know I wasn't mad about it. Almost..."

"Expecting him to do it?" A faint nod.

"Like it was his job..."

"Still, I can't help you if we don't have a name, Bryce."

"I was wondering about that. He came through the portal, at least we think. So that means the government was paying for him." A spark lit up in Zhong's eyes as he started typing on the register.

"There's two accounts here that were made about a month ago. One a bit longer than that. Do you happen to know what was bought?"

"Recently?" The runner nodded at the drake. "Melon bread... Peanut Butter, and..." Another glance around. "Something strange."

"Jam? Marmalade? Grape Jelly?"

"No, something weird that he put onto his sandwiches..." A glance around the meats, the greens, bakery goods. "Sugar? ...Icing Sugar...?" A glance at his reflection. "Brown! Brown sugar!!!"

"You are way too excited to be shouting that in my store."

"But that's what it was! He said it was much better with plain bread-!" A double take at Zhong's awkward stare, making the earth dragon whimper.

"Seriously, I've given hatchlings free candy before and gotten a more mild reaction compared to that."

"But I-!" He looked over to find a package of brown sugar. "I'm remembering him, little by little. I remember how he made me feel, how much I wanted to see him. How crappy it was to go back to work, because I..." A heavy breath. "Because I wanted to spend the rest of my life with that furball. Watch him get nailed by every dragon we came acrossed-!" A double take at the green runner, who was staring at the doorway to the shop. Trailing those sights towards a furry dragon who went by the name of Kevin. Just staring awkwardly at Bryce and his monologue with embarrassed teal eyes. Slowly stepping back out and closing the glass door without breaking eye contact until obstructed. Then getting the two males to share a look.

"Best thing that's happened in this place all morning." A whimper from the drake. "I'm serious, I'm not going to let that go from here on out."

"Not even if I pay you five sessions with the bear?"

"That-..." Another blush from Zhong. "That I might... Consider." A chuckle from the chief. "Regardless, I suppose I could've just looked at the dates these items were purchased, considering one of them has been rather absent for nearly three weeks."

"Can you get a name?" The nod fluttered his heart.

The grey and small blue dragons entered the large building, looking around it's somewhat empty look. "She's on the first floor."

"R-right..." Lorem responded, getting an unimpressed glance from those red eyes. "Can I be honest?"

"About what?"

"Anna kinda scares me." A snout toss from Maverick. "And I'd rather talk to Ipsum for a moment-"

"Who?"

"My roommate." Another moment of study and those blue ears fell. "He recently lost his sphere, and I have the feeling that..."

"You just really don't want to talk to her, do you?"

"-Not in the slightest." A grumbling exhale from the grey one as he dismissed the wyrm. Allowing them to go their separate ways, Lorem staying on the ground floor and following directions towards where his friend worked. Spotting his unoccupied workspace at first before-

"What are you doing here?" A light purple dragon asked, about the same size as the cyan one was and looking rather Eastern compared to others. "I thought you were going to visit someone this afternoon."

"Y-yes, I was, Ipsum." A bit of a shy look and the roommate smirked at him.

"I had a feeling that's what it was about, but if you're here..." A bit of a worried look through his spectacles.

"N-nothing bad happened. At least, not exactly..." A noise in question. "This is going to sound weird, but... Can you remember who it was?"

"Not in the slightest." He answered Lorem rather quickly, almost joking and making the blue one sigh.

"I didn't think you were paying attention." But... A glance at white sphere with glowing symbols floating just behind the eastern dragon's shoulder.

"Go on."

"I... Can't remember who it is either." An eyebrow raised. "No one can."

"What do you mean? Were you actually planning to go to an Org-"

"N-no!" The cyan one hissed, blushing and covering his eyes. "But... Anyone who tries to remember that bear..." A grunt from Ipsum that time.

"Bear...?"

"White. Male. That's all we got, and he's missing." A few moments of thought and the purple one shook his head. "Your sphere..."

"What about it?"

"Didn't someone find it recently?"

"Why yes, you knew that already-"

"Who?" The eastern one was going to answer, then drew a blank. "That's exactly what was happening to everyone who was trying to remember him. Remy thinks he was possibly removed, both from here and all our memories."

"Meaning what?" A shrug from those blue wings. "You said yesterday he came by, yes?" A faint grunt, but a nod from Lorem. "And he looked-"

"Tired."

"Which would be normal if someone was supposed to abduct anyone from a timeline, so to speak. It would have to play on their endurance and will, find a way to drain it before such a thing could possibly be conducted."

"How would you...?" A smile from Ipsum.

"This is all theory, of course. Something I pondered after the portal's functions were discovered."

"Of course." A bit of a snout toss from the blue one as he looked over the sphere again. "...Can I see that?"

"Mother of...!" The pink runner cursed, overlooking the grey dragon in her doorway wearing a badge. "What the hell does the force want from me now? Coming to take my lab away from me again?"

"No."

"Then what the hell, Maverick?" A slightly sad look from those red eyes as he sighed a bit. Seeing they were alone.

"I know you just got this back-"

"And?"

"I know you've had cancer." A bit of anger from the female. "I'm sorry-"

"Don't you dare pity me-"

"-That I'm terrible with words." A bit of silence. "You've always known that about me. I often felt like that's what made us work." Her anger lowered a bit. "You didn't say it when Miles... And I won't say it for that. We've never liked those words."

"So, you came all the way down here to tell me-"

"That I want another shot." A curl of her neck. "With us." Silence, but Anna was giving it some thought. "Someone told me that I need to find something. That I need someone to help me... Recover. Not to distract me from the pain, but to heal me from it." A look into her green eyes. "Maybe it was a stupid idea to ask, but... We made it work once. Left because-"

"Of the cancer." She mumbled, looking away from his curious gaze. "That's what it was."

"...What?"

"I was diagnosed, and couldn't keep doing this. Knowing that I was wasting time, what little time I had left with you... That if I could save my life, I could have you back." A long silence as Maverick stepped forward and half hugged her. Hearing her exhale. "Put a little effort into it at least."

"Later, because I need your help."

"Of course the force does-"

"That person I was talking about..." A noise in question. "He's missing."

"Who?"

"I don't remember the name. No one does-"

"Bartan!" Lorem shouted, entering the room and seeing them immediately stop hugging each other. Blushing a bit before their heads started to hurt. "S-sorry, I didn't mean to ruin your moment, but his name was-!"

"Bartan?" The white dragon asked, grunting at the pain and looking over the portal with all the others. "That... Does sound right. It-"

"Fits?" They nodded at Bryce as he overlooked Lorem, Maverick, Ipsum, and Anna. "How did you guys find out?"

"The bear ended up finding my sphere quite a while ago." A gesture to the globe that was still hovering over the eastern dragon's shoulders.

"I've never understood what the point of those were." Maverick snorted.

"It's just a toy for grown-ups." The smaller blue one teased, getting a snout toss from Ipsum.

"Hardly, but it is able to take photos and videos of the area when commanded to." A few taps on the lettering, and a digital picture of the bear and Lorem showed up. In a couple's hug and nuzzling, smiling at the camera. "Regardless of the memories, there's one for every one of you here, except me."

"So, everyone Bartan's sessioned with?" Bryce asked, getting everyone to start looking a bit at each other, then all look towards Maverick who was doing his best to keep composed. Failing, but only slightly due to blushing. "...Really...? Like, seriously?"

"What!?" The grey one hissed at them, coming out as a quarter of a whimper. "I-! ...Blame him!"

"His tongue is quite persuasive." Remy stated, getting agreement with nearly everyone.

"Apparently I haven't been giving it enough credit if he could somehow convince Mav-"

"Get on with it, Bryce!" The grey one hissed again.

"Alright, alright. Seb, any progress on the portal?"

"Yes. So far, the link with the Human world is back up, but no connection yet."

"I have a bad feeling about that though..." Adine admitted, looking over the console.

"I know I do as well." Maverick grumbled, still slightly blushing and still getting some looks.  
"Just-! Put it behind us already!"

"I can't help but be curious of the details." Anna teased, hearing the wyvern giggle a bit.

"Oh my."

"That's enough, everyone. The sooner we can find this bear..."

"The sooner we can get the details straight from his maw." Zhong added to the earth dragon's statement. Hearing the grey one growl loudly and cover his eyes with a paw.

"But it's unlikely he's gone through to the human world." Remy stated.

"Yeah, he hated that species." The blue wyrm confirmed.

"You sure there's nothing else, Sebastian?"

"Nothing, sir." The eastern dragon came up to take a look.

"What is this one?"

"That's always been there, but could never connect."

"It wouldn't hurt to try it now." The white one suggested, getting a nod from the others and a sigh from the runner.

"Alright, but step back just in case." They did so, and he activated it, being surprised that it connected and started ripping a hole through the space between the pillars. "Well, I'll be."

"Witnessing the creation of a wormhole is something I can now check off my To-Do list." Ipsum said quite happily.

"Alright, who's going in?" Sebastian asked, getting slightly worried looks from all of them before seeing Maverick and Bryce step forward.

"I will."

"I-what?" A sharp look at the grey one. "Maverick, no. He's not-"

"That bear doesn't belong to you, Bryce."

"He's right." Remy said, also stepping forward. "He belongs to all of us."

"We should all go." Lorem stated. "You'll never know who would be useful."

"And if it doesn't lead to anywhere specifically?" Ipsum asked, getting worried looks all around. "I'll stay and try to keep the portal opened. Just hurry back with him." They all shared looks and nodded.

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"And I'll escort you out of here safely. But you are not allowed to return-"

"Who says I'll go quietly?" A thick stare from those now golden eyes. Tensing the bear's jaw as he looked over that scarred muzzle.

"I do." A near grumbling exhale from the bear at the earth dragon's thick words. "I know you. I know your distrust for such species, but that doesn't give you the right to change something that isn't yours-"

"All because of your fetish for such species-?"

"They are livestock, Bartan. Nothing more. They believe that they have a greater purpose, but really they're just made to suffer. You can't expect that much from them, let alone what you seem to conduct through that mind of yours."

"And the dragons?"

"You know already. Now you're just stalling for time." An exhale from Bartan. "I could've just let them remove you entirely, but watching them whittle away at your endurance... I didn't feel like it was right. This way you get to see them all once again." No response. "Is there anything you want to do before I lead you out? Anyone specific you want to see?" A long silence, and those brown eyes looked at Bryce's golden ones.

"Yes." A gesture to go on. "Take me back." The bear said thickly, getting the dragon to curl his neck.

"You cannot be serious."

"I am." An eyebrow from the brown one.

"You are... Absolutely insane, aren't you?"

"Maybe. Maybe I know what I want, and know what is best."

"Bartan, you are mortal. You don't have any power or authority over me, what so ever. Why

would I listen to you?" A look towards the door.

"This place is cold, meaning it's outside the realm with a sun. That light is false, and it's only getting colder now that illusion is broken." A look back at the creature. "And your partners did not agree with your current actions, as most Forces that run their universes do." A bit of a crossed look. "Meaning, we're in hidden space."

"So what?"

"You don't know who I am, do you?" A neck curl. "You checked that I was mortal, yes. Recent memories from all the portal visits, but nothing past that."

"And?"

"Do you know who my husband is?" A bit of a grumble. "His name is Beo'Karah." A faint shrug from the drake. "And he's a Terrasque." An eyebrow that time. "Let alone, very protective of me. If he can't sense me, he knows something has happened and will bolt here to find where I've been. Do you really think you can deal with that?"

"Our Counterweight won't allow his passage-"

"Maybe your Architect can stop that, but it can't stop two other Counterweights on top of that." A bit of a growl from the dragon. "That is not something you want to see at your doorway."

"You cannot possibly expect me to believe such a bluff." A snout toss from the bear.

"You're Fate!" A gesture to his white head. "Look!" A few moments of staring, and the drake let out a long growl. "I know what I'm talking about. I know what works and what doesn't when it comes to the structures of a universe-"

"You can't possibly know that as a mortal-"

"I don't know how it's done, no, but I know what happens when it's done Wrong." Another growl. "Forget the misanthropy, throw it aside for the time being. This isn't me being discriminate about that damn species, but *Listen* to me when I tell you this: *This Is A **Mistake**. A Dire One*. Change is needed, Force. It's not easy, but this... Harvest thing you've got going on will not last. It will only make your job harder and harder."

"It's too late to change anything, bear-"

"So you're going to rely on *Tradition* because it's too hard otherwise?" Bartan grumbled. "Just because you haven't seen the signs-"

"Doesn't mean they're there. We're running in circles."

"I know Counterweights. I've hung around them enough to know they can be convinced. I've seen them enjoy the pleasures of life and the want to experiment. Understand the meaning of change!"

"It's illegal for them to do so-"

"Not anymore." A head tilt. "This place is so far out there, I don't blame you for thinking otherwise. But..." A gesture outside. "This... This is primitive technology compared. Given the rights, I'm sure your own Counterweight can think of something better. A different source of power that doesn't rely on pain and agony." A look in thought as 'Bryce' stared into space. "It appointed you for this position for a reason. Your architect will listen to you, if it feels you know best."

"A Counterweight that feels, that's a good one." The drake tossed his muzzle.

"That doesn't mean it can't." A strange look. "It's happened before, you can literally tell if I'm lying or not. You have no reason to distrust my words other than the sheer fact that you are afraid of change." The white one thickly said. "Just like *they* are."

"You aren't going to let that go, are you?"

"You give me another reason why the human species is so damn popular among worlds, aside from the fact they make great cattle." Bartan grumbled. "Why else would you keep them around?"

"They're great for stories at parties." A large snout toss from the bear actually made the dragon chuckle. Coming back around to see Adine sadly smile at him. "Maybe you are right... But how am I going to convince the others?"

"Could always warn them that if they don't listen, a brass terrasque is going to come by and ass-rape them." A giggle from her, even making Bartan smile. "I mean, he might be on his way right now, a Cryo right behind him." An eye roll from the wyvern that time.

"Ugh, what the hell kind of family do you have out there?"

"Hey, I barely added to it. Even then, it's complicated."

"Next you're going to tell me that you have a Force in there as well."

"Well, my wife can substitute as one by force. But that's a rare thing to happen." An irritated ear flick from the female.

"Of course, of course." The bear got up and sat down beside the yellow one. Nearly whimpering when a furred paw lightly cupped her chin and looked deep into those red eyes.

"You did the right thing. I'm sorry if it hurt a little, but you need to realize that I-"

"Need to make it sting." A slow nod from the bear.

"Only so you'll take me more seriously. Now, can I have what I've worked for?" A long study from the dragon and she sighed.

"Just tell me one thing..." A soft gesture to continue. "You claim you're smarter than the average

bear." A bit of an eye roll as Adine giggled a bit. "Did you... Plan this?" A deep breath from the white one.

"...I'd be lying if I said no. But that wasn't the only reason."

".....Misanthropy?" A large snout toss from the bear made her burst into laughter.

"Well, *that* too, I guess. But again: not..." A smile as she calmed down. Slowly inching his muzzle towards hers and making her lightly whimper. But maybe this time... After seeing it so much recently, she could try it. If not, just once. Taking very faint breaths as she felt the exhales of that white muzzle against hers. Making first contact against those white strands against her own yellow scales, then that tongue next-

The door busted open as Bryce and Maverick fell inside the room. Nearly seeing the entire cast look inside at the bear sitting next to... Themselves. On a couch, nearly holding paws and very close to each other. Making everyone blush, except Bryce and Mav, who's view was currently obstructed by furniture. "Bearr! We've come to rescue you!" The drake mumbled under the grey one. "Maverick, get off me." After a bit of struggling, the two larger one double taked at 'Themselves' beside the bear.

"...Hi everyone?" Bartan half greeted, rather surprised that they made it here. Then looking at Fate for a moment who was just as surprised as he was. "How did you...?"

"Nevermind that. This isn't your apartment!" A blank stare at Bryce. "You've been kidnapped-!"

"-Bearnapped." Sebbly corrected him.

"-Bearnapped!"

Another few moments of staring and he looked over the Force once again. "May I?"

"You are a horrible influence on them." It's response made Bartan smile a bit. "Go, before I decide that you can only choose one of them." An unexpected hug from the furred one made Fate whimper a bit. Watching him get up and start walking towards the group before turning around to face it once again.

"If you ever want to continue this, you know where to find me."

"I might just hold you on that, bear." A smirk from the furred one as he left with the others. Closing the door and looking at it a little sadly.

"I'm... Beginning to think you didn't need rescuing." Remy stated as they started walking through an invisible path within the cosmos. Moving towards a nearby hole that displayed the green fields.

"Judging from those positions, I'm pretty sure Bartan was in the process of using his talents." Anna teased.

"Is that what all this was about? Some higher being wanted to get laid?" The wyvern giggled.

"Not quite."

"Then what, bear?" Zhong asked.

"Were we even needed?" Maverick snorted.

"Yes..." A breath as Bartan picked up the smaller blue one. "I needed you, thank you."

"I'm pretty sure he owes us now." A nudge from the beige.

"I think so, beers and strokings for everyone!" A sigh from the furred one at the drake's comment.

"I guess I gotta start somewhere." A look around as they stepped through the portal. "How did you guys even find me?" Then a look at the portal. "And didn't we dismantle this thing?"

The bear laid in the evening grass, looking towards the clear sky and the many stars. Almost being able to catch glimpses of ones tinted in a dark green, which only worried him. But hopefully everything would be okay, providing they would listen. Let alone, listen to a mortal outsider which really didn't belong and caused them a lot of trouble. Come to think of it, maybe taking this job wasn't such a good decision, but the bear was soon reminded why he took it. Amazing what the simple sounds of pawsteps could do. "This one better not get stolen this time." Bryce mumbled decently clearly for a basket handle in his maw.

"I'm pretty sure whoever did it last time won't be stealing anything anytime soon." They shared a chuckle as the drake passed him a bottle. Accepting it and feeling the larger one lay down close to Bartan. Taking the time to just hug him tightly, almost too tightly. "You okay, big guy?"

"...Yeah." There was a lot of seriousness in his voice as he exhaled. Nuzzling him a little hard. "I... Almost lost you today. Without even realizing that you even existed."

"So you and the others say. That's what they tend to do. Granted, a bit sloppy, but they were a little rushed for time."

"I swear it was only dumb luck that we could figure everything out..." A deep breath and Bartan could feel something a little wet in his fur.

"You have me, Bryce. Don't worry." Several minutes as the earth dragon just held him. Finally getting granted that power of just keeping time still for as long as he wished. "Getting a little tight there, buddy."

"Don't ruin this for me, bear." A few strokes against his side and neck as they kissed a bit.  
"...Bartan."

"Yes?"

"Never randomly disappear and get your memories erased from everyone you've ever stroked off again." A loud chuckle from him. "I'm serious, that's on the list. Just like force feeding-"

"I still say-"

"Just. Like. Force. Feeding." A growl from the brown one just made the bear laugh.

"I can't promise anything."

"Well, you better. You keep breaking one of the rules."

"Actually, I was thinking about that." A noise in question for the bear to continue. "Something might happen here, it's hard to explain. But... We might get a visit from the one who did..." A gesture to his lower self. "And odds are, he wouldn't mind doing yours either, if you wanted to."

"Are you serious?" A solid nod. "That's... Something to think about, that's for sure." He half grumbled. "Does it hurt?"

"Not for long. Does kinda shock though."

"Wonderful." A snout toss as they took a drink. "...Bartan?"

"Yes?"

"I'm going to ask you something, and you better not say no. No matter how much I groan, toss my snout, and bleed out of my muzzle." A strange look from the bear. "Explain it to me. Again."

"Seriously?"

"Yes." A faint sigh and a deep breath. "-But! Keep it very very simple." A chuckle from the furred one. "What the HolyFishBalls happened?"

"Alright, alright..." Another deep breath and he gestured the sky. "Everything out there is your universe. Can you follow that-?"

"You lost me." A loud series of laughs from the two. "Okay, black stuff with blips of lights equal universe."

"Yes. It's big, but it's not infinite. It just feels that way to us-"

"Because we're so freaking tiny and insignificant compared to it."

"But not unimportant. I'll get to that. Point is, the Universe came from somewhere." A strange

look from those golden eyes. "Something created it, designed it. We call this thing a Counterweight. Think Architect."

"Why call it that?"

"Something to do with the universe's weight or something, it's complicated." The drake snorted at him for such a dumb answer. "They design the universe, give it the starting boost, create its walls and whatnot. But they don't control everything inside."

"What?"

"It hires others to do that. Usually three, sometimes less, sometimes more."

"That being the Forces, right?" A nod from the bear.

"Yes. Usually Reality, Death, and Fate."

"And one of these bearnapped you." It was barely a question, but it made Bartan chuckle.

"Kinda, because the others just wanted to get rid of me. Fate thought I could be reasoned with instead."

"Hence the sudden disappearance, and the portal's repair." A large nod from the white one.

"See? You're getting this."

"After hearing it ten times, yes." Another snort, and he got a kiss.

"If you can get through the rest of it, I'll stroke you off."

"You're stroking me off either way! I don't give a damn!" A chuckle.

"Alright, alright. What their plan was, was to keep contact with the humans. Eventually allowing them to probably invade here way down the line and well..." A frown from the dragon.

"Why though?" A gesture towards the sky again.

"You ever wonder how they keep doing that?"

"The stars?" A nod. "Not in the slightest."

"At least you're honest." A lick from that pink tongue. "Counterweight's often need to get some source of power to keep everything running. They get this from another being."

"The T thing."

"Terrasque, yes. It's a being that feeds off of negativity, and in return it gives off a lot of power. They basically caged one of these things and built their universes around it." A groan from the dragon. "In order to keep it fed, those within the universe need to suffer. Gathering enough of that negative

energy to keep everything rolling."

"How big is this thing exactly? If you have to attach universes to its cage...?"

"You seriously want to hear this?" A groan from Bryce as the bear smiled. Stroking his side. "I'm serious, we can stop here."

"Damnit, just give it to me straight. How screwed are we if that thing comes out?"

"Well, in regarding its size... Okay, Counterweight's can't fit inside their own universe without reducing their mass." A whimper from the dragon. "Terrasques can swallow Counterweights." A louder whimper. "Whole. Usually with ease-" The loudest of whimpering groans as he stuffed his head into the bear's chest. Getting him to chuckle. "So on a scale of 1-10? 67,283,581,932,672.4 levels of screwed."

"Yeah, I'm not sleeping tonight."

"Yes you are." Bartan teased him. "I'll personally see to it." A smirk from Bryce.

"You're so nice to me." A kiss. "Did you...?"

"Hmm?"

"Did you ever think of your prices yet?"

"For the Companion thing?"

"Your services, yes." A chuckle from the furred one.

"Never decided just yet, but I got a few ideas. Why?" A devious smirk from the drake. "Oh, here we go."

"I want to pay for your first session."

"Bryyyce. You don't need to pay for me-"

"No, no, no. I'm not taking that for an answer. I know you're slightly nervous about taking money from others, and I..." A breath from him. "I occupy you a lot. Too much without giving something in return."

"Well, you do have a lot to give."

"And the cleanup is something else."

"That's true." A lick from the drake. "Fine. What do you want me to do for you?" Another sly smirk as he went back to the basket for a moment, coming back with an empty jug. "You want me to?"

"Fill that." A slight whimper. "To the brim. For tomorrow, that is." A sigh from Bartan.

"Alright, but you need to do what I say. Getting to eager will only keep us here all night."

"Not that I would mind." A deep kiss from Bryce. "Bear?"

"Hmm?"

*"...I love you."*

*"I love you, too."*