

## On Dealing With Dragons – A Cautionary Tale

“Back so soon?” The soft, silver glow of the speaker’s eyes glinted from deeper in the massive cavern’s darkness than the torchlight could reach. “Did you miss my company, perhaps?”

Flaming torch in one webbed paw and spear held shakily in the other, an otter grit his teeth together in anger. His leathers were covered in the grime and muck of a journey hastily undertaken. He’d hurried. “You knew I’d be back, Eigil!” he shouted at the figure in the dark.

A deep, bass rumble of a laugh echoed from the direction of those silver eyes as they drew closer to the ground. The sound alone was enough to shake the cavern’s stony walls. “I had suspected. Why do you not bear my gift, Alver? You worked *so* hard for it. Is your wish to hurt my feelings?”

Another snort of laughter sent a roll of short-lived flame up from the back of the cave. It illuminated the face of a massive dragon, scales white as snow and teeth bared in an armor-rendering grin. When the flames died away, all that was left was the glow of Eigil’s eyes as they zeroed in on the otter’s spear. “Or is your wish to hurt more than just my feelings... hmm?”

“Do you have *any* idea what you have done?” snarled the otter as he started forward again. Alver squeezed the spear tighter, partly to ready it for battle and partly to keep it steady in his own trembling grip. “Do you know what you’ve cost me? You and your *gift*?”

There was a rush of air from further down the cavern as the great dragon swept forward, propelled by a push from his wings. He slipped into the light with all the grace befitting such an ancient and powerful creature, head held aloft as he crept slowly around Alver. His eyes flashed in the firelight as he gave another toothy smile. “I must admit that I do not know,” he replied. Flame licked around his nostrils as his grin broadened.

Alver struck. It was a rash throw of the spear; a reaction to the taunting smile on the dragon’s muzzle. He experienced a split-second of hope as it left his paw cleanly, followed by the barest thrill of momentary delight as it soared through the air.

The moment passed as the dragon’s tail flicked up and across the spear’s path. It shattered the spear into a thousand pieces well before it could impact his body. The otter’s hope was similarly shattered as the spear exploded, and his eyes widened as Eigil swooped in on him.

A gust of wind kicked up from the dragon’s wings knocked him flat on his back, and when Alver looked up again it was right into Eigil’s glowing, glowering gaze. Massive legs planted huge foreclaws on the ground to either side of the otter as he leaned in close enough to taste the fear that boiled off the smaller creature. “However,” he continued as his tail slithered out to coil around a surprised Alver’s body, “I would *very* much like you to explain it to me...”

*Two weeks earlier...*

It was all for her. That was what Alver had kept reminding himself.

Three months. Three long, painful, frustrating months away from town. No friends or family. No company. Scraping by, establishing camp alone and breaking it by dawn, only to do the same thing the next night... it was getting old. The otter had to keep reminding himself of why he was out there. It was all for her.

Myrilla. Light of his life. Fire of his heart. She wasn’t the most beautiful female of the town, though to Alver there was no other. She wasn’t the most well-connected or wealthy, but Alver cared not a bit for either of those things. She was, in fact, the rough-and-tumble eldest daughter of Kornel; the town’s finest hunter. She was spirited and brave, strong and capable, and one of the most respectable individuals he’d ever had the pleasure to lay eyes on.

But what chance did he, a simple fisherman, have with a truly lovely lady such as she? None. Not when her father announced that only a hunter as great as he would be permitted to take his daughter. He had no experience. He had no training. He had no idea.

He’d left right away.

Three months in and Alver was no closer to bringing back a trophy that would be worthy of her father. His brothers had continued to work in his absence, though he knew that they would berate him when he returned. His parents would chastise him for chasing game, rather than sticking to what his family had always done. They’d be right. He was no hunter.

It wouldn’t matter, though. He had a plan. Three months had brought him to desperation. He *would*

bring back a prize that would win Myrilla's affections – something truly worthy of such a wondrous female – and all would be forgiven. There were all sorts of warnings and tales that cautioned against it, but Alver cast them from his mind. He was desperate, and in love. Only one person could help him, one way or another.

And that was why, torch in one paw and appropriated fishing spear in the other, he'd walked the hills beyond his people's land and entered the lair of the mighty dragon Eigil.

The whole town knew about the great dragon that dwelled nearby. He kept much to himself, and as a result the town left well enough alone. They knew well the power at his command, and more importantly they knew better than to challenge him.

Every now and again, some upstart adventuring party from some far off kingdom would be summoned by word of his vast hoard of gold and jewels, or his magical prowess and arcane trinkets, or the mythical properties ascribed to dragon scale and flesh. They would learn all they could of him in Alver's hometown before they confronted him in his lair.

Each time they were swiftly sent back where they came from. Often they returned in more pieces than they left, though the majority *were* at least able to return. It was unusual mercy for a dragon, but that mercy was what Alver was counting on. The otter needed Eigil to at least hear him out.

He crept through the dark of the caverns Eigil called home, alert and watchful for traps or monstrous creatures. The complete and total lack of either set the otter ill at ease. The deeper he ventured, the more wary he became. Was the dragon simply this careless? Did he believe he had nothing to fear from any other creature? Was he *right* to fear nothing?

Then his torch had gone out; smothered in a gust of cool, dank wind. The sound Alver had been made could have been unfavorably compared to a squeak.

He'd fumbled with flint and steel for a moment in a desperate attempt to light it again, when a light bloomed in the dark. From over his shoulder shot a thin tendril of flame that reignited the torch, but Alver had been so surprised that he'd dropped it to the floor. He spun around to find the source of the flame, and his eyes had gone wide.

That was when he first laid eyes on Eigil. The dragon's head had been craned down on level with his own, for if he'd straightened up his horns might have grazed the ceiling far above. His scales shone in the torchlight and his eyes sparkled with their own luminescence. His wings were spread wide as he sat back on his haunches. His tail curled beneath him as he lifted his head and smiled. "Are you brave," he asked as Alver scabbled back from him, "or mad to come here, I wonder?"

Alver had gulped as he gripped his spear a little tighter. When he remained silent, Eigil lifted his head and cocked it slightly to the side. The dragon's eyes scanned through the dark before they settled on the otter again. "You come alone, too. Interesting. Do you feel no fear?" Eigil chuckled quietly to himself as he slid forward. His body seemed far more serpentine as he curled himself slowly around the spear-wielding otter. How much larger than Alver was he? Three times as big? Four? Six? More?

It took a moment for Alver to force moisture into his muzzle. "M... my n-name is Alver," he stammered as he followed the dragon's face as best he could. Eigil moved like liquid as his massive body encircled the much smaller otter's. "I'm... I'm, ah... I need your help."

Both of Eigil's eyeridges lifted in polite surprise as he brought his head down right in front of Alver's. "My help?" he echoed with a wide grin. The dragon's scales rippled down his body from head to tailtip as his eyes raked over the otter. "How quaint... most who come seeking me come in search of my life, or my treasures. What help do you require, little Alver?"

The soft glow of the dragon's eyes were almost hypnotic. It took Alver a moment to respond, and he was only able to after he broke the dragon's stare. "My love is... out of reach," he replied as he stared at the floor. "In order to win the right to marry her, I must hunt prey worthy of her father." He gulped again as he felt Eigil's body draw closer in against him. "I... am no hunter."

"This is clear," Eigil agreed with another quiet, rumbling chuckle. "I do not fear you, little otter. If you intend to bring me back as a prize for your beloved--"

"No, nothing like that!" Alver hurriedly interrupted. His eyes went wide as he glanced up. There was only the barest hint of irritation on the dragon's face, and Alver dropped his gaze again before he further offended the creature. "Respectfully, great one, that would be suicide."

The dragon's rumble of approval was enough to force a sigh of relief out of Alver. "I come asking your help. I need to bring back a prize worthy of a great hunter, and I... I don't even know what I'm doing." He squeezed his eyes shut. "Please, great dragon... I beg your assistance."

Silence reigned in the cavern for a moment. It broke with another strong gust of wind, and once more Alver found himself flattened against the ground by the force of it. He grunted as he hit the ground, though his

torch was sheltered from the blast by his body. It shone on, and when he looked up and around the dragon was gone again.

“You ask me to help you win your love,” came Egil’s voice from deeper in the cave. “You know that your challenge is to hunt for her father’s ideals of honor, and you still wish to bring the power of a dragon to bear on your side?” He snorted, and as Alver looked harder he could see the shake of Egil’s head in the sway of his glowing eyes. “You have nothing to offer me that would entice me to assist you, were I even inclined to intervene in this ridiculous farce.”

“No, please,” Alver began, as he scrambled to upright again. He reached for his torch and spear, but hesitated a moment. In the end he only grabbed the torch and straightened up. “Master dragon, I will do anything. I cannot do this alone... I cannot prove myself to her father. I need only a chance to prove myself to him, and I *know* she would see me as someone willing to do anything for her!”

“You are willing to cheat for her,” Egil corrected with a toothy smirk. Those teeth shone in the light as Alver moved closer. “You are willing to lie and deceive her in the name of winning her affection. Your love is false.”

“My love is *true!*” Alver shouted back with a shake of his head. “And I will do anything and everything I must in order to prove to her that she *is* my everything!”

Egil chuckled again as he lay his forelegs down and rested his head atop them. “And you are so blinded by your ‘love’ that you are incapable of seeing the contradiction there. You amuse me, little Alver. I am quite enjoying our discussion.” His smile only grew wider still as the otter’s expression turned briefly to anger. “You think I mock you.”

“I think you don’t understand what love is,” Alver shouted back. For a brief, terrifying moment he wondered if he’d been too defiant.

But the dragon didn’t look offended in the slightest. In fact, he only looked more amused. His eyes were sharper, and there was a glint of something else behind them; something *interested*. “Dragons view love in a very different way to *otters*, I assure you. Certainly we share some very physical characteristics that will imminently be of particularly important note, but the concept of your love is very foreign to us, yes.” He lifted his head slightly. That grin was still stuck to his muzzle. “Your contradiction interests and amuses me. I will aid you.”

The anger vanished from Alver’s features immediately. First it was briefly replaced by joy, followed by a considerably longer period of skepticism. That stuck. “Why the change of heart?” he dared to ask.

“I have settled on something I may be offered in trade.” The dragon rose from where he lay and backed once more into the shadows. Even the glow of his eyes vanished. “You seek proof that you have slain a great creature to impress your love, and you will do anything for it. I have something here that may well do just what you wish. I wish a proof of concept.”

Skepticism turned into suspicion. A moment’s fear gripped Alver, and he glanced back the way he’d come. It would take him ten minutes at best to sprint away from the dragon and back into the light of day. Would he make it? He wasn’t sure he wanted to find out. “And what is this proof of concept you want in exchange?” he asked after he steeled himself and turned back again.

“I wish to see if you *will* do anything for your love,” came the dragon’s voice. It emerged from behind Alver as he turned back around, and the otter jumped as he came face to face with Egil. “You are a strange creature, little Alver. Brave enough to come before me, but timid as a mouse. Sure of yourself, and blind to your own desires. You are indeed an interesting subject.”

Alver took a deep breath and held it as he drew himself up tall. “I don’t care if I amuse or impress you,” he said with all the strength he could muster. “I *will* do anything for my love. I swear it.”

When Egil’s smiling face lifted away from him, Alver was left to stare under the dragon’s body. His jaw dropped at the sight. There rested a length of flesh almost as large as the otter himself. Numerous firm ridges pulsed slowly, in time with the great dragon’s heartbeat. The air around Alver became thicker and hotter as he stared at that slick length of pinkish-red flesh, glistening in the torchlight. “I... but... that’s...” was all he could manage.

“I did say that we shared several physical characteristics, did I not?” Egil smirked as he reached forward with a foreleg and gently tapped Alver’s back to push the otter closer to his malehood. “I presume your people still view such delights shared as taboo when not with the one you have married? This taboo will be broken if you wish me to aid you in winning your love.”

Alver’s head shook slowly side to side as he tried to back away, but the foreleg pressed down his back kept him from retreating. “This is insanity,” he declared after a moment. He felt his heart rate quicken as he finally tore his eyes from the dragon’s length. “You cannot possibly expect that... that we could... could...”

He gestured wildly with his paws. “You know!”

“Such matters are for *me* to attend to, not you,” Eigil replied with a waggle of his hips. It set his shaft swaying side to side, and managed to shake a large drop of pre to the cavern floor. “If you wish my assistance, this is my price and these are my terms. Your body will be mine until I release you. Serve me and service me well – violate your beliefs for me as you ask me to violate your female’s honor and integrity on your behalf – and I will give you proof so mighty a hunt that none will question your ability as a hunter.”

As he spoke, the ridges of his malehood flared. The scent was overwhelming; a humid heat that almost washed over Alver in waves. It didn’t make him choke or gag as he might have expected. Instead it suffused him with a heat like the summer sun, and it rushed sensation to his firming shaft in spite of his trepidation. That he looked on the dragon’s malehood and even *considered* the offer was madness in and of itself.

His mantra flashed back into his mind, though. It reminded him who he had spent three months alone in the wilds for. It reminded him of why he’d come to Eigil in the first place. He was doing it for her. Everything he’d done was for her. And as he reached out his paw to gently rub against the side of the dragon’s length, he sighed. This, too, would be for her. “I... agree to your terms, Eigil,” he sighed.

“Then you are mine until I release you from my service,” Eigil replied. His foreleg lifted up and freed Alver to move again, though he hunched forward to bring his shaft more firmly against the otter’s paw. “Now let us see if I have made a fair bargain. Serve, and show me your conviction.”

Those ridges flared again under the otter’s touch as he brought his second paw up and around. Alver glanced up at Eigil’s face as he began to rub and stroke as best he could along that sensitive flesh. The dragon didn’t need to give any further instruction. Alver’s gentle touch was enough subservience for the moment. It worked up and down as much of the dragon’s malehood as he could reach, though that was nowhere near its full length.

The deep growl that came from Eigil jerked Alver’s head up, but the sound was not one of disapproval. Quite the opposite; the dragon’s eyes were closed and his head was tilted back. If anything, the long, smooth strokes of Alver’s webbed paws were placating enough... for the moment. The otter wasn’t so certain that he wanted to know exactly how else Eigil wished him to ‘serve.’

And yet, as his paws grew slippery with the dragon’s pre, he couldn’t help but notice the straining of his own malehood. Wrong and disgusting as his service was, Alver’s length was hard and his heart was pounding in his chest. Somehow, some part of him was enjoying his service.

He tried to put it out of his mind as best he could as he continued his efforts. The otter’s focus shifted fully to the massive length of flesh against his paws. His fingers squeezed at Eigil’s ridges as he massaged up and down along the dragon’s malehood, and Alver closed his eyes as he took a deep, slow breath to try and calm himself down.

Another groan from above him heralded the flex of the dragon’s shaft. It twitched and splattered the ground beneath the otter with a jet of hot pre-seed. It took all of Alver’s control not to jerk back as he squeezed gently with his paws. It had felt like the dragon’s length was rippling for a moment.

As he opened his eyes again, he found them wide with surprise. Eigil’s shaft *had* rippled, along with the rest of him. The whole dragon’s body was a twitching, writhing thing as it began to shrink. However large his natural size was, each second that passed saw the dragon grow smaller and smaller. Alver stepped back and released Eigil’s malehood as he watched the dragon shift himself smaller, and smaller, and smaller.

When he was done, Eigil was still considerably larger than Alver by at least two times. His shaft was shrunk proportionately, and Alver eyed it warily as Eigil gave him a thin little smile. “I told you it was my matter to attend to,” he reminded the otter as he sat himself down on his haunches and gestured a foreclaw toward himself. “You will resume your service, little Alver. This time with your muzzle.”

For the briefest moment, Alver’s eyes glanced to the side where his spear lay. He’d barely taken in its distance and determined it too far to reach before a swipe of the dragon’s tail swept it away. The spear clattered across the cavern floor and into the darkness as Alver’s gaze shot up to the shaking head of the dragon. “If you do not know your spear from your muzzle, I have made a poor bargain indeed.”

It was with a sour expression that Alver crept closer to Eigil. He shifted down to his paws and knees as he shuffled closer to that still-disturbingly-large length of flesh. When the otter was close enough to almost touch it with his nose, he took another glance up at Eigil’s face. The dragon stared expectantly back. Was it boredom on his features, or impatience? Neither was something Alver wanted to chance. He took a breath, swallowed his pride and prepared to swallow something else.

The first touch of his tongue to the tip of Eigil’s shaft was electric. Scent and taste mingled in Alver’s muzzle in a way he’d never experienced before. Some part of his mind cared that this might have been one of the reasons dragon hunters sought draconic flesh and scale. The greater whole however was consumed by the

sensations, and Alver found his eyes wide as he sank his muzzle down and around Eigil's tip.

His mantra stopped really meaning anything to him. What mattered in those immediate moments was the texture of the dragon's malehood as he dragged his tongue along it. Eigil's tapered tip was explored in full as Alver's lips drifted lower and lower. It was almost as much as he could take to completely envelop the head of the dragon's shaft in his mouth, but that was enough of a strain for his jaw. It was enough even, if he dared admit it to himself, to *enjoy*.

The dragon's enjoyment was clear. His shaft continued to pulse with that slow heartbeat, quickened slightly by his shrunken body and the eager ministrations of the otter between his hind legs. Pre continued to drool out of his tip, and he gave a wide smile as Alver swallowed it down as quickly as it came.

That he was exactly where Eigil wanted him was of no care to Alver at all. The otter's lips tingled as they worked up and down around as much of the dragon's malehood as he could realistically take. He curled his tongue up and around the underside of Eigil's tip as both of his paws came up again to stroke and rub along the length that he could not reach with his muzzle. His reward was another little spurt of Eigil's fluids right down his throat. The sound he made might have been a croon, but the otter was too busy to notice and too pleased to care.

Until he felt Eigil's foreclaws carefully shred his breeches to rags and spread his cheeks wide, Alver'd had no idea that the dragon had leaned down over him. He had been too occupied with his service to notice the dragon's motions. He hadn't even noticed the near-painful strain of his own malehood as he worked his tongue and lips up and down Eigil's shaft. But when he felt the dragon's tongue worm down beneath his tail and spread him open, he developed a very good idea of where Eigil thought things were headed.

Reality set in and overcame for a moment the satisfaction that the dragon had visited upon Alver. He pulled up and off Eigil's tip with a wet *pop* and, after a moment to allow his jaw to set itself into a more comfortable position again, the otter opened his muzzle to speak. A wriggle of Eigil's tongue robbed him of his words though, and all Alver could manage was a strained moan of pleasure. His ruined breeches slipped off his footpaws as he underwent a full-body tremble.

On some level, Alver knew what Eigil was working toward. Each delightful squirm of the dragon's tongue within his body was preparation for that monster before his face. In spite of that and all the fear it should have brought, Alver could only feel a tingle of needful anticipation. When had concern changed into want? Whether it was the dragon's nature, his magic or some other factor wasn't something Alver could pin down. The transmutation had been seamless.

And when Eigil turned him about with a gentle push of a foreleg, Alver *himself* was the only thing that could be pinned down. Eigil's tongue had never left his backside, swiping down between his cheeks and teasing his spread, slick hole even as the otter was maneuvered into position. The dragon had even chuckled to himself when he'd seen Alver curl his tail up and out of the way, rump raised and bared for his master. Alver hadn't seen the dragon move up behind him to mount, but he shivered with his want for it.

When the otter felt the tip of the dragon's shaft against his backside, there was that same tingle of pleasure he'd felt when he'd given his first lick. It was a jolt that woke him completely and alerted him to what was about to happen. There was none of the trepidation that he'd had when he'd given himself into the dragon's service. There was none of the fear that maybe Eigil was still too big to make it work.

The dragon pushed forward, the tingle spread outward and inward. Pre-soaked shaft tip and tongue-teased tailring met only briefly before Eigil's hips twitched and sank the first few inches down into Alver's body. There was a moment's pain as muscles, unused to such an intrusion, closed down tight around the head of the dragon's shaft. Alver arched his back and cried out as his legs shook. For a moment, the part of him that wanted the dragon to mount him was disappointed. He was still just too big.

Eigil's shaft pulsed again though, the pain was washed away with a surge of the dragon's pre. It ran deep into the otter's rump, soothing and warming in a way that Alver couldn't have imagined. His cries turned into moans as he bore back slowly, gradually straining himself further and further around the dragon's shaft. All his concerns were washed away with that spurt, replaced with the want to service that length driving down into his body.

Finally, with half of Eigil's malehood buried inside his rump and no room left for it to occupy, Alver sighed with a mixture of relief and pride. The otter wriggled his hips from side to side as Eigil shifted above and behind him. The dragon's quiet chuckle reached his ears and perked his head up as he felt strained muscles twitch around his master's length.

He felt each ridge flare inside him as Eigil began to draw his hips back. They trembled as they tugged the otter back with the motion, but the dragon planted a firm, gentle foreclaw on Alver's back to keep him in place. When only Eigil's tip remained tucked inside the heat of Alver's body and the otter was left to whimper

at the empty feeling left in the wake of being so full, the dragon slid forward again.

It was slower than a part of Alver expected, but the whole of the otter was left to luxuriate in the sensations that washed over him. The dragon's hips pumped with the sureness and determination of the tides. In and out of Alver he washed, with whole minutes passing slowly between the waves. There was a care there in the dragon's motions; whether to protect him from Eigil's size or out of appreciation, Alver didn't much mind which. Alver's drooling malehood was proof enough of his enjoyment, neglected though it was.

All that mattered to him was the near silence of the dragon above. His mind was absent his mantra. He couldn't remember what had drawn him to Eigil's lair in as the dragon claimed his body. It didn't compare to the sensations of the present. It couldn't match the smooth sawing of the dragon's hips as they worked those ridges so deliciously against his inner walls. Each thrust saw them flare and pulse with Eigil's satisfaction, surging pleasure through Alver's body from some unknown place within. He couldn't imagine anything else. His mind was blown away.

Alver had thought, at first, that Eigil would be unable to push any more of his length inside. Part of him had hoped for more, even as it was satisfied with what he had. But as the dragon's hips began to thrust with greater and greater vigor, Alver felt himself spread wider and deeper than he'd dare anticipate. The dragon's care with his smaller body, the slick pre that continued to leak into Alver's rump and perhaps more of the dragon's magic were all potentially to blame. Which of them was specifically to blame didn't matter. Inch after inch slipped in as Eigil's thrusts grew more wanting.

The otter's whole body began to tingle, as if he were on the edge of his control. He felt his malehood twitch, but his climax was just out of reach. Something held it back, even as he squirmed around the foreclaw that pinned him. He strained back against Eigil's thrusts as best he could, even as the dragon brought more force and eagerness to bear in his mating. The silence had turned into growls at some point, but that too was beyond Alver's ability to care about.

Whatever had helped spread Alver's body further around the dragon's malehood, there was only so much he could take. The otter eased a paw to his front, able to feel a bulge in his belly where his master's shaft invaded him. He groaned as he rubbed that bulge each time it eased into him. Eigil's thrusts remained even and smooth; despite his growing eagerness, he never bucked too hard or deep, or pushed down on the otter too firmly.

Above Alver, the growls turned to lustful pants and huffs for breath. Flame licked from the corner of Eigil's muzzle as he bore down as hard as he dared on the otter's backside. His ridges flared as he grit his teeth, and the dragon arched his back and slid his malehood as deep inside Alver as it could reach.

The feel of Eigil's seed as it rushed down and into his body was the key that unlocked the otter's own climax. The tingling pleasure that had held him back intensified the moment Eigil began to fill him, and Alver felt as though his whole body was about to explode even as his shaft twitched and erupted.

For each spurt that drained through his length and across the ground, a much more massive one was fired deeper inside his body than he had imagined possible. His eyes rolled back in his head as he allowed the waves to break over him, and Alver's entire body shook under Eigil's foreclaw as he surrendered to the dragon's onslaught. Sensation faded from his body as he felt his consciousness slip away in a blissful haze...

When he opened his eyes again, Alver was on his back. His rump was filled with a soreness that was something between physical pain and a deep ache. The cavern was lit with motes of white light that danced through the stalagmites and shone brighter than any torch. Beside him were his breeches, unmarked and neatly repaired. His torch and spear were set beside them, as was a small, brown sack.

"I think you will find this sufficient."

The otter craned his head to stare deeper into the cave. There was Eigil, returned to his normal size again. His face was expressionless as he sat upon a carefully carved bed of stone, and he nodded toward Alver's effects. "I took the liberty of repairing the damage I had done during our... exchange. You performed better than I anticipated. The act was most pleasing."

The soreness in his rump made Alver wince. The context didn't help. "I'm glad you enjoyed yourself," he muttered as he sat up and hurriedly pulled his breeches on. The soreness didn't fade, but his hurried efforts didn't exacerbate matters as badly as he might have expected.

"As did you. Perhaps you have a calling as a servant, rather than a hunter." The dragon smirked as Alver tossed him a dirty look. "Oh, go on. Do try to convince yourself that you did not find *something* to enjoy

about our little transaction.” He nodded again at the sack. “And if you find no solace in your inability to fool yourself, perhaps you will find some at the bottom of *that*.”

Eigil’s perceptiveness was bordering on unnerving, and Alver found himself glancing at the sack as much to escape the dragon’s glowing gaze as it was to hide his face. He could remember how good it had felt to be under Eigil. It had been better than such an unseemly thing should have been. “What’s in there?” he asked as he tugged the sack toward himself.

The dragon snorted quietly to himself. “What you worked so hard to earn,” he replied with a flutter of his wings.

Alver frowned as he untied the lip of the sack and peered inside. His frown deepened for a moment before understanding dawned and his eyes widened. He tore his gaze from his reward to stare disbelievingly at Eigil. “No. No, it can’t be. Are those-”

“They are,” the dragon replied with a nod.

In a heartbeat, Alver shoved the sack away. He pushed it a little further with a footpaw. “I can’t,” he said with a shake of his head. “No way. No one would ever believe me.”

Eigil’s wings fluttered again. “They will if you speak the right words to convince them,” he suggested as he straightened up. “You sought a prize that would make your paramour’s father envious of your skill as a hunter. This is just such a prize, as agreed. Your service until I release you, for this.”

Alver eyed the sack warily. “They would never believe me,” he repeated, even as he began to crawl back over to it. There was no chance he could get away with such a ruse... could he?

“They will believe you, little otter, for that was part of our deal. I was to give you that which would earn the respect of your love’s father.” Eigil’s eyes sparkled in the light as he watched Alver tie the sack up again. “If you follow my instructions, they will believe your ruse completely.”

He was doing it for her. That was his mantra. He’d almost forgotten it in the wake of earning the dragon’s prize, but it crashed back into Alver’s mind in full force. Eigil was right. What he’d earned would certainly win him Myrilla’s affections and the respect of her father. The otter nodded once and tried not to let his jubilation show. Everything was going to work out, after all!

Eigil smiled broadly as he lay his head down and stared at the otter. “Very well, little Alver. Know you will be questioned on your deeds. Know they will scrutinize you. Know that the right words will convince them. Tell them thusly...”

### *One week earlier...*

But things had *not* gone as smoothly as he’d expected.

He’d been given some strange looks as he walked back into town with his head held high, of course. No one had expected to see Alver again, after he’d been gone for so long. More than a few of the people who had known him had thought he’d perished. But to return, sack over his shoulder bulging with only the gods knew what? It garnered no small amount of attention.

What seemed like half the town followed him as he headed to Myrilla’s home. He’d confidently strode right up to their front door and beat upon it with a raised fist. It had been hard to keep the smile from his face. He’d done it. He’d sacrificed much, but he’d done it. There was no way he’d be denied. He set his spear down against the wall of her home and knocked again.

She answered the door herself. Tall, slender and toned from the hunts she accompanied her father on, with eyes as cool as the ocean’s blue and the deepest brown fur he’d seen on any otter... Seeing her again made everything he’d been through worthwhile. Alver almost felt his heart leap up through his throat and steal his words just at the sight of her face. He’d managed to shoulder the sack with a confident smile as he’d told her, “I am here for you, my love.”

Her confusion and surprise had been evident as she invited him in and called to summon her father. That was alright by Alver. Even if she’d not expected much of him, what he’d secured would be more than enough to prove his love for her. Even when Kornel came into the room demanding to know what was happening, his confidence didn’t falter. He had done it. He knew he had.

He’d taken them to the nearest table and upended the sack. A collection of bones, polished and cleaned clattered out from the sack across the surface. Alver had stood back and folded his arms expectantly as he watched Kornel’s face. At first, he’d been as confused as his daughter. Then he realized what they were. Confusion turned to disbelief. Alver knew he’d done it.

But then Kornel's disbelief turned into fear. The brute of an otter snatched up one of the rib bones from the table and brandished it at Alver. "This is *dragon*," he'd growled at the little fisherman.

Confused then himself, Alver nodded. Eigil had told him exactly what to say. "Yes. A juvenile male I came across; one of Eigil's clutch. He attacked me, and I struck him down." He puffed up his chest as he tried to affect the strong-hunter-male aura he'd had when he came in.

None of his words had had the intended effect, though. Horror colored the hunter's face as he backed away from the table. "Pick up your trophies now, boy," he growled harshly. Behind him, Myrilla fled deeper into the house. "Take them and leave, before you doom us all."

Alver's confusion continued to grow. He started toward the bones, but stopped himself before he could pick any up. "You demanded a worthy prize for the heart of your daughter!" he protested as he straightened up again. "I slew a dragon for her! One of Eigil's own clutch!"

His eyes widened when he saw Kornel draw a knife from his belt and raise it. "And what d'you think happens when *Eigil* finds out you murdered one of his children?" he all but shouted. He rounded the table with the knife raised, and Alver backed away with raised paws as the hunter advanced. "He will *destroy* you, boy! You, and anyone unlucky enough to be anywhere near you!"

Forced back toward the door, Alver shook his head frantically as he kept his eyes locked on the knife. This wasn't how it was meant to go at all! "No, no! No, you don't understand!"

"You can leave this place now!" roared Kornel as he reached out with his free paw to shove Alver back out the door. "Before you get us all killed! If you value my daughter's *life*, you'll leave!" His eyes narrowed as he gave a threatening slice of the knife through the air. "And if you *stay*, I'll kill you myself and take you back as an offering to beg Eigil's forgiveness. Maybe he won't take Myrilla for being your reason for this madness!"

There was fear in the hunter's eyes, but something more. Concern for his daughter, yes, but murder. The way he gripped that knife was more than enough of a tell for Alver. Myrilla's father was ready to kill him where he stood for placing the whole town in danger.

As he glanced back, he could see that word had already spread. More than a few of the townspeople looked back at him with disgust and fear. For generations they had stayed on Eigil's good side by not daring to attack the great dragon in the hills. They might not have known exactly what had happened yet, but the story would spread.

They would lynch him if he stayed. He'd be thrown out of the town at best, or executed as he'd been told and served up as an example at worst. He'd been played for a fool. Eigil had told Alver exactly what to tell Myrilla's father, and he'd trusted the dragon's word. He'd trusted the dragon's deal.

Anger all his own filled Alver as he snatched up his spear. He turned on a webbed footpaw and marched back away from Myrilla's home again. The people he'd grown up around – friends and family – parted around him like a stone in the river. Outcast. Banished on threat of murder.

"*All because of you!*" he roared at Eigil.

The dragon had sat patiently through the tale. He'd watched with lifted eyeridges as Alver had told him the whole story. He'd observed the otter's agitated behavior and rage as he recounted the deal that had cost him everything. "Yes," was Eigil's response.

The bluntness of it stunned Alver to momentary silence. "Is that all you can muster for what you've taken from me?" he growled back.

"Do you think yourself deserving of more?" Eigil asked as he lifted his head to better regard the otter. "Consider. You approached me with nothing. You came seeking help but unwilling and unable to pay with anything of worth. That which you sought was deceitful and dishonorable. Do you deny this?"

Alver drew himself up straighter and met the dragon's stare for the first time since the story had begun. "Everything I did, I did for-"

"Love?" Eigil interrupted with another fiery snort. "From your account, I very much doubt it. Did you know much of this Myrilla?" His head tilted to the side as Alver frowned at him. "You hold her up as a shining example of a female of your species. Tell me of her. Tell me of her joys and sorrows. Tell me of the affection she shows you, and you her. Tell me of your *love*."

Alver opened his muzzle to reply, but it stuck there in silence as he fought to think. "She never noticed me!" he finally snapped back. "I have known her; adored her from afar for years, and she never, ever noticed me. I needed to prove myself, so that she could see me at last and know that I loved her." He thrust a single

finger at the dragon. “And you took that from me.”

To Alver’s growing anger, Eigil looked bored with the explanation. “If you’ll permit me to offer a counterpoint, that does not sound like love to me. It sounds to me as though you harbored this female an obsession that, pardon me for saying, placed you at my mercy.” His smile drew thin. “Any female that demands tribute for the right to mate sounds more draconic than... well, your kind.”

“Kornel demanded! And you promised me-”

“The proceeds of a great hunt,” Eigil finished for him, as the dragon’s boredom began to infect his tone. “The bones of a young drake who dared infringe on my territory to claim as one of my clutch. A prize worthy of her. I provided this to you.

“And *you*,” he continued as he thudded his tail down firmly behind Alver as the otter began to back away from him, “offered yourself in exchange. You would serve me in exchange for your worthy prize. Was this not our arrangement?”

Alver tore his eyes from the dragon’s tail and stared back up at Eigil’s grin. His gaze tracked down the dragon’s body where a familiar length of flesh began to slip free of the dragon’s slit. It summoned an equally familiar tingle in his loins as half-remembered pleasure tickled his mind. “No... no! You said I would serve you well and I would be able to return to her!” A twitch of the dragon’s tail swept his legs out from under him, and he hit the ground with a groan.

Eigil lifted a large foreclaw and pressed it down against the otter’s chest, just shy of hard enough to break through his leathers as he rolled onto his back. “If you recall, little otter, I said your body would be mine until I released you,” he corrected Alver as the otter whimpered under him. “I allowed you to return to your home to seek this female of yours, but I did not release you from my service. This is what you reap when you make an ill-conceived deal with a dragon.

“But fear not,” he added with a chuckle as he stepped up and over Alver. The scent of the dragon’s arousal once more filled his nostrils, and the otter could only whimper and shiver as it loomed over him. “You *will* be released when I am through with you, if you wish it so. Though perhaps, judging by our last encounter, you will find all the release you could ever need right here. Once one has experienced that pleasure a dragon brings... well, it is difficult to return to one’s previous life.” He nodded down to his shaft as pre began to leak from its tip. “Best get to it, little Alver. It, like you, is going nowhere any time soon.”

Alver gulped as he looked up at the titanic shaft that occupied his view. With no choice, he gave a resigned sigh and lifted his paws to stroke across the tip of Eigil’s malehood again. Each breath drew more of Eigil’s scent into his body. The otter leaned up and reluctantly – or so he told himself, at least – dragged his tongue up across the dragon’s leaking flesh. Trapped. Used. Enslaved. Betrayed.

It was a lie. His rage faded under the thick scent of the aroused dragon. The need to run itself fled from him. Being trapped didn’t seem so bad, as he drank of the dragon. The betrayal would see Eigil use him again, and again. And again, if he served well. The strain of the otter’s length in his breeches knew what it wanted. Maybe service wasn’t so bad, especially since he couldn’t return home.

The distant voice that told him to flee receded into the corners of Alver’s mind, pushed aside. Return home? Why would he want that? They’d chased him out, and besides which, he’d made a deal.

And as Eigil’s shaft pulsed between his lips, Alver could sense that the dragon was in desperate need of good service.