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DAGON'S RIDE

LYNN HAGEN

The
ManLove
Collection

 BRAC PACK 19

Brac Pack 19

Dagon's Ride

Taylor has spent his whole life listening to his mother viciously bash gay people, and his attraction to Dagon has him confused and ashamed.

Dagon is supportive in the wake of his mate's doubts and insecurities, and he tries hard to convince Taylor that love knows no boundaries. Dagon had hoped Taylor's older brother, Joshua, who's mated Dagon's brother Law, would be enough to convince Taylor to accept who he is, but Taylor still refuses to fully acknowledge his love for Dagon, and Dagon soon grows weary.

Meanwhile, Taylor's inner demon may be more tangible than anyone could have imagined, and the mates, risking their lives to help Taylor, take off on their most unbelievable adventure yet.

Note: Each book in Lynn Hagen's Brac Pack collection features a different romantic couple. Each title stands alone and can be read in any order. However, we recommend reading the series in sequential order.

Genre: Alternative (M/M or F/F), Paranormal,
Vampires/Werewolves

Length: 35,794 words

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MANLOVE**



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A SIREN PUBLISHING BOOK
IMPRINT: Everlasting Classic ManLove

DAGON'S RIDE
Copyright © 2011 by Lynn Hagen
E-book ISBN: 1-61034-666-1

First E-book Publication: July 2011

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DAGON'S RIDE

Brac Pack 19

LYNN HAGEN

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Chapter One

"I don't know why I agreed to let you live with Josh. I swear, if he turned you gay, I'll kill him," his mother ranted.

Taylor sat at the kitchen table staring at his mom. He couldn't believe he was back here. "You can't turn someone gay, Mom." *God, what rock did she live under?*

"It's his choice. Josh could choose not to be. *But no*, he had to get even with me for some reason." She tossed the dishtowel on the table and fisted her hands at her sides, glaring angrily at the wall.

Taylor laid his head on the table and began to bounce his forehead onto the tabletop. After the fight he went through to move in with his older brother Josh, he was back here again. What a nightmare. He had lasted four and a half torturous weeks. Wasn't that enough? Why couldn't he leave now instead of waiting the two days until his eighteenth birthday?

Except for the occasional running away and being brought back the same day, he had behaved pretty well. Shouldn't his sentence be reduced?

"If it has rubbed off on you, I'll hunt him down."

“You can’t catch gayness. You’re born that way.” He gritted his teeth. This was an impossible nightmare, and he desperately wanted to wake up.

“No, you are not. Go up to your room and unpack. We need to sit down and pray he hasn’t messed with your head. I’ll call Reverend Glass over and see...”

Taylor tuned her out. He shot up the stairs and went straight to his bedroom window. There was no way he was sticking around for an exorcism. He would be eighteen in a few days. He could make it on his own until then. It was better than smelling mothballs all of the time and watching his mom’s bric-a-bracs watch him. Taylor swore those porcelain cats’ eyes followed him, all eighty of them. And what was with all the dollies? He felt as though he lived in a fabric shop.

Taylor pushed the window open quietly, slid one leg out, found purchase, and then slid the rest of his body down onto the rooftop of the sunroom below. He didn’t care what his brother Josh said, or Josh’s boyfriend Law, not even Dagon, the man who made him feel all jumbled inside. He wasn’t staying here.

His mom’s constant nagging, belittling, and self-righteousness were enough to drive anyone up the wall.

Taylor slid down the roof, turned onto his belly, and then jumped down. There was one place he knew he could hide out, at his best friend Tater’s house.

His mom didn’t know about Tater. No way in hell he was going to tell her about him either. She would only know where to find him if she did.

The guy was the coolest to hang around with, and they always had a good time. Tater had told Taylor that he had a place to stay if he ever needed one, and well, he needed one.

Taylor ran, which turned into a jog, and finally he walked until he arrived at the big red barn behind Tater’s house. He slipped in and found his friend in his usual spot.

“Hey,” he mumbled as he closed the barn door behind him.

Tater looked up from the many pieces of his motorcycle parts strewn about and smiled. "Did Josh just drop you off?" His friend wiped his hands on a shop rag and then stood to greet him. Tater bumped shoulders with Taylor, pointing to a crate. "Have a seat."

"No, Josh didn't drop me off. My mom made me move back in with her." Taylor grabbed the crate and flipped it upside down, sitting on the hard plastic. He shuffled his sneakers on the dirt floor, wishing his two-day sentence was up.

Tater sucked air in through his teeth and pulled his face back as if in pain. "Sorry to hear that. Fuck, man, that sucks."

"You have no idea. Can I stay here?"

"Well, I'm an adult now. I have to be responsible. So you can't stay in my room, but you can sleep up in the loft." Tater pointed over his shoulder. "Course, you can't be letting my parents know you're here."

"You just turned eighteen. Some adult you are. I won't let them know, thanks." A few days of sleeping in a loft filled with hay was better than sleeping under the same roof as Mommy Weirdest—as Josh referred to her.

Taylor picked up a wrench, swinging it around his index finger as he watched Tater work. "Have you ever ridden that thing? Every time I see it, it's in pieces."

"Once, but then I didn't like the way it sounded, so I tore it apart again."

Taylor yawned. It had been a long four and a half weeks filled with shifters, blue fairy men, and being forced back to the prison his mom called home. He was beat. It felt like the weeks were finally catching up to him now that he could actually relax. Two more days and all of this would be over. "I'm heading up to the loft, 'night."

"Night, I'll bring you something to eat in the morning." Tater wiped his hands off again and tossed the rag at the pile of parts. "I'm heading in."

Taylor climbed the ladder, trying to find the softest spot to sleep in. There didn't seem to be any. He lay down, thinking of a man with long wavy black hair, big green eyes, and the most incredible Spanish accent.

* * * *

Taylor came awake with a jolt, struggling against the hand clamped over his mouth. He pushed away from the bales of hay, trying his best to get his footing.

"Hold still," a voice warned softly.

Taylor knew that accent—Dagon. What in the hell was he doing here? He nodded, and the hand was removed.

He followed Dagon's eyes. The big biker man pointed down into the barn to show him that there was someone down there, and it looked as though they were searching for something. His eyes grew round when an extremely large wolf crept into the barn, sneaking up behind the searching man.

Dagon clasped a hand over Taylor's mouth again, stopping the scream that was about to emerge, when the wolf attacked the man. The large biker man turned Taylor into his chest, blocking his eyes from watching what was taking place down below, although Taylor could hear it all.

He heard snarling and hissing and what sounded like Tater's bike parts flying about. Taylor tried to turn his head to see, but Dagon wouldn't allow him. "You don't need to see this," the man whispered.

Taylor nodded, covering his ears with his hands. He didn't want to hear it either. What was going on down there? Never before had trouble followed him here. Tater's was always a place he considered his hidey-hole. Guess he didn't have that reprieve anymore, but at least it wasn't his mom who discovered it.

"Okay, you can look now." The hands eased up on his body, allowing him the option to retreat.

Taylor pulled back from Dagon, staring up at such big green eyes, eyes the color of emeralds. He ducked his head, unsure why he was gawking at the man.

"What happened?" he asked as he scooted further back. He wasn't gay, no matter what Josh was convinced of. But there was something about Dagon that drew him like a moth to a flame, or a psychotic man to meds. Yeah, that fit better because he was crazy for feeling this way.

"When you, Josh, and Melonee were taken, Melonee's scent clung to you. That was a vampire down there, lured to that very smell. Vampires are drawn to the elven scent."

"Oh great, I'm a magnet for vampires now. I knew Melonee was trouble the moment she opened her mouth." Taylor crawled over toward the ladder. He had to get out of here. He liked the idea of men changing into wolves—when Josh first told him he thought it was the coolest thing—but vampires were a whole different kettle of fish. They drank blood, something that made Taylor shiver with the grotesqueness of it.

"Slow down, Taylor." Dagon quickly came after him.

Taylor didn't want to stop. Besides the fact that he wanted to run for the hills because of his mom and vampires, Dagon confused the hell out of him.

He didn't know what to do with the feelings he had for the man. Any time he was near, Taylor's bells and whistles went off and his head swirled with thoughts he knew he shouldn't be having.

Even though he worshipped his brother Josh, being gay was wrong. It was drilled into his head by his mom and was stuck there now. He felt dirty for feeling this way, feeling like he wanted to crawl in Dagon's lap and purr, just wrong.

"It's not safe for you to be on your own. There may be more than one, and I'm not willing to chance that."

Taylor stopped dead in his tracks at those chilling words. He sat at the edge of the loft instead, swinging his legs and wondering why

Dagon's voice pulled at him. His breath caught when the big biker man sat down next to him. The urges were conflicting with who he thought he was, with what he was taught by his mom. Her voice was a constant in his head, telling him he was an abomination for wanting Dagon.

No, he didn't want him. Yes, he did. *Hell!* Taylor didn't know what to think.

"Why did you leave home this time?"

"I couldn't take my mom talking about Josh like that. It isn't right." Taylor would never tell anyone that he worshipped his older brother, but it made him mad as hell when someone talked about him or made fun of Josh.

He had heard it in school, how Josh's butt was too big or how he acted like a girl. He got into many fights defending his brother, and would do it again in a heartbeat. All this gayness and man-love confused the hell out of him, but Josh was in a class all of his own. Taylor never looked at him that way. He was just...Josh.

"You have to tune it out. I know that doesn't sound right, but having you wandering around isn't safe. I worry about you. It would hurt my heart if something happened to you." Dagon picked up a piece of hay, rolling it around between his fingers. Taylor was shocked at his confession.

Why would someone as big in stature, seeming to need no one, worry about him? It didn't make any sense to him. Now Taylor had something else confusing to think about.

"I don't want to be there," he confessed in a childlike voice, hating the fact that he sounded that way. He was a grown man and needed to sound like one.

"Then I'm sorry, but you have to go back."

The words tore at him, even though he knew them to be true. "I'll only leave again."

"No, *cachorro*. Now someone will be in the shadows guarding your house twenty-four-seven."

"What?" Taylor jumped up, glaring down at Dagon. "That isn't fair. You have no idea what it's like to live with her. Try it. I bet after a few hours you'll think cyanide poisoning is a better alternative." He paced back and forth with anger.

"I don't want to send you there. I'd rather have you with me so that I can protect you better, but we have no choice for the next few days."

"She doesn't have to know where I am. Josh could hide me." Hope sparked in him.

Dagon shook his head, and Taylor knew he was going to lose this argument. That little spark flickered and then died. "That wouldn't be fair to your mom. No matter how she is, not knowing where your child is, that is a parent's worst nightmare. I won't do that to her."

"Fine, side with her." Taylor turned around and climbed down the ladder, dropped to his feet, and walked away, ready to get the hell out of here.

He took a step back when Dagon's brother walked through the barn door. Tryck made him leery. The guy didn't have kind eyes like Dagon did. His were mistrustful. He watched Taylor walk by, no smile or greeting.

He could hear Dagon climbing down the ladder and catching up with him. "Taylor, I told you it wasn't safe," Dagon said as he caught Taylor by the arm and spun him around.

"I'd rather deal with vampires than my mom. What does that tell you?" He yanked his arm away, walking over to Dagon's bike. Okay, riding on the man's motorcycle was one thing he *did* like. It was fun as hell. A small part of him laughed with giddiness at the thought of getting to ride it again.

"Will you talk to me?"

Taylor shoved his hands in his front pockets, kicking at the dirt. "About what?"

"Not running off any more, about keeping yourself safe. Promise me you won't try to run again."

"I can't. If she starts her stuff, I'm outta there." Taylor watched as Dagon reached into the inside of his leather, pulling out a cell phone.

"I bought a brand new one for you and programmed in everyone in the Den's phone number. If she starts in on you or talking about Josh, go to your room and call me, or anyone else. Just don't leave the house." Dagon held the shiny black phone out to him.

Taylor took it. He didn't want Dagon to see how excited he was at having his very own. Dagon had tried to give him his own phone before coming back here, but at the time Taylor was too pissed off to take it.

This one was *his* though. *Cool*. It seemed trivial with everything going on, but Taylor wanted to play with it and see what all it had and could do. Maybe he could finally get on the internet. They didn't even have that in his stinking house.

"Come on. Let's get you home before you're discovered missing."

"She called a reverend over to make sure Josh didn't rub off on me," Taylor said to the phone, unable to look up at the gorgeous man. His thumb slid over the sleek casing, embarrassed at his mom's actions. Why couldn't he have a normal mom that baked cookies and drove them around to soccer practice when they were younger instead of what they had to deal with?

"Man, that's harsh. Just keep in mind that you have only a few days more of this, and then you can come live at the Den."

That was the only thing keeping Taylor sane at the moment, knowing he could live with Josh again soon and be around Dagon. Whatever these mixed-up feelings were, he knew being around this man excited him. The guy was fascinating to him and made him feel safe. Taylor didn't know what to think anymore.

He shrugged, playing it off. "I guess."

"Come on, *cachorro*, let's get you home."

Taylor climbed onto the back of Dagon's bike, watching Tryck get onto his. They rode down the dirt road, Taylor bouncing on the back of the bike. This was so much fun. He wanted Dagon to take him

on a long trip just so he could spend more time on the back of it. He felt a sense of freedom like no other when Dagon rode him around.

All too soon, they were back at his mom's. He would never refer to it as home. It didn't feel like a home should. He climbed off of Dagon's bike, wondering where the warden was.

"Go upstairs to your room. I'll take first watch." Dagon smiled at him, and Taylor's insides became all knotted up. Maybe it was just some kind of hero worship? The guy seemed to be everything he would want to be. Or it could be idolizing. He wasn't sure what it was, but the man stayed on his mind constantly since meeting him.

Taylor climbed in the sunroom roof, not wanting to explain to the warden why he was coming through the front door when he was supposed to be in his room, that and the fact he didn't want to be undemonized. He climbed back through his window, noticing his bedroom door open. So she had come to take him downstairs, not happening. He closed and locked it, and then he sprawled across his bed.

Taylor thought about Dagon being outside and watching his room. Why did that thrill him? He played with his new phone, debating on whether he should call his guard or not. Pulling the chair from his desk, Taylor set it by the open window and then kicked his feet up on the sill, staring into the night and trying to spot Dagon.

He jumped when his phone rang. Taylor hurriedly hit the send button before his mom heard it. "Hello?"

"Are you okay?"

Taylor looked out over the backyard but couldn't see the man. "No, I don't want to be here."

"I know."

Taylor pulled at the hole in the knee of his jeans, thinking that, since Dagon wasn't standing right in front of him, maybe he could ask some of the questions that were plaguing him.

"Dagon?"

"I'm listening."

Taylor's palms became moist at the low and rough voice. "Why is it every time I'm around you I feel... funny?"

"It's called a pull, *cachorro*."

"Pull?"

Dagon sighed deeply into the phone. "I'd rather tell you this in person."

"I'm a chicken in person." Taylor laughed.

"Really?" Dagon chuckled softly. "You don't seem the type."

Taylor shrugged, forgetting Dagon couldn't see him, or maybe he could. "What's the pull?"

"Fate seems to think you and I would be compatible."

"Like a gay couple?" Taylor squeaked.

"Or a team." He offered an alternative that Taylor was more comfortable with at the moment. He was still trying to work all of this out in his head. The word *team* was better in his opinion.

They sat there on the phone for a while, not saying anything, lost in their own thoughts. Taylor noticed how comfortable the silence was. He didn't feel any pressure to say anything. But a question did pop into his head. "Dagon?"

"Yes, *cachorro*?"

"Did fate say why?"

Dagon chuckled softly again. "No, but the pull is what tells us that fate has paired us together."

"Oh."

"Do not be frightened of it. I will give you time to adjust to it, to get used to the idea. Don't think that you only have a few days. Take all the time that you need."

"Thank you." It *had* felt like he was under a countdown. Taylor relaxed knowing Dagon was willing to wait. The idea of being with him didn't repulse him. That was the most confusing thought of all.

Josh's gayness is rubbing off on you. I told you it would. Taylor shuddered at his mom's voice in his head. Why couldn't he rid his mind of her mental criticism? He could probably sort his feelings out

a little better without her lectures constantly running through his mind every time he thought of Dagon.

"I'm not difficult. I know what it's like to be confused, to not know who you are. I've been there, questioned and examined it, unsure and sure at the same time."

It stunned Taylor that someone as fierce-looking as Dagon questioned himself. It made talking to him easier, made the wolf seem reachable. He once again tried to pinpoint Dagon's location but only saw shadows in the yard. The wolf was good.

"I just don't know what to think right now."

"Life is sometimes confusing. The forks in the road aren't always clear. Take your time, *cachorro*."

"Thank you." Once again they fell silent, the phone placed at his ear as Taylor thought of a hundred things and nothing at all. He closed his eyes when a warm summer breeze blew through his window. He wished he was riding on the back of Dagon's bike instead of being stuck in his old room.

"Can we go for a ride?"

"I see you like my bike." Dagon laughed. "We will have time for that as well."

"Kay."

Silence.

Taylor was really beginning to like the guy. He wasn't hard to get along with. Dagon was even willing to give Taylor the time he needed, and he was kind of nice-looking.

For a man.

Taylor didn't think it was only this *pull* that attracted him to the biker man. Dagon had a sense about him that made Taylor want to know him better, be around him all the time. He began to wonder if he really was gay and denying it because of his mom.

He felt himself nodding but couldn't bring himself to hang up. He liked Dagon's deep, accented voice. It was soothing. "How old are you?"

“Two hundred and ten.”

“Holy crap!” He sat up a little with the revelation.

Dagon snorted. “I’m young compared to some of the others. Maverick is almost four hundred.”

Taylor’s head was spinning. A wide grin spread across his face. “Did you used to shoot it out in the Old West?”

“At sundown.”

Taylor liked that. He closed his eyes once again, cradling the phone between his shoulder and his ear, listening to Dagon talk about what he had experienced over that last two centuries, his mate’s voice lulling him to sleep.

His last thought, before he dozed, was that he had thought of Dagon as his mate. Maybe he could get used to it after all.

* * * *

Taylor woke with a start, a hand on his shoulder. He looked up to see Melonee standing next to him with a smile on her face. She placed her index finger over his lips, indicating for him to be quiet.

He grabbed the cell phone that was stuck to his face from the summer’s humidity, seeing that the battery had died. Shoving it into his pocket, he stood, shimmering out with the little elf girl’s help.

“That was close. If you had said *anything*, Dagon would have heard. Dang Timber wolves and their hearing.”

“Where are we?” Taylor asked.

“In my bedroom. I figured you wanted to get busted out of jail, so I just thought of you, and voila, here we are.”

“So you took me from one wolf with exceptional hearing to a house full of them?”

Melonee looked miffed. “I hadn’t thought of that.”

Taylor kicked back on her bed, placing his hands behind his head. “It’s cool. I appreciated you bailing me out. So now what?”

"I hadn't thought of that either." She sat on the floor and crossed her legs. "I just thought it was unfair that you had to go somewhere you didn't want to be."

They both jumped when her door opened. Taylor relaxed when he saw it was only Tangee. "Been shimmering prisoners out again, little sister?"

"He shouldn't be forced to go somewhere he doesn't want to be."

Tangee held his hands up. "I wasn't saying anything about it." He dropped down on the bed and smiled down at her.

"Oh." She grinned.

"We can just kick it in here." Taylor smiled at his accomplices.

* * * *

Dagon stood up straight when he saw a low light in Taylor's room. He growled, knowing exactly what that damn light meant.

Melonee.

Those two had become fast friends and bickering partners since they met. Dagon crept over to the sun porch, climbing the sunroof and looking into his mate's room. No Taylor.

"Maverick." Dagon spoke into his cell phone that he pulled from his jacket as he sat on the roof. "Your kid has kidnapped my mate."

The Alpha chuckled. "Seems they've become fast friends. I'll go check her bedroom."

"I'd appreciate it." Dagon hung up the phone and crawled through the window. He walked to the closet, sliding into it just as he heard a key insert into the lock. Did Taylor know his mom had a key?

He watched through the crack, seeing Taylor's mom come into the bedroom, sniff around, and then curse.

Did she really just sniff his bedroom? What human did something like that? An uneasy feeling settled into his stomach. Something sinister was going on here, and he was going to get to the bottom of it, especially with his mate living here.

He'd ask Detective Lewis Keating—one of the mates—to look into the mom's threat about calling the cops on Taylor. There was probably nothing they could do about it, but the thought of his mate staying here didn't sit well with him.

Taylor's mom bent over, sniffing and pulling at his bedspread. Okay, that was just too damn weird.

Dagon's heart stopped when Melonee, Taylor, and Tangee shimmered into the room at that exact moment.

Chapter Two

Dagon shoved the closet door open, rushing across the room, and grabbed his mate to his chest and spun away just as Taylor's mom's arms lashed out. Her face wasn't human. *What the fuck?*

"I told you Josh turned you gay!" she screeched.

Melonee placed her hand on Dagon's shoulder, Tangee grabbing his sister's hand as they shimmered to Melonee's bedroom.

Maverick was sitting on her bed. "Well, I said for her to return him, not bring back more."

"What the hell was that?" Taylor yelled, flailing his arms around. "She wasn't human."

Maverick stood up, staring at the four. "Who wasn't human?" He frowned as he waited for an answer.

"My mom, her face..." Taylor's fingers wiggled around in front of his face in a busy manner.

"He can't go back there. His mom is...hell if I know. She sniffed at his bed, and then when these three shimmered in, her face did this weird fucking thing. I can't explain it." Dagon would never forget that freaky ass face.

"Try," Maverick said, looking confused.

"Her eyes changed to black, and her face almost turned scaly. I told you I couldn't explain it right." Dagon saw surprise in Maverick's eyes. The Alpha *knew* what Dagon was talking about.

"Give me your hand, Melonee. We don't have time." Maverick turned to Dagon. "Take your mate downstairs. Melonee and I have to shimmer around a bit, lose the trace. Give me your shirt, Taylor. I need your scent to follow us."

Dagon was confused as hell as he watched his mate take his shirt off. Dagon instantly pulled his leather off and covered Taylor's torso. Better. He grabbed Taylor and headed for the bedroom door.

"Yeah, that's good. Now he's covered in your scent, go." Maverick waved quickly as Dagon closed the bedroom door.

"What's happening?" Taylor asked him as they ran down the stairs and into Maverick's office.

"I'm not sure, *cachorro*, and we're not sticking around to find out." Dagon closed the door to the office, pacing back and forth. He pulled his cell phone out, calling his brothers. "I need you and Law in Maverick's office. Bring your mates."

Five minutes later his brothers, with mates in tow, entered. "What's going on?" Tryck asked, eyeing Taylor, who was sitting on the leather sofa.

"A very bad nightmare." Dagon shook his head and then retold what had happened up until he called them.

"No shit." Josh gaped. "Mom?"

"What the heck?" Taylor got up, going over to his brother and pulling his mouth open. "Those are vampire teeth."

"I'll explain later." Josh smacked his little brother's hand away.

Taylor dropped back down onto the sofa, shocked as hell that Josh was a vampire. How? He stared back up at his brother but didn't say a word. His life was going to the shit house, and he felt like he had no control over it anymore. *Not Josh*.

"I knew this was a crazy ass place to join a pack. But *no*, you two wanted to be in the Brac pack. Way to go." Tryck narrowed his eyes at Dagon and then Law.

"Like we knew all this shit was going to happen," Law defended himself, pulling Josh into his arms. "At least I found my mate here, and so did you. So stop bitching."

"Maverick took Melonee on a shimmer spree?" Carter, Tryck's mate, asked in surprise. "She's too young for that."

"Too late, they're already gone," Taylor said.

Dagon pulled Taylor over to him. "How are you holding up?" Dagon asked Taylor.

"I think I'm pretty numb right now. I'll let you know when my brain kicks back in. I'll be screaming, if you need a clue as to when that happens." Dagon pulled Taylor into his arms, giving him a supportive hug. Taylor hated that he gave a slight tremor of fear. He was supposed to be strong, a man, not a cowardly little wimp.

The three warriors turned, pulling their mates behind them when the door opened. Maverick and Melonee came in. "I think we lost her."

"Just exactly what is she?" Dagon asked, sitting him and Taylor down on the leather sofa.

"A demon."

"Could you repeat that? I thought you said a demon." Taylor ringed a finger in his ear and then looked back up at the Alpha.

Maverick picked up the blue stress ball from his desk, staring down at it as he spoke. "My father dealt with one once. I was a cub when it happened. The thing pretended to be my aunt."

"Wait, so where's my real mom?" Taylor interrupted.

"Some kind of hypnotic state. More than likely following a compulsion to visit relatives or something. My real aunt was on vacation in the Bahamas." Maverick tossed the ball into the air. "No one said the paranormal world made sense."

* * * *

Dagon rubbed Taylor's back. His mate was sitting there with his mouth hanging open. He couldn't begin to imagine what he would feel like if told his *madre* was a demon, not just acting like one, but a real live version. "So besides the facial treatment, how do you know if the person is who they are supposed to be or a demon?"

Maverick caught the ball midair. "The eyes. Josh and Taylor, I assume, never looked at their mom because she was too busy tearing

into them. If they had, they would have seen that the irises weren't quite the right color. There's one more thing, the smell of mothballs. My father told me that when he went to my aunt's home, there was a strong smell of them lingering in the air." The Alpha set the ball back on the desk, looking at each individual in the room. "Go get some sleep, but keep one eye open. I'll inform everyone else to do the same."

"So basically, if she creeps up in here as someone else, we won't know until we look them in the eyes?" Taylor asked. "And I know everyone's eye color because?" Dagon didn't like the fact that his mate's voice was laced with tension. The need to soothe his worries had Dagon ready to fight every enemy in the world to keep him safe.

"Not just that, it's the attitude as well. Josh said it himself. She was getting meaner. Demons for some reason can't keep up the persona they are imitating. Sooner or later their real sparkling personality shows."

"So Tryck's been a demon his whole life," Dagon stated, his brother flipping him off.

Dagon ignored him and stood, helping his tired-looking mate to his feet. "Come on, let's get some sleep."

He took his mate to his room, showing Taylor into the adjoining room. "I'm going to leave your bedroom door open. Yell if anything shows up."

"Can't we just pull the mattress in here? I don't want to sleep in there knowing a demon is after me."

Dagon pulled the mattress from the adjoining room into his bedroom, tossing it next to his bed. "I'm a light sleeper, so go ahead and get some sleep. I'll watch over you." Dagon felt more at ease with Taylor in the same room, knowing he was better able to watch his mate with him sleeping next to him.

"Can you pull yours down here, too?"

Dagon yanked his mattress up, tossing it next to Taylor's, both of them getting comfortable on their individual makeshift beds.

* * * *

Taylor woke up and stretched. He yawned, feeling the gunkies in his mouth. Morning breath was the worst thing ever. Rolling over, he got to his feet and made it to the bathroom, taking care of business and then brushing his teeth.

It was his birthday today. Two days of looking at everyone in their faces, the entire house watching each other's personalities for any sign of aggressive behavior. That was hard to do considering half the occupants were cranky shifters, with personalities to match.

Evan was hounded by the warriors. The man wasn't Mr. Sunshine to say the least, but he wasn't a demon. He was called a lot of other things though. His mate Lewis had to constantly reassure everyone that Evan was fine.

Taylor looked into the mirror at his reflection. He didn't look any older. He looked like Taylor Tate. He smoothed his hands over his shirt and then reached for the doorknob. His hands began to shake, so he pulled back.

He was an adult now. What would Dagon expect today? The man said it wasn't a countdown, but an image of Big Ben loomed in front of him. He closed the lid on the toilet, taking a seat. What if Dagon was out there right now lying naked on the bed? Taylor couldn't get his heart to slow down. Taking a deep breath, he stood. Why he was acting childishly was beyond him. His mate said he had time.

When he finally emerged, Dagon was standing by the dresser smiling at him. Taylor's lungs stopped working when Dagon walked over to him and cupped his face. "Happy birthday, *cachorro*."

Taylor closed his eyes, waiting for Dagon to lay a kiss on his lips. Instead, dry lips touched his forehead. Taylor opened his eyes and watched as Dagon sauntered into the bathroom.

Well, okay then. He could handle that. As a matter of fact, he liked it. A wide grin spread across Taylor's face as he went to answer the bedroom door when a knock sounded.

A kiss, cool.

"Happy birthday," a few of the mates sang. Taylor looked for his brother Josh but didn't see him. That wasn't like him. His brother *always* made sure to tell him first thing in the morning, every year.

"Thank you." Taylor stepped aside to allow them in.

"I brought you something." Johnny beamed up at him. Taylor thanked him and accepted the small black box. A pink bow sat on top. He opened it, and a necklace with blocked letters spelling out the name TAYLOR sat nestled inside. The beads between each letter were wicked. It looked like something he would have picked up at a leather and bike shop. The mate had taste.

"Thanks, I like homemade gifts." He pulled it out and clasped it around his neck.

"My turn." Keata jumped up and down, another box in his hand. Taylor opened it, and a rolled up piece of paper lay in it. He extracted it, unrolling the sheet. A picture of a man and a wolf were drawn on it, and then colored in. Taylor was amazed at how well it was drawn. He never would have guessed Keata had such artistic talent. The rendering was beautiful.

"Thank you, I'll buy a frame for it." He laid the picture on his dresser.

"Now me." Gabby handed him a small gift bag. Taylor reached in, pulling out a pair of baby booties. What the hell?

"The way things are going around here, you may need them." Gabby and the others chuckled.

He knew the half vampire had become pregnant, giving birth to a son. Hell no, that was *not* going to be him. Not in this lifetime or the next. "Thanks." He pasted a smile on, giving Gabby a quick hug.

"We also made you breakfast, so don't be long." Johnny smiled and clapped him on the back.

This should be interesting. He sighed inwardly. Taylor watched as the three left the room, still wondering where Josh was.

Duh, the thought just struck him. If Josh was a vampire—which he was going to hunt his brother down and make him spill—then he couldn't be out in daylight.

He pushed the thought away of Josh being a vampire. It was one more thing that would only freak him out if he thought too hard about it.

One thing at a time. Deal with one thing at a time.

Dagon came out of the bathroom fully dressed and smiling at him, drying his hair with a towel. Taylor watched, and an urge to run his fingers through those wet strands had his hands itching. He shoved them into his pockets. "The mates made me breakfast."

"Good, we'll go down and eat. What would you like to do today?"

There was only one thing he wanted to do. "Go for a ride on your bike."

Dagon chuckled and tossed the towel back in the bathroom. "How did I know this?"

"Because I'm using you for your bike, remember?" Taylor teased. He tensed and then relaxed when a large hand covered his, holding on as they walked down to the kitchen.

Hand-holding, he could do that.

"Smells good in here," Dagon said in a deep voice as they entered the kitchen. George and Tank were standing at the stove, the mate George fussing at the warrior Tank for stealing bacon.

"Happy birthday, Taylor." Tank smiled at him, a piece of bacon stuck to his bottom lip. Taylor laughed, pointing to his own lip to tell Tank to get rid of the evidence. The warrior stuck his tongue out, swiping at the pork and winking at Taylor for the heads-up.

"I caught that." George smiled at Taylor.

Dagon pulled a chair out for him, Taylor taking a seat. His mate served him breakfast, giving him a glass of orange juice as well. George must have cooked this. It was too good. He would have eaten

it if the others had slaved over it, whether it had been tasty or not. He wasn't ungrateful.

"Morning, Mr. Birthday." The warrior Remi and his mate, Drew, came into the kitchen.

"Morning." Taylor chewed on a piece of bacon as he watched the two men hug all over each other. They seemed comfortable with it. Drew giggled and opened his mouth for some eggs, Remi kissing him after giving his mate a bite.

Could he do that with Dagon? Taylor took a drink of orange juice, seeing from the corner of his eye Tank kissing on George's neck. Gay couples seemed to surround him in the kitchen, having no concern that others might see them.

"I'm finished." Taylor took his plate to the sink, getting a closer look at Tank and George, seeing how George was staring lovingly into Tank's eyes. He looked away, setting his dish into the sink.

"Let's take that ride." Dagon took his hand, and this time Taylor felt more comfortable with the act.

"Thanks for breakfast."

"You're welcome." George surfaced long enough from Tank's lips to reply. Taylor looked over his shoulder as Dagon pulled him away, seeing Drew sitting in Remi's lap and laughing.

Dagon pulled Taylor to his bedroom, handing him a helmet and a small, thickly stitched leather jacket from the closet. "I bought that for you, seeing how much you like to ride."

Taylor examined it. "Thank you." It looked expensive. He pulled it on and ran his hand down the soft-as-butter leather. It was heavily stitched and comfortable. He really liked it. Taylor followed Dagon once again as they headed to his bike.

"Happy birthday," the warrior Micah called out as they made it to the front door.

"Thank you." It seemed he was saying that a lot this morning.

Taylor caught himself staring at Dagon's butt. *Okay, I've never done that before.* He watched it saunter back and forth, bunching and

flexing, the curve of it bubbling out slightly. His hands itched again. He followed Dagon to the row of vehicles until they came to the warrior's bike.

Taylor put his helmet on, waiting for his mate to get on first.

"Climb aboard." Dagon swung his leg over, straddling the bike as Taylor grabbed his large shoulders and slid behind his mate. He bit his bottom lip, grateful Dagon couldn't see the hard-on he was getting just from having the enormous man in front of him. What the hell was going on with him?

It was like he turned eighteen and, *bam*, instant gayness. If Josh was right and Taylor had been gay all along, wouldn't he have been checking guys out long before Dagon? He hadn't.

Hell, his first experience with sex was with a girl. What did that say? Taylor slid his arms around Dagon's waist, holding on as Dagon started the motorcycle and dug his heels into the gravel, backing the bike up.

Taylor lifted the visor momentarily as he inhaled leather and man. He snapped it back down, wondering why he had done that.

Dagon tilted with the bike, rounding the drive and drove onto the paved road, the thrum of the motorcycle once again giving him a thrill like nothing else.

"Please let me get through this ride without embarrassing myself," Taylor mumbled to himself.

"You okay back there?"

Taylor jumped at Dagon's voice. There must be headsets built into these things. "I'm fine." Oh shit, Dagon had heard him. How else was he going to humiliate himself today?

No, wait, he didn't want to know.

His fingers bunched in his mate's shirt, fighting the pulsing throb in his cock. He inched forward, allowing his erection to touch Dagon, the friction between denim thrilling him. Taylor pulled back when he heard a low grunt in the headset. Did his mate feel what he had just done?

Blowing out a silent breath, Taylor did it again. The need to relieve the pressure was tremendous, making him take risks he otherwise wouldn't have dared.

His hands *accidentally* slipped down, getting closer to Dagon's manhood. If he could just knock the guy out and explore to his heart's content, he would be happy.

"If your hand goes any lower, I'm pulling over," Dagon warned into the headset.

Taylor fought a war inside his head. Did he want him to pull over? His cock said yes, his chicken heart said no.

He wasn't going to lie to himself. He was curious, wondered what it would be like to let a man fuck him. Did wondering about it make him gay? He knew wanting it did.

His chicken heart won, raising his hands back to their original position.

* * * *

Dagon knew his mate was struggling with his sexuality, trying to figure things out in his head, but Taylor was torturing the shit out of him. He could feel Taylor's erection behind him, and when his mate's hands began to lower, Dagon damn near laid the bike down.

He told his mate he had time, but he had no clue Taylor was going to drive him insane in the process. Dagon drove the bike onto the entrance ramp, riding his mate to the city.

"The highway?" Taylor voice was laced with excitement. He knew he made the right choice. His mate was becoming a hog junkie as he was. Dagon leaned back a little, enjoying the contact. Taylor's grip became firmer, leaning into him.

If he could get his mate used to touch, slowly ease him into this, then maybe they had a chance. His eyes focused on the road. Not wanting the feel of Taylor to distract him, he checked his speed limit. It was well within the legal range.

Dagon took the exit ramp, driving through the city streets until they turned onto the street he wanted, and then drove into to small lot.

"Ice cream?" Taylor asked curiously.

"Yep, nice day for it." Dagon held his feet firmly on the ground as Taylor used his shoulders to dismount. He glanced down, seeing the erection his mate was trying his best to hide.

A smile crept across his face from knowing Taylor wasn't so immune to him after all.

Pulling his helmet off, Dagon dismounted and set it on the seat. He sauntered over to Taylor, standing directly behind him as he studied the menu posted above the window.

"I'll just have a chocolate cone."

"That's it?"

"Yes," Taylor replied.

"Make it two cones." He told the teenage girl behind the window. She nodded and walked away.

"So how does it feel to be a legal adult?" he asked as he laid a hand on Taylor's shoulder. Subtle moves should help Taylor acclimate to his new life, couldn't hurt. If fate paired them, then all he had to do was let Taylor become acquainted with his touch.

Taylor shifted an inch closer, shrugging his shoulders. "I don't feel any different."

Dagon accepted the cones, handing one to Taylor and opting to sit on the concrete steps instead of at one of the tables. He watched the traffic pass as he thought of the claiming. The pull was getting stronger. Five weeks had been agonizing while his mate was at home, but now that he was with him, it was hellish at best.

It wasn't about sex. Okay, not all of it anyway.

It was about having his mate bound to him, sharing his life with someone. With Taylor. Dagon had never confessed to his brothers about his longing to have a home, a mate, a life with someone he cherished above all others.

It was the sense of having that one individual person by his side, the person he could share everything with that drove him to get to know Taylor, to get him used to touch so he could claim him and begin their lives together.

Dagon licked the top of the ice cream right off of the cone when he glanced sideways and saw how Taylor was practically molesting the cold treat. Okay, he was exaggerating, but watching his tongue swirling around and licking had him rock hard in seconds. He would bet a million dollars that a wet spot was on the front of his jeans right now from the river of pre-cum leaking out.

“You dropped your ice cream.” Taylor pointed to the ground.

“I guess I’ll have to get another.” Dagon whimpered when Taylor’s pink tongue darted out and licked the chocolate mustache. “Excuse me.”

He took off to the bathroom, unzipping his jeans and pulling his cock free, leaning forward and jerking the damn thing until he came. “Fuck.” He wasn’t sure how much more of this he could handle. *You have to wait until Taylor is ready.*

His mate had him jacking off in public places, for fuck’s sake. Dagon stuffed his cock back into his pants, washed his hands, and prayed he didn’t have to run back in here. Maybe ice cream wasn’t one of his more brilliant ideas.

Chapter Three

“You only want to hold the ladder so you can look at my ass.” Drew giggled as he hung the streamers.

“You’re damn straight. It’s the best job in the world.” Remi licked his lips, dying to tear his mate down and run to their bedroom with him. The two had been together for quite a few years now, and there was nothing in this world Remi wouldn’t do for his Andrew.

Nothing.

He’d kill a rock for his man.

* * * *

“Get out of that. It’s for the birthday boy, not you.” George slapped Tank’s hand, smiling at his contrite mate.

“But you’re the best cook ever, and I’m the best eater ever. We’re perfect for each other.” Tank pouted.

“You say all the right words, but I see your hand sneakin’ behind me to get at that food while your gums are flappin’.”

George still couldn’t believe how happy he was after all this time. He chuckled when he thought of how deep he used to be buried in the closet, what nonsense. Every day with Tank was like waking up to the most beautiful sunrise.

* * * *

“It’s my job to set the punch bowl up.” Caden batted Mark’s hand away. “So stop trying to squeeze my as—butt.”

“You better not cuss. You’re too perfect for that.” Mark nuzzled Caden’s neck, thinking of his former life, his very lonely former life. He wasn’t gay, not by a long shot, but for Caden, he’d parade around in a leotard. Okay, maybe not, but he got the picture. It only took a five second decision, a leap of faith, and Mark’s life was perfect now.

“Hey, Dad?”

Mark turned to his son, Curtis, standing next to him. “Yes?”

“Could you let my other dad finish what he was doing before I dehydrate?”

Mark chuckled. Being with his guys was like coming home every day.

* * * *

“Get the boys. I’m going to check on the cake.” Heaven smiled at Murdock.

“On it.” Murdock chased little Maddox down. The second born was the troublemaker, just like his father. Matthew was clinging to Heaven, just like his first born always did. Although finding his mate had been one rocky-ass road filled with pits of hell, Heaven wouldn’t change it for the world.

He watched his family laughing and playing, wondering what the one he was carrying now would be. His heart filled to capacity and burst every time his mate smiled at him.

The walk through hell was worth the heaven he was now living in. No pun intended.

* * * *

“Here they come!” Gabby ran around in circles, his arms flying high over his head.

“It’ll be okay, pumpkin.” Montana reached out with his free hand and snagged his overexcited mate. He repositioned their son Nevada

in his arms, the toddler squirming around, and then pulled his mate close as everyone stilled.

Montana smiled down at Gabby. His mate had been through some crazy shit, but it all led to their son in his arms, a decision they made that Montana would never regret. His little fireball was everything he could ever want in a mate, diabetes and all.

"I love you, pumpkin."

Gabby smiled a big goofy grin up at Montana. "You're still not getting any ass."

Montana had been in the doghouse ever since Nevada started teething, telling him that the pain wasn't worth the cock and they were only having one child. He knew his mate would change his mind. Gabby's morning, afternoon, and even his evening wood told Montana he would get to dip back into his pumpkin real soon.

* * * *

Dagon pulled his bike into the gravel drive, the urge hitting him hard to run to the bathroom and jack off for the fifth time. Taylor pulled at his shoulders, dismounting the bike. His jean-clad cock slid up Dagon's back, making his own dick jump and plead for more attention.

He was convinced Taylor was going to make him set a world record for the highest number of masturbation sessions in one day.

"Let's get inside," Dagon choked out, his voice returning to its prepubescent stage. The little devil smirked at him. Taylor knew what he was doing. Dagon had no doubt about it.

Taylor placed his helmet on the seat of the bike, pulling his leather off and draping it over his arm. "I had a nice time, thank you."

"Me, too." After a thousand trips to the bathroom, and almost getting caught twice by people coming in and hearing his frustrated grunts. What a day.

Opening the front door and letting his mate in, Dagon nearly had a heart attack when the entire house jumped out and yelled, "Surprise!" It would have been a surprise if he attacked their dumb asses for taking one hundred years off of his life expectancy.

The foyer began to sing "Happy Birthday" to Taylor. His mate was grinning from ear to ear, and his hand grabbed Dagon's as he stepped a little closer. Taylor initiating hand-holding was a step toward progress. He would have him screaming to the gods by tonight.

Hopefully.

Maybe.

If not, he would sleep in the bathroom...naked.

His mate was carted off by the other mates. Music blasted throughout the den and foyer. With so many people, the excess had spilled out of the party room. Law growled when he heard the song playing.

I like big butts and I cannot lie, you other brothers can't deny...

"You think you're smart, don't you!" Josh yelled from somewhere.

Dagon cracked up. His brother's mate did have a big bodacious booty. Thank goodness Taylor hadn't inherited it. His butt was perfect, a small bubble, not a hot air balloon.

He saw from the corner of his eye Nero and Cecil high-fiving each other.

"Come on." Taylor appeared at his side, pulling Dagon into the room of sweaty and dancing bodies. Dagon grabbed Taylor, spun him around, and pulled his ass to Dagon's crotch, swinging his hips around to the music.

Well shake it, shake it, shake it, shake that healthy butt...baby got back...

He was shocked and pleased that Taylor not only *didn't* protest, he was pushing back into Dagon. Why did there have to be a room

full of people? His mate seemed receptive now, and Dagon wanted to test that theory.

Crap. He moved away when he spotted Melonee making her way toward them. Guess the dirty dancing would be reserved for their bedroom, hopefully. Visions of porcelain and faucets made Dagon groan.

"I want to dance with him." Melonee pulled his mate away.

After a few more songs, and plenty of tense moments when Taylor danced seductively with him, they all adjourned to the dining room to cut the cake. He and Taylor stood up front, his mate blowing the candles out. Everyone clapped, and Dagon took that moment to lay a blazing kiss on his mate's lips. Cheers, catcalls, and whistles echoed through the room.

"Happy birthday," Dagon growled into his mate's parted lips. His hand held Taylor's neck, his thumb caressing his mate's nape.

"Ung," Taylor replied.

"No sex in room." Keata giggled as Maverick clamped his hands over Melonee's ears, narrowing his eyes at Keata. The mate just laughed and shook his head at the Alpha.

Dagon forgot where they were. All he could focus on were those beautiful green eyes, which matched his in color. Taylor stood there staring at Dagon as if he wanted more, the lustful gleam in his eyes a dead giveaway.

"Cake first?" Remi asked.

Dagon's mind unfroze, and the room came back into view, the voices infiltrating his ears.

"Yes, of course." He smiled down at Taylor before handing his mate the knife. "You get first cut."

The party went into full swing. There were buffet tables set up, punch bowls, and it seemed everyone was having a good time. Taylor's skin was flushed, and Dagon was pleased to see him laughing practically all evening.

"Thank you."

Dagon turned to see Josh standing at his side. "For what?"

"He's never really had a birthday celebration. I can tell he is having the time of his life."

"Not even as a child?" This was odd. What parents didn't throw birthday parties for their child?

Josh shook his head. "My mom didn't believe in them."

Dagon felt for his mate. He wondered, not for the first time, what kind of upbringing Taylor actually had.

He walked into the den, placing his hand on Taylor's shoulder for the contact as his mate smiled up at him. "I'm having a good time."

Dagon's chest tightened at that smile. He knew at that exact moment that he would do anything to keep it on Taylor's face.

He stiffened, grabbing Taylor and pushing him behind his back as the smell of mothballs stung his nose.

Demon.

* * * *

"Come on." Dagon pulled Taylor into their bedroom, slamming the door shut. "I don't know which person down there is being imitated, and I'm not waiting to find out."

Taylor nodded. He didn't give a shit about any stinking demon because he was still charmed by that incredible kiss from earlier.

"Are you okay?" Dagon asked as he led Taylor over to the bed, sitting down and then pulling Taylor down next to him. Their arms and thighs touched, and Taylor didn't protest, wanting Dagon and questioning his sanity at the same time.

All he knew was that when he was near him, everything felt right, felt complete.

"Uh-huh." Taylor's eyes were fixated on Dagon's lips, wanting another kiss, no, needing one, more than his next breath. He pulled Dagon's head down, kissing him as if *he* were possessed.

Dagon placed his hands on Taylor's shoulders and gently pushed Taylor back. "Slow down, *cachorro*." The wolf cupped his face, and the side of his mouth pulled back into a half smile. "There's no need to rush."

Taylor couldn't focus. His mind was in a lust-induced fog as he sat so close to the one man that had him questioning everything. The scent of leather and man shrouded his thoughts and made him want things that he never thought to want.

"Please," he begged softly, unsure at this point what he was begging for. All he knew was that he had a deep ache inside of him to be with Dagon.

For over a month now, Dagon had occupied his every thought, his every dream. Taylor wasn't sure if it was the adrenaline or the need that was making him so bold.

There was a lightning storm of emotions colliding inside of Taylor. A need so strong to be with Dagon that he tossed all caution to the wind and unsnapped his jeans, pushing his hand deep inside as he tried to relieve the ache that felt as though it were boiling his blood.

"*Cachorro*." Dagon's breath grew ragged, his eyes glued to Taylor's hand. Taylor had no clue where his wanton behavior was coming from, but he couldn't stop, not now, and not when his blood felt as though it were on fire. He pulled his cock free, squeezing until pre-cum ran down the sides of his fingers.

Dagon's arm pulled back slightly, and Taylor draped himself across his mate's lap. Taylor toed his shoes off, hearing them hit the floor and trying his best to rid himself of his jeans. Dagon slid his hand in the waistband, tugging them down and off.

With his cock fully freed, Taylor boldly began to stroke the hardened shaft, unable to look up at his mate, but unable to care that he was lying in a man's lap as he did it either. He moaned when Dagon's hand joined his, the strong grip sending pulses of raw need throughout his entire body.

His voice echoed a throaty whine in the quiet room, the callused hand slowly and torturously worshipping his shaft. “Dagon.” Taylor wasn’t sure why he called the man’s name, and he wasn’t sure he would keep his sanity at the moment either.

“*Cachorro*, are you sure you’re ready?”

Taylor couldn’t think right now, let alone answer any questions. He pulled at Dagon’s clothes, wanting skin, needing to be touched in the most intimate way.

Dagon nodded, placing Taylor on the bed and disrobing, pulling Taylor’s shirt free to leave them both bare.

Taylor’s breath hitched, and then his world turned inside out when Dagon rubbed his naked body over his. He spread his legs apart, his groin blazing to be sated. His skin began to buzz with the skin-on-skin contact.

His hands reached up, landing on Dagon’s shoulders, and pulled his mate down to him. Taylor wanted lips, teeth, and tongue. Dagon meshed their lips together, giving Taylor the most seductive kiss he had ever had. He opened as Dagon’s tongue swept in, stealing the very breath from his lungs.

His legs came up and laced around Dagon’s waist, trying in earnest to grind his cock into some part of this fearsome man. His fingers dug into the soft flesh of Dagon’s shoulders, pulling him forward and pushing him back. Taylor was losing his mind.

Dagon’s hands explored his body in such a sensual manner that Taylor thought he would go up in flames. The feeling of a man’s cock against him didn’t repulse him like he’d thought it would. This made him even braver. He grabbed one of Dagon’s hands and guided it down and behind him.

His mate’s eyes locked on to his, his eyes questioning as Taylor bit his bottom lip and nodded.

Taylor hissed when a finger was inserted into him. It felt strange, foreign, and wonderful.

“Relax, *cachorro*. I will take this as slow as you need me to.”

Taylor nodded, taking a deep breath and exhaling as he unclenched his muscle and concentrated on Dagon's grassy green eyes.

His eyes rolled into the back of his head as his body arched off of the bed when an electricity shower of epic proportions rained down on him. Dagon had rubbed over something inside of him, and Taylor's world began to spin sideways.

"Fuck, you're gorgeous," Dagon whispered.

Taylor lost the power of speech. Fragments of who he was splintered as he came. He grabbed on to Dagon, wrapping his arms around his mate's neck as wave after wave of seed spilled from him.

Dagon pulled his hand free, Taylor tensing when Dagon grabbed for the lube.

"Look into my eyes, *cachorro*." Taylor did, and saw just how deep and dark the green had turned. "Your body is wonderment to my eyes, your smile more beautiful than a hundred angels." As his mate crooned to him, Taylor felt Dagon breach him. It was the oddest feeling he'd ever experienced. It pinched and burned, and then slowly eased into something more exhilarating than life.

"Oh, god." Taylor felt Dagon's cock all the way to his toes. He tilted higher, wanting Dagon to rub that spot again. Dagon's hands were like manacles as he grabbed Taylor's wrists and pushed them above his head. He thrust harder, pulling back slowly, allowing that large cock to scrap over his sweet spot, and then rocked back in.

Taylor wasn't going to survive this.

Dagon pulled free, and Taylor wanted to pummel his fists into his mate's chest. What the hell?

"Turn over."

Taylor moved quickly, wanting to feel Dagon back inside of him. His legs almost gave out when Dagon plunged back in, grabbed his hips, and rattled his teeth with the assault on his ass.

Taylor pulled at the sheets, crawling up the bed, needing to escape the blinding pleasure threatening to consume him. Dagon kept pace as

he hammered into him, following him up to the headboard where Taylor latched on with nowhere else to go.

“Dagon,” he cried.

“Do you accept me as your mate, Taylor?”

Taylor’s fingers dug into the wood, clenching his jaw with the powerful strokes nailing him. “Yes, Dagon.”

He dropped to his left when Dagon bit into his shoulder, his body jerking as he came for the second time. Taylor pulled at the headboard with his hands, his body stiffening and crumbling. Dagon cried out behind him, blanketing his back and kissing where he had bitten.

“You are mine now,” Dagon declared.

The last active brain cell fizzled out as Taylor nodded and fell asleep.

* * * *

Dagon lay there holding Taylor as his mate slept, still feeling the buzz from what he could only describe as the best sex of his life. He had felt the ribbons of their souls unwind and merge when he claimed his mate. It was the most prevailing emotion he had ever felt.

Taylor grumbled and shifted around, Dagon running his hand through his mate’s hair. His man was worn out. Taylor burrowed under Dagon.

He smiled. His mate was a snuggler.

The hairs on the back of his neck stood as the feeling of being watched alerted his senses. He scanned the room but saw no one. Dagon pulled Taylor closer. His instincts had never been wrong before. Someone was here.

He growled low, warning whoever it was that he was aware of their presence. Dagon rolled and covered his mate when two eyes appeared in the shadows of the room. Over by the chair, where the light of the moon wasn’t coming in, were blazing eyes.

Not eyes on fire, but more of a reflection, as if they were staring into a fire and the irises caught the image and held it. They mesmerized him for a moment, holding his gaze.

A full body walked out of the darkened corner, the man smirking at Dagon as his eyes lowered to Taylor.

"I will not harm him."

Okay, but the stranger said nothing of Dagon's safety, as if he needed protection. He mentally snorted. *Not in this lifetime.*

The stranger laid his hand on his chest and gave a slight bow. "I am Panahasi, the leader, if you will, of the Demon Warriors."

Dagon was stunned. He had grown up thinking only were-shifters existed. Since leaving home, he had discovered tiger shifters, vampires, fucking fairies, and now demons? Boy, did his parents get it wrong.

They were *not* the only paranormal creatures.

Dagon shifted and howled when ten men emerged from the shadows behind Panahasi. He wasn't foolish enough to think he could defend his sleeping mate from these men. There were just too many of them for him to take down alone.

His bedroom door burst open. Maverick, Evan, Tank, and Tryck shifted and surrounded his bed, snapping and snarling their warning to stay back or be attacked by Timber wolves.

Maverick was the largest of their breed. From floor to head, he stood four feet tall. From snout to the tip of his tail he was six feet long, and the monster weighed over three hundred pounds, a beast of his own right.

"We are not here to harm anyone, but if you don't shift back, we *will* defend ourselves," Panahasi warned.

Maverick was the first to return to his human form. "Who the fuck are you, and why the hell do I keep getting wackos popping into my damn house?"

One of the demon men pointed to Maverick. "You're the one who is naked. I wouldn't exactly call us wackos."

Maverick growled and grabbed Dagon's jeans from the floor, shoving his enormous legs into them. Dagon mentally laughed as they rose past the Alpha's ankles.

The man was too damn tall to put on someone else's pants. It was hard to take him seriously seeing him like this.

"Now tell me," Maverick commanded.

Panahasi was having a hard time keeping the smile from his face, Dagon could see the sides of his mouth tugging and pulling. "I'll wait while you fetch your own clothes." He chuckled.

"Cody!" Maverick yelled. Seconds later the Sentry appeared, immediately curled his lips in, and bowed at the Alpha's command, and then ran to get him some jeans.

Maverick snatched them from Cody when he returned moments later, pulling Dagon's off and then putting his own on, glaring at Panahasi the whole time.

Dagon looked down to see Taylor staring at him. Fear, stark and vivid, glittered in his eyes. He leaned down and licked the side of Taylor's face, nuzzling his neck before looking back up at the intruders.

"My name is Panahasi. I am the leader of the Demon Warriors. He has mated, alerting us to his presence." Panahasi pointed at Taylor.

Dagon growled, hunching down to gently lay over his mate.

"And why would his mating alert you?" Maverick asked.

"Because he is half demon."

Chapter Four

Maverick was stunned but hid it from the men standing in Dagon's bedroom. The Sentries surrounded him, all cocking their heads to the side as Panahasi continued.

"The woman, or demon as she is, that is hunting him is his true mother."

Maverick glanced over at Taylor as the young man cried out, "No!"

"She wants him back and will stop at nothing to obtain him. It is our job to stop her." A brown-skinned man stepped forward. "I am Donnchadh, but call me Donny."

"Well, *Donny*, we can take care of our own." Maverick pointed at the demons. "We don't need any outside help."

"You may reconsider once she appears and your mates start disappearing. She will pose as one of your warriors and take them one at a time," Panahasi warned. "Think about it before your ego leaves you without."

"You remind me of someone I really don't like." Maverick looked over at Tryck.

"And here I thought we were bonding," Tryck said as a brow rose and he rolled his shoulders. "So how do we kill her?"

* * * *

Okay, he was not going to panic. His brother was now a vampire and his mom was a demon? What the fuck was going on in this crazy world he lived in? He wasn't a demon, not even half.

Taylor grabbed Dagon's fur, needing an anchor as he felt his vision blurring and he became light-headed. This was just too damn much to take in.

What about their oldest brother Brad? He was human, and Josh was as well, before whatever happened to him—that, Taylor still needed to question his brother about. How was he demon and they weren't? They were all raised by the same woman.

Taylor watched as Josh crept into the room, slid behind the Sentries, and ran to his bed. He pulled the sheet up his chest.

He was naked for crying out loud. Did no one care about this but him?

He hadn't even begun to process the fact that he just slept with a man when all this was laid at his feet. *Talk about a sedative day.*

No one paid any attention to the fact that a wolf lay over him, only a sheet covering his naked form. They must all know that he slept with a man, yet no one said anything.

It was as if they saw this kind of thing all of the time. Well, he didn't, and it was unnerving. He wanted his *me* time to freak out, and no one was giving it to him.

"They say I'm a demon," he told Josh, ignoring everyone else in the room. If he focused on his brother, he may make it through this ordeal.

"I know."

"You knew?"

"No." Josh shook his head. "I know because I heard them."

"How?" That was the biggest question he had. How the hell did they not know? His fingers dug deeper into Dagon's fur, feeling hysterics growing closer as he thought about all of this.

"Hell if I know." Josh shrugged.

"If I may?" Panahasi took one step toward Taylor, and the wolves growled. Dagon's was the loudest, deepest, and most frightening.

"I would advise against that." Maverick pointed to Dagon. "His mate would die to protect him, and we would do the same to protect them both."

Panahasi nodded and stepped back. "I respect the bond." He turned back toward Taylor. "You and your brothers are too young to remember. Your father was a single parent with only Brad and Josh. He met your mother and laid seed with her."

Laid seed? Could he sound any more gross? Taylor shuddered. Thinking of his parents having sex was disgusting. Thinking of that thing as his mother was even more disgusting.

"She will not stop until her offspring is returned to her. As evil as she is, her maternal side is forcing her to hunt you."

Taylor struggled with the fact that she was his mother. The mom he grew up with wasn't always mean. She did love him, and he loved her. "I can't let you kill her."

"Then she will be contained." Panahasi looked at him with sympathetic eyes, making Taylor wonder how a demon could be understanding.

"I need to be alone, leave," Taylor said angrily.

"My office." Maverick led the tribe of demons from his bedroom, Josh kissing his cheek before leaving him as well.

Dagon shifted back once the room was clear and the door closed behind everyone. "Are you okay?"

"Do I *look* okay? I just had sex with a man, my brother is a vampire, my mom is an evil demon, and I'm lying naked under a sheet while everyone discusses the weather. *No*, I'm not okay."

* * * *

Shit, his mate was on the verge of freaking out on him. He should have taken this slower, not given in to Taylor. He knew Taylor was still hesitant, but with his mate displayed in front of him, pleasuring himself, it was more than Dagon could stand.

Too late now, all he could do was deal with the fallout. Dagon pulled Taylor into his arms, his mate struggling to get free. It wasn't only the sex. Given the news that he was half demon, that his mother was out to get him back had to weigh heavy on Taylor.

"Calm down, *cachorro*." Dagon held on tight as Taylor stopped struggling and began to cry in his arms. "We'll deal with this together." His mate's tears were nearly his undoing. It hurt his heart to see his mate in pain.

Taylor grabbed onto Dagon with a death grip. His slim body was racked with sobs as Taylor purged what he was feeling inside.

Dagon wrapped the sheet tighter around his mate, rocking him back and forth, wishing he could erase all of this and take them back to an hour ago when Taylor welcomed his touch, welcomed a man loving him, freely giving himself in return.

He wasn't giving up on his mate. If Taylor needed time, he would give it to him.

Although, after knowing his mate's body the way he did now, it would be agonizing to see him and not touch him. Taylor's body welcomed him and gave him the purest pleasure. If only Taylor's mind would do the same.

Dagon laid his lips on the top of his mate's head, inhaling the scent of an ocean breeze and jasmine, his cock threatening to come back to life. *This is not the time for that*. Dagon fought the urge, knowing Taylor was too distressed to go for another round of twisting the sheets up. This was about Taylor and what he needed right now. His needs would take a back burner position until his mate was in the right frame of mind.

Dagon's heart broke when his mate spoke, a hint of tears lacing his voice. "I can't stop wanting you." He sounded so hopeless.

"Do you think it is wrong for men to love each other, *cachorro*? It is love. What could be wrong with that? The gender should not matter, only how the people involved feel about each other."

"I was taught that it's wrong. My mom, that thing, drilled it into me."

Dagon pulled back, staring down at Taylor. "And what of Josh?"

Taylor lowered his eyes as he spoke. "He's different. I'd love him no matter who he wants to be."

"Then why can you not love yourself no matter who you want to be?" It was a valid point, one he hoped his mate would consider.

Taylor chewed on his bottom lip, glancing up at Dagon and then back down as his features took on a concentrated look.

"I can want you?"

Dagon chuckled. "Yes, you can want me." *You can want me day and night and I'd never tire of it.*

"Can we..."

Dagon rolled Taylor under him, not waiting for his mate's mind to flip back to uncertainty. He slicked his cock again, Taylor still loose from the claiming. His mate's body accepted him, taking him in greedily.

If Taylor was accepting of this, of them, then he would show his mate what love between two people, gender be damned, could be like.

"Dagon, make me fly," Taylor begged.

Dagon tossed the sheet the rest of the way off of his mate's body and threw Taylor's legs over his arms, grabbing his hips and pulling his mate down onto his cock.

He panted with every stroke, Taylor reaching up and grabbing hold of his hair. Dagon dipped down and smothered his mate's mouth with his. He reached between them, fisting the erection and matching the strokes with his body's own.

He released Taylor's right leg, pushing the left one up and over his mate's head. He couldn't seem to get deep enough, far enough into that tight hole to stop the boiling of his Latino blood. Taylor was driving him mad, and he loved every minute of the ride.

Dagon drove hard into Taylor's ass, his mate pulling at his hair like reins in his hands. Taylor tilted his ass higher, begging Dagon to

fuck him. Dagon's hands flew up, grabbing the headboard for leverage as he fucked Taylor to the point his mate was scooting up the bed.

The skin surrounding his cock expanded with every thrust, taking what Dagon was giving. Dagon watched in utter fascination as Taylor's fingers parted and reached down, sliding over Dagon's cock and jacking him off as he pounded into Taylor's hole.

His eyes were locked onto those lithe fingers, unable to tear them away, and not wanting to either. The tingling in his spine signaled his impending orgasm, but Dagon didn't want to come, not yet.

Not when his mate was fully open to him. He fought for control, a fight he might lose if he kept watching the wicked erotic play between their legs. His eyes closed, feeling instead of seeing. Dagon wasn't sure that was a better option. His senses heightened once the sight was gone.

"I'm coming." Taylor shouted to the heavens, his hand pulled away, and Dagon opened his eyes. Taylor laced his fingers with Dagon's, pulling hard as seed began to erupt between them, painting them both with white ribbons.

Dagon released his hold, allowing control to slip away as he came hard into his mate's ass. He roared as his body shook.

Taylor's arms fell to the bed, a big grin on his beautiful face. "I think I like man-love."

Dagon smiled, falling to his side and spooning behind his mate. "I'm happy to hear that."

* * * *

Taylor slowly walked down the winding staircase, his bottom protesting any move he made right now. The sex was off the hook, but the afterward part sucked.

You're an abomination! Taylor pushed his mother's condescending remark from his mind. He wasn't going to go there.

With his mom drilling homophobia into his head about gay people for years, he couldn't get her belittlements out of his head.

They were coming more frequently now, blasting through his mind like a freight train every time he looked at Dagon and felt the deep want inside of him.

The den was lively, the other mates jumping around playing video games or shooting pool. Some of the warriors were in there as well. Probably guarding them and using the pool table as an excuse.

He hated the fact that these kind people had to be on guard in their own home because of him and his mother. It was fucked up all the way around. Guilt ate at him because of this.

Taylor looked around, wondering why it was dark in here. He could have sworn it was morning and then he saw the blackout curtains. His brother Josh sitting on one of two suede sofas engaged in a conversation with a few mates explained it all.

He walked over, scooting Murphy aside as he took a seat. "So spill." He pointed to his brother's mouth.

"After I dropped you off at Mom's," he said, and they both shuddered simultaneously, "I went home. I was attacked but still don't know by who. The prince of vampires saved my life by turning me. So now I suck blood." Josh made a slurping sound in Taylor's ear, grossing him out.

"So because that demon woman made me come home, you almost died?" Taylor asked angrily.

He worshipped Josh. Nobody could ask for a cooler older brother, and he almost died?

His heart clenched at the thought of not having Josh around. The world wouldn't be the same without him. Conflicting emotions whirled through him. He hated his mom for all of this but still loved her. He hated her for his brother almost dying, but still loved her.

"Not really. If I hadn't taken you home, you probably would have been attacked also," Josh pointed out as he leaned forward to stare at

Taylor. His brother's eyes were kind, compassionate, something he wasn't at the moment.

"No, we would have been safe here," he countered bitterly. That demon woman was causing nothing but trouble, and at that moment Taylor didn't care what Panahasi or any of those demon men did to her.

He knew he was thinking with his emotions, but Josh was a part of his life, and Taylor never wanted that to change.

"Chill, little bro." Josh leaned in closer. "Makes sex with Law a lot more interesting." He wiggled his brows.

"Ew." Taylor didn't want to think of Josh having sex with Law. Thinking of family in that way was...yuck.

Taylor noticed the other mates staring at him. Did he look any different now that he was gay? Could they tell he did the tango with Dagon? He shifted in his seat, feeling uncomfortable that they probably knew.

Even though each and every one of them was gay, he still felt embarrassed. Excusing himself, Taylor headed for the foyer, Dagon appearing right before he could make a hasty exit. He brushed past him and ran down one of the hallways, looking back to make sure he was alone.

Why couldn't he accept how he felt about Dagon? He was really starting to fall for the guy, and that scared the hell out of him. Dagon had said it was okay for two men to love each other, but it still didn't sit right with Taylor. He wasn't Josh, so he wasn't going to parade around in extremely short cutoffs and halter tops.

He was a *man*.

Taylor shoved his hands into his front pockets, trying desperately to figure things out. He never thought about man or woman, although his first experience was with a girl.

He hated the fact that his mom drilled anti-gay into him. If she hadn't, maybe he wouldn't be taking this so hard.

Taylor felt bad for brushing past Dagon just now without a single word. The guy was trying his best, and Taylor wasn't being fair to him.

He wanted to tell his mate how he felt, but talking about feelings was so girly. It was as if he was going through hot and cold spells when it came to his feelings about the warrior.

"You shouldn't be wandering around here alone right now."

Taylor looked up to see the warrior, Ludo, walking toward him. The guy was intimidating as hell, although he sported a cool goatee. "I needed to be alone."

"Then I will escort you at a distance. How does that sound?"

Taylor nodded. It wasn't as though the man was next to him. Ludo fell in behind him and gave him the space he needed to clear the clutter from his head. He glanced back, thinking to himself that Ludo was gay and he didn't hide the fact when Murphy was near him. In fact, his hands stayed glued to his mate.

Why couldn't he have that confidence, that "I don't care what you think of me" attitude? Maybe he was overanalyzing his new identity. It was a new identity, right? Taylor was even more confused now. Who was he?

He became agitated and angry when he couldn't figure it out. Why did he have to be a mate? Why couldn't he have his own identity instead of being Dagon's mate? He was working himself up and he knew it, but couldn't stop it.

"I'm not Dagon's bitch," he shouted to the pictures hanging on the walls as if they were staring at him accusingly. "I'm Taylor Tate!" Whoever that was.

Oh no, he could feel it coming at him full speed ahead, but couldn't jump off of the tracks. A nervous breakdown, anxiety attack, whatever it was called, was coming at him full force with everything that had happened in the past few days.

His brain couldn't process it. It was dumping the maelstrom of emotions into his gut, and Taylor was about to vomit all of it out.

“I’m a man, not a girl!” he shouted once again at the picture of two wolves howling together, using them as his target of aggression. “I’ve never liked men before, and don’t know *why* I do now. This is crazy. My life was boring, but it was a human life before all of this. I want it back!”

He stepped toward the picture and pointed at it. “I don’t want to be Dagon’s bitch. I want to be my own man. What’s so hard to understand about that? And why the fuck do I have to be part demon? I was a normal human, and I don’t want to be anything else but that!”

Taylor knocked the picture from the wall, screaming out his frustration as it fell to the ground. He kicked it, watching it fly down the hall. “Fuck, fuck, fuck, damn it. No, no, no!”

Two large arms circled around him, pulling him close to a broad chest. Dagon shushed him as he held onto him. Taylor pummeled Dagon’s chest and his mate took it, not saying a word. “Why? Why did fate choose me?”

Dagon shook his head. “I don’t know, *cachorro*.”

Taylor leaned into the warrior, his energy leaving him after using so much of it in his outburst.

He wanted to go back to the way it used to be. Yet, he didn’t want Dagon to leave his life. Taylor didn’t know what to think or do so he let his brain shut down and thought of nothing. “I’m Taylor Tate,” he whispered as he closed his eyes.

* * * *

Dagon had followed behind Taylor, staying back and allowing his mate the time he needed while still keeping him safe from being alone. He saw Ludo fall behind and jerked his head to the side to tell Ludo to leave because he was going to be the one to catch Taylor when he fell.

And his mate had crashed hard.

He had noticed a few heads peek around the corner and then disappear. Who wouldn't be curious at all the noise Taylor was making? But at least they had enough respect for his man to give him his privacy while he melted.

"Who am I, Dagon? Because I don't know, and I feel so lost," Taylor mumbled into Dagon's chest.

"I can't answer that for you, *cachorro*. You have to find out who you are and come to terms with that knowledge." As badly as Dagon wanted to tell Taylor that he was a mate now and a half demon, it wouldn't help the man accept it until his mind did.

"I want to go back to my apartment and pretend none of this ever happened."

Dagon felt his heart being ripped out. If Taylor wished that, then he wished to never have met Dagon. He kept the pain in check, knowing that his mate was just working things out in his head, but it hurt like a bitch.

He picked Taylor up and carried him to their bedroom, laying him on the bed and tucking him in. Dagon crawled in behind him, pulling his mate close. "Do you regret mating with me?"

He knew it was a selfish question considering what Taylor was going through, but he needed to know.

"No."

Okay, if Taylor didn't regret the claiming, then they could work past anything else. As long as they had the foundation of his mate wanting to be with him, they should be okay. "So why is it so hard for you to accept what we have?" he asked in the shell of his mate's ear.

"That's one of the things I'm trying to figure out." Taylor reached his hand up and wiped at his eyes. "I don't want you to leave me, but I'm scared to embrace any of this."

"Give me time. Let me show you that it's okay to be whoever you are struggling to hide." Dagon brushed his mate's hair back, kissing his temple then resting his cheek on Taylor's head.

"I don't want to want you, but I want to want you. Does that make sense?"

"Yes. Would you like to take a walk in the forest? Some fresh air may help your mind clear."

"Can we go for a ride instead?"

"I'd rather you use me for my body than my bike."

"But your bike is so sweet-looking," Taylor chuckled and wiped at his eyes again.

"Thanks, brat." Dagon tickled Taylor, and his mate squirmed around to run from Dagon's fingers.

"Uncle," he cried out.

"Uncle it is. Let's go."

* * * *

Tamera watched her son leave the house with the shifter. If it was the last thing she did, she would kill that wolf for claiming her son. It was an abomination for two men to be together, and he would pay for turning her offspring gay.

She didn't care about Josh or Brad. They weren't hers. But Taylor was. If he fought her on this, she would kill him, too.

Damn this maternal drive to be mommy dearest. It wasn't in her nature and maybe offing the brat would rid her of it.

Hmm, not a bad idea.

Chapter Five

"I think Taylor needs intervention." Cecil rubbed his hand over his chin. "He won't accept that he's gay, and it's tearing him apart."

"Oh, no. I'm not popping you brats anywhere. Maverick would skin my pointy ears from my head." Carter held his hands up, palms out, as he waved them. "Get someone else to do your dirty work."

"Chicken?" Cecil challenged him.

"Every bone in my body," the elf stated proudly.

"Fine." Cecil looked across the den. "George, we have another mate hiding in the closet, need your help."

"You talkin' about Taylor?" George sauntered over, removing his Stetson and scratching his head. "How do you want to handle it?"

"Another strip club should help him out."

George shook his head, his eyes narrowing at Cecil. "Have you forgotten about his little problem? His mama wants to reattach the umbilical cord...around his neck."

Cecil snapped his fingers together. The greatest idea yet came to mind. "Panahasi."

"Let me get this straight. You want to take a demon with us to stop a demon from taking her kid?" George asked in astonishment.

"Something wrong with that idea?"

George grinned widely at him. "Not a thing."

"How do we call him?" Nero asked as he walked over to the secretive group of mates.

"Yell for him?" Tangee suggested.

"Nah, I think I know." Cecil led the group of mates into the library and shut the doors, closing the heavy drapes, and then turned

to them. "It has to be dark, according to Maverick. They come out of the shadows."

"Sounds like scary story," Keata whimpered.

"No, just weird as hell. Ready?" He looked around at the fearful faces. "Oh, come on. I'm the one who is afraid of the dark."

"What do we do?" Kyoshi asked.

"Panahasi," Cecil said the name and waited. Calling him like they did when they wanted Carter should work as Tangee suggested. They just needed some darkness.

They all jumped when blazing eyes appeared from the side of the bookshelf, and then a massive body appeared. Cecil looked behind the demon, trying to spot some sort of doorway to another world, but his eyes only saw what they should have seen, a darkened alcove, nothing more.

Cecil had heard Maverick telling the warriors about the demon, but he never said how unearthly the guy was. He stood about six seven, but his body mass was something to be reckoned with. He was more enormous than the Alpha of the Eastern pack.

"I take it you require an audience?" The man's voice was laced with sarcasm and a touch of irritation.

Cecil squared his shoulders. "Yeah, you Taylor's babysitter?"

The reflection of flames in the demon's eyes rose higher. "I am no one's babysitter."

"Whatever, we want to cut loose with Taylor and thought maybe you would come along to keep an eye on things. Got a problem with that?"

"Depends, where are you going to cut loose at?" The leader leaned against the desk and crossed his ankles. Cecil thought for sure the desk was going to give under the tremendous pressure.

"A strip club."

Panahasi's booming laughter scared the shit out of everyone. It sounded more maniacal than hilarious.

"Child's play, I have someplace better in mind," he said after the psychotic laughter died.

Cecil didn't like the sound of that, and judging by the looks he was getting from the mates, neither did they. "How do I know you aren't tricking us in an effort to kidnap the group?"

"What the hell do I want with a bunch of sniveling humans? I'm doing you a favor, not the other way around." Panahasi stood and stared down his nose at them.

"Fine, then we have an arrangement. I'll call you when Taylor returns from his ride with Dagon."

The demon's face pulled back in rage. "He has left the Den?"

"Duh, that's what I just said." Cecil's lip twitched, as he fought back the urge to laugh.

The man turned on his heel and stormed back into the shadows, not another word spoken.

"Does that mean yes?" Blair asked.

"Who the hell knows," Cecil stated flatly. It hadn't gone the way he thought it would. Now all they could do was wait for Taylor's return.

* * * *

Taylor leaned his head back, opening his visor as Dagon drove the motorcycle, enjoying the sun on his face and feeling bad that Josh would never experience this again. His brother had loved being out in the sun.

"Close it." Dagon's voice came over the headset. How did the guy know?

"I have exceptional hearing," he answered Taylor's thought.

Taylor knocked it back into place, souring his face up in protest. He wanted to cross his arms over his chest but feared letting go at this speed. When Dagon gave him his first ride weeks ago, the man had gone ten miles an hour. Now that he knew Taylor loved to ride, he

rode the speed limit. Taylor had a feeling the man preferred to ride faster.

They pulled up to a small bakery about thirty miles from home. The smells coming from the shop had Taylor's mouth watering. Fresh-baked bread and cinnamon filled the air. His stomach growled at the aroma.

Taylor was happy to pull the leather off. The heat of the day was making it stick to his arms. His skin felt degrees cooler once he let the jacket slip from his arms and draped it over the bike. He removed the helmet next, sucking in fresh air. Sweat trickled down his temples. Taylor pulled the hem of his shirt up and wiped away the perspiration.

"I love fresh-baked bread," Dagon said as he held the door open for Taylor. "It's the best thing to eat."

Small talk, he could handle that. "Even better with butter."

"Now you're talking my lingo."

Taylor followed Dagon to the counter, eyeing all the delicious-looking pastries in the glass display. He moved down, spotting the cheeses. "And eat it with cheese, yum."

Dagon smiled. "I think we have found something in common."

Taylor grabbed two bottles of soda and a package of cubed Monterey Jack. Dagon bought a loaf of fresh-baked bread and a small personal-sized tube of butter.

They carried their food and drink out to a small gazebo that overlooked a pond. Taylor kicked his feet up on the bench, enjoying the picturesque view. Dagon fed him cubes of cheese and small slices of buttered bread as Taylor laid his head on Dagon's lap, testing his bravery in such a public place.

He took a deep breath and relaxed, trying not to be too fidgety.

* * * *

Dagon was amazed his mate laid his head down on his thigh, his feet planted firmly on the circular wooden bench. He wasn't complaining though, not at all.

He ran a piece of cheese across Taylor's lips, popping it in once his mate opened for it. "Nice day for relaxing," he commented for no particular reason.

Taylor nodded as he chewed and then swallowed, Dagon watching with interest at the way his mate's throat muscles worked, praying he found out how one day.

"It's peaceful here." Taylor's fingers clung to the soda bottle, twisting it around in his hands. Dagon's thumb smoothed over his mate's cheek, loving the way the skin was so soft under his touch.

His hand moved further down, resting on Taylor's neck as his mate chewed, feeling the tendons stretch and flex. Fuck, he was getting hard.

Somehow his mate sensed this because his head turned and he stared at the bulge in Dagon's jeans and then up at him. He visibly gulped, and then licked his lips. "I'd like to try."

Holy shit, those words almost made Dagon come in his jeans. He looked around, seeing an open field and tall grass.

Desperate minds thought of desperate plans. "Follow me." He pulled Taylor off of the bench, taking him into the tall grass and laying his mate down. Dagon unsnapped his jeans, readying things just in case Taylor stuck to his want.

Taylor rolled to his side, pulling at Dagon's shoulders as he leaned in and began to kiss him. Dagon cupped his face, slanting his mouth to take full advantage of those luscious lips. He sipped and nipped, plunging his tongue in for a taste of paradise.

His mate moaned as he reached into Dagon's jeans and fisted his cock. *Do not fucking come*, he commanded his body. A hiss left his lips as Taylor pushed down his body and stared at his begging cock.

"I..."

"Whatever you're comfortable with." *Just stop torturing me.*

Dagon's toes curled inside his boots when Taylor's lips finally covered his shaft. He fisted his hands, pulling them behind his head in an effort not to grab his mate's head and shove his cock down his throat.

Taylor explored at first, giving small licks and squeezing his shaft rather hard. "You've had your cock sucked, right?"

Taylor blushed deeply. "Once."

"Do what you would like to have done." *And now, before I explode, pretty please with sugar on top?* Dagon was losing his mind. He had to take in short bursts of air to control the surging feeling in his balls.

Taylor stretched his mouth open, taking Dagon in a few inches. He hurriedly grabbed the base, stopping his mate from taking in too much and choking. He pumped it slowly as Taylor licked around his shaft, bobbing his head in a sincere effort to please Dagon. His other hand came down and stroked the back of Taylor's head.

His mate's tongue wrapped around the head of his cock, licking the pre-cum that was flowing out. "Feels good," he encouraged.

Dagon placed his hand on Taylor's throat, feeling the muscles work with a different exercise, an exercise he had just been fantasizing about.

Taylor pushed to his knees, planting his hands on Dagon's thighs, and bobbed his head faster.

It felt like a thousand needle-pricks running up his spine as his balls drew near to his body. "I'm coming," Dagon warned, jerking his cock faster.

Taylor did the most amazing thing. He pulled Dagon's cock from his mouth and opened it as Dagon's seed shot out, hitting his mate's mouth on target, a few ropes landing on his chin. Taylor licked the crown, lapping at any seed that remained.

Taylor smiled down at Dagon, wiping at his chin. With the sun setting behind his mate, Dagon had never seen a more serene sight. The late rays beamed to create a halo around Taylor's head, making

him seem like he wasn't from earth, but an angel who had come down from heaven.

Dagon's fingertips traced down Taylor's face, his thumb caressing his sex-swollen lips. "You're perfect."

"You're only saying that because..." Taylor waved a hand at Dagon's still-exposed cock, turning a deep scarlet.

"No, I'd say it even if we didn't have sex, although it helps." He smiled at Taylor's hopeful eyes.

"You really think so?" Taylor looked at Dagon with nothing short of adoration. Dagon combed his fingers through his hair, wondering if Taylor was going to freak out again since he sucked him off.

He cringed when he saw the look, the one that said Taylor was on his way to a nuclear meltdown. "Now relax, it was just a blow job." When Taylor's mouth gaped open, Dagon wished he had phrased that differently. He stood, quickly shoving his softened cock back into his jeans.

"I-I-I'm okay, really," Taylor squeaked out. Maybe he should help his mate stand on his feet. Kneeling before Dagon couldn't be helping the matter.

"It was the best." He tried a different tactic, hoping it worked.

"It-it was?"

Okay, he could deal with stammering. It was better than sobbing. "I'm reaching into my bag of rewards right now and slapping a gold star on your forehead for the sheer enthusiasm you showed."

Taylor tilted his head and stared at Dagon, his right eye closing slightly. Maybe that last part was too much. "I've never done that before. I may not be a pro, but I tried," his mate spat out.

Anger was real good. It was an emotion Dagon was familiar with and could handle better than tears or a meltdown. "I said you did a good job."

"Oh, thank you, boss man, can I get a raise?" Taylor got to his feet and stomped back over to the bench. Dagon had a raging hard-on from his mate's fire. Was the guy bipolar? Sure as shit acted that way.

“We should go. It’s dark out now.” Taylor snagged his treats and stormed off toward the motorcycle. This roller coaster ride was making Dagon’s head spin.

If Taylor was going to flip the script every time they had sex, he was going to need a big ass bottle of aspirin.

Okay, so he didn’t the last time, but two out of three was too many in his book. Dagon followed behind him like a good little warrior, ready to throw Taylor over his bike and give him a good old-fashioned ass whooping.

Fuck, he was hard again.

“Are you going to pout all the way home?”

“Yep.”

Dagon pulled his leather on, smashing his helmet over his head and swinging his leg over his hog. Why was he berating himself? Taylor was the one who offered. He was a guy and sure as hell wasn’t going to refuse sex with his own mate. Now Dagon was as confused as Taylor acted. Should he have? Or would that have given Taylor the impression he wasn’t interested? Dagon felt caught between a rock and a hard place. He wasn’t sure what he should do anymore.

Damn psycho.

He waited impatiently as Taylor climbed on back, peeling away as soon as his mate was seated. He hit the road doing ninety miles an hour, so pissed off right now that he wanted to find an anonymous person and beat the living hell out of him. He didn’t like doubting himself. Taylor made him feel as though he were chasing his own tail and getting nowhere, fast.

“You could slow down. I don’t think I would look good being scraped off of the road.”

Why did he have to invest in helmets with headsets? “Keep quiet back there.”

“Why? I sucked your cock. Can I absorb that fact?”

"Absorb it quietly. You're disturbing my anger." Dagon did slow down, Taylor's words hitting home the fact that if they wrecked, neither would probably survive it at this speed.

He pulled into the gravel drive, parking his bike and using more force than needed when lowering the kickstand. His Harley Softail was taking a lot of abuse today.

He would take it to Mark's Garage tomorrow and have a tune-up done on it.

"What the hell is wrong with you?" Law asked when he saw the look on Dagon's face when he entered the Den.

"Ask Bipolar Man." Dagon shoved his arm behind his back, pointing at his glaring mate.

"You know he needs time. Stop acting like a big ass baby, and think about him for a moment. If the shoe was on the other foot, how would you be reacting right now?"

"Can I get a witness?" Tryck hollered and bounced on the heels of his feet, raising his hand over his head as if he were in a church service. "Amen, Law. Preach to the knucklehead."

Law flipped Tryck off and continued. "It's been what, two days? Shut the hell up, suck it up, and deal with it."

"Fuck you," Dagon mumbled, knowing in his heart Law was right. He had been acting like a spoiled brat while his mate struggled to deal with his sexuality. It was just that dealing with the hot and cold was giving him a migraine. Should he say yes, should he say no? There didn't seem to be a right answer. He scrubbed his face, wondering just how complicated the complicated situation was going to get.

He turned to apologize to Taylor, but he wasn't standing behind him.

"The mates snagged him. Let him hang with the fellas, blow some steam off." Law threw his arm over Dagon's shoulder. "You see, little brother, it's like this..."

* * * *

Taylor followed behind Cecil, running as fast as he could from Dagon. Why did he freak out every time they had sex?

Because you had his cock in your mouth.

He shouldn't have liked doing that, but he did. *No, no, no, no, it was wrong.* So why then was he licking his lips, wanting to taste his mate's seed again? He couldn't chase away his mom's scowling face and vicious words. They seemed to haunt him every time he was with Dagon sexually.

You're an abomination.

You're going to hell.

You're sick in that twisted head of yours.

Josh's gayness rubbed off on you.

Taylor hated the fact that he allowed those reactions to control what he thought was a good man who only cared about his needs. Dagon didn't deserve his ups and downs, his hot and cold. Taylor wanted to rip his hair out at the confusing feelings battling inside of him. If only he could shut his mom's haunting voice up.

"We're bailing, and you have to come with us."

Cecil's words brought Taylor out of his thoughts, staring at the mate like he'd lost his mind. "I do?"

"Yeah, it's the only way the big guy would agree to come with us." Taylor looked behind the smaller mate, seeing Panahasi standing there looking bored. This couldn't be good.

"What the hell is he doing here?" Taylor snapped quietly. "Have you lost your damn mind? He's a demon, D-E-M-O-N."

"Thanks for the proper spelling. Now quit stalling and get your ass moving. We don't have all night." Cecil grabbed Taylor's arm, pulling him toward the towering demon.

"Hi." His voice broke on the word, showing every cowardly bone he had.

"Greetings, young demon." Panahasi's features softened when he spoke to Taylor. That was just creepy coming from a man who looked as intimidating as the one standing in front of him. The soft features didn't fit the face.

"If you knew how I've been acting lately, you'd be correct in calling me that." Taylor cringed back when Panahasi grabbed his shoulder and gave a light squeeze. Okay, maybe light to the leader, but it hurt like hell to his delicate human bones. *Half human, that is.*

"Your demon is emerging, that's all. You'll learn how to handle him."

"It better be soon before Dagon has me committed."

Panahasi lowered himself, looking Taylor straight in his eyes. "Emotions running hot and cold, high and low?"

Taylor nodded.

"It's only your demon trying to settle inside of you now that it has been unlocked. It's trying to learn your ways. Give it time." Panahasi stood, directing everyone over to a shadowed corner. "Let's party, *demon style.*" He winked.

Taylor felt the air leave his lungs as he followed behind the large man. Dizziness and disorientation rushed over his body, and then they were entering some sort of club. It was dark, noisy, and smelled of bad alcohol. The act of leaving one room and ending up in what seemed to be whole other realm was playing havoc on his nerves, but Taylor managed to stifle it.

His eyes darted up to the stage, seeing a woman sashay around, wiggling her ass to and fro. She had on barely enough to cover her private parts, although her top was less revealing than the boy shorts she wore. Ass cheeks smiled at him as the woman turned her back on everyone. Didn't do anything for him, so what did that say?

"I think we're in the wrong place, Panny. The gender up there is all wrong. My taste runs a little more on the masculine side." Cecil pointed to the performing woman.

“No, you’re exactly where you need to be, *mate*.” Panahasi laughed as ten men surrounded the group.

“Oh, shit, Maverick is going to kill me for this one.”

* * * *

“Where exactly did they take Taylor?” Dagon asked when he couldn’t find a mate anywhere.

Law and Loco sat forward on the leather sofa in Maverick’s office. “Why?” Law stretched the word out, his face changing from curiosity to rage. “Where’s Carter?”

“That’s what I’m trying to find out.” He had been sniffing the air as he searched for Taylor but hadn’t smelled anything resembling mothballs. “I can’t find any of them.”

Maverick stood so fast his chair clattered to the floor. “Find them.” He growled low. “With that demon bitch after Taylor, none of them are safe.”

The hunt was on. Every warrior searched the Den but came up empty.

“Could your mate have taken them out again?” Hawk asked.

“Not likely. Cecil knows the dangers. Besides, no vehicles are missing, and Carter wouldn’t dare pop them anywhere. Something’s wrong.”

Dagon’s gut was twisting with worry. If Taylor’s mom had gotten to him, there was no telling where she would take him. His chest constricted at the thought of never seeing Taylor again.

He *had* to find him.

Chapter Six

Now that Taylor knew why he acted flip-floppy around Dagon, he wanted to be with him. He sat there watching the performers on the stage, not really interested in what they were doing. His mind was on his mate as he picked up his glass of water and took a sip.

Taylor played with the condensation that was running down the sides of the glass, seeing some of the mates jumping around and enjoying themselves and others looking around as curiously as he was.

The place had some strange-looking people in here, and he used the word *strange* loosely. The place seemed to house all sorts of mystical creatures. Panahasi had reassured them that the Shadow Elves wouldn't bother them, but after Ahm's performance back at the Den, he kept one eye on them.

There were Wood Elves there as well as other demons and some shifters. Panahasi pointed them out because they looked very human to the mates. "How you holding up?"

Taylor gave a tight smile to one of the Demon Warriors, as Panahasi had referred to them, and took another sip. If he remembered correctly, this one's name was Hondo.

"I don't think that woman up there is getting it for me."

Hondo snorted and shook his head. "That's no woman. That's Roxy. *He* performs here regularly."

Taylor looked back up at the stage with the new knowledge. A guy? He was pretty for a guy. He tried to make out a bulge in the front but saw none. "Where is he hiding his parts?"

Hondo laughed. "Don't know, and I'm not going to ask. Roxy is a bit of a drama queen and gets pissy over the smallest shit."

Taylor nodded and then looked back up at Roxy. He was drawing the crowd in as the men in the club were whooping and whistling, waving money around for some of the performer's attention.

"You look troubled," Hondo observed.

Taylor eyed the massive warrior as he took another sip. He didn't know this guy from Adam, so why did he want to spill his guts?

Maybe it was the easy way Hondo spoke to him, made him feel comfortable, which was odd as hell considering he was a demon. Weren't they supposed to be inherently evil?

"Working out the mating thing." He gave the demon a small part of his problem.

"Why? Does Dagon treat you badly?" Hondo's brows pulled together, his voice growing rough and threatening.

Taylor wanted to laugh. He didn't ask if it was because they were men. He asked about how he was treated. It seemed everyone around him thought nothing of two men being together. So why was he always getting so worked up about it?

"No, he's actually very nice to me."

Hondo's features relaxed. Taylor knew they were there to protect him, but would Hondo have defended him if his mate were treating him badly?

"That's good, so then why are you looking so lost?"

"I'm not sure I get the whole man-love thing. I was raised to believe it was wrong. Despite my brother Josh."

Hondo tilted his beer bottle back, taking a long draft before lowering it and wiping his mouth. "What's to get? Girl and girl, guy and guy, or guy and girl, doesn't really matter. Gender shouldn't be a factor in it."

"That's what I've been told. But, I keep hearing her voice in my head screaming at me for letting Dagon touch me." Taylor blushed at

giving out the little intimate detail. He was basically telling Hondo that he and Dagon had fucked.

“Nah, don’t let her bother you. That’s one opinion, and the only one that counts is yours. Do you not want to be mated to Dagon? If not, I can make him disappear.” Hondo winked at him before taking another drink from the dark bottle.

“Don’t even think about it. I may be questioning things, but I *do* want to keep him.” There, he had said it out loud. It felt like a small weight was lifted from him with that statement.

“He is hot.”

“*Mine.*” The word rolled up and out of Taylor without conscious thought. Where did that come from?

“Seems your demon is very territorial.” Hondo laughed. “Stop fighting it, fighting the mating and fighting your demon. It will be a lot easier if you just accept it.”

Taylor was still trying to accept the idea he had something inside of him. He picked up the napkin that came with his water, pulling pieces of it apart and dropping them to the table. “What exactly is *my* demon?”

“Almost like the shifters. It’s an actual entity in you, there to protect you from harm. Although you aren’t fully developed at such a young age, you’ll eventually shift when he’s needed. Most half demons mature at around one hundred in human years.”

Well, that cleared things up. “How old are you?”

Hondo’s mouth pulled back in a smile. “I stopped counting when I reached three thousand. Demons don’t age and die like other mysticals. We age like fine wine.”

“Am I immortal?” Another thing to wrap his head around. Here he thought he took things in stride, had told Josh to lighten up when his brother wanted to freak out that Law was a werewolf. Man, had he known that his words would come back to bite him, he would have helped Josh pack.

“You’re only half, so it all depends on how strong your demon becomes. With half demons, it’s all about what sort of demon they have in them. And before you ask, Dagon will live as long as you do. It’s a mating thing.” Hondo clapped him on the shoulder before standing, Taylor jerking forward from the large hand.

So he *may* be immortal, mated to a were-creature, a *male* were-creature, his mom was a demon out to snatch him away from his mate, and his brother was a vampire. *Dr. Phil, here I come.*

“Stop fighting it,” Hondo said before leaving the table. Taylor watched him walk away, wondering if he could embrace who he was, now that he knew.

“Having fun?” Cecil asked as he fell into the booth Taylor was seated at. “That’s a guy up there.” The mate pointed to the stage and laughed. “He sure as shit fooled me.”

“Me, too.”

Cecil cocked his head and stared at Taylor. “You know, George was a closet case when he first came to town, wouldn’t step out to save his life. Nobody cares that you’re gay. We all are. Hell, I’m more curious about your demon than your bed partner.”

“That makes two of us. Hondo said it will develop and may make me immortal.”

“Makes being a human suck. Everyone has all these weird and cool tricks up their sleeve, and all I can do is burp out the alphabet.”

Taylor hadn’t thought of his demon as being cool. Maybe having it in him wasn’t so bad after all. “I’m gay,” he blurted out.

Cecil fell over to his side laughing. “I know. You’ll be fine.”

The laughter was contagious. Taylor grinned and then started chuckling. “I’m gay,” he repeated.

“And proud of it.” Cecil reached across the worn table and tapped Taylor’s knuckles. “Cock for life.”

This time Taylor burst out laughing. “*One* cock for life.”

“As long as it’s good.”

“And big.”

“And he knows what to do with it.”

“And big.”

“You said that.”

Taylor laughed. “It’s the most important part.” The weight of him agonizing over being with a man seemed to lift right off of his shoulders. He did have to admit that it felt good as hell when Dagon fucked him. More than good, it was fucking fantastic.

Some of the other mates scooted into the booth, looking from Cecil to Taylor. “What’s so funny?” Kyoshi asked.

Cecil pointed at Taylor. “He’s gay.”

Kyoshi raised one brow. “And that’s news because?”

“He’s admitting it.”

Kyoshi smiled over at Taylor. “Congratulations on coming out.”

“Thanks.” He was excited now to get back to his mate and be claimed again. Would he freak out afterward? God, he hoped not. With the feeling of being accepted by everyone and the thrill of having such a hot-ass mate, he hoped the euphoria didn’t fade into hysterics. That would be a mood killer...again.

“Oh, shit.” Taylor spotted his mom at the bar. She looked odd as hell standing there in a one-piece leather outfit considering he thought of her as a dollies and bric-a-brac kind of woman.

“We need to go,” Oliver whispered across the table at him.

“Ya think?” Taylor’s eyes scanned the crowd for his bodyguards, trying to get their attention when he spotted a few of them. There was no need. They were already descending on his mom. As much as he hated the idea of what she was trying to do, he still loved her.

She was his mom.

“Let’s go,” Panahasi said as he appeared at Taylor’s side. “My men will take care of her. You guys need to get back to the Den.”

Nobody argued. They all flocked to the large man and then were led to the side of the bar, stepping back through what Taylor assumed to be some sort of portal. He breathed a sigh of relief when they were once again in the library.

“Later.” Panahasi walked backward and threw up a peace sign as he faded into the shadows.

“That was...interesting,” Drew said as he looked away from the corner Panahasi had just disappeared into and stared at them. “Thank god I kicked the drugs. That was mind-blowing enough.”

“I had fun.” Johnny and Keata smiled.

“Roxy was hot.” Johnny giggled.

“And who is Roxy?”

They all jumped and spun around, seeing the entire Sentry unit standing there glaring at them.

“Uh, a cross-dresser?” Tangee answered hesitantly.

Taylor inwardly groaned. Even he knew that Tangee had given the wrong answer.

* * * *

Dagon paced back and forth in their bedroom, unsure of how to handle this situation. His mate had disappeared for hours and now seemed to be a different man. Was this one of his hot and cold mood swings?

He was running hot right now, and Dagon wasn't sure if he should allow any sex until he was sure his mate wasn't going to freak out. Besides, he was pissed as hell right now at the mates for running off when danger was all around them.

“Do you know how much you had me worried?” he snarled. He paced some more, not waiting for Taylor to answer him. “A note would have been nice, a quick ‘I’ll be back’ or anything to indicate you were taking off.”

“I—”

“No, there’s no excuse. It’s my job to protect you, and that’s hard as hell to do when there isn’t a *body* to protect.”

“I—”

"I tore this house up looking for you, going out of my mind thinking something horrible had happened."

"I—"

"You what?" Dagon stopped pacing and looked at his mate, waiting for a plausible reason for him dipping out. He couldn't come up with one, so maybe Taylor could enlighten him. "Well?"

"I came out."

Dagon furrowed his brows, wondering what in the hell his mate was talking about. "Came out of where?"

"The closet."

It took a second for his brain to catch up to his mate's words. Did he mean it, or was this a momentary thing? He wanted to believe it, wanted it with everything in him, but Taylor's meltdowns after sex made him hesitate. "I'm glad."

"I'm sorry for the way I acted. But you have to understand that I was struggling with all of this. It wasn't easy."

"I know." Dagon pulled Taylor into his arms, praying his mate meant his declaration. It would make life a whole lot easier if he did, aside from the demon after him that is.

Dagon put all of his eggs in one basket and trusted his mate at his word. If Taylor wasn't going to freak out, then he was going to fuck him through the mattress and into the floor.

Dagon had taken stock of himself while searching for Taylor. His mate was working through who he was and what was happening to him, and Dagon had acted like a selfish prick. This wasn't about him. This was about Taylor finding himself and accepting or rejecting what he discovered.

He felt like a total heel. There was nothing he wouldn't do for Taylor, but seeing him go through the changes had made Dagon question everything around him. This was something he wasn't used to, and it had unsettled him. With Taylor being the only one around, he had come into Dagon's direct line of fire when the uneasiness

settled inside of him, taking it out on the one man fate had chosen for him.

His brothers had been correct when they confronted him earlier, but Dagon would never tell them that.

There was one more thing that occurred to him while on the hunt, and he needed to let Taylor know this. "I love you."

Taylor looked up at him in shock, his eyes rounding as he bit his bottom lip. "You don't have to say it back." He stroked a thumb over Taylor's cheek. "I just wanted you to know this."

His mate shook his head. "It's not that I don't want to say it back. It's just that...it's hard."

Dagon reminded himself once again of the internal struggle his mate was going through. Hearing the words would have been nice, though.

"I do, you know?"

He would take that if that's all Taylor could give him right now. Sex was one thing, but exposing himself emotionally was a much larger step, one his mate wasn't ready for. Dagon walked Taylor backward, kissing those tempting and plump lips along the way. He slipped a hand behind Taylor's back, running it up and down his spine.

Taylor tilted his head back, opening for Dagon and his explorations. Dagon reached up to touch Taylor's face, cupping his jaw as he kissed him slowly, softly. He wanted his mate to know exactly how he felt. It was Taylor who broke the kiss, pushing Dagon's shirt up. He lifted his arms, allowing Taylor to take it the rest of the way off.

"You have a nice body," Taylor admitted while blushing.

Dagon thought the colored cheeks only added to the appeal of the sexiest looking man he'd ever laid eyes on. He kissed each one, the color deepening. "Thank you."

A thought occurred to Dagon. He took a step back and locked eyes with Taylor. "You're about to have sex with a *man*. I'm going to

fuck that tight ass of yours, and hopefully you're going to suck my cock. You do realize this, right?" He prayed saying it out loud would stop his mate from freaking out afterward.

Taylor turned seven shades of red as he nodded. "I know."

Dagon pulled Taylor's shirt up and off, latching onto one of his nipples. Taylor moaned as his head fell back, grabbing Dagon's hair while pushing his chest closer to Dagon's mouth. He nipped and then kissed, finally blowing a puff of air at the wet skin, watching in wonderment as the nipple peaked and pebbled. Dagon kissed across Taylor's sternum and then latched on to the other one.

Taylor pulled his hair harder, a whimper escaping his lips as Dagon sucked the skin into his mouth. He unsnapped Taylor's jeans while playing with the brown circles, pushing at the waistband to free Taylor's cock.

Taylor's hips snapped, and Dagon glanced down. Taylor's erection was so hard, it lay against his lower abdomen. Glistening drops of pre-cum were welling up and spilling over to make the most erotic sight as his mouth watered to taste his mate.

Dagon eased Taylor down, pulling his shoes, socks, and then his jeans off. He circled the crown with his tongue, greedily drinking the moisture that was escaping. Taylor swiveled his hips, pushing his cock deeper into Dagon's mouth. He opened, taking in what his mate was giving, enjoying that taste of salty flesh against his tongue.

"Wait," Taylor croaked. "I don't want to come that way."

Dagon knew what his mate was talking about and didn't hesitate to crawl between his legs. After lubing and stretching him, Dagon sank deep. He watched in fascination as Taylor's hole stretched around him. What a glorious sight. It was if his mate was made solely for him.

He grabbed Taylor's hips, pulling the smaller man to him as he thrust back and forth. "I love you," he repeated with a grunt. His balls were drawing up quickly, and he knew he wouldn't be holding out much longer. Reaching around, he grabbed Taylor's cock and

matched the stroke to his set tempo while his mate's back arched. Taylor was close as well.

"Come for me, *cachorro*." Dagon's hand became warm in seconds, Taylor crying out his name. Dagon gave a few more thrusts before feeling his seed leave his body and spurt into Taylor's tight grip.

"Fuck." Dagon's sweaty body collapsed, pulling Taylor along with him. He spooned his mate, nuzzling his neck while enjoying the afterglow of sex. This time Taylor didn't have a meltdown. His mate cuddled further into Dagon's arms, sighing heavily, and then yawned loudly.

"Sleepy?"

"Uh-hum." Taylor turned, pulling his arms up to his chest as he burrowed under Dagon. He petted his mate's hair and back, wondering how Taylor managed to come to terms with who he was. It didn't set right with him if someone else helped his mate, but grateful that Taylor was finally accepting it. Once Taylor fell asleep, Dagon gently pulled free and tucked the covers around his mate.

He pulled his jeans on and then his T-shirt. "Panahasi," he called quietly into the shadowed corner of their bedroom.

Two eyes blazed with fire at him, but Dagon was becoming used to the freaky sight. "Now what?" the demon asked as he emerged from the shadowy doorway of another realm. This, Dagon assumed, was what was going on when the man appeared.

"I don't know whether to thank you or punch you for tonight."

The large man shrugged, taking a few steps toward the soft, cushioned chair that sat on one side of the room, and took an uninvited seat. "They asked me, not the other way around. Would you prefer I told them no and allowed them to take Taylor to a human club?"

"Where exactly did you go?" This had been on Dagon's mind, but he had pushed it aside when lust overtook him. Now he wanted answers.

"A realm club, he was safe. The Demon Warriors were all present and watching over them, including myself."

"Exactly what are you and the *Demon Warriors*?"

Panahasi studied him for a moment before answering Dagon's question. "We are an elite group of warriors sent out to find those demons who have gone bad. We also help the half breeds who have unlocked their demons and help to protect themselves while they struggle with their new demon."

"Demons gone bad?" That was a paradox if he ever heard one. "Aren't you guys inherently bad by nature?"

"A big misconception." Panahasi waved a hand in front of him. "We live like all breeds, wanting families, mates, and a place to safely live."

Dagon absorbed this, not sure how much to believe. He was a demon after all. The son of a bitch could be blowing smoke up his ass for all he knew. Dagon stayed close to his bed, his protective mode in full force as his mate slept. "And what of Taylor?"

"As one of my warriors, Hondo, told him, he may be immortal. He may not. It all depends on his strengths and weaknesses as a half demon and the entity that resides in him now." Panahasi stood, glancing at Dagon and then at the shadows of the room. "His mother is imprisoned now. He's safe and has somewhat accepted who he is. My services and my men are no longer required. Nice meeting you, Dagon Santiago. Take care of him." With that being said, Panahasi bowed and walked into the darkened corner.

Chapter Seven

Taylor stared at the sleeping man next to him. Dagon was really quite handsome in a rugged sort of way. His skin sizzled every time his mate spoke with that thick accent of his.

He traced the thick veins that ran the length of Dagon's biceps, thinking of the cookout Maverick had announced they were having this evening. The event was to take place tonight, so Gabby and Josh could enjoy it as well. The Alpha had said it was an end of summer event he wanted to become a tradition in their household.

They found out that Gabby and Montana's son, Nevada, was immune to the sun's rays, which was a relief to both fathers. How they found out wasn't said, and Taylor hadn't asked.

Taylor still couldn't wrap his head around the fact that a man had given birth. Two of them to be exact, and Heaven was pregnant again. He learned that Josh was now capable. Taylor smiled at the possibility of being an uncle. Although Brad had a bunch of kids running around, none of the women stuck around long enough for either Josh or him to connect with their nieces and nephews. If Josh gave birth, the babe would be raised right under this roof. This excited Taylor. He loved little kids.

The only part that sucked was the fact Josh had taken a five-year birth control shot. Maybe by the time it wore off, his brother would have changed his mind.

Taylor pulled his hand back when Dagon shifted around, pulling him close to that big expansive chest. Taylor leaned in, using his mate's strength for comfort. He liked that Dagon was much larger

than him. Although he wasn't helpless, Taylor liked the feeling of being protected.

"Good morning, *cachorro*." Dagon nuzzled his neck. Taylor leaned in, feeling freer than ever before now that he didn't let that voice tear into him. His hand went back to admiring the large muscle on Dagon's arm, the pads of his fingers exploring and appreciating the beauty as his mate caressed his back.

"Are you feeling okay?" Dagon kissed his forehead, each closed eyelid, and then his nose before taking his mouth. What a way to wake up. Taylor let go, allowing the enjoyment to run through him.

"I am now," he breathed out when he broke the kiss. "I love you." He smiled, finally having the nerve to say it.

Dagon growled, pushing Taylor further under him. He felt the hard shaft tapping at his belly, letting him know exactly what Dagon planned to do. Taylor wiggled around, smiling up at Dagon as he freed his legs and wrapped them around his mate's thick waist, barely managing to get his ankles locked.

"And what does my *cachorro* want on this bright and beautiful morning, *hmm*?" Dagon kissed his way down Taylor's neck, making him almost forget what the question was.

"You."

"I can do that." Dagon added lube to his cock and sank into Taylor, already stretched from the night before.

Taylor cleared his throat and made the best monkey sound he could muster. Dagon stilled and stared down at him with confusion written all over his face. "Is this a demon thing?"

Oh my fucking god, I'm going to kill Josh. Taylor grabbed a pillow and shoved it over his face, humiliated to the point that he wanted to crawl under a rock somewhere. He shook his head at Dagon, feeling the burn creep up his neck and across his face.

Dagon tugged at the pillow, and Taylor finally released it, throwing his arm over his eyes so Dagon couldn't see his face.

"Taylor?"

“*Josh!* That’s who. I’m going to kill him. He told me I had to scream like a monkey when having anal sex with a man!” To add to his mortification, Dagon threw his head back and burst out a loud and booming laughter that rang off of the walls. His left hand went to his side as his right landed on the mattress, bent over and laughing so hard he was crying.

Taylor grabbed the pillow and started beating Dagon with it. “S—Sorry.” Dagon tried to get out but started laughing even harder. Taylor pushed himself up, freeing Dagon’s cock from his ass as he rolled away.

“Come here, don’t be mad.” Dagon pulled Taylor back onto the bed, wiping his eyes with his free hand. “It was...cute.” Dagon began to laugh again.

Taylor cuffed the back of his mate’s head. “No, it wasn’t.”

Dagon pulled in a deep breath, trying to still the laughter that kept bubbling up. “Do it again.”

“No.” Taylor pouted, crossing his arms over his chest. He couldn’t stay mad long. It wasn’t Dagon’s fault Josh had tricked him into making an ass out of himself, but Dagon could find less humor in it. Taylor thought about what he had just done, a smile breaking across his face. “That was funny,” he admitted after the initial embarrassment wore off.

“Yeah, it was.” Dagon narrowed his eyes. The previous look of desire was back, and Taylor’s toes curled in.

“Can I try again?”

“Try what?” Dagon asked as he pulled Taylor back onto the bed.

“To suck you.” There went the face burning again. Taylor ducked his head at what he had just said, hoping Dagon’s laughter didn’t return. His mate grabbed the sheet, wiping away the lube from his cock before nodding.

This time Taylor took it slow. He studied the engorged shaft in front of him, dipping his fingertip into the moisture leaking from the head and placed it on his tongue. It was salty and bittersweet. He

leaned forward, sticking the tip of his tongue out and tasting it firsthand. He smiled when the cock jumped, obviously enjoying what Taylor was doing.

His lips wrapped around the head, sucking at the soft skin and letting his tongue explore the thick veins and the opening at the top. Holding the base, he pushed Dagon's cock further into his mouth, stretching his lips wide as he tried his best to conquer the beast.

"Taylor." Dagon moaned, running his hands over Taylor's hair, massaging his scalp. Taylor palmed his sac, rolling it around in his hand as he sucked up and down the heavily veined cock.

"That's it, baby."

Taking Dagon's words as a sign that he was doing a good job, Taylor began to pump the cock in his hand, wanting to taste his mate's seed. It was a drive in him now, a goal he was striving to achieve.

"I'm close, *cachorro*," Dagon warned, trying to pull back, but Taylor wasn't having that. He was going to prove that he could do this. He locked his lips into a tight suction and swallowed the cock further into his mouth, jacking the shaft for all his worth.

"Taylor!" Dagon shouted as hot cum filled Taylor's mouth, he swallowed every last drop. Pulling Dagon's cock from his mouth, Taylor wiped his face and looked up at Dagon from under his lashes.

"My turn, beautiful." Dagon pushed him to the mattress, swallowing him to the root. Taylor bucked and keened as Dagon sucked him off with the experience Taylor lacked. He stiffened and cried out as he came, his body jerking with his release.

Dagon licked any remnants and then kissed his way up Taylor's body, stopping at his mouth and sharing the taste. Taylor smiled into Dagon's mouth, feeling happier than he had in a very long time.

* * * *

Taylor helped set the tables in the backyard, unable to keep the grin off of his face every time he looked over at Dagon. His mate winked at him as he talked with a few other warriors.

For the first time in Taylor's life, he was in love. It hit him this morning when he stared into his mate's eyes. He couldn't imagine a life without him.

"I know that look," Tangee teased as he helped Taylor set up the table. "You're in love."

Taylor blushed seven kinds of red at Tangee's words. It was true. Every time he looked at his mate his heart burst with happiness. "Is it that obvious?"

"Yeah." Tangee laughed.

Caden and Nero came over and helped them start setting out the food. Taylor placed three stacks of paper plates at the end of each table. Cecil and Blair drug out the refreshments and emptied the cubes of soda into the large barrels that were full of ice, shoving bottles of juice alongside them.

Taylor leaned his head back and sniffed. The smell of meat grilling made his mouth water. "Hey, Taylor." Oliver nudged Taylor's shoulder with his. "Need any more help?"

Taylor pointed to the huge box of trash bags. "You could line the fifty-five-gallon drums with those bags."

"On it." Oliver grabbed the box and walked over to the containers.

How did he end up in charge of getting everything together? The sun said its final farewell as it dipped in the western sky, twilight bringing the lightning bugs out and sending the little ones chasing after them. A slow melody began to play in the background, and Taylor saw that Nero had set up a DJ stand. This was going to be one heck of a party.

"Make way," George shouted as he and Tank, along with a few more warriors, brought out trays of food. Taylor stepped back and watched as an array of food was placed on the tables.

Large arms circled him as Dagon kissed his temple. "How you holding up, *cachorro*?"

"Good. Although I'm not sure how I got suckered into organizing everything."

"You're a born leader."

Taylor shook his head. "And you believe that? My middle name is chicken."

"You sell yourself short, baby." Dagon pulled Taylor up and tossed him over his shoulder, Taylor grabbing onto the back of his mate's shirt for dear life.

"Dagon! Put me down," Taylor yelled.

"You can take a break and help me at the grill." Dagon lowered him and set him on his feet, leaning in for a kiss. Taylor glanced around and then gave Dagon a quick one.

"Good enough." Dagon laughed, as if sincerely amused. He picked up the extra set of tongs, handing them to Taylor. "You get the other grill."

"How is that a break? I'm still working." He stated the obvious as he flipped a few ribs. Taylor liked this job better though because he got to be next to Dagon. It didn't seem so much a job with a perk like that.

Taylor dropped the tongs when his eyes began to burn. It felt like they were on fire. "Shit." The palms of his hands rubbed them as they watered profusely.

"You okay over there? The grill smoke will burn your eyes if you're not careful." He could feel Dagon's hands on his face. "Move your hands and let me see, *cachorro*."

Taylor lowered his hands and blinked a few times, trying his best to open them.

"Your eyes...they're changing." Dagon gasped. "They look like Panahasi's."

"How? He said I was *half* demon."

“This is true, but he also said you would discover yourself as the demon inside of you evolved.”

Taylor wanted his green eyes back. He liked the fact that they matched Dagon’s. He tried rubbing them again, praying he could somehow rub the green back in.

“Stop.” Dagon grabbed his hands. “You may make it worse.”

“By rubbing them?” Taylor was being snarky, but he couldn’t help it.

“Do you know anything about this? I sure as shit don’t. Maybe this is only temporary, just wait and see.” Dagon cupped his hand and poured water into it from a bottle and splashed Taylor’s eyes. “It’s worth a shot.” He shrugged when Taylor pulled the bottom of his shirt up and wiped his eyes.

“See?” Dagon smiled. “They’re back to green.”

“Really?” Taylor poked at his eyes and then thought about what he was doing. *Duh, like I can tell by feeling them.*

“We’ll just monitor them to see what happens.” Dagon kissed Taylor and then walked back over to his grill.

Taylor didn’t like the idea of his body changing on him and not having any control over it. Would his life ever even out and run smoothly? It seemed that he had experienced one thing after another lately, and his mind was having a hard time keeping track of all of this.

Taylor jumped when he felt a hand skim down his back and cup his rear end. He was so submerged in thought that he hadn’t seen Dagon approach. He leaned back into the strong muscled chest, enjoying the closeness.

He’s making you gay.

Taylor had had about enough of his mom’s intrusive voice. It was starting to really piss him off. He was finally happy now, and she was ruining it! If only there was some way to turn that damn switch off!

“*Cachorro?*”

Taylor was seething as he turned toward Dagon. "What?" he snapped. His mate pointed at the grill. Taylor gasped when he saw it levitate a few inches from the ground. Holy shit! Had he done that?

"I think your anger is doing it." Dagon stepped closer, embracing Taylor as he talked soothingly in his ear. "Calm down. Whatever is making you angry isn't worth it."

"She won't shut up," Taylor replied.

"Who?"

"My mom. All I can hear are her critical words. They won't stop." He beat at his temple, making the grill hover higher.

"She's not here." The Alpha walked over, talking in a low tone. "You are with Dagon, the man you love. Her opinion doesn't matter, Taylor." He blinked a few times and then nodded at the Alpha. Taylor couldn't understand why he had allowed himself to get so damn mad.

As soon as he calmed down, the grill hit the ground with a loud thud. That brought Taylor's attention around. He stared at it for a moment, watching the fire hiss and then smoke as the fat dripped from the steaks.

Taylor grabbed the tongs, flipping the meat over before setting them down and then stared at the ground. He had done that, had made the grill leave the ground. Taylor stole a quick glance at the crowd gathering around him and then back at the ground. He didn't care for all the attention on him now.

"Do you want to go inside?" Dagon asked.

Taylor nodded, keeping his eyes from making contact with anyone. He walked numbly next to his mate, wishing everyone would stop fucking staring at him. He was embarrassed enough without the unwanted attention.

Dagon guided him by the elbow, taking him through the kitchen door and pulling a chair from the table, and helped him sit. "I did that." Taylor looked up at Dagon, his mouth opening and closing like a fish.

"It's okay, Taylor. You didn't do anything wrong."

* * * *

Dagon knelt in front of Taylor, wondering why he didn't feel as stunned as he should have been. It could be the fact that, with everything going on around them lately, he was getting used to the weird crap.

Dagon brushed the hair from Taylor's forehead and then rubbed his ear with his thumb and forefinger. "It'll be okay, *cachorro*."

Taylor quietly sighed and stared outside. "I know. It just seems like as soon as I get used to the idea of something, another thing pops up, and it's not small things either."

That was very true. His mate had dealt with more shit in the past couple of weeks than most dealt with in a lifetime. "You're strong. You can handle it. I know you can."

"Can I borrow some of that optimism?" Taylor smiled and leaned in to kiss Dagon's lips.

"Anytime you need it." Dagon straightened and held his hand out, Taylor grabbing it as they walked back outside.

"I don't think it's safe for me to man the grill," Taylor said as they walked back over to the large, smoking units. Dagon wasn't going to have his mate running from who he was.

"You'll do just fine. I have confidence in you." He picked the tongs up and handed them to Taylor. "Show everyone you got this under control." Dagon winked at his mate.

"I feel better knowing you're behind me in this." Taylor accepted the tongs.

"You doing okay?" Maverick asked as he walked up to Taylor with Melonee and Cecil right by his side.

"I don't plan on making the grill leave the ground again."

Dagon took the tongs from Taylor and turned the meat over, hearing the hissing sound as the fat dripped onto the charcoals. The

breeze that wafted by felt good on his skin as he turned his attention back to the people standing close to his mate.

"I knew you were cool." Melonee smiled at Taylor.

"Like I've said before, it makes being human seem boring." Cecil laughed. "You supernaturals are outranking us here."

"I'm still human," Taylor said.

"Yeah, and so am I." Melonee giggled.

Dagon chuckled as he grabbed a few juices from the drum and handed one to Taylor. He unscrewed the cap, taking a long drink before turning to Maverick. "I hear you have an announcement tonight."

"After dinner." Maverick held his hand out for Cecil as he walked away.

"Don't you just hate that?" Melonee shook her head. "He's always so cryptic." She raced off when she spotted her brother, Tangee.

"This has got to be one of the strangest families I've ever met." Taylor looked over the crowd in the backyard.

"But any one of these people would stand up and fight for you." Dagon chuckled as one of Heaven and Murdock's twins walked over to them. "Well, almost everyone."

Taylor bent at the waist, hauling the little one into his arms. "I bet he would try." He tickled Maddox's stomach, and the toddler squealed with delight.

Dagon chuckled as he took another drink of juice, wondering how he had gotten so damn lucky with Taylor.

He plated the meat and carried it over to the table. Dagon walked back to the grill and closed it before declaring to everyone that the food was ready.

They had six long picnic tables set up, six or seven people to a table as everyone formed a line at the buffet tables. Dagon wasn't sure what he wanted to eat. It all looked good.

He carried his and Taylor's plates as his mate carried their bottled drinks and silverware.

“Damn this is good,” Dagon said as he licked the barbeque sauce from his fingers. “Whoever made the potato salad needs an award.”

“That would be me,” Heaven called out from the next table over. “Thanks.”

Dagon held his potato-filled spoon up at Heaven and then opened his mouth to enjoy the flavors bursting on his tongue.

The conversations were lively and laughter was heard all around.

Taylor smashed two plates of food. Where did his mate put all of it? He was skinny as hell but ate like he had two stomachs. Dagon grinned when Taylor dropped four rib bones onto his plate. “I thought you looked like you needed more.”

“Ah, you know me too well.”

“I’m going to get more before he eats all of them.” Law got up and made his way around the tables.

“Bring me some back,” Tryck yelled.

Dagon watched the mate, Nero, lay a few napkins on the bench and then sit. His mate, Gunnar, laid napkins on the table before setting the plate in front of Nero. The short mate snapped on a pair of blue gloves and then smiled up at Gunnar before eating.

He chuckled at the blue-gloved mate as he thanked his lucky stars he didn’t have any hang-ups.

Once everyone had full bellies and was sitting back talking with each other, Maverick stood and cleared his throat.

“I have an announcement to make, so I thought this picnic would be a good place, considering everyone is here.” The Alpha’s deep timbre voice boomed across the backyard.

“You’re handing the reins over to me,” Tryck shouted.

“In your dreams,” Maverick snorted. “As I was saying.” He shot a glare at Tryck before continuing. “I’ve decided that some expansion is needed.”

“You and Cecil having a baby?” Montana called out.

“Not in this lifetime,” Cecil shouted back as he grabbed Melonee’s hand. “I’m not talking about you.” He smiled.

"Can I finish before you guys toss in your two cents?" Maverick pulled at his soul patch as he glanced at the tables. "Thank you. It's been a quite a few years since the first mate has walked into our lives. A lot has happened since then. Our family has grown to a large size. The Den can accommodate all of you, but I am aware some of you wish to have your own homes."

Dagon knew the Alpha was talking about the couples with children. It wasn't a hidden fact that Heaven wanted a small home for his and Murdock's twins to grow up in, along with the child on the way.

"I've thought long and hard about this. What I propose is that a few cottages be built on Brac land, behind the Den, so that any couple who decide they want a place of their own are still close by. I also want to expand on the town, build more businesses to help the community with their financial troubles."

Everyone began to clap as cheers went up at the news. Maverick held his hands up until the crowd quieted. "I already have a long list of townspeople qualified to get the job done. A few are interested in owning some of those businesses. If any of you want a business to call your own, by all means, let me know."

Dagon knew that Heaven owned a barbershop, Murphy owned a bookstore, Mark owned a garage, and Cody was half owner of the diner. It would be good to see more pack-run businesses. He sat there and thought long and hard about becoming a business owner.

What would he do?

"If anyone has any questions, you know where my office is." Maverick took a seat and began to talk quietly with Cecil.

"Can I own one?" Taylor turned to Dagon and asked.

"I don't see why we can't go into business together. But what would we do?"

"Sell motorcycles." Taylor laughed. "What else?"

"Santiago Cycles. I like that." Tryck smiled.

“You want all of us to go into business together?” Dagon looked at his brothers.

Law shrugged his shoulders. “Why not?”

“I like that idea.” Taylor grabbed his plate and Dagon’s, taking them to the trash can.

Yeah, why not?

Chapter Eight

Taylor laughed as Dagon pulled him through the woods. "How's this?"

He nodded. They could be standing in a marsh and Taylor wouldn't mind, as long as he was with Dagon. "Perfect."

Dagon stopped walking and spun Taylor around, making him face a tree as Dagon pressed his chest into Taylor's back. "That's what I was hoping you would say." He could feel Dagon's erection, hard and ready, rubbing against his ass. Taylor moaned, having become quickly addicted to the feel of Dagon's cock.

His hole clenched at the thought of being filled by that large shaft. Taylor had noticed that he no longer heard his mother's voice in his head and was a thousand times thankful for that miracle. He could only guess that it had disappeared when he finally accepted who he was.

He pushed up on his toes, wanting to feel Dagon's cock at the crease of his ass. His nerve endings prickled as Dagon rubbed his erection against his ass. Taylor could feel his own cock biting into his zipper as it grew with need.

"I can smell your lust, and it's driving me crazy." Dagon nipped Taylor's ear, his cock jerking at the action. Taylor pressed his ass into his mate's pelvis, wishing the clothes between them would disappear.

He gulped and then panted as Dagon reached around him and unsnapped his jeans. "I'm going to suck your dick, Taylor."

He melted at those sexy ass words. His fingers dug into the bark as Dagon's breath whispered across his skin. Taylor's eyes blinked as his lips parted, his heart picking up in beat. "I want."

“Mmm, what does my *cachorro* want?” Dagon’s hands unzipped his jeans but then moved away. Taylor whimpered.

“Tell Dagon what you want, and you may just get it.” His tongue rimmed the side of Taylor’s ears as his leg pushed between Taylor’s. Dagon’s forefinger tilted Taylor’s head back, their noses clashing as Dagon’s mouth swooped down to take his.

Taylor rubbed his ass up and down Dagon’s leg, feeling the friction against his balls. Taylor’s fingers dug harder into the bark of the tree. His feet were lifted from the ground when Dagon raised his leg higher.

“You’re making my cock throb from rubbing your ass all over my leg. Why don’t you do that naked?” Dagon cupped the back of Taylor’s head, nipping at his lips before pulling back and removing his leg.

Taylor shoved his pants down, pulled his shoes off, and then kicked them the rest of the way off. He grabbed the bark as he slid back onto Dagon’s leg, moaning as his testicles smashed against the strong muscle, feeling the material of Dagon’s jeans tickle his balls.

“Tell me we’re not a perfect match,” Dagon crooned in his ear as his leg jerked under Taylor. He fell forward, his cock leaking onto his mate’s jean-clad leg. The warrior ran his hands over Taylor’s behind, squeezing his ass, making him groan. Taylor pushed back, his head falling to the side as his hole grazed Dagon’s muscled thigh.

“Are you ready for me yet?” Dagon lifted Taylor with his hands, setting him on his feet as he unsnapped his jeans, freeing his cock. “Wrap your legs around me.”

Taylor did, as Dagon placed his hands on the tree, Taylor leaning back as Dagon entered him. His head spun as his mate fucked him against the tree. Taylor clung to him. The small bite from the bark was miniscule compared to the pleasure his mate brought him.

“Perfect match,” Dagon said before he took Taylor’s mouth in demanding frenzy. Dagon thrust into him, his fingers digging into

Taylor's sides as his face pulled back, hissing as he stiffened and then came.

Taylor whimpered when Dagon pulled free, but his whimper quickly died when Dagon set him on his feet and then dropped to his knees. Taylor shivered at the sight. The big, strong, and masculine Dagon was on his knees, taking Taylor's cock into his mouth.

His head fell back, hitting the tree as Dagon worked his shaft with mastery. Taylor could feel his cock hitting the back of Dagon's throat, and then Dagon took him further down his throat, working his muscle to bring Taylor such pleasure that he shouted out, crying to the trees as he came down his mate's throat.

Taylor fell to his knees, his breath ragged as he fought to breathe.

"I told you we are a perfect match." Dagon chuckled as he helped Taylor get dressed. Dagon stood, pulled his jeans up and tucked his soft cock back into his pants.

"Come on, *cachorro*. We were taking a walk, right?"

Taylor nodded, unsure what Dagon was saying, his mind still buzzing from that explosive orgasm.

"You look gorgeous flushed," Dagon teased him as they walked out into a clearing.

* * * *

Dagon hunched down as he examined the scrape on his bike. It wasn't large, but *he* noticed it. He didn't like to see any marks on his baby. Maybe owing a bike shop was a better idea than he thought.

It would have gotten his baby fixed right away.

Dagon wiped the soft cloth over the scratch, knowing that it wasn't going to remove the mark. One could always hope.

He planned on taking it into Mark's Garage today to get an oil change and anything else it might need while he and Taylor bummed around. He also wanted to look at some prospective land, find the best location for the shop. The Alpha had made it clear that if anyone

wanted his own business, he would pay for it. It was a way to make them feel accomplished.

Buying the lot, building their shop, and getting up and running wasn't going to hurt the Santiagos' wallet. They just never found a place they wanted to settle down in. Now they had. Brac Village was the perfect place to live. Regardless of Tryck's bitching, Dagon knew his brother loved it here.

He felt as excited as a kid in a candy store when it came to owning his own. Well, owning a family business, that is.

Dagon stood and tossed the rag in his saddlebag as the scratch stared angrily at him, as if his bike were accusing him of being too rough on it. He chuckled to himself, wondering how someone could be in love with his motorcycle like he seemed to be.

"Ready?" Tryck asked as he and his mate, Carter, approached. Law was right behind him with Joshua in his arms. Dagon looked at each man and then at the house.

"As soon as Taylor gets out here." They had planned on a night ride, just getting out and enjoying the open road. It had been too long since he and his brothers rode. He missed it.

"I saw him talking with Melonee in the den," Law informed him. "Those two are like two peas in a pod."

Dagon was glad his mate fit in so well here. After everything Taylor had been through, he feared his mate would run for the hills screaming and never look back.

Things seemed to have settled down over the past two months. No other incidents had occurred, and he and Taylor's relationship was blossoming nicely.

Dagon tightened the buckle on his saddlebag as he waited for Taylor to join them. He smiled when he saw his mate racing across the lawn with his riding jacket on and his helmet tucked under his arm. Taylor lived to ride.

"Sorry...I was talking with Melonee, and she wouldn't let me go." Taylor panted as he caught up to them and stopped by Dagon's side, a

wide grin stretching across his face. Dagon would never get over how gorgeous his mate truly was. His breath seemed to catch in his chest every time he looked at Taylor.

"Come on, *cachorro*. Let's ride." He could see Taylor's eyes darken at those words. Taylor was more turned on by riding than Dagon was.

The brothers mounted their motorcycles, their mates climbing on back as all three rode from the gravel drive out onto the paved road. Dagon could feel Taylor holding him tight around his waist and knew this was one of those moments his mate lived for.

"I can feel your cock getting hard." He chuckled into the headset. The bulge pressing into his ass was testament to his words.

"Every time I ride." Taylor laughed. It was music to Dagon's ears as they entered the on-ramp to the highway.

They exited the highway, driving their bikes through the city as they made their way to the all-you-can-eat buffet. The concept was good for large families, but the franchise had no clue the Santiago brothers were entering their establishment. They could eat the business bankrupt. Although they wouldn't.

He chuckled when Carter tugged at his knit cap, covering his elfish ears as they walked into the place. He had to admit, Tryck had done well when fate gave him Carter. He wasn't too sure about the ears though. Dagon had an urge to tug on them every time he was near Carter just to see if they were real.

"Touch them and die." Tryck glared at him.

Dagon smirked at his oldest brother as he pulled Taylor into the curve of his body. His brother knew him too damn well. They paid for their meals and ate until Dagon felt like he couldn't move.

* * * *

Taylor walked across the restaurant to the men's room. His belly felt like it was going to burst from eating so much. Never had he been

to a place like this and was thankful. He would weigh a ton by now if he had discovered the restaurant before. The food was delicious.

He stood at the sink washing his hands when he heard crying coming from one of the stalls. Taylor grabbed a handful of paper towels as he listened closely. It wasn't any of his business, and he felt like he was intruding on someone's privacy, but he couldn't just walk away. It wasn't in him to do so.

"Is everything okay?" he called out. He heard some sniffing and then a nose being blown, but the person didn't answer him.

Taylor shrugged and tossed the paper towels into the trashcan when the stall door opened.

He waited, curious if he was honest, to see who would come out. He was amazed to see the dark-haired beauty who emerged, wiping at his eyes and dodging Taylor's intent stare.

"Are you okay?" he asked again. The man stiffened next to him and nodded. Taylor wasn't a bulky man, not in the least, but this man was super slim with gentle and angelic features. He looked fragile to Taylor. "Is there anything I can help you with?" He wasn't sure why he was offering this stranger his help, only that a need deep inside compelled him to ask.

"I'm okay." The man spoke softly, as if whispering. He could see the man's hand tremble as he turned the faucet on. Taylor felt helpless, wanting to help this stranger for some crazy reason. His anger surfaced when he saw a small bruise on the side of the slim man's face.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Steven." The man's eyes widened as he stared at Taylor. He quickly grabbed a few paper towels and dried his shaky hands.

"I want you to take my number, Steven. If you need help, or just someone to talk to, call me."

Steven blinked at Taylor, fear and curiosity in his eyes. "But why? You don't even know me."

Taylor couldn't answer that. He wasn't sure himself why he was reaching out to Steven. He just knew he had to help this stranger. "Will you take it?"

Steven quickly pulled out his cell phone and handed it to Taylor. His hands trembled in front of him as he waited for Taylor to punch his number in. "I'm serious, call me day or night."

"Thank you." Steven spoke so softly that Taylor wasn't sure if he had really heard him. Taylor tapped his forefinger on the countertop of the sink, wondering what he should do.

Did Steven get that bruise from a fight with a stranger, some kind of accident, or was someone he knew abusing him? He hated to leave Steven to his fate.

"Is it someone at home?" he pried.

"I have to go. Thank you..."

"Taylor. My name is Taylor Tate. Call me, Steven." He sounded a little bit forceful with his command but hated to see Steven, or anyone else, being abused.

"I will." Steven gave him a weak smile before rushing from the restroom. Taylor followed him out, watching to see who he was with. Maybe he could tell the brothers and they could help Steven if the abuser was here.

Unfortunately, Steven walked right out of the restaurant. He sighed deeply, knowing he did the best he could considering the circumstances.

* * * *

"Can we talk?" Taylor asked Dagon once they made it home. He took off his jacket and hung it in the closet and then sat down on the chair to remove his boots. Taylor couldn't stop thinking about Steven and what he may be going through right now.

"Of course." Dagon set his boots by the bed and sat up. Taylor studied his mate for a moment, his eyes drinking in Dagon's

handsome features. He'd never regret his decision to be with the strong and sexy man.

"I think I know what I want to do."

"I'm not following you, *cachorro*."

Taylor stood and began to pace as he gathered his thoughts. "I heard Drew talking to one of the other mates about becoming a counselor at the rec center." He stopped and glanced over at Dagon before continuing. "I think I could help a lot of people out that way."

Dagon seemed to consider this news for a moment before he spoke. "It's a noble profession. I can see how Drew could contribute his experience with drugs to help addicts, but who would you help?"

Taylor had thought long and hard about it the whole ride home. The situation in the restroom had disturbed him, more so than he had thought at the time.

Taylor knew the different programs that Thomas, one of the counselors at the rec center, had set up and had gone through all of them in his head. "I want to be an abuse counselor. I want to help those who are being abused. Those people looking for guidance. I think Maverick should set up some kind of shelter for those looking to escape that kind of life and wanting to start over."

Dagon held up his hand, his face stoic, as he stared at him. Taylor's heart plummeted. Dagon was going to say it was a stupid idea, argue with him that he had no clue what he was talking about. He felt anger building inside of him, and a bit of resentment as well.

Taylor knew from the moment he stepped out of that restroom what his purpose in life was, and Dagon was about to shoot it full of holes.

"Slow down, *cachorro*." He lowered his hand as he took a deep breath. "I think you should run this idea by Maverick. It sounds like you've done a lot of thinking about this."

"I have."

"Then I think it is something you should pursue."

"Really?" Taylor had steeled himself for the argument he knew he would have to face with Dagon. He wasn't prepared for his mate to be onboard. Not when he had looked like he wanted to argue at first.

"Why do you sound so surprised?" Dagon asked as he stood, crossing the room to pull Taylor into his arms. "I think it is a wonderful idea."

"You do?"

Dagon tilted Taylor's head back, kissing him softly on the lips. "Anyone willing to help another out, a stranger at that, has my respect and approval."

Taylor knew he didn't need Dagon's approval, but it helped knowing his mate was behind him all the way. "You think Maverick will do it? Build a shelter?"

"I think he would do anything for this community. I know he hates abuse. I can't think of any reason why he wouldn't be onboard with this idea." Dagon began to kiss down Taylor's neck. "You're sexy when you're passionate for a cause."

Taylor groaned as his head fell back, his skin breaking out in goose bumps at Dagon's touch. Taylor gripped the front of Dagon's shirt, pushing it up past his head as he latched onto one of Dagon's nipples, sucking it into his mouth as he moaned.

"Damn, baby." Dagon cupped the back of Taylor's head, his fingers gliding through Taylor's hair. "That feels good."

Taylor nipped the brown disc before making his way to the other one. His hands spanned out over Dagon's skin, feeling the tight muscles of his abdomen as he unsnapped Dagon's jeans.

"Fuck, any more causes you want to join?" Dagon asked as he pushed the waistband of his jeans down, exposing his hardened cock. He began to stroke his shaft as Taylor kissed, licked, and sucked his way down Dagon's torso.

Taylor chuckled at his mate's words. "I think one is enough."

"Just don't stop."

Taylor didn't plan on it. He dropped to his knees and licked the pre-cum dripping from Dagon's cock. His mate continued to stroke himself as Taylor licked and sucked, indulging in the erotic taste of Dagon's body. His mate grabbed his hair as he fed Taylor his cock. It was wicked and alluring having Dagon masturbate into his mouth.

Taylor opened wide, his tongue flicking out to catch the clear liquid as it ran down the side of Dagon's hand. "*Me estás volviendo loco.*" Dagon groaned.

"Mmm, that sounds kinky. What did you say?" Taylor asked as he sucked the head of Dagon's cock between his lips.

"You are driving me crazy."

That was Taylor's goal. He wanted his mate unglued, pleading with Taylor to let Dagon fuck him. Taylor pulled back, smiling up at Dagon as he flicked his tongue out once again.

"You little devil." Dagon grabbed Taylor by his arms, flipping him on the bed in a lust-filled craze as he yanked Taylor's jeans down to his knees. "I will teach you to tease me, *cachorro.*"

Taylor laughed and then moaned as Dagon lubed him up and then sank in deep. His legs were caught in his jeans, impeding his need to pull his legs up under him. Dagon lifted his hips, driving deep as he fucked Taylor into the mattress.

"Fuck me harder, Dagon," Taylor shouted.

"Oh, a potty mouth. I like it." He growled as he fucked Taylor faster, slammed into his ass harder. "Say it again, *cachorro.*"

"Fuck me hard, deep, and fast. Make me feel your cock."

Dagon chuckled as he dug his fingers deeper into Taylor's sides, giving him what he was begging for. Taylor clawed at the sheets, his brain becoming unhinged as Dagon's powerful strokes took him to another world.

His legs pressed against his jeans, yearning to get free so he could climb all the way onto the bed. He kicked, trying his best to get the fabric to give and release his legs. He was tangled in them, with no way out.

Taylor stopped struggling as Dagon's cock worked his ass like magic. Never in a million years would he have thought that a man fucking him would feel so good. Taylor was thankful he hadn't fought it so hard, had finally given in to his cravings and allowed Dagon to claim him.

His ass hitched higher as Dagon pounded his ass, hitting Taylor's sweet spot repeatedly. His eyes rolled back and his cock throbbed as Dagon laid it on him.

Taylor reached between his body and the bed, grabbing his cock and squeezing it hard, thrilling at the instant electricity that shot through him.

He cried out when Dagon pulled out of his ass and flipped him over. His mate continued to stroke himself at a fast pace, gripping Taylor's hair with his free hand. He knew what his mate wanted, so Taylor opened wide.

"Oh fuck," Dagon shouted as ropes of seed shot out of his cock and painted Taylor's face. He licked as much as his tongue could reach before Dagon pulled Taylor up and tossed him on the bed, taking Taylor's cock down his throat.

Taylor squirmed and shouted as Dagon sucked his cock like a madman. Taylor grabbed Dagon's hair, pulling it in a tight grip as his balls drew up to his body and electricity shot up his spine.

"Oh god," Taylor shouted as he felt his body explode. He fucked Dagon's mouth until he thought his hips would lock into place.

Dagon pulled back, smiling up at Taylor as he licked his cock clean. "Are you sure there aren't any more causes you wish to take up?"

Hell, he'd join every last one if Dagon fucked him like that every time.

Chapter Nine

Maverick leaned back against the picnic table, his elbows stretched out behind him and resting on the table. His ankles crossed as he studied Taylor. “A shelter, huh.”

Taylor sat next to him worrying his hands. If the Alpha didn’t agree, all his hopes would fall at his feet.

“Who would run it?” Maverick asked as he pulled on his soul patch.

“Thomas said he would love to.” Taylor knew he should have talked to Maverick first, but he had to make sure his ends were tied up before coming to the Alpha.

“So you’ve talked to him already?”

Taylor gulped and nodded. He knew Maverick to be a fair Alpha who was totally against abuse, but the wolf intimidated the shit out of him. “Yes, sir.”

Maverick nodded, falling silent once again. Taylor’s gut knotted as he waited for some kind of yes or no. Why was that so difficult to say? The Alpha had him sitting here sweating bullets as he apprehensively waited.

“Does this have anything to do with a slim, black-haired man?”

Taylor’s mouth hung open as he stared at Maverick. “How did you know?”

Maverick’s chuckle was a deep timbre as he shook his head. “I have my Jedi ways.”

The dude was creepy as hell. “His name is Steven. I saw him in the restroom of the restaurant we stopped to eat at. I felt helpless when I saw the bruise on the side of his face and there wasn’t a thing I

could do about it," Taylor confessed as he played with the hem of his blue cotton shirt.

Maverick leaned forward, placing his arms on his thighs as he looked over the backyard. There was Melonee's swing set. Although she was a preteen now, she still swung on it. There was a garden that he knew Murphy liked to mess around in. And the picnic tables were still set up.

"I see it sometimes, when I go into town. I've been here a long time and have witnessed a man staring angrily at his wife or a child with fear in their eyes. It's sickening. I feel powerless when I see bruises on a young man's face or a wife or girlfriend cringing when her man speaks to her. I want to take the abuser behind the police station and teach him what it's like to feel helpless and cornered."

Taylor was amazed that someone like Maverick could feel helpless. He was tall, strong, and intimidating. He didn't look like someone who would stand for any of that stuff.

The Alpha nodded, looking over at Taylor. "I think it's a great idea. I also think it should be one of the first things built." Maverick sat back and placed his elbows on the table behind him again. A wide smile spread across his face. "I can also see a few warriors volunteering to help out, you know, keep the abusers away."

"I've done research on other shelters as well. We could offer financial counseling. Nero could help with that. We could also offer free haircuts for the kids. Heaven could help with that. We could even offer payment plans for car repairs. I don't think Mark would object to that service."

Maverick's face grew serious as he stared at Taylor. He snapped his fingers and then pointed at Taylor. "You've given this a lot of thought, I see. I like the compassion you have shown. I think I'll call it the Tate Resource Center. How does that sound?"

Taylor was floored. "I'm not looking for recognition from this. I only want to help those who are looking for someone to help pull them out of any mess they're in."

Maverick stood, a smile tugging at the side of his mouth. "That's why it's going to carry that name." He turned and walked away, leaving Taylor staring at his back in utter astonishment.

* * * *

Taylor walked across the street after leaving Murphy's Bookstore, watching the construction of the shelter. He was amazed at how quickly Maverick had implemented his idea and got it started.

The building was nearing completion, and Taylor felt an excitement run through him as he watched the workers build his dream. After only two months he was watching his idea being born.

Right next door the Santiago brothers were having their bike shop built. Taylor hadn't argued with his mate when he said he wanted to be close to Taylor in case there was any trouble. In fact, it made him feel safer knowing his mate and his brothers would be one door down.

"It's coming along nicely," Dagon commented as they stepped up on the curb. Taylor agreed. It was more than he had dared to dream. Maverick had sleeping quarters built in the back, for those running from whomever. He had told the warriors that one wolf would be on patrol as long as the shelter housed a victim.

Curious passersby stopped to watch, chatting with each other and wondering what was being built. They weren't announcing it. Referrals would come through from the rec center, and then those who needed shelter would be privately taken to the shelter. It would defeat the purpose if everyone knew where to find the abused.

They were going to let everyone know that community services were being offered, but the uglier side of things would be kept a secret. Taylor hoped it worked out that way. He wasn't too sure how much abuse went on in this county, and he prayed the beds didn't fill up. That would mean they had a bigger problem than anyone had suspected.

Taylor walked over to the bike shop, watching Dagon's eyes light up as the roof was being laid today. Tryck was already there, snapping at the workers about how he wanted things done.

Dagon chuckled. "He's been bossy since we were cubs. I don't think he has it in him to just stand by and watch."

Taylor laughed with Dagon as his cell phone rang. The number that displayed wasn't familiar to him. "Hello?"

"T-Taylor?"

The voice sounded familiar, but Taylor couldn't put his finger on it. "Who is this?"

"Steven."

Alarm bells went off in Taylor's head. He walked across the street to get away from the construction noise. "Hi, Steven."

"You remember me?" He sounded surprised and a bit relieved.

"Of course I do. Is there something I can help you with?" Taylor walked a little further down, wanting to give Steven uninterrupted attention. Dagon followed closely by his side, his brows pulled together as he walked next to Taylor.

"I'm—I'm not sure why I called. You said to call if I wanted to talk." The voice was shaky on the other end. Taylor could hear the fear that was pouring over the phone.

He pointed to a bench on the side of the diner, Dagon taking a seat as Taylor sat down next to him. "I'm listening, Steven." He could see Dagon bristle, but Taylor scrunched his face up and pointed at the shelter. Dagon's eyes grew wide as he nodded, understanding what Taylor was referring to.

"It happened again," Steven whispered.

"What happened, Steven? Were you hit again?"

Dagon stood and walked away, Taylor ignoring him as he strained to listen. "Steven?"

"Yes." A small whisper sounded over the phone.

Taylor closed his eyes, his heart going out to the small man. "I can help you. Just tell me where you're at, and I'll come get you. I have somewhere safe you can go."

"I—I'm scared."

"I know. But if you tell me where you are at, I can get you out of there." Taylor spoke softly to Steven, trying his best to sound convincing. He had to, or Steven wouldn't tell him squat.

"Y—you'll help me?"

"Yes. I'll give you shelter and a new life if that's what you are looking for. We can talk about it when I pick you up. Will you tell me where you are?" Taylor held his breath as he waited for Steven to reply.

"Okay."

Taylor ran into the diner, snatching a pen from the waiter, Tangee's hand. He grabbed the order pad, cradling his phone between his ear and shoulder as he jotted down the address. "Is this the number I can reach you at?" He nodded his thanks to Tangee as he handed the pad and pen back to the mate and then took off back outside.

Just then Dagon pulled up in a SUV with Tryck and Law in the backseat. "I'm on my way. I should be there in less than thirty minutes. Don't leave unless you feel your life is in danger."

"Okay," Steven said quietly into the phone.

"I'm not going to hang up. Just stay on the line with me until I get there."

"Taylor?"

Taylor shoved the address at Dagon and waved his hand for his mate to get his ass moving. Dagon tore from the parking space and hit the on-ramp, driving quickly down the highway.

Taylor stared out at the passing cars as he listened to Steven breathing. "Are you there?"

"Yes. I just wanted to say thank you."

Taylor closed his eyes and knew he had made the right choice when he decided to open the shelter. When he had told the mate,

Drew, about it, Drew had become just as excited as Taylor had felt. "You're welcome."

He could hear Law in the background talking on the phone. He knew the warrior was talking to Maverick. "We need that shelter tonight. Is there any way they can get the essentials complete so the first occupant can sleep there?"

Taylor strained to listen as he held the phone, listening to Steven breathe. Law gave Taylor a thumbs-up, letting him know Maverick was taking care of things on his end. He let go of the breath he had been holding.

Taylor sat in silence on the phone as they exited the highway, turning down city streets until they came to the address Steven had given him. "We're outside. I'm sending a friend up to get you, Steven. He's very tall, very built, with black hair and green eyes." Taylor shoved at Dagon, waving his hand for his mate to move it.

Dagon slammed the truck door closed, his eyes scanning as he disappeared into the apartment building.

"Someone's knocking," Steven whispered in a panic.

"It's Dagon. Open the door for him, Steven."

"O-Okay."

Taylor could hear Dagon's voice on the other end of the phone and knew his mate was there. "I'm going to hang up now. I can hear Dagon. You're safe, Steven."

"O-Okay." Steven hung up, and Taylor let a rush of air leave his lungs.

"You're doing a good thing." Law patted Taylor on his shoulder.

"Thanks. But now the hard part begins. Helping Steven put his life back together." Taylor sat back, staring out at the street that lay beyond the front windshield. He had no clue what he was going to do, but he was willing to go above and beyond to help Steven get his life back.

"Fuck," Tryck shouted as he jumped out of the SUV, Law bolting out right after him. Taylor swung his head around, looking over the

seat as two large men approached Dagon, one of them yelling and grabbing at Steven.

Steven was cringing back as Dagon shoved the scared man behind him. Taylor jumped out of the truck, pulling Steven away as the Santiago brothers handled the two men. "Get in." Taylor opened the back door, scrambling in behind Steven.

"I have to go." Steven reached for the door handle. "If I go with him, he'll leave your friends alone."

Taylor grabbed the frightened man's arm. "Not in this lifetime. They can handle their own, trust me."

Steven blinked up at him and then looked over the seat to the street behind him. "Are you sure? I don't want to cause any trouble."

"No trouble. You're not the one who is causing trouble." Taylor looked back to see the brothers walking toward the truck. He caught a glimpse of the two guys that had tried to take Steven away as they walked into the building. They looked pissed as hell. Taylor prayed that was the last they saw of them.

Tryck slid into the driver's seat as Law opened the passenger door and got in. Dagon climbed into the back and sat next to Taylor.

"You've already met Dagon." Taylor pointed to his mate. "That's Tryck and Law." He pointed to the two sitting up front.

Steven looked like he wanted to bolt from the truck as Tryck and Law nodded at the frightened man. "You're safe. They won't hurt you."

Steven nodded and looked out of the window. It must be scary as hell for him to go with strangers after being abused by someone he trusted. Taylor mentally clapped his hands at Steven's bravery. Taylor was even more determined now to make sure Steven got his life back together.

Tryck parked outside the diner as Taylor got out, waving for Steven to join him. He wanted the shaky fellow to get a good meal in his belly. He was way too thin in Taylor's opinion.

His mate and his brothers crossed the street to check on the construction and to see if the resource center was fit for Steven to stay the night in. Once the man had eaten, Taylor walked with Steven across the street.

Maverick was standing there with Cecil, talking with one of the workers. He reached out and touched Steven's elbow, nodding toward the Alpha. Taylor cleared his throat as he approached. "Maverick, this is Steven."

The Alpha turned and smiled down at the shorter man. With Maverick's height of six nine, everyone was shorter. "Hello, Steven."

Steven gulped and shot a glance at Taylor before looking back at Maverick. "Hi."

Taylor pulled Steven aside, explaining to him what the building was being built for and that he would be staying the night there. He told Steven of his desire to be a counselor and how the man was his first case.

"I feel honored." Steven softly chuckled. "Is it all right for me to stay here?"

"That's what Maverick," Taylor said, pointing to the Alpha, "is discussing with the crew now. I'm pretty sure it will be. If not, we have plenty of room at the Den for you until it is."

Steven stared at Taylor, his head tilting to the side as he brushed a hand through his shoulder-length black hair. "Why are you doing all of this for me?"

Dagon stepped up behind Taylor, wrapping his strong arms around his shoulders as Taylor answered Steven. "Because no one should live in fear. I believe everyone should live a satisfying, if not fulfilling, life."

Dagon bent down and kissed Taylor on his neck. "I love you."

Taylor could feel his face heating up. "I love you, too. Now let me take care of Steven." He batted his hand at his mate.

* * * *

Dagon felt pride tight in his chest as Taylor talked to Steven. His mate was brave, compassionate, and kind. God, that was such a turn-on.

Remi pulled up, he and Drew walking across the street. Dagon talked with Remi as Drew spoke with Taylor and Steven. Once everything was settled, Remi volunteered to keep watch over the place for the afternoon, and Dagon volunteered to relieve Remi tonight.

With shifters, rogues, and now Steven's abuser involved, they wanted to ensure Steven was safe.

Everyone and anyone who could help out came from the Den, bringing cots and other items seeing as how the shelter was partially open now.

Dagon helped bring in some makeshift desks until the ones Maverick had ordered were delivered. He noticed how the foreman kept watching Steven. He was installing the electrical work as his eyes constantly followed Steven's movements as the first occupant of the shelter helped set everything up.

He nudged Law, nodding toward the foreman as they both watched him watch Steven. "Do you think we need to keep an eye on him?" Dagon asked as he crossed his arms over his chest.

"I'll let Remi know." Law left his side as Dagon sought out his mate. Taylor was putting some towels in the closet, humming to himself. Dagon had never seen a more gorgeous sight. He looked around the building, amazed that all of this was Taylor's doing.

"I can feel you watching me." Taylor smiled as he turned around, walking straight into Dagon's arms. He reached up and planted his lips on Dagon's, giving him a heated kiss.

"You keep that up, *cachorro*, and I'm liable to use one of these cots."

Taylor laughed as he pulled away. "I can see working next door to each other is going to be very interesting."

"You have no idea." Dagon patted his mate's ass as he winked at him.

"Perv."

"Tease."

Dagon pulled Taylor through the almost completed building. "Let's go have dinner."

"Good, I'm starving. I didn't eat when Steven did. I was waiting for you." Taylor shouted to Drew that he and Dagon were going to grab a bite to eat, Drew waving him on.

They exited the building into a beautiful evening. It was dusk out now, Dagon's favorite time of day.

They spotted Thomas, the rec center counselor, sitting at the counter enjoying a meal. "How is everything coming along?" he asked before shoving a forkful of mashed potatoes into his mouth.

"Good." Taylor sat next to Thomas, telling him about Steven.

"Well, it looks like you guys opened up just in time."

"It looks that way." Dagon took a seat next to Taylor.

"How's it going, Keata?" he asked Cody's mate. Cody owned half the diner, Keata coming to work with his mate every day. He noticed Keata taking a more active role at the diner. The mate helped George out when he needed it and served the customers when it became busy. Right now he was chowing down on dinner.

"I am good. How are you, Dagon?"

The mate's English had come a long way since arriving in Brac Village. "Good. I'm real good."

Frank took their orders, handing them over to George as Dagon laid his hand on the small of Taylor's back. The contact made him feel connected to his mate in a small way. He could feel the utter joy coming from Taylor at the moment, and a sense of peace settled inside of Dagon.

Taylor leaned his back against Dagon as he talked with Thomas. Dagon wrapped his arm around Taylor's shoulder as he spoke with Keata.

Once they finished eating, they bid their farewells and headed home.

* * * *

Remi watched the foreman as Drew talked quietly with Steven. If the shifter thought he was going to make a move on a defenseless human, Remi would string his balls up like Christmas tree lights.

He casually walked over to the stalker, watching him while he worked. "Is there a reason you keep watching Steven, or are you looking to rest your face on my fist?"

"What?" The foreman turned toward Remi, bewilderment in his eyes. Remi pointed to the man's eyes, a smirk on his face.

"Don't play that innocent game with me. I'm watching you watch him, and I'm not liking it one bit. If you make a move on him, I'll crush your balls under my fucking boot."

The screwdriver dropped from the foreman's hand as he stared wide-eyed at Remi. "Are you fucking crazy or something?"

"Or something," Remi snapped. "I'll be watching you." Remi made a V with his fingers, pointing them from his eyes to the foreman's. He mouthed *I'm watching you* as he turned away.

Remi felt better knowing that the foreman knew he was being watched now. He had a smug smile on his face as he took a seat behind the makeshift desk, watching the foreman watching Steven.

Chapter Ten

Dagon sat in a folding chair on the sidewalk as he watched the construction crew work on his shop and the shelter. People walked around him, staring down at his sitting form as though he'd lost his mind.

He shrugged, not caring what anyone thought. He was tired and cranky, having stayed up all night patrolling the shelter. A good day's sleep and a hot shower was what he wanted and not necessarily in that order. But the one thing he wanted most was to curl up next to his mate.

Ludo, one of the warriors, pulled his truck in front of Murphy's Bookstore, his mate climbing out of the backseat. God, he was a sight for sore eyes. He stretched his arms above his head as his back popped. Fuck, he was tired.

Taylor spotted him and raced across the street. "I missed you." Taylor reached down and planted a big, wet kiss on his lips.

"I missed you, too, *cachorro*." Dagon ran his hands down Taylor's side, enjoying the feel of his mate. It felt like a lifetime ago that he stood in Taylor's backyard and talked with him on the phone. They hadn't heard anything else about Taylor's mom, and the oldest brother, Brad, had taken over the house. Josh and Taylor couldn't care less. It wasn't as though Brad had been an active part of their lives anyway.

"How is Steven?" Taylor asked as he stood.

"I don't know. I haven't bothered him. He went to bed last night, and I stayed outside patrolling the area. He might be awake." Dagon stood, stretching some more before following Taylor inside. It was a

few degrees cooler inside the building. Maverick was having central air installed within the next week or two, but Dagon stood there letting his skin cool off as Taylor walked to the back where Steven was sleeping.

Dagon inhaled the smell of the new building, letting the scent of a freshly painted room permeate his lungs. Taylor and Steven walked up front. Dagon had to bite back a chuckle at Steven's disheveled look.

"I just wanted to let you know we're nearing completion." The foreman walked through the front door, his eyes locking on Steven.

"I'll let Maverick know," Dagon said as he walked over.

"The name's Roman." The foreman stretched his hand out.

"Dagon," he said as he shook the man's hand. "Can I have a word with you?"

"Sure." Roman walked outside with Dagon. He whirled around, getting right into the foreman's face.

"I don't know what you are up to, but if you go anywhere near Steven, I'll kick your fucking ass."

Roman snarled as he stared Dagon down. "What is with you wolf shifters? Are all of you Timber wolves psychotic assholes?"

Dagon shoved a finger into Roman's chest. "I have no clue what you are talking about, but that human in there has been through enough. He doesn't need someone trying to put the moves on him. Back the fuck off," Dagon warned.

"First of all," Roman said, shoving his gloves in his back pocket, "I'm not trying to put the moves on him, as you so eloquently put it. He's my mate, so you back the fuck off." Roman took a stance, squaring his shoulders as he glared at Dagon.

"Well, damn." Dagon backed away. "That's all you had to say." He ran his hands through his hair as he looked at the shelter and then back at Roman. "Look, he just ran from some asswipe that used him as a personal punching bag. All I'm saying is give him some space."

They both jumped as screaming voices came from the shelter. They bolted through the front door to see Steven cowering in a corner and Taylor levitating the entire room of furniture at the back door to the sleeping quarters. "*Cachorro?*" Dagon asked as he approached his mate. He glanced over to see Roman hiding Steven behind him.

"What's wrong?"

"My mom," he yelled over his shoulder. "She appeared in the doorway and started to come after me with the biggest damn knife I have ever seen."

Dagon turned and pointed at the front door. "Get Steven out of here. Take him to wherever you are staying and keep him safe."

Roman nodded and pulled Steven from the shelter.

"Wait, why are you sending Steven with him?" Taylor asked in a panic-filled voice.

"Because Roman is his mate. Now let the furniture fall so we can get out of here." Taylor looked at the doorway he was holding the furniture against and then at the front door. He slowly backed up until he reached the threshold and then dropped his arms, rushing through the front door with Dagon on his heels.

"I thought the warriors took her away." Taylor panted as he ran across the street.

"I think we need to find Panahasi and have a word with him." They jumped into Dagon's truck and sped toward the Den. Dagon kept glancing in his rearview mirror, as if Tamera would appear on the road behind them. Taylor held on to his seat belt for dear life as Dagon made the turn and hit the gravel drive.

They both hopped out and shot across the lawn, making their way to the door. Dagon grabbed Taylor's hand as he shot around the corner and down the hallway to Maverick's office.

Taylor dropped onto the sofa as Dagon slammed the door shut. The Alpha stared curiously at both of them.

"His mom decided to pay him a visit," Dagon panted as he pointed to Taylor.

Maverick automatically stood, grabbing the curtains and yanking them closed until no light could filter through the heavy drapes. "Panahasi," the Alpha bellowed out.

They waited, Dagon looking around as if Casper were going to jump out at any moment. This was bullshit. "Panahasi!" Dagon roared.

Maverick smirked as an eyebrow raised. "Impatient?"

"You're damn right," Dagon growled.

Eyes appeared, and then Panahasi walked into the office. "I'm not your fucking pet. Stop calling me."

"My mom is free," Taylor blurted. Dagon stood, walking over to the demon leader.

"Why is that?"

Panahasi rolled his eyes and threw his hands up. "Because the keeper found her innocent. Why else?"

"What the hell is a keeper, and why didn't you tell us there was a chance she could walk free?" Maverick demanded as he walked from the window over to where the demon leader was standing. "Is there anything else we need to know about?"

"The keeper is not someone you need to worry yourself about, and the reason I didn't tell you is because it is extremely rare anyone is found not guilty."

"But there was a damn chance." Dagon spat out the words contemptuously. "You should have warned us!" he shouted. Taylor began to pull at his arm when Panahasi squared his shoulders and leaned into Dagon, their faces mere inches apart.

"You have no clue, shifter, of what I am capable of. I would strongly suggest you back off."

Taylor threw his hands out, and the sofa began to lift from the floor. Dagon quirked a brow and looked over at his mate, Taylor shrugging. "I tried."

"Your powers are useless against me, young demon, and I would suggest you not try them again against me. My patience only goes so far."

"Are you threatening my mate?"

"Is there anything else I can do for you? I will handle the demon, rest assured."

Maverick leaned against his desk, pinching the bridge of his nose.
"Thank you."

"Thank you? Why the hell are you thanking him?" Dagon growled as he pulled Taylor close to his side. This was un-fucking-real. Dagon barely contained his anger as the leader walked back into the shadows. His hands fisted at his side as he breathed out a steady stream of air. He wouldn't allow Panahasi to take him there.

"We need to let the others know that Taylor's mother is still a threat." Maverick walked from the office, leaving Dagon and Taylor standing there.

"Well, damn, that didn't help." Dagon ran his hands over Taylor's head as he considered what they should do. The shelter wasn't officially opened, but they still had an occupant to take care of. Steven needed counseling and other services that he could technically get from Thomas, but he knew Taylor wanted to do his job.

"We need to check on Steven." Taylor had read his thoughts, speaking them aloud. "I don't feel right bringing him here and then letting the foreman cart him away. He trusted me, Dagon."

"I know, babe. Let's go find him." Dagon scanned their surroundings as he tucked Taylor into one of the trucks and drove back to town. His senses were on high alert, watching everyone as he stopped back at the site, everyone cleaning up their tools and whatever else men did when a job was complete.

"Can you tell me where to find Roman?" Dagon asked one of the workers.

“He’s out at the Lakelands’ farm,” one of the workers answered over his shoulder as he hauled a load of used drywall into the back of a truck.

“Do you know where it is?”

Dagon felt stupid as hell as he shook his head. It was a shame that a stranger had to tell him where someone lived in his own town. Hopefully that would change once the new businesses were up and running.

“Thanks,” Dagon said as he headed back to his truck. He reached across the bench seat, grabbing Taylor’s hand and giving it a light squeeze. “I’m thinking that maybe we should let Steven digest what happened before we head out there. What do you say we go in the morning? He is with his mate after all, and Roman won’t let any harm come to him.”

“I feel terrible that Steven witnessed all that. Not only is he probably freaking out about what I did, but he was already shaky as hell from the start,” Taylor murmured. “But you’re right. It’s probably best to let him sleep on it.” Although Taylor didn’t like the idea, he knew Dagon was right.

* * * *

Taylor stared at the old white house. He wanted to kick himself for what happened at the shelter. Steven had trusted him to help him out, and Taylor had made it worse.

“It’ll be okay, *cachorro*,” Dagon reached for his hand once they cleared the truck. He was thankful for his mate’s strength. Dagon had been behind him all the way on this new path Taylor was taking and knowing someone was by his side had helped tremendously.

“Can I help you?” An older gentleman came to the door with a shotgun over his shoulder. Just great, how much more traumatizing shit could Taylor introduce Steven to today?

"I'm looking for Roman and Steven," Dagon called out as they walked closer to the front porch. Dagon had pulled on Taylor's hand until he was partially behind Dagon. His mate didn't seem to like the man having a gun and neither did Taylor.

"You friends?" the man asked as the gun lowered slightly.

"Yes. Could you tell him Dagon and Taylor are outside?" Dagon answered.

"Wait right here." The man pointed at his porch with the shotgun. "If you step into my house uninvited, I'll shoot you."

"He seems friendly," Taylor said as he climbed the porch and took a seat on the swing that was to the left of the door.

"Mighty friendly," Dagon snarled as he stood in front of Taylor, blocking his view. Taylor reached out and slapped Dagon's hip, nudging his head to the side.

"Move."

"Not while I'm still breathing," Dagon grunted and crossed his arms over his chest.

"Taylor?" Steven asked as he hesitantly stepped out onto the porch.

"It's me, behind Mr. Mountain here." Taylor moved his mate aside as he approached Steven. "Look, I'm sorry that you had to see what happened yesterday. I know you must be wiggling out and regretting your decision to come here, but I promise it is safe."

Steven shook his head as he stared back at the screen door. "Roman explained a lot to me. I think I understand."

"So you're not trying to run back to the city?"

"Why would I do that? I'm fine, Taylor." Steven shoved his hands in his front pockets as he stared around the front porch.

"Then you'll come back to the shelter?"

Steven shook his head. "I'd rather stay here. Mr. Lakeland is really nice, and so are Roman and his brothers."

What the hell was Taylor supposed to do now? "I set up an appointment with Thomas, he's one of the counselors, for today at

ten.” Taylor began to panic. Everything he worked for seemed to be falling apart all around him.

“I’ll go. I just don’t want to stay at the shelter.” Steven walked over to the steps and sat down.

“Is it the shelter? Tell me what you didn’t like about it.” Taylor took a seat next to Steven on the steps, pulling at his pant legs as he prayed he hadn’t made the wrong decision to open the thing in the first place.

He felt his dream blowing away with the breeze, his shoulders slumping in defeat. Dagon knelt behind him, massaging his shoulders as Taylor saw his first chance at a meaningful life slipping through his fingers.

“Oh no, the shelter was very accommodating. I just prefer to stay here.” Steven’s head shot sideways as his eyes grew wide. “Unless you want me to go back there.”

“No one is forcing you, Steven. If you are more comfortable here, then we don’t mind.” Dagon stepped in, talking when Taylor’s tongue felt like it had stuck to the roof of his mouth. “Come on, *cachorro*. Let’s head home.” Dagon patted his shoulder as he stood.

“You’ll go to your appointment today?” Taylor asked before he stood and brushed his bottom off.

“I promise.” Steven stuck his hand out. “Thank you for helping me, Taylor.”

Taylor smiled as he shook Steven’s hand. “That’s my job. Call me if you need anything.”

“Even if I want to talk.” Steven smiled as he finished Taylor’s sentence.

“I’ll see you later at the shelter.”

Taylor grabbed Dagon’s hand as they walked back to the truck. “I want to ride.”

Dagon chuckled as he climbed into the driver’s side. “I want you to ride.”

* * * *

Taylor bounced on the back of Dagon's bike as they drove back to the small bakery thirty miles from home. It was twilight now, the stars shining brightly as Dagon pulled to the back of the bakery. It was closed, but they had brought their own treats.

Taylor took off to the gazebo as Dagon followed close behind. He laid the bag of bread and cheese on the bench as he spun around and wrapped his arms around Dagon's waist. "It seems like a lifetime ago we were here."

"Yeah, it does." Dagon laid small kisses down Taylor's neck. "I remember a certain someone who freaked out from giving me a blow job." He chuckled into Taylor's neck. "Now he's a pro."

"And I remember a smartass who wanted to give me a gold star for *sheer enthusiasm*." Taylor laughed. "The grass is still tall." He wiggled his brows as he took off running.

"Good, I get my cock sucked again then." Dagon gave chase.

Peals of laughter trailed behind Taylor as he ran through the weeds, hearing Dagon close behind. He jumped when an arm reached out and grabbed him. He squealed as he tried to yank it away.

"You bastard. I told you Josh would rub off on you." His mom yanked him along with her fingernails digging painfully into his arm.

"Why are you doing this? You're my mom." Taylor cried as he tried to pull away, seeing blood slowly drip down his arm. This was a fucking nightmare.

"Only by blood, faggot." She tossed Taylor to the ground, pulling a long serrated knife from a sheath on the side of her leg. "I can't cure you, so I'm gonna kill you."

Taylor's vision blurred as the knife rose into the air. He was crying, trying to wipe the tears away so he could see. Why? Why would he want to see his own mom stab him? Taylor became angry. He had done nothing wrong, and his fucking demon mother was trying to kill him.

“No!” he shouted as he raised his hand, making the knife fly away from her and land somewhere in the tall grass.

“I see your powers are growing, brat. But it won’t be enough.”

Taylor watched in horror as Dagon’s wolf form leapt from the tall weeds, tackling his mother as he fought to save Taylor’s life. “Dagon!” Taylor jumped up, running around the fighting pair and feeling helpless to do anything.

“Stand back,” Panahasi said as he emerged from the grass. The leader raised one hand and then flung it, his mom rising up and then flying through the air. He saw two of the demon warriors with him tackle her then place strange-looking handcuffs on her.

“You fucking fag. This isn’t over. Not by a long shot. I’ll kill you.” She fought her captors as she was hauled away.

“I think this time the keeper has a reason to hold her.” Panahasi bowed and then walked away.

Dagon shifted, wrapping his arms around Taylor as he stood there, numb. “She tried to kill me,” he said in shock.

“I know, *cachorro*.” Dagon ran his hands up and down Taylor’s back, soothing him as nobody else could. “Things seem crazy at the moment, but it will get better.”

Taylor snorted. “Hardly. We live in a paranormal world. Things are always going to be screwed up.”

Dagon chuckled, his naked chest vibrating with laughter. “True. But it will never be boring.”

Taylor pulled on Dagon’s shoulders as he wrapped his legs around his mate’s waist. “Life with you is never boring. Now, I could have sworn someone mentioned something about a ride.”

Taylor laughed as Dagon growled, dropping to the ground with his arms spread wide. “Dagon’s ride, at your service.”

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lynn Hagen loves writing about the somewhat flawed, but lovable. She also loves a hero who can see past all the rough edges to find the shining diamond of a beautiful heart.

You can find her on any given day curled up with her laptop and a cup of hot java, letting the next set of characters tell their story.

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