

Chapter 1

High Duke Torrance Zelan took another long drink of his hot, bitter brew and thought moodily over his trip into the dragon world. Some days there wasn't enough coffee in the universe to help wake a man up. This would be his second trip after visiting his cousin Jorih for his mating ceremony. Now he was visiting the southern provinces to meet with the king and discuss mining rights. The High King, his uncle, wanted the rare mineral that was only found in this area of the galaxy. It was a necessary component for the processors in the new warp drives. As he was already semi-familiar with the planet and had a personal connection with dragons, his uncle thought he would be the perfect representative.

Tor was holding back his opinion until he met the Southern King. Larien would've liked this trip. His lover venerated dragons. Dear, sweet, gentle Larien with his hard body and sweet voice was a man who dreamed of seeing dragons fly.

"You would've loved this baby." Tor whispered to himself.

Swallowing hard, the Duke held his back tears. It was times like these he wished he'd followed his lover into the afterlife instead of lingering on. Larien's loss hit him like a fist to the stomach.

Only his family kept his feet firmly grounded from leaving this plane for the next. He couldn't leave his little girl and two boys. Although his heart remained tattered and bruised, he loved them.

"Did you say something, my lord?"

The Duke sighed, pressing his face into his hands, discreetly wiping away the tears with the heels of his palms. The cold glass of the window cooled his heated skin and he pulled out another sigh. Even though he couldn't see the star field outside the window, he knew it was still there. When Baroy flew through the cosmos at night he took Tor along for the ride in his dreams. It was the only way he could see anything. Dragon bonded as a child; Tor's vision relied solely on what the dragon wanted him to see. Subsequently, his ability to see flashed in and out like a poor intergalactic transmission. Sometimes it was excruciatingly clear but most of the time it was complete blackness.

"Nothing important, Pietro. I was thinking of how Larien would've loved visiting the dragons."

The elderly man grunted in agreement. The sound of coffee pouring lured the Duke back to the small dining table. "Mr. Jall always dreamed of dragons. He would be proud that you went to visit them in his stead."

Speechless from the lump in his throat, the Duke nodded.

Pietro cleared his throat. “He also would’ve wanted you to move on with your life.”

Tor laughed. “Very subtle, Pietro.” He picked up his coffee cup and waved the servant away. “You may retire for the night. Thank you.”

He could feel the servant staring at him. Larien always said Pietro’s gaze was frigid and that his grey eyes must be chipped from polar glaciers to achieve his icy looks. One of the benefits of being mostly blind was that he could ignore those icy stares.

“Remember what I said, Master. Mr. Jall lived for your smile. Don’t disappoint his memory by forgetting how to.”

With that parting shot, Tor heard the door softly close.

You are sad this evening.

The Duke heard the sweet whisper of Baroy’s voice echo through his head. The space dragon’s voice was a soft buzzing sound; comforting and abrasive. Tor’s life had changed forever when he bonded with the baby dragon at the tender age of five. As far as he knew he was the youngest being, human or not, to survive a matching with the rare breed.

I am missing my mate. He mentally sent back to the dragon.

You are missing your lover, the dragon corrected. *You have yet to meet your mate.*

That doesn’t make it less painful.

No it doesn’t.

A burst of laughter ripped through him.. “If it hurts this much to lose a lover, I don’t want a mate.”

It isn’t a matter of want. It is a matter of fate. You will meet your mate soon. I have foreseen it.

Chills shivered up and down Tor’s spine.

The dragon was never wrong. The creature was even more accurate than Tor’s daughter, Alexandra, who was a born seer.

I don’t want a mate. He said again. He wondered if saying it enough times would make the nebulous male vanish from his future.

His heart still cried for Larien. Tor wasn’t ready to risk his love again.

All things happen in their time.

Great. Just what he needed; more sage sayings from the cryptic dragon.

Tor felt the dragon leave his mind. “I’m surrounded by beings with great parting lines.” Sighing, the Duke took another drink of coffee. In times like these, Tor could almost feel Larien. As if he was still beside him. The Duke whispered to the empty room, “I will never forget you, my love.”