

Somewhere Out There Act 13 - All You Wanted

By Bartan Tirix

The natural alarm went off again, groaning the large one sluggishly awake to constant purrs and a wet mess. Soaking most of the bed he was laying on and a very strong smell covering up a certain scent that forced him to purr. Just not enough to start engaging in such acts again. Really, it was for the best. His lower area still ached like it was stretched out, but the calls needed to be answered. Staggering his grey self up, he expected to be more tired after such a thing. Considering the punishment each of them took, especially the bear inbetween the two dragons.

He's told stories, yes. Ones that Maverick swore would leave him blushing for days after hearing, and nearly cursing at the chief's ability to stay impervious to such things. But he only expected it to be just that: stories. Exaggerations. Not literally morphing that furry belly into a waterball, full of a certain white substance as it distended and bloated out to make more room. Yet the grey one was just too enthralled to keep his fangs away from it, already starting to feel his slit swell a bit just thinking about it, while using the restroom. Unable to really understand why he liked such a thing. It was just a nice, big, soft furred pillow just waiting to be nuzzled and gnawed into-

A head shake to snap his thoughts back into place. *It's just the scent.* The wyrm thought to himself. Returning down the halls and looking towards the front door. Those wings never felt so restless, haven't been out to fly much today. A glance down at the bedroom, swearing he could see some of the fluids leak into the hallway from the door, the grey one took a breath. *He'll be safe if Bryce is with him. It's only for a few minutes anyway.*

Quietly, Maverick snuck out. Locking the door behind him and taking off. Though still a bit sticky from sleeping in such a thing, he was still surprisingly awake. The cool night air making him a little more so with every wingbeat, and feeling those muscles become satisfied by such a decision. But circling around the town, those senses started to pick up something. Movement in the dark of something running away through the streets. That thief? Changing to a glide, he followed the shadow from above. Seeing it approach a store building from behind and getting him to growl.

They were right all along. *It was using the vents- Did it just tackle a dumpster?* Some struggles were picked up from below as he took another quick circle around. Some shouting that almost sounded like...? And then a smaller shadow scampering away. *That* was the thief, and the dragon dove from the sky after it. Landing hard in a pounce before biting at its neck, growling loudly to ensure Maverick meant his threat. "Don't. Move." He snarled, only getting a few expected coughs from something so small. Regardless of how wrong it felt to do this to a literal hatchling, the grey one wasn't going to take anymore chances. Be it for the townspeople, be it for the bear and his comrades. This had to stop. "Try anything, and you're done for."

"Okay... Okay, fine." Another few coughs as those red eyes quickly glanced at the runner tangled in vines. *Is that... Sebastian?* The very slight double-take opened a window for the little one, creating a spike out of the pavement and stabbing it into that plated chest harshly. Causing the adult to roar in pain, but bite down hard into that neck against the sudden shock. Causing the little one to grunt sharply in pain before the wyrm snapped its neck in anger. Leaving the child's body limp.

"Mavers!!" The runner called loudly, almost sounding muffled to the larger dragon gripping on that solid spear. Pain overwhelmed his chest, causing his heart to race, but remain beating. His lungs burning, but not flooded with any blood. Just growling against the sharp pain until some paws examined the area. "Stay with me buddy! Stay with me!" Though the raptor was just in front of him, he sounded so far away. "Somebody call for help!!" The grey one's breaths were starting to get deep, but not shallow. Causing the runner to whimper. "Just keep breathing, Mavericks. Don't fall asleep, no matter what. You hear me? Stay awake!"

"You'd think I'd be used to this by now." The wyrm hissed at the pain. "How bad is it?"

"I can't tell without a light, but don't move!" Those beige paws carefully scanned the area. "If you do, you'll likely bleed out."

"Then..." Another growl. "You need to cauterize the wound." A double take from the smaller one.

"What!?"

"Either find a way to break this thing so I can move, or we pull it out here and you seal it!" Maverick growled.

"Mav... I-I don't think-"

"Well, I can't do it!" A frustrated hiss, getting a whimper in response. "The longer we leave it in, the more dangerous it becomes. We can't wait." Another whimper as Sebastian looked around.

"...Alright...!" He looked at the angle of the spike. "You're going to have to stand on something if we're going to pull it out carefully." He got a few sturdy boxes and placed them nearby the wyrm. Carefully placing them under his paws and feeling the spike withdraw little by little. The soaked tip glistening in the moonlight more and more until the very edge could be seen. "Okay-okay-okay. Sit down-sit down." Though the wound was rather small, it still made the younger officer nervous looking at it. Knowing that blood was not going to stop.

"Do it...!" The grey one growled, looking away and hearing the runner take a few breaths. A heated burn was soon felt forcing the wyrm to roar loudly against the pain for several moments. His body starting to feel shaky and a little faint from it, demanding more deeper breaths for him to exile with growls.

"I hope that did enough, but we still need to get you to a hospital!" A sharp nod. "I don't trust

your wings like this."

"Be best not to walk that much either." A harsh grumble as those red eyes glanced down at the limp wyrmling's body, seeing Sebastian follow it and frown. "We gotta do something about him too." Some silence. "Go. Get help or make sure it's coming. I'll guard it until then." But the beige one didn't move, not until he got a bit of a heavy swat from the grey one. A motion that was more powerful than he meant it to be. "Hey!"

"R-right." Another look at each of them before nodding at the wyrm. "I'll..." And he took off.

The smell of cinnamon picked up by that scarred muzzle was soon followed by a loud groan. Doing his best to just fight the idea of work and bury his muzzle into that living pillow, only to find it covered in a cold slime. Everything covered in a colder slime, getting him to grumble as last night returned to that drake's brain. Another long grumble when he realized how sore he was from it. "Bearrr..." He mumbled in a yawn, getting a noise in question from his wet pillow. "Never come home smelling like that again." A chuckle, as the dragon licked at him. "But come home smelling like that again soon." A louder chuckle that the two shared that time.

"It wasn't my intent, draggy." They kissed as Bryce tried to carefully snorf that fur in the more dry areas. Purring loudly at the scent still lingering within. "I was actually going to shower it off first, but I spotted Maverick last night."

"And he probably picked up on it..." Another purr. "Woke up the neighbors mounting you."

"The hardest he's ever done someone, I'll tell you that." A bit of a laugh.

"You want to see rough, do you?"

"I like it a little rough, you know that by now." Another kiss as the two made noises of affection. Feeling those large arms hold the bear tight against his titanic body, and a certain rod almost throbbing for attention.

"You should be careful what you say around me, furball." A loud murr as the larger one pressed Bartan into the bedding, pinning him in place and nailing that muzzle with a deep kiss. "You'll be provoking me to rival such a thrashing."

"I have been waiting for a demo for a while now, chief." A loud growl of affection from the earth dragon. "But maybe later tonight. Though last night was pretty close."

"I barely remember it. Just this haze of black and thick smells." A noise in confirmation. "Growls, groans, and an explosion of wetness." Those golden eyes got a bit more serious as he looked over the naked bear's body. Mostly that mid-section. "You... Sure you're okay?"

"I'm fine, Bryce. Was just a small sting."

"He bit you." The drake snorted, getting him to chuckle.

"No different from when I bite you."

"Oh, you mean when I do this?" That brown bicep flexed, nearly ripping the outer scales from the sheer bulge of those muscles, and getting the white one to whimper loudly. "Go ahead, bear. I know you want to..." That furred muzzle almost latched onto it with a small kiss, then a gnaw. Almost tickling the drake as he tried to remain still. "You're only weakness, side from me lifting my tail to you."

"You... Have..." A few whimpers as those paws groped the thick muscle. "A nice... Hole..."

"I know I do." Bryce teased, hearing the phone ring and getting the two to stop for a moment. "I better answer that." A whimper in disappointment. "I know, I know. You want it now, don't you?"

"I'll..." A few breaths. "I'll recover. But only because I have to use the restroom-"

"Bathroom!" The chief half-hissed as the bear left. Answering the bedroom phone with a grumble. "Bryce here- Ah, crapbaskets. Who is it this time?" He growled almost loudly, looking at the number.

"Hey, chief." The runner on the other end mumbled.

"Don't tell me." The drake mumbled, putting a paw over his eyes and getting an awkward silence for a few moments. "Okay, tell me."

"I caught the thief again last night."

"And he beat on you again?"

"On... Maverick, actually." A glance over on the grey one's usual side of the bed, just now realizing he was missing. "He's hurt, Bryce."

"...I'll be right down there." He almost whispered, looking back at the hallway. "You can tell me about it then."

"Alright." They hung up and the earth dragon took a breath. Hearing those pawsteps return and stop at the doorway. "Just work that called-" A double take at the white one staring at the room and almost whimpering. "What?" A gesture to come over, and he did, looking at the huge mess they made last night and whimpering with the white one. The film of foggy white was all over the bedding and floors, some against the walls, but not so much on the ceiling.

"...That's going to be fun to clean up."

"Very fun." A long silence. "Have fun with that!" A whimper of defeat from the furred one as the dragon rushed to the bathroom.

"So, he's dead." The chief asked in a low mumble, looking through a windowed door into a confined room. Seeing a black wyrmling close to about Vara's size lying there.

"Your enforcer bit down on his neck at full strength." The red runner snorted. "What exactly did you expect!?"

"Dr. Taute, can you give us some privacy?" Sebastian interrupted, getting a grumble in return then muttering about how much work he had to do for the day. Placing a beige paw on Bryce's shoulder as the drake exhaled. "This is what happened last time. He looked damaged..."

"But somehow escaped." The two shared a look, noticing how the idea of it was somewhat sinking into those golden eyes. "How long has it been since?"

"About... A few hours. Close to four now." A faint nod from the larger one. "I've been guarding him while they take care of Maverick."

"How is he?"

"Fine. Complaining and getting complaints from the staff about how often he's been in here the past couple of months." That made the two chuckle a little bit. "The doctors said that spike missed his heart and lung by a thread. A literal thread."

"So it was aiming for his vitals...?" A shrug from the runner.

"To him, it was a life or death situation. Predator attacking its Prey. I don't blame him for fighting back, but it was damn close to taking Mav's life." A heavy exhale from both of them as a dark brown arm circled around Sebby's back, pulling him closer for a hug. Getting a bit of a grunt before feeling a beige arm pull the heavy paw up a little bit in a more comfortable position for the raptor.

"I hate this damn job sometimes, Seb..."

"We know these things happen, big guy-not so tight." Another grunt as they adjusted again. "We agreed to this."

"I agreed to this because I didn't expect these things to happen so often around here." Another heavy breath as they broke the embrace. "Did you want to go home and rest? I can take it from here."

"I'm fine. I'm afraid of my home smelling a little funny anyway." A questionable look from Bryce that made Sebby double take. Lightly blushing and nearly asking himself *Did I Just Say That Out Loud?* "I'm curious to what his motives are anyway."

"...And if he escapes again?"

"...I won't pursue." A look of relief from the larger one. "I'm pretty sure we've given the wyrmling a scare anyway, let alone the lengths we'll go around here."

"As much as I hate to say it, we're not equipped to deal with something like this." Another glance at the wyrmling, barely seeing those paws in shackles, tied to the bedding. "If he can control these things..."

"There's not much we can bind him with." A bit of a crossed look from the two. "I've been wondering what exactly has the power to do that... Remember when the bear disappeared and told us about..."

"Force thingys and... Counter-something-"

"Weights, yes." The two looked over the black one again. "Maybe that's what we're dealing with here."

"But why the hell would they be stealing money?"

"Let alone so little of it... That's why I want to be around. See if I can get it to talk."

"You sure that's a good idea? You nearly caught him twice. That thing might hold a grudge against you."

"Well, I'm the only one really familiar with its abilities to know what to look out for. Let alone the tongue to do so-"

"Hey, my tongue works wonders." Bryce snorted in a tease.

"Your tongue works wonders for certain other things, boss. Talking isn't quite one of them." They shared a chuckle. "Go check up on Mavericks. Just don't squeeze him too hard."

"Alright, alright. But be careful, Sebastian." A solid nod. Those golden eyes once again overlooking the black one before taking a breath and leaving.

The hallways weren't that busy at least, but still rather occupied. Making it a maze for the earth dragon, one he somehow knew the layout like he's been in here quite a few more times than he remembered. Getting this strange feeling of dread that made those brown scales click together, reacting to the shiver that trailed down his spine. Wondering how the dragons that worked here did it every day. Nearly having to put on a mask of sorts to not let their emotions and instincts get in the way.

He supposed it was the same for the drake's job as well. Having to go out and face danger, something that's becoming a lot more recent lately. Keeping this place a little more busy than normal with all the injuries and murders. Not fully feeling the weight of possibly losing that grey wyrm until he saw Maverick laying in a bed, sharing a room with an empty one for the moment. Those red eyes closed for a bit until his instincts kicked in, scanning the room and locking onto those golden ones.

The drake moved at a quick pace, barely giving the grey one time to curse before those large brown arms wrapped around the arguably bigger dragon. Hearing him groan in pain. "Easy-!" Mav

hissed at him. "Your worse than getting shot sometimes, I swear."

"You should know by now, bullet magnet." Bryce chuckled at the growl. "I guess we can add Pavement Spike to the list of things that's entered your body. Along with-"

"Don't." Maverick grumbled. "Not in public just yet."

"Not ready to admit you got shafted by a few spears?" The chief whispered his purrs before exhaling and just holding the wyrm for a few moments. Making out that strong heartbeat that nearly lost its rhythm today. "This has got to stop."

"We caught him, Bryce-"

"I know, but he wasn't worth risking your life." An exhale from the grey one as his paws stroked the drake a bit. "Why didn't you just kill him? Knowing he would come back?"

"I wasn't sure who it was. I actually seen Sebastian going through the streets first, thinking it was that wyrmling." A worried look from those golden circles. "Still think I should've dove for the first shadow I seen and executed it?" An exhale in defeat.

"You're right..." A deep breath. "Is it so bad that lately I just want everyone I know to live? Not to get them nearly killed every day I wake up? Every damn time that phone rings?" That grey muzzle half frowned in response. Bryce's paw touched that chest, trying to stay clear of the large bandage, but still getting a grunt. "You're not expendable, Maverick. Don't take anymore chances, understood?" A deep breath and he nodded. "Last thing I want is to come home and tell that bear..."

"The same damn thing goes for you then." A slow but solid nod. "You owe me that much."

"I'm not the one that got shot three times this year."

"But you are the one that jumped on an exploding Generator to save us." A snout toss from that scarred muzzle.

"Not in this timeline, but..." Another breath. "I follow." A glance at the doorway, seeing some of the staff display some rather crossed looks at the room. "What's up with them?"

"...Word got around." A noise in question. "That I killed a wyrmling."

"One that comes back to life-"

"They don't know that part of it." The grey one exhaled, closing his eyes. "I've just been..."

"I can always tell them-"

"Only for them not to believe you."

"We have proof, Mav-"

"Proof that they're not ready to see yet." A breath from the chief. "I've had time to think about this, Bryce... We don't even know what this thing is. We don't even know if there's multiple of them or not." A slow shake of that scarred muzzle. "I don't give a damn about my reputation. If they want to call me a child killer, then fine."

"It's not the truth. You gave it an opportunity to surrender, and it attacked you. Doing near fatal damage in the process..." The drake overlooked the bandage. "It's not even bleeding...?"

"Sebastian... Cauterized the wound at the scene." A worried look from Bryce. "*Poorly*, according to them, but it saved me." A faint nod as the brown one continued to hold him. "People are going to start thinking funny thoughts about us if you keep doing that."

"I could confirm such thoughts if you like." An awkward grumble from Maverick. "You've survived one stabbing today, I'm sure you can survive another."

"Doubt they would have any of that. They won't even let me walk. What do they expect me to do all day?"

"Well then, you're just going to have to bite me in the neck and we'll be roomies for the day."

"Too soon." A chuckle from the drake. "...If you came here, then Seb must've called you?"

"Yes."

"What did Bartan say...?" A breath from Bryce.

"...He didn't hear the conversation. And I slipped out before he asked much. Just told him it was work calling, for me to check out a body from last night." A nod from the grey one. "He still doesn't know. I'm honestly not sure if I should tell him anymore..."

"What difference would it make?"

"You." A slightly tighter embrace. "We could've been more prepared, if only we asked him."

"You were pro on asking him in the beginning."

"Yeah, until I found out what this wyrmling was capable of. Then..." A deep breath from the chief. "...I got scared. Scared of losing him. But instead I almost lost you. Almost lost Sebastian. Twice." Another breath. "Who's next on that damn list? Who else is going to be taken from us?"

The grey one was quiet for a few moments. "...That's our job, Bryce. To keep people safe and alive. It's a risk we're willing to take."

"...I don't know how much longer I'm willing to take those chances, to be honest." Another frown as the two just held each other. "I'll see what I can do to get you home. Even if I have to push this damn thing all the way there and back."

"I'll be fine, Bryce." A few pats against that brown back. "Besides, I know the bear will likely say something like sex is good for healing or some excuse." The two chuckled.

"That reminds me. I had this wonderful idea for a hospital I want to tell you..."

...He reached the old doctor's home and gave a loud knock on the door. "Go away! I'm doing science!" The bird shouted from inside, giving the Gnoll a puzzled look on his face. *(I still don't get what a Gnoll is. Why not just call him a Hyena?)*

"It's Kassel."

"Kasse? You're back already? I only sent you out a few hours ago."

"You sent me out yesterday afternoon." Kasse said, tilting his head. And once again giving an irritated look at the sky. I'm not sure why you keep looking up, I'm not above you. "You sound like you're in my head."

"Who are you talking to?" The doctor asked, while tending the several minute task of unlocking his door. *(Several minutes? We barely have one lock on our doors around here.)*

"Uh... No one. Long story."

No one. I feel special.

"Well, you're technically not around here, so."

Doesn't mean I'm not real. I'm just... Not exactly there.

"What do you mean by that?"

"What are you doing?" The old bird snapped while finally opening his door and grumbling at the dawn of light. "Get in here!" And the Gnoll entered the workshop. Inside, the room was rather dark. Only illuminated by a dim light from a lantern above. The tables were always messy with books and potions of such, with the occasional scroll here and there. As for the large bookshelves, there were hundreds of them within the Tower Home. "Did you get what I asked of you? Or are you wasting my time?"

"Y-yes. I found it. And barely got out alive, for your concern." The bird snorted at him. "But..."

"I don't like Buts." Kassel did his best to hold in his chuckle. "Now where is it?"

"Right here, Burdock." He handed the Red feathered bird the bag. "See what I did there? You're a bird and you're a doc-" *(What's a Burdock? I'll ask the bear later.)*

"That wasn't funny when we met several years ago, and it's not funny now." (*Several years?*)
The bird snatched the bag. In your defense, I thought it was clever.

"Thanks!"

But I'm not sure how many people know what Burdocks are.

"They don't?"

And Mr. Taute is giving you an odd look. (*Taute...?*)

"He is?" The Gnoll looked at the bird who was giving him an odd look.

"...I see starvation is getting to you."

The runner looked up from his book and back into the hallway slowly, almost looking for the red doctor. Shifting his purple eyes from the paperback to the hall a bit before those instincts kicked back in. As if someone just entered the room, and soon hearing the wyrmling groan a bit. Move around and discover he was snagged by. Grumbling a bit before holding his breath for a moment, then whimpering. Trying it again, then whimpering louder almost in defeat. "Trying to break free?" Sebastian asked rather thickly, only for those deep purple eyes to lock onto his own faded ones. Then exhale again and flop that black head down on the pillow.

"Give me a minute... Things will come back to me." A slight cough from the little one. "Can I get some water?"

"Can't control it this time?" A sigh in defeat, but the runner got up regardless. Getting a small bowl and studying the wyrmling for a moment. "I want a name." A snout toss from the little one as those frilled ears went flat against his head.

"Harrak." He grumbled, extending an opened paw for the bowl. Not getting it for another moment as the runner studied him.

"That's not your real one."

"No, it isn't, Captain Obvious." Harrak snorted, taking laps from the bowl as the wheeled bed was being shifted around to better keep an eye on the little one. Seeing the raptor sit back down at his chair and watch the black wyrmling. "Yours? Or should I just call you the thorn on my side?"

"...Sebastian."

"Of course. Ruin my fun." Another snort as he continued to drink, then froze for a moment staring down into the water. Grunting against a bit of pain in his head. "Taath-taath-taath!" He cursed, getting the runner to growl.

"You kiss your mother with that maw-?"

"How long was I out!?" Sebastian gave him an odd look as the smaller one tossed his snout. "The bigger one killed me right? Didn't just knock me out?"

"...Yes-"

"So, three hours. I need to get somewhere-!"

"Four. And you're under arrest, Harrak-"

"Someone's life is in danger! If we don't leave now, they're going to die!" The black one growled, getting a suspicious look from the adult. "-I know! I know! You can't trust a damn thing I say because I'm young and a criminal, but I'm telling the truth! Let me-!" Another snag of the shackles and Harrak looked at it, those wings drooping a bit as if a dark realization hit him. "I can't... Defibrillator! Tell me you have a portable Defibrillator!"

"A what?"

"It's the damn thing that shocks people's hearts to get them to start up again!" The black one hissed, once again just getting an odd look from Sebastian. "Look. I told you guys not to kill me. It... Can make me lose my Atonements if it happens too often-!"

"Atonements?" A sharp snout toss of that black muzzle. "Your powers?"

"Yes! I was using them to keep her alive! Her heart doesn't keep beating like ours does! It stumbles upon itself, skipping beats over and over again until it eventually stops! These damn doctors misdiagnosed her with Narcolepsy!" He almost roared. "Listen... Sebastian. I don't give a damn about me. You caught me, fine! I'll take whatever punishment you have in this damn world. Even if it's death. But that doesn't mean she deserves to die because of someone else's mistake!!"

A slow blink from the runner as he took a breath. "Please." The little one begged. "You have *very* little time left. If you don't get there, she'll die. *Every. Second. Counts.*" Another moment, but those instincts flourished within the runner.

"...Where." He demanded.

"I can show you-"

"No. You're staying here-"

"I can't do anything anymore!" Harrak growled. "I'm not a threat-!"

"And I can't trust you. Tell me where, that's the only way you're going to save her." A sharp, almost frustrating whine of defeat from the smaller one.

"Fine! Get a few more in here to be sure. Get the defibrillator, take a doctor or a nurse with you

who knows how to operate it. Stretcher as well-and make sure the damn device is charged!" Another moment of study and the black one frustratingly tugged at the shackles. "*I'll be here.*"

It was a great morning for a walk, still cool by the time the bear got out to meet his first client. Making him wonder what the winters were going to be like, and question whether or not he should've brought a coat for such things. Perhaps he could get one custom made somewhere, or even perhaps ones designed for runners might work out well. Granted, the bear rarely seen anyone wear clothing of any sort, so likely this was about as cool as it was going to get.

He approached the large glass doors just as a team of several was leaving. A mix of colors, but he swore there was a beige in there. Making his first thought the officer, but Sebby wasn't the *only* light brown runner around. Still, Bartan wasn't going to keep him from his work if it was, likely still a little uncomfortable from the other night.

Speaking of which, the furred one cautiously entered the hospital. Almost wondering if all the males around were going to drop everything and suddenly pounce the bear due to that scent. It took a lot of soap, but by the look of it, he got most of it out. Only to go back later tonight for another session with Lorem. It was definitely going to be an interesting week, likely having to spend the nights there for a bit to keep the messes to a minimum. That, or perhaps strike a good deal with Zhong when it comes to buying shampoo.

And that's not counting the toll it would likely take on the two dragons living in that house as well. Making the bear wonder how their day was going thus far, let alone whatever happened to Maverick last night. Hoping the grey one didn't have another mental episode, but by the sounds of last night, he got over that. Or, was going to, until something interrupted him. Scouting the rooms and directions to the building to find the Cancer ward, then casually browsing through the rooms, he pondered what the grey one was arguing about.

He pretty much guessed who or what it was. Be it real or all in his head, people will do what they need to in order to cope with the harshness of life. Even if it means making up a friend, enemy, or even an entire family. Something the bear was all too familiar with. "Over here, furball." A female called from one of the rooms he passed, getting Bartan to double take and look back in a solitary room. One occupied with a pink runner in the bed.

"I didn't expect this area to be so big for a small town."

"It's the only one in the region. The closest other is way out in the city, and even that's getting busy." Anna grumbled as the bear approached, giving her a hug but being careful not to tug on anything important, being hooked up to a large machine. "You didn't tell me that this thing was so large." A shrug from the white one.

"Cancer's complicated. It's not just a simple strain of illnesses, even though we often assume it is." The furred one took a seat. "How are you feeling?"

"Bored. Tired. Irritated because that nurse keeps giving me dirty looks. I swear the entire staff is against me having this treatment, even after I paid for it."

"They can't argue against that, but maybe they're just not having a good day. You never know-"

"Every day that I've been here?"

"They work at a hospital." A snout toss from her. "Enough said."

"Fine, fine." The runner grumbled, taking a breath. "Maybe you're right. I suppose I'm still used to people giving me the stinkeye after everything's that happened. As if they're somehow jealous."

"Of what?"

"Money maybe? I don't know."

"Well, you did pay for a private room-"

"Only because the first patient I was roomed with was horribly annoying." Anna nearly snapped, but the white one took it lightly. Chuckling at her expression. "Seriously, shouting at every little thing that she recognized. Every damn sound-"

"Tourette?"

"I don't know what they had, but again: I swear it was the staff getting back at me." Another chuckle from the bear. "Let me guess: It's all in your head, Anna."

"It's all in your mind, yes." She snorted, nearly taking the nosepiece out in the process. "I think this works out for everyone anyway."

"You're so kind." The pink one grumbled.

"Well, you get a private room, TV, comfortable bed, and get cured in the process. It's a wonder you even needed me here." Those green eyes looked slightly away as she somewhat frowned at the opened door. "Want me to close it?"

"If you don't mind. I'm not expecting anyone else to come." A slight nod from him and Bartan did so. "I hired you because I wanted company."

"You didn't have to pay me for that, Anna-"

"It's got nothing to do with money, bear. I have enough of it to the point where I don't really need it." A breath from her, but the runner's sights still looked towards the exit. "I just wanted... Someone here who doesn't hate me."

"I still say they don't."

"But is that really too much to ask? It's pretty bad when I have to hire someone to be a decent person to me."

"To be fair..." He teased, getting her to grumble and playfully shove that furred shoulder. "I know, I know. But that's the consequence of being bitter around others; it makes it hard for them to like you."

"You're just as bitter as me, you even admitted it." Those white paws raised.

"It's true, I can't deny that."

"Then how the hell do you do it?"

"Talent, really." A grumble from the female. "Tolerance." A paw over her eyes that time.

"You state that like I haven't tried."

"Maybe you just need a little more." He smirked, getting another shove. "As I said the first time: species help as well."

"Of course. Your wonderful adventures of getting under everyone's tail. How's that coming along?"

"Well, I met my first person in heat last night."

"Oh, I can see where this is going." She chuckled.

"Yes, it was quite interesting. The smell didn't affect me though, not in the slightest. However..."

"Every male in town wanted to get under your tail in the process." A large nod from him, and they shared a chuckle.

"I actually forgot the scent was on me, and when I returned home..."

"Your alpha went nuts?"

"One of them, yes." A double take from her.

"One...?" A nod from him. "Bryce and... Right. Mav moved in with you. I nearly forgot."

"Mhmm."

"So, he's been fighting to claim ownership of the furry hills, I assume." She grinned slyly, making the bear chuckle a bit.

"Actually, I almost expected there be some kind of competition between them, but they've been doing very well with each other. Not only sharing me, but they have their own little sessions with

themselves-

"Aren't they like brothers to each other?" Bartan shrugged, but nodded. "I swear bear, you could convince anyone to have sex."

"I think it helped that me and Bryce already talked about it long beforehand." An eyebrow raised but Anna was trying to hold back her chuckle. "Just hypothetically and random scenarios, the Chief's been a huge help with letting Maverick in. I can't commend him enough."

"I'm sure you can think of many ways to repay him."

"Aside from all the tail he could ask for?"

"Exactly. I think he also likes breathmints as well."

"He does. They're always on the list. I'm actually surprised you don't have toothpaste here."

"...What?" She asked, studying the furred one for a few moments and he pondered.

"Perhaps you call it Tooth Polish here?" An eyebrow raised that time. "Must just be a human thing then."

"Which did what exactly? Made your teeth shine like a mirror?"

"Just cleans them." A blank stare. "Though you guys do have mouthwash here, but that's under prescription or something-

"Was until recently. Gum diseases are still around- but back to this..."

"Toothpaste? It's a bit of a long story, but humans basically put sugar in everything, along with many other things. Which is rather bad for teeth as a whole. And it was made to help clean out most of the aftermath-

"Are you telling me that humans even needed outside sources to keep their maws clean?" A chuckle from the white one.

"For the most part, yes. That is, if they wanted their food to taste better. Something I'm still getting used to around here."

"So used to the fine human cuisine, are you?" She teased.

"Was. I'm starting to like your kind's food a bit better. I'm just mediocre at cooking it."

"You're not the only one. It's why I normally just eat out."

"Not to mention how much you like being waited upon." The female smirked at him, blushing slightly.

"I won't lie, I enjoy being in charge. Like I am with you for the next two hours." Anna purred.

"You got something in mind that you would like?" She pulled on her sheets slightly and lifted up a hind paw.

"You might want to ask them for a bucket and some water. I'm still deciding whether or not I want you to use a sponge or that tongue." An overdramatic snout toss from the white one.

"Ugh, all I've done this morning is clean." The bear chuckled.

"No complaining, dear servant."

"Yes, Mistress." A large sly smile from her.

The wyrmling laid on the bedding almost grumbling. Trying his concentration from time to time, but doing nothing towards the shackles that bound him to the siderails. Stress was eating away at his mind, finally able to convince them that the female was in danger and to search out for her. Of course, expecting the common questions: how do we know this isn't a trap? What good is your word? How can we trust you not to attempt to break free while we're gone? He's heard it all before. Knowing there was going to be dozens upon dozens more to come.

At this time, he was just waiting for that interrogator to appear. Often wondering if he was just making the little one wait as a ploy or tactic. When really, it was just making the young one bored. Harrak would rest if he knew the yellow one was safe, but no word from their return until at least another hour. Forcing him to sigh and just ignore the heavy pawsteps entering the room. Hearing it walk over to the table and overlook the opened book that the runner was reading earlier. "...What the hell is a Burdock? I'll ask the furball later." That finally got the attention of the black one, overlooking the dark brown earth drake as he struggled to hit a button on a recorder. "We get to meet at last."

"Let me guess... Sheriff?"

"Chief, but yes." The two studied each other for a few moments. The smaller one looking at the scars on display against that muzzle and plated neck, while the wyrmling was equipped with his own that seemed to be nearly faded. "...You've been through a lot."

"Same goes for you." Those purple eyes stared at Bryce's neck. "That looks like a bite mark."

"It was." A breath from his muzzle. "And you've pretty much been through a food processor." The larger one came over for a closer look. "I'm familiar with the development of scales over wounds. Your color hides them quite well, but..." Those large dull claws half brushed over the smaller one and Harrak nearly growled at him. "What the hell happened to you?"

"What didn't?" He snorted.

"Thing is, I swear Sebastian said you were a different color. Not black." Those frilled ears went back. "You've met Sebastian, yes?"

"We've met a few times by now, yes."

"I'm half considering pulling him off this case because of how much you two have encountered each other. I think he's starting to hold a grudge." Those golden eyes studied the smaller one, almost adoring the lack of intimidation the young one had. "I had to convince him to look over the search party, and I'd be the one to watch over you." No response. "Bryce, by the way."

"...Harrak."

"Well, Harrak. We have a few things to discuss, considering you've decided to turn yourself in for the female." A quiet exhale from the small one as Bryce returned to the table. "You want to start with why you've robbed several stores the past week or so."

"That you've discovered."

"Are you admitting to more than what we found?" No response from the wyrmling. "You doing so will help your case-"

"I think you mean harm. I'm not going to be punished for something you don't think I did. Let alone, don't know about." Another moment of them staring into each other's eyes.

"Interesting... I was expecting this to be more of a pain, when really..." The drake retrieved the empty bowl of water from before and refilled it. "It's like talking to an adult." Again, the two just stared at each other. "How old are you?"

"Old enough." Harrak snorted, accepting the bowl and taking a drink. Almost expecting the larger dragon to nearly bully him, but Bryce just returned to the table. "...I don't know."

"Lost track?"

"It's just... Difficult to tell." The smaller one mumbled.

"...Why did you do it?" A slow blink from those purple eyes. "Hitting multiple stores, barely taking anything from each. At least not enough to cripple them. Any other thief would A: only attempt one at a time, and B: take everything they could hold, then the kitchen sink. I think what throws me off so much about this case is how you've been doing this." The chief said rather calmly. "You're not doing it to show off, you're not attempting to mock us like a hatchling would... I know kindness when I see it." A heavy exhale from the black one that time. "You mentioned a female to Seb earlier. She your mother?"

"...No."

"Sister?"

"No relation." A noise in question. "...I found her. Out in the woods, passed out on the ground."

"Yet you knew what was wrong with her?" No response. "You are the same one who lashed out at Taute about a week ago, yes? Same kid?" A snout toss from Harrak. "That's a yes."

"Damn idiot wouldn't listen to me." The smaller one snorted, almost getting a sad smirk from Bryce. "I talked to him, yes. Tried to get him to do something-"

"Something about a... Battery in her chest? Am I understanding this correctly?"

"It's called a Pacemaker. It will replace the same thing that sends electrical pulses through your heart and keeps it beating." The black one grumbled. "Hers is... Irregular. Slowing down her heart until it stops. If it doesn't get shocked again, she'll die."

"And that's what this thingamajig is for?" A solid nod from the wyrmling. "I've never heard of that."

"That doesn't surprise me." Harrak snorted. "But *they* should have by now."

"So, what was your plan? Steal enough money to convince them to do it?" A heavy exhale from the smaller one. "What if they refused-?"

"I wanted to keep her in the hospital for a day, let them see for themselves that she wasn't Narcoleptic. Maybe then they would take me more seriously."

"Take a wyrmling more seriously." Those frilled ears went flat against Harrak's head as he grumbled at the larger dragon. "So that's why you were doing this? Robbing people, because you wanted to save someone you found-"

"Wouldn't you?" The black one snapped making Bryce's expression cross. "Do whatever it took to save someone?"

"I would probably ask for help first-"

"Don't say that like I didn't try! And I can bet that's something they all left out in their statements. How they rejected helping out some damn stray that looked foreign to them."

"You're not from around here, that's for sure." A growl from the smaller one. "Aside from the strange powers, I knew it when I first laid eyes on you, walking through that door." A long silence as they stared at each other.

"...Fine. What gave it away?"

"Promise not to judge me?" The smaller one curled his neck at the adult's strange request. "You have balls." A very faint whimper from the wyrmling. "External stones under your tail." That black tail covered the small package up as those frilled ears turned slightly purple. "Don't! Don't judge me!" Bryce playfully hissed. "They just stand out-"

"Why would you...!?" Harrak groaned, hiding his head with a pillow for a few moments.

"So you're an Outsider then." The chief stated, hearing a few muffles under the pillow. "Which half explains the powers. But why do you come back from the dead?" No response. "Perhaps you need time to process that. I'm gonna get some lunch for us." The drake went to exit, opening the door and hearing the wheeling of a stretcher passing through the halls. Stepping back into the room as the two eyed a yellow runner on the portable bed being pushed outside the room, and almost hearing the younger one's attention lock onto her. Those purple eyes following every sound far past out of view. "...I'll try to get a status on her in the process for you, Harrak. But you need to stay in here." Again, no response as the chief left the room, closing the door behind him.

"I'm fine." The grey one grumbled during the examination of his wound. "Or at least will be if you stop poking at it."

"I want to be sure, Maverick." A lighter grey female said quite pleasantly. At least she seemed pleased with how the wound was looking. "How many times am I going to almost lose you this year?"

"A few more, for good measure." The wyrm snorted, getting the drake to chuckle a bit. "And it's not like I'm going around looking for trouble."

"I donno. You're pretty much a magnet for these sharp projectiles-"

"That was from before. This was a spike of pavement."

"And how exactly were you stabbed by a sudden spike of pavement?" The larger one grunted a bit awkwardly, as those yellow eyes studied him. "Why do I have the feeling that it's just an excuse?"

"Excuse? Excuse for what?"

"Have you been sexually active?" A whimper from him that time. "I think that means yes. Maverick, I know some people enjoy... Hurting themselves to get aroused, but couples have safety words for-"

"T-that's not what this was!!" He almost roared, covering his eyes with a paw. "I'm not a masochist!"

"Your body wounds are telling me otherwise. Unless you are hurting yourself just to see me." A smirk on that grey muzzle told the male she was just teasing. "But your '*Pavement*' wound-" A grumble from him. "Is healing nicely. However, I would like you to stay here for a few more nights. It's in a very bad spot, and I want to make sure-"

"I'm fine, Jijar. The sooner I get home, the better anyway."

"I don't want you alone, Maverick-"

"I-I... Won't be." A noise in question from her as she filled out a chart. "I've been... Living with some others."

"I see." Those yellow discs studied him for a moment. "Tell you what. One night here. If there's no problems, then I'll send you home. Deal?" A breath from the large one, but he nodded. "Excellent." She turned to leave.

"Jijar..." She looked back. "...Can I ask you a question?"

"Sure." He took a breath.

"...A long time ago I burnt my mouth, and no longer have the ability to taste." The drake curled her neck. "Is there any way...?"

"How long ago was this?" Those red eyes just fell to the floor. "I don't think that's possible, Maverick. With scales, you can sometimes graph them, but with tastebuds..." An exhale of disappointment.

"I understand..."

"That explains a lot really." That time she got a look. "You're the only one here that didn't complain about the hospital food being slightly bitter today." A grumble from him. "The cook left the potatoes boiling a little too long."

"I didn't notice." He muttered. Seeing the female walk towards him again closely.

"Open up." A bit of a mumble but he did, giving her a good view of his maw. "I can't offer much in terms of hope, but... It's possible if we remove this dead tissue that you might regain some taste again. But it's going to be rather painful and you won't be able to eat much for a few weeks."

"I'll... Think about it." The earth dragon smiled at him. "Thank you." She left the room after a noise in confirmation, just as another bed was being brought into a nearby room. The beige runner trailing behind it but slowing to a stall. Catching eyes with Maverick and he walked towards him.

"He told us of her whereabouts."

"The wyrmling?" Sebastian nodded. "What's wrong with her?"

"I couldn't tell you. She wasn't breathing when we found her. They used the shocking thing to get her to kind of do so, but she never regained consciousness. On top of that, her heart stopped two more times on the way back here. That thing must be out of charge by now."

"Meaning what?" A sad look from that runner's eyes. "She's not going to make it..."

"It's a wonder they even got the heart beating again in the first place. They explained a bit to me on the way here: if the heart stops, no oxygen gets into the brain. If it's starved for too long, it gets damaged. Very quickly."

"So..." They looked over the runner again, Bryce joining up with the two in silence.

"Odds are she isn't going to wake up." The beige one sighed heavily. "I can't help but think this was my fault-"

"It wasn't, Sebastian." The chief almost growled. "Don't start thinking like that-"

"If I didn't stop Harrak, she would still be alive-"

"He was stealing from places." The grey one growled.

"Only so he could afford treatments for her, apparently. Which would explain the low amount of every store taken." They looked at the brown one for a moment as he took a breath. "I'll tell him-"

"No." Sebastian stopped him. "I'll do it. He already resents me. If you got him to talk, there's no need to tarnish your reputation with him." A deep breath, and they nodded. Leaving Maverick to catch Bryce up on what happened.

Those frilled ears were picking up every noise possible. Trying to make out any word, any tones that might indicate the yellow one's condition. Once again tugging at that shackle and cursing at it. Wishing he could just rip the damn thing apart, but it was locked onto his wrist. Nearly being able to pull that paw out of it, if only that thumb wasn't in the way.

Looking at it, then back where they took the runner again, the black one cursed. Forcing that small appendage to dislocate and causing his paw great pain in the process. Likely breaking something too, but with a bit of struggling, he got his paw free from the damn cuff. It was going to hurt walking on it, but he will manage. Now to disappear and wait for one to come back, trying to force that joint back into place in the meantime.

Soon after, the beige runner walked into the room and instantly noticed the empty bed. Cursing loudly in a hiss, he turned to rush out the hall, but those instincts stopped him. Scanning almost through the opened door to the room, he kicked it with anger so it slammed against the wall and omitted a yelp of pain behind. Followed by the growl of the wyrmling quickly scampering out.

Sebastian dove for him, grabbing at his tail and lower half. Trying to keep hold of the smaller one as it squirmed and hissed at him, eventually clawing free and bolting down the hallway. Slipping past Bryce and Mav before they even noticed who it was, and picking out the yellow runner lying in the bedding. The grey wyrm almost pursuing him, but got a brown paw to tell him not to. "Let him have this..." The chief said, watching as the black one climbed the bed in a bit of pain.

Stepping on her body triggered nothing. Hooked up to life support to keep her breathing, no matter how much the smaller one was shaking at her. Looking at her head, carefully opening an eye nearly broke him. Seeing no response in those blue discs to the light overhead, causing the young dragon to almost sob loudly at her condition. Repeating words of denial over and over as he held her.

"Wake up..." The black one pleaded. "You have to wake up...! I can't be too late-damnit! I just can't be! Not again! You need to-" A sharp breath. "You promised...! You Promised me that you would End This!! You Have To Wake Up!!" The room went completely quiet as the smaller one buried that snout into her unresponsive neck. "Narcolepsy...?" Harrak growled through his tears. "Taathing Narcolepsy!? You did this to her!!" He hissed at the red doctor. "How could you screw that up!?"

"She claimed she was getting tired-" A childish roar that morphed into coughs, as the wyrmling struggled to get across the bed. Finally getting Maverick to stand between them and hold Harrak against his chest, trying to keep him away from the wound.

"Enough." The grey one got a hiss. "I said **Enough**. Nothing more can be done..." A look at Taute to double check, and the doctor just shook his head. "We'll give you time to say your goodbyes, but it needs to end."

"I can..." The little one struggled against the grey paw. "I can still save her! I just need time!"

"Only for her to suffer more. It's no way to live, wyrmling. Just accept it..." Several more sobs into that plated chest and it was even starting to get to the earth dragon. Getting a paw on his shoulder from Sebastian before giving a sharp breath.

"I... I need to..." Bryce backed up and left the room after seeing the runner's nod.

Every step felt heavy on the way home, being one of the longest days at work the drake's had. Almost reminding him of those days after the portal, having one tragedy after another. Overlooking his home for a moment before walking inside, knowing he would have to confront the white one about this. About how much Bryce and Maverick have been hiding from him. Barely picking out the sounds of dishes and the smell of a meal being cooked as he leaned into the kitchen. Seeing that furball with his back turned working around the counters, catching a glimpse of those brown eyes in a reflection and the bear smiled. Turning around to meet that saddened scarred muzzle and instantly drain the outsider of all happiness. "What." He almost demanded from the earth dragon, getting him to take a breath.

"...There's been a death, Bartan."

"Is Maverick...?" No response other than a shake of that brown head. "Sebastian?"

"Seb is fine. Maverick..." Bryce walked over and held the furred one for a moment. "Missed him by a literal thread." A slow nod from Bartan. "I'm sorry... I'm sorry I kept this case from you, bear. I just didn't want..."

"Hey, hey... It's okay." Feeling those white arms hold him. "But what do you mean Missed Him?"

"It missed his heart..." A worried look from those brown eyes. "I'm sorry, Bartan... I shouldn't

have-" He broke into sobs, holding onto that body a little too tightly. "I just couldn't risk losing you...!"

"Bryce?" A few pets to help the large one through his sorrow. "Just clarify this for me: are Sebbly and Maverick alright?" A sharp nod.

"Mav's... Hurt. But he'll live." A breath of relief.

"Then who died?" Those broad shoulders sank, worrying the bear. "Bryce?"

"...I never knew her name." He sniffed. "Yellow... Runner."

"No one comes to mind-"

"But that could've been you...! If I involved you in this case, you could've been..." A few more whispers to calm the drake down, feeling the furred one just rock him back and forth a bit. "I just didn't want to lose you... And you could've been enough to save her-but you could've been..." A heavy few sobs. "I couldn't take that chance, bear! I just couldn't take the chance of losing you...!"

"It's alright, Bryce-"

"Someone is dead because of my selfish choices... Because of me... Because I forced the others not to rely on you... I wanted to at first, then I found out how dangerous he was..."

"He...?" Another sharp whimper and those thick arms just held him tighter. "Easy buddy... Easy. I'm here for you now, Bryce. I'm here for both of you." A few deep breaths. "Start from the beginning, okay? Please?" Several more breaths, and he nodded. Leading the white one into the bedroom first before starting the heavy conversation.

"I see..."

"Does any of this sound familiar to you?" Bryce asked, finally able to stop the tears from his eyes.

"The only real thing was something Maverick said. He told me a wyrmling died a few days ago, and that you guys didn't want me involved." A heavy sigh from the drake.

"You have to understand, bear, we were only trying-"

"It's okay, Bryce." Bartan gave him a small kiss. "It's okay." A deep breath from him. "You can't know these things right off the bat. You can't predict the future. Blaming yourself does not help-"

"You could..." Another heavy breath from the earth dragon. "When I first met you-"

"After countless trial and error, yes. Life isn't like that. This life isn't like that." Those golden eyes glanced away, but were pulled back. "Bryce... You're going to lose me. And I'm going to lose you. That is truism." His heart sank. "There is nothing you can do about that, it's reality. But that's why our time here

and now is so precious. It's a weird concept when you think about it, but this needs to happen in order to keep everything running." A deep exhale as a paw stroked between those yellow discs. "You have me now, draggy. You always have me now. Stop worrying about the future and what it holds. Focus on what you have. Focus on what is needed, okay?" Another exhale, and he nodded. Hugging the furball once again tightly. "Now, I have a client to tend to that I can't cancel on. Remy should be home tonight, do you want to call him to stay with you?"

"...Yes." A slow nod from the white one as he reached for the phone. "Bear?"

"Mmm?"

"How did you do it...? How the hell were you able to make those choices I forced on you?"

"You mean back then?" A slow nod. "...I didn't. It honestly didn't feel like a choice, whereas there was only one answer." The dragon just held him tighter. "It felt like an illusion at first, like it didn't matter what my actions meant. Things were always going to be harsh, they were always going to be some loss... I just had to protect those who I cared about most." A slow nod was felt from that scarred muzzle.

"What do I do...?" Those brown eyes looked at him. "To make up to him for this?"

"It wasn't your fault, Bryce."

"I... Know. But he was just trying to help someone... Someone he didn't even know." A heavy breath from the chief. "Harrak's guilty, yes. But does he really deserve to be punished for this? Like you said during Anna's trial...?" A deep breath from the bear, and he held the drake for a bit before starting the call.

"What do you want to do?"