

Kemy

“The Doctor! He is here, I saw him! I saw him!” I yelled in panic, jumping out of his lap and standing on my knees as a cold shiver went down my spine.

I scratched my ear inadvertently, the sensation of wanting to crawl out of my own skin crushed me once again—that was how I felt in that lab, surrounded by pain and repulsion.

Tears clouded my vision. I wanted to escape, but I didn’t know where to.

“What? The one that kidnapped you? Where is he?” Henry’s voice was deeper than ever and it carried the undertone of a growl, showing that my Knight was also on the surface. Before standing up and looking around relentlessly, he put me off his lap with a gentleness that I didn’t expect from him in his stressed state of mind.

I looked at the place I saw that horrible man, by the rocks. But he wasn’t there anymore, “he is gone,” I murmured under my breath.

Mal took my hand in hers, attracting my attention and grounding me a bit, “Kemy, could it be that you are seeing things because you are sleep deprived?”

A sigh parted my lips and I nodded, she must be right. He wouldn’t be able to follow me to Spain, it was all in my head.

“Let’s go back to the mansion, Kemy. We don’t have to go out in the next few days if you don’t want to,” Henry reassured me, taking me in his arms and heading back home. As soon as we entered the large hall I breathed in relief, although I was still trembling slightly.

“Is she okay?” I heard Marion’s worried voice as she walked towards our little group. She was a very nice lady and I think I’d never seen someone so elegant and graceful in my whole life.

“Yes, just a bit stressed out,” Mal replied behind me. Henry didn’t stop walking at their exchange, he knew I needed my room, to lay in his arms and try to wipe the Doctor’s image out of my mind. I was out of my very long dream, but it seemed that a nightmare was still following me around.

“It’s all in my mind,” I repeated under my breath, trying to convince myself, as I took slow and deep breaths. Henry’s arms around me were my only source of calmness and peace.

“I will ask Niki to make a relaxing potion or tea for her,” Marion offered.

“That’s a great idea!” Mallory told her and I called my sister closer.

“I don’t want it, Mal, I don’t want to sleep,” I murmured and she sighed, rubbing my side and following Henry and me up the stairs.

Marion was right behind us and I heard her talking to Daniel, “Alma and Egan finally left their nest after five days.”

“I didn’t know dad dragons nested the babies too,” Mal chimed in. I also didn’t know about it, but it seemed only fair that mum and dad would both tend to their babies.

“Only some of them do it and Egan is completely in love with his family. He wouldn’t leave Alma and the babies’ side for anything in the world,” Marion’s voice was filled with tenderness and even a twinkle of longing.

As much as I was looking forward to getting to know her better and finally meeting Egan, Alma and the twins, the idea of being around anyone but Mal and Henry made me hyperventilate a little.

To my relief, we reached the room and once again I was alone with my mate and my sister. Henry placed me on our bed, cradling me in his arms and almost enveloping me completely with his large body. An exhale left my lips and I relaxed a bit, my nerves were only half-stretched now.

Henry and me and taking it in hers.

"I am afraid of it. Of being awake and of falling asleep," I sighed, a bit embarrassed at my silly fear.

"It's hard to adapt to a normal life again, Kemy. They rescued me months ago and the truth is, I've hardly left the house, in the first days it was even hard to leave my room and talk to the ladies. It's a huge deal. Did you see how sweet Marion is? Alma is just as sweet and I couldn't even be around them.

"Mal, I don't even know how to be myself anymore, everything scares me and now I am even having hallucinations! I am pretty much afraid of being alive. I don't want to be afraid, I don't want to lose even more time, cowering in the corner of my fear," I sighed, letting all the feelings I've been repressing these last few days out.

I gulped hard and turned to look at my mate's eyes, "Henry, I don't think I can be your Luna and cope with so many unfamiliar people, werewolves. I won't be able to do that any time soon, maybe only after a lot of years. Your pack needs you, the wolves there can't take being tortured by your dad for much longer, you should go, and maybe find someone better for the Luna job," I murmured, holding back my tears.

"Don't say that, Kemy! There isn't anyone else but you. You are my Luna, the one and only and I am not going anywhere. We will find another solution, but I am not leaving your side." His eyes were burning with blue flames of conviction, and his hold on me only grew tighter, as if to prove he didn't want to let me go.

"I think it's normal to be overwhelmed by people, and by everything new. You are only about to take your first steps again, literally and it's a lot," Mal cooed at me and I nodded. She was such a good big sister and always knew what to say, I only hoped she was right and it was something normal and temporary.

"We don't have to rush things, Sweetness. Just take your time, and be sure that I will be here with you," my mate added, pressing a kiss on my forehead.

He was sweet, but I knew that there was a rush and I couldn't let the wolves of his pack keep suffering any longer on my account. I had to do something about it, convince him to leave soon and fight for his pack.

~*~

Egan

An exhale of frustration broke through my throat as I left Alma and our little ones for a moment, and went to my office to make some calls. We didn't expect Alma going into labour that early, so Adrian and Alev had set some important meetings with some prospective business partners and the executive board of our newly created company. Once again, it was an exclusive handcraft jewellery design company, but our main focus became pieces with rubies, as a way to celebrate my most precious treasure, my Little Ruby, my Alma.

I sat on my chair and took the phone to start cancelling the meetings personally. I wouldn't leave my new family any time soon, nothing was more important than them.

After I was done, I looked around my office, searching for some protection amulets my mother gave to me and my sister when we were born. They were consecrated by fairies and contained very powerful light magic. Looking at my shelves I noticed something disturbing, the amulets and stones were out of place and they resonated with unfamiliar magic. Someone touched them and surely took some of them. I had to count them and find out what was missing, besides finding the culprit.

I mind-linked Daniel, Adrian and Alev to come here immediately, something had to be done. Someone had to be punished.

41. Imagining Red Dragons?

and defended them fiercely, with fire and blades. We dragons were well known for taking very good care of what was ours.

Besides that, our clan didn't open the doors of our house to strangers, to the ones that weren't close allies. After having lost so much and almost being wiped off the face of the earth, we have been very careful and had only a few trusted allies, like Anita, Doctor Emily and now Jen.

An exhale of aggravation left my lips, we should have kept more attentive eyes on the wolf, and watched him better.

"Blasted wolf!" I cursed under my breath, taking another look at our magical stones. It was utterly unbelievable, I've been robbed in my own house!



** Many years ago **

Kemy

"It's okay, Princess. Just keep still and it will be over soon," Doctor Robert said as he injected the burning liquid into my veins, a soft smile on his face.

Hell, I would keep still!

I refused to make it easier for them, even though it would probably cause me more pain.

My body squirmed non-stop, but there wasn't much I could do. My arms and legs were tied to the bed and a machine was firmly attached to the top of my head, making it hard to do anything besides wriggling a little and screaming at the top of my lungs.

"Be a good girl, Princess, and keep still. It will take just a few more minutes," he smiled, running his fingers through my hair and making my stomach churn, wanting to vomit fire on him.

His creepy smile and the way he looked at me always made my stomach churn. If only I could burn him and reduce him and all these red monsters to dragon barbecue! But they did something to my fire and to my dragon. I couldn't feel Ember in my mind and soul all the time like I used to, she was coming and going. My eyes clenched shut as I blinked away a few burning tears, I only hoped she was okay.

After a few minutes of struggle, the burning sensation subsided, but I only had a second of peace, and it was quickly replaced by a weird sting. It felt as if thousands of mini blades were cutting me from the insides. The pain ran through my veins with this awful liquid and concentrated on the bottom of my spine. I wanted to jump at the horrible sensation, little did I know that it was only starting and after a few seconds, a jolt of sharp pain was sent into my head, making me almost blackout.

A whimper left my lips, I wish I could black-out, faint, so I wouldn't have to be going through all this torture; so I wouldn't have to endure his stomach-churning smile.

Doctor Robert approached me and kissed my ear before saying the same cringing words he did every day before leaving me to deal with the aftermath of their cruel experiments.

My stomach clenched even more. All I wanted to do was to scratch my ear. No, I wanted to crawl out of my own skin, burning him in the process.

He murmured softly, in the way someone would talk to their beloved and not to the kidnapped woman he was performing bizarre experiments on, "Don't sleep darling, I will get you out of here soon."

~~*

*** PRESENT ***

Anita

Humming my favourite song, I went to the garden to get some black elderberry for Niki to make some tea for my Alma to take when she woke up. Nursing two starving baby dragons wasn't easy and she needed all the magical help she could get.

The new mum was finally resting a bit while Niki and Marion were drooling over the babies.

A smile formed on my lips as I looked at the beautiful day and heard the sound of the waves crashing on the stones. I loved Spain's sunny weather, and that was one of the reasons why I decided to stay longer after I tried to help Kemy. Besides that, I missed Marion and it was good to spend some time with my favourite dragons. My nomad life felt exhausting sometimes and it was good to have something like a home, or better yet, a few places you could call home around the world.

Being a witch without a coven wasn't that easy, I only had my sisters to rely on— and they both had already settled down and had their own families— I was the one left behind to roam around the world by

42. Demons of the Past

After picking up all the berries I needed, I was heading home when my senses went on alert. There was something wrong and out of balance here. I looked around, trying to feel the energy surrounding me. Spinning around as fast as I could, I saw them, three tall men approaching me. My eyes narrowed at them, I knew well who they were and that they had ill intentions.

Without wasting time, I chanted an old spell under my breath, to keep them still with paralyzing whispers until someone could come to help me, “Clachan cuideam ort, clach a bhios tu, fo iomaguin tha sàmhchair a ’toirt a-steach do fhrèam, chan eil annad ach ùine, do-sheachanta mar nach b ’urrainn uair a thìde a dhol seachad.” (*)

My words crawled into their ears and echoed in their minds, making all their muscles still, but their hearts.

My gaze roamed around, I couldn't run or even lose my focus, else the effect of my spell would fade away completely. Help had to come soon.

Dealing with the three of them on my own wouldn't be possible, and above everything, I wasn't a killer. I didn't have any coven rules to bind me, so I developed and followed my own ethical code. I fought when needed, giving everything I had. But I would avoid killing, taking a life would alter the balance of the elements, and except in extreme situations, it wasn't for me to decide who should die or stay alive.

After a good half an hour, they started to move, my body and my magic were both exhausted, so I did what I could: I ran.

As the first man approached me fast, I used the energy left in me to fight. I used air, my element of control and moving my hand up and down I called for a fast gust of wind that sent the man far away. Moving my finger in a circular motion, I tried to call for a tiny tornado, but before my pointing finger could swirl twice, one of them took my arms forcefully in his, keeping me still as his companion sank a knife in my stomach. My body fell on the floor with a thud noise, and the last thing I heard before losing consciousness were these words, “no one is around, everything seems clear. We have to act fast and steal my Princess away.”

~*~

Henry

The Alpha Dragon summoned me to his office, by sending the most annoying dragon to escort me there.

Alev scoffed at me, “They should have heard me, but now they know better. Your kind can't be trusted!”

“*They know what you tried to do, Henry! You should have listened to me!*” Knight growled in my mind, his ears were stirred up and I could feel the judgment in his eyes. I deserved it.

I frowned back at him and we walked through the hall in silence, quickly reaching Egan's office.

All the male dragons were gathered there, Daniel and Adrian were by the shelf. Adrian's normally calm expression was contorted with a scowl and Daniel's normal frown was aggravated by his anger, he shot me a seething stare before my gaze met Egan's.

Egan took a few menacing steps towards me, I could feel the energy and the anger rolling off of him, his jaw was locked and his eyes had a dark gleam. But I was an Alpha and I wouldn't flinch before anyone, not even fire-breathing creatures.

“Henry, my stones and amulets were touched and you are the only unfamiliar person in our house. We welcomed you to our house and clan, we treated you fairly after you invaded our home like a barbarian,

your mate: by stealing from her clan and family!" His firm words resonated across the room.

"I didn't steal anything, Egan. You can check your stones again and you will realize that," I replied honestly. He could accuse me of being in his office, but not of stealing anything.

"That's what I am currently doing, Henry. Take a seat! I will go through all my gems and talismans once again and get into the bottom of it!" His eyes narrowed at me and his words carried the imperative undertone of an order. I exhaled sharply and did what he said.

"He will realize you didn't take any stones and you can come clean, tell them about your change of heart," Knight pushed. I could almost feel him propelling me forward with his head.

The air in the room was heated with rage, which made a droplet of sweat slide down my forehead. Was it guilt?

"Yes, that's what I will do, but only when Alma is around, she is the only one who can tame her man, and calm all the beats," I replied to my wolf.

A sharp exhale left my lips, as I watched Egan going over his stones and crossing a few words from the list in his hands. I didn't fear the Dragons, at least not the menacing male ones in this room shooting me daggers with their eyes. The one that I feared was a beautiful female with soft green eyes. How would my Kemy react when she learns about what I've almost done?

"I want to talk to Alma"

She was the most reasonable person and the first one to hear me out when I came here to rescue Kemy. Besides, dragons got very territorial and aggressive when it was about their treasures, the hordes.

"She is sleeping now and no one will bother her," Egan stated.

How could he find it out so quickly? I was very careful, covered my scent, and above anything, I didn't steal a single stone.

"You really imagined that if Egan found something out we would already be far from here, no?"

I didn't reply to Knight, but he was right. That was what I had in mind. I thought that, since I hadn't taken a single stone, everything could be left behind and I could move forward now doing only the right thing. Not acting like my father would, by taking things he thought he needed or deserved, but by being the man my mate would be proud to have by her side, someone fair and considerate, someone who put her first.

Suddenly, a cold shiver ran down my spine and her name left my lips as I stood up with a jolt, "Kemy."

Something was wrong with her, I could feel it.

"I have to return to Kemy's room, something is wrong," I told them.

"Now you are coming up with lies and making excuses to run away and not face the consequences of your acts?" Alev furrowed an annoyed brow at me.

"No, he isn't. Something is wrong with Mallory too, we have to go now!" Even before Daniel concluded his words, I started running towards my mate's room. F*uck, I left her there alone, fifteen minutes ago, how could something happen that fast?

My heart pounded in my chest crushed by the icy pang of worry and fear, as I felt her distress increasing.

(*) Translation from Anita's spell:

Stones weigh on you,

Stone you will be, petrified

42. Demons of the Past

You are only the matter of time,

Immovable as if no hour could pass. (Gaelic)

Kemy

I was on my bed with Mallory, snacking some dried fruit like we used to do when we were little. Being with her felt like being at home and I would be okay if I didn't have to leave this mansion any time soon. I just hoped I could remain awake, sleeping was a nightmare.

"Are you feeling better?" Mal asked softly.

"Yes, I am. You were right, it was only a hallucination, the Doctor isn't here. I just wish I could get used to everything, feel and be normal again," I sighed.

"Kemy, these things take time. You've never been very patient, but now you should be and go easy on yourself," she rubbed my arm and I smiled at her. She was right, I wasn't very patient and I used any patience I had as I stayed almost my whole life caged in a dream.

"Kemy, something is wrong. Can you hear it?" Mal asked, as she stood up and looked around, taking a few steps towards the door.

I tried to focus on all the noises surrounding me, but nothing penetrated the silence of the room, "I can't hear anything."

"Stay there, and mind-link someone," she told me as her shaking legs took a few more steps towards the door. She was pale, all colour had faded from her face, but she still faced it, step by step.

Mal would do anything, even walk towards what she feared most to protect me. But I shouldn't let her do it all alone. I tried to mind-link Marion, but Ember's magic failed, she was still too tired and hurt.

Suddenly, the door burst open, and a strangely familiar man entered the room. I started trembling and took a few deep breaths to calm myself, while Mallory let out a piercing scream and moved her hands in circles in the direction of the man approaching her with a knife made of red metal in hands. I think I knew what is it, Dragonian Brass, something lethal for Golden Dragons.

He tried to attack her, but she dodged unexpectedly fast, striking a kick on his knees and making him almost lose his balance.

I saw him take something in his left hand, and place it behind his back as he launched at my sister once again.

"Mallory, watch for his other knife!" I yelled, gulping hard when I saw that he was carrying a little blade in his other hand and was ready to attack her treacherously. My eyes were fixed on them as I stood up on my knees on the bed trying to think about what to do, wracking my brain for something, but I didn't even know how to react.

Before the man could reach her, fire leaked from Mal's hands as her arms flowed in fire itself, making the man stop in his tracks, trying to jump and rub himself against my wall in a clumsy attempt to extinguish the flames in his arms.

"Make it stop, you crazy b***h!" he yelled, leaning down and trying to smother the fire running up onto his shoulders. Mal's fire didn't stop, it was bright and alive and no amount of smothering would be enough to get rid of it. Taking advantage of his agony, Mal lifted my bedside table and crashed it onto his head, knocking him out. My whole body froze, I felt as if ice was flowing through my veins as my gaze met the grey eyes of the macabre doctor and another man that looked familiar, he was another Red Dragon, one that I am sure I saw at the lab.

My hands held my head and my heartbeat so loud that I felt it in every inch of my body.

No, no! It couldn't be!

I wasn't crazy, it wasn't only a hallucination! It was real and he was real! After just knocking the man

"Mal!" I tried to alert her, but it was too late.

The Red Dragon was already behind Mallory, he wrapped his arms around her body from behind and immobilized her with some sort of thick red-metallic chains as the doctor took a few steps in my direction, he was wearing his sickening smile like always. And I had to control myself to not vomit.

"Kemy, you mind-linked someone?" she yelled, as she tried to squirm away from the Red Dragon's hold. But she had no chance, there was nothing she could do, she was as paralysed and frozen as me.

"I can't, Mal! I can't!" I muttered. It was too much for Ember now, we were both powerless, just like when we were locked in our dreams.

"My sweet Golden Princess, you are finally awake and now we can be together," he smiled, taking a few measured steps closer to me.

I flinched, that was the only reaction I could muster while cursing myself inwardly. I had to be strong, for myself, for Mal, Henry and all that I loved and had to lose.

"You have nothing to fear, Princess, you won't go back to that lab ever again. It will only be you and me!" he added, his smile growing even bigger and creepier. Was he insane to think I could ever want anything to do with him?

"Leave her alone!" my sister yelled, she was still fighting to escape the Red Dragon's grasp.

Mal was always a fighter, even when she couldn't see that on her own.

He was now close, dreadfully close to me, at the edge of my bed. I made a great effort to stand up on the bed, forcing my aching muscles to keep steady as I called for Ember, for our fire, as I tried to become our fire.

He leaned down to my bed, approaching me, but before he could move any closer, I felt a hot sensation on my fingertips and aimed at him. My fire was delicate, like a golden ribbon, but it was enough to spread across his chest and make him groan in pain as he leaned back.

"Princess! Don't do that! Be a good girl!" he yelled, between moans of pain.

Good girl, my ass! I was a fire girl! Clenching my hands in two fists, I gathered all the power and fire I could and used it to create a circle of fire around him and keep him confined. The flames started small and shy, but quickly they grew tall, bright, alive, dancing around him.

"Now you are the one caged! I won't ever go anywhere with you Doctor Macabre!" I yelled, hot tears of anger sliding down my eyes.

The man holding my sister moved his eyes to me. His amber gaze looked no less sinister, laced in threat. Before I could do something about him, Henry entered the room, punching the man straight on the face faster than he could react, and freed Mal from his dreadful gasp. Daniel was right behind Henry, he surrounded the man with the thick rope of fire that left his fingers with ease and wrapped my sister in his embrace.

"You are safe, Baby," he cooed at her and she sank into his chest. Alev, Adrian and someone that must be Lord Egan were right behind him. Alev grabbed the Red Dragon by the only place that wasn't surrounded by Daniel's fire, his hair, and dragged him out of the room, as Lord Egan and Adrian went in Doctor Macabre's direction.

I fell onto the bed, my weak and exhausted muscles failing me. Henry ran to my side and scooped me up in his arms, cradling me and pressing me against his chest protectively.

"Sweetness," he murmured, cupping my face in his large hands, and caressing my cheek with his thumbs, ignoring anyone else in the room, "I shouldn't have left you here... I won't leave your side ever

"It's not your fault. I shouldn't have frozen, and not done anything," my voice came out in a whisper as I met his blue eyes, deep and full of worry and love.

"Kemy, you can hardly stand up, but you still managed to save yourself. I know it is your fire surrounding that f*cking jerk, somehow I can recognize it," he said, running his fingers through my hair in a soothing way and pulling me even closer.

His lips caressed my forehead and my heart started beating evenly again, in the peace and warmth of his embrace.

"Princess! You should be mine, don't give yourself to a filthy wolf!" Doctor Macabre hissed before Lord Egan started dragging him out of the room and Adrian tried to extinguish the fire before my room would burn completely.

A feral angry growl left Henry's chest as his eyes zeroed at the doctor, **"I would tell you to stay the f*ck away from my mate, but you won't have a chance to come close to her ever again, you will die!"** His eyes were growling and I knew that Knight was on the surface, saying those words with Henry.

"Go to hell, Doc!" I told him before turning to look at my Henry once again and forget that this horrible doctor had ever existed in my life. I would leave him, these memories and this fear behind, let it burn in the flames of his demise.

"Let's go to my room," Henry said, looking between me and the half-burned furniture. It was a pity, I really liked the now burn dresser.

"No, I want to stay with Mal." I looked at my sister, she was still with her mate, her head pressed against his chest and his arms wrapped around her.

"I am going to interrogate the Red Dragons," Daniel told my sister, without letting go of her.

"I am joining you," determination vibrated in Mal's eyes and voice, and I knew that nothing in the world would make her change her mind.

"Are you sure?" Daniel asked, caressing her face with the back of his hand.

"Yes, I am. We have to know if more of them are coming, and what this insane doctor did to Kemy," she replied, looking at me and silently asking me if I was okay.

I nodded at her; I knew she had to do it. Her way to move on was to confront these monsters, while mine was to forget about them and focus on my Henry and my future.

"I will stay here with you, Sweetness. There is no way I am leaving you anytime soon," Henry said, peppering some kisses on my temple.

Looking at him, I shook my head.

"You must leave me when I have to use the loo. Some things not even mates should share," I told him and he nodded.

"Fine, only when you go to the restroom," Henry chuckled a little and I smiled at him. The heavy dread of fear had lifted, like a dark fog, dissipated by my flames and its warmth.

Daniel and Mallory left the room and I snuggled further into my mate's arms. To my surprise, I heard a very familiar whimper. But it wasn't in my head as it was supposed to be.

"Ember?" I asked, looking around. I was beyond confused. A gasp escaped my lips as I saw my dragon by the window, crouching down to fit in the room.

"How could she?... detach from me?" I thought out loud. As far as I knew, I could shift to her form, or stay in my human form, but we never could stay side by side, just like in my dreams.

Henry and I exchanged a look of surprise, it probably worked the same with him and Knight, and for all

43. Golden Princess

Ember placed her huge head on Henry's shoulder and nuzzled him, he smiled and patted her head gently.

"I don't know how it's possible. But Ember also needs some comfort now," he said, caressing her head and making her almost purr like a happy cat.

My body was completely relaxed as I curled up in his chest, and patted Ember as well. It didn't matter how it was possible, I loved to be like this with them. It was like a dream, one that I wouldn't be afraid of.

I was less afraid to sleep now, knowing that my Ember was well, and having them both by my side.

Daniel

I held Mallory's hand as we walked down to the basement where Egan had a small dungeon built with only a few cells. When one has as many enemies as our clan has, this kind of place comes in handy.

One of the Red Dragons was chained to the wall, surrounded by Egan, Alev, and Adrian. My gaze moved to my mate, but she seemed surprisingly unfazed by the scene unfolding before her eyes.

"He was the doctor responsible for experimenting on Kemy. We still have many questions to ask him, before he becomes ashes. So far he had only told us that no one else knows where we are. They came here without telling anything to their Lord." Egan said firmly and calmly, looking between us and the chained prisoner.

Mallory's heart quickened at the mention of the Red Dragon Lord, had she ever met him personally? Or did she have his reaction because she knew he was the one behind her kidnapping? I squeezed my mate's hand, trying to comfort her.

"The doctor didn't want the other Red Dragons knowing about Kemy's whereabouts," Egan added.

I knew he'd found a way to extract the truth from these bloody monsters. Besides that, Adrian was very good at interrogations, he was even known as the Dragon's truth detector.

"How did they even find her?" I asked with a frown, fearing that the others could track Kemy and Mallory in the same way.

"There is a chip in her, in the back of her neck. We have to get rid of it immediately," Adrian chimed in and I nodded. Mallory sucked a lungful of air at his disturbing words, yet she didn't falter.

"Where are the other men?" I asked, looking around the dungeon, the three other cells were empty.

"I killed the two of them, they didn't know much. The only one who has important information is this piece of scum," Alev hissed, shooting a seething glare at the so-called doctor.

"You hurt my sister!" Mallory yelled, launching at him before I could even react, flaring two torches of fire at his legs, she was trembling and I could feel her distress as if I was the one feeling it. I wrapped my arms around her, pulling her to my chest.

"Don't, Mallory. *You* are too good to have your hands dirty with his filthy blood, don't stoop to their level, my love," I told her, holding her tighter for a moment and pressing a kiss on her forehead before I pulled away and took a step closer to the monster who hurt my mate's little sister.

Fire surrounded my fist, as I punched the red dragon on the face, "But / am not!" I hissed at him, he screamed at my attack.

There wasn't much he could do, now he was the one captive, immobilised against his will, just like he did to Kemy. I punched him a couple of times, making him scream and wriggle helplessly before I got back to my mate and intertwined my fingers with hers.

She looked at me and nodded, her trembling was gone.

"He has a lot of answers to give!" Egan continued, as fire left his fingers and surrounded the screaming doctor, almost touching him, close enough for him to feel the heat and start sweating in fear.

"You, I recognise you now. My Kemy's sister. It didn't matter what they did, or how many tried, they couldn't impregnate you!" he said these words looking at my mate. She pulled her hand away from mine, and I felt her freeze, her breathing stopped for a moment.

My vision became red, fire, anger, sheer fury vibrated in every cell of my body.

What I feared most was what had happened to her! That was why my poor mate was so afraid, she was successively violated by these bloody monsters. I would kill them, all of them. Boil their blood with my

44. Opening wounds

I was breathing fire and fury now. A lick of flame escaped my nostrils inadvertently. My blood became molten lava, and I launched at the man, strangling him. My hands were encased by fire, I didn't care, I only wanted to kill him.

"Daniel, we have to interrogate him! We will kill him, rest assured, but not now," Egan told me, as calmly as he could. Although I could hear the note of anger and the threat underneath his voice.

My eyes and hands left the bloody psychopath's neck as I heard Mallory walking away.

"Go to your mate, Daniel. She needs you now, we won't kill him. Don't worry," Egan reassured me and I nodded, going after Mallory. Egan knew well that I had to ask questions and get their answers myself. This bloody monster wasn't his, or the other men's kill.

Knocking on her bedroom, I didn't get any answer, only a noise coming from the ensuite bathroom and the crushing feeling of pain radiating from her. Pain that was added to my own.

"Delemars!" A curse in an ancient dragon language left my lips. I didn't know what to do, how to comfort my mate and make her feel better. I didn't know how to make myself feel better, rage and pain were burning through me. My gaze went to my hands, they were fisted in two tight balls as a few flames grew from them inadvertently, out of control.

My Dragon and I were both about to lose control and fire at everything around us. I entered her bedroom and knocked on the door of her bathroom.

"Mallory, how are you?" I waited, but my question wasn't met with any answer, "Please, talk to me."

~*~

Mallory

My legs ran to the bathroom as endless tears slid down my cheeks. Now everyone knew what I was, who I was: The Red Dragons' Golden Toy, like some called me.

Tainted. Ruined. Damaged to such a point that I couldn't be a good mate to anyone. It wasn't only my body that was violated, but everything in me.

Daniel knew it now.

Crouching down and opening the toilet, I threw up all my stomach's contents without stopping sobbing. Suffocating in my own tears, in my deep pain.

Alessia started to hum in my mind like she always did to calm me down. But this time, it wasn't working at all. My poor Dragon had her life bonded to a broken human like me, she deserved so much better! Someone stronger, and less scarred.

Daniel called for me, but I didn't answer. I only sat on the cold floor, my back pressed against the wall, elbows on my knees and my face buried between my hands.

A deep exhale parted my lips as silently I prayed for the Great Golden Fire, asking to grant me a single desire as I was denied its blessing for so long. *I only wanted to disappear.*

Daniel's voice broke through the piercing silence of my sadness once again. Why was he here? Why was he looking for me after learning the truth?

His voice was laced with desperation and I hated to be the source of his suffering. Alessia let out a deep whimper within my soul, she wanted me to go to him. She needed her mate.

I stood up slowly, washed my face and brushed my teeth, before looking at my reflection in the mirror. Pain and taint were all I could see.

My eyes were red and swollen, their normal blue colour changed to a shade of dark purple. My hands covered my cheeks, all the colour had left them, leaving behind a waxy and sick-looking paleness. My

44. Opening wounds

My past flashed before my eyes as I stood paralysed in front of the door. My eyes closed for a moment and after taking a deep breath, I opened the door for him.

~*~

Niki

Marion and I finally put the two cuties down to sleep and tucked them in their white cribs. My eyes roamed to the photo of Burbus above their cribs and I giggled quietly, that cat was a great big brother, always coming around to check on the twins.

He brushed his side against my leg and meowed.

"I didn't know you were here! Were you sleeping under the rocking chair?" I shook my head at the chubby ball of fur. He looked between me and the door, and meowed a couple of times, his green eyes open widely.

My eyes examined him carefully from his tail to his stirred ears. I knew this cat as if he were my own, he was trying to say something, to show me something.

"Is it Alma?" I asked and he didn't meow back. It had to be something else. Tapping my lips with my fingers, I tried to wrack my brain.

"Anita? Is it about her?"

Anita was taking way too long to come back with the chamomile leaves. Something must be wrong.

Burbus meowed twice and looked at the door. Yes, it was about her.

Suddenly, the sleeping calm twins started crying simultaneously in a way I wouldn't expect for such tiny people. They definitely had strong lungs!

"Something feels off, I have to look for Anita," I told Marion and she nodded, taking little Amaris in her arms. She surely saw my very instructive conversation with the orange cat.

I tried to comfort little Ethan, but it wasn't working at all and I knew that I had to go check on Anita now.

"You are right. The babies seemed very sensitive to any change in the magical atmosphere of the house, for them to react like that suddenly, when they've been fairly calm the whole day, something must be wrong. Go and look for Anita, Niki. I will mind-link Adrian and ask him to come to help me. Be careful!" Marion told me and I left the nursery immediately, and ran down the stairs as fast as I could. The odd feeling grew with each step.

As I arrived at the garden, I was faced with Anita's fallen and bleeding body. She wasn't even awake anymore. My mouth opened in a gasp as I screamed. I went down to my knees and breathed in relief after I pressed my hand on the side of her neck and realised that her pulse was weak but still there.

A desperate sigh left my lips, she was white like a ghost and bleeding a lot, pretty much surrounded by a pool of her own blood.

"Damn! I've never seen that much blood in my life!" I muttered under my breath.

I've been studying medical and healing potions for quite a while, but no potion could help her now; she needed a healer immediately. My trembling hands reached to my pocket and I dialled Jen's number, asking her to get ready. Now, I just had to tell Marion to teleport to Jen's home in England and pick her up.

"Hold on, Anita! Help is coming soon!" I caressed her honey-coloured hair before standing up and running to Marion.

I only hoped Anita could wait.