



Dragons Don't Forgive

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Chapter One

Sarn

In the corner of my mind, I hear them shouting. My rage has taken over and I have no control left to stop the destruction even when someone yells directly in my ear, “Sarn, dammit that’s enough!”

I don’t care. I will destroy everything around me. That’s what I’m good at. Everyone in my path goes up in flames. Smoke escapes from my nostrils as I think about burning this building down around me. It would feel so damn good to let go.

Two shifters grab my arms, their hands like steel. It doesn’t matter because I’m stronger and the alcohol makes me invincible. Dmitri is the one who finally puts a stop to my insane theatrics. Well, he stops me from burning his precious nightclub, but the rage will never go away.

“Are you done?” Dmitri demands in a deadly voice that only a vampire can back up. He is peering down at me with lethal amber eyes as I lie flat on my back with his iron grip tight on my throat. The pressure on my windpipe makes my head swim even more than the alcohol. I. Can’t. Breathe. My face must be red tinged with blue. I feebly try to dislodge his hand, but it’s like a fly battling a military tank. Then I realize maybe he can end it all so I stop fighting him.

Dmitri’s smile is anything but friendly and in my oxygen deprived brain the evil Count Dracula comes to mind. I would laugh if I could breathe. Sadly, this is what it’s like every day in my insanely drunk brain—self-hatred, drink enough to escape the memories, and crazy analogies that have absolutely nothing to do with anything. I guess it’s called avoidance, though there isn’t enough alcohol in the world to avoid my demons.

Dmitri must realize I’m about to pass out and even through the fuzzy haze I hear his low growling words, “I will eventually release you, but first, dragon, we shall have a short discussion.” He eases up the pressure just a bit,

which allows me to breathe. I suck in air when what I really want is for him to tighten those deadly fingers and take all the oxygen from my worthless life. But no, he is so fucking noble.

His amber eyes assess me and I can see the contempt written clearly in their depths. Before he begins the *discussion*, I know my welcome at the club is at an end.

“You’re done here,” he whispers, which is actually more threatening than yelling. I can hear his frustration in each word. It’s the pity in his glowing eyes that keeps me silent. And he’s not finished, “I’m having you delivered to the bear clan where you will dry out and get your shit together. You will not return to the nightclub or any other club until you’re sober.” His eyes burn a tad brighter. “We will have another conversation again when you can remember things clearly.”

My fury combined with alcohol makes me object to his dictate. “I won’t go and you can’t make me.” And if that isn’t the biggest, whiny, pussy voice alive, I don’t know what is. The disgusted look on Dmitri’s face shows he thinks the same thing.

He grabs my wrist and lifts it toward his mouth where long canines extend. “I’m not giving you a choice,” he says right before twin pin pricks enter the vein at my wrist.

It’s my first vampire bite and I swear it will be my last because I will kill the bastard for this. A heavy weight settles in my chest and darkness replaces the alcohol haze no matter how hard I fight to stay awake. My limbs turn to jelly and I can no longer move. The only fight still taking place is in my head.

“Transport him and have two guards stationed on the cabin door,” is Dmitri’s fuzzy command before the world turns pitch black and for a short time, I find peace.

My stomach rebels again and I spew into a bucket beside the bed. Nothing

has stayed down for two days. I'm retching every few hours and I still crave alcohol. Liquor is the only escape from the memories and the only thing that's kept me semi-functioning for a year. I'm such a pathetic excuse for a dragon. My ancestors must be rolling in their graves and that thought bothers me not at all. I need a drink.

The cabin door clicks as it opens. I barely lift my head from the bucket to see who it is. When I do, I wish I hadn't bothered. It's the person I want to see least. Without a care in the world, she walks inside like she owns the place. And shit, she's in another damned leather getup like she wears at the nightclub. Goddess, I pray silently in my head, please end my miserable life because anything is better than being in this room right now.

I lift my head completely out of the bucket and wipe away a stream of spit from my lips. I bring my full attention her way and I'm surprised she doesn't incinerate on the spot from my glare. I don't want her here. Hell, I don't want her within a hundred miles of me.

"Don't stop puking your guts up on my account," she says in a chipper sing-song voice as she steps closer and places a tray with a bowl and glass of water on the side table. "I've brought you some broth to help you along."

Heat builds inside me. It's a slow burn that starts in the pit of my stomach and moves up until I can barely contain it in my throat. I'm miserable and dangerous—not a good combination. I don't need anything from her or anyone else. "Get the fuck out." I barely move my lips because if I open my mouth, she will be a pile of ash.

Her assessing glance travels my body from head to toe. Her eyes move slowly like she's deciding if I'm edible or just a pile of shit lying in bed and taking up space. Her lips tip up at the corners and a wild spark enters her eyes. I groan when she purses those lips and says, "Make me."

She's certifiable. And she needs to leave. I push my hair back from my face with shaking fingers. My arms and legs tremble in the same way. I'm lying down, so at least I don't suffer the indignity of falling on my ass. From

the smug look on her face, she knows I'm incapable of making her *do* anything. Exhaustion rears its ugly head and I'm too pathetically strung out to fight her any longer. "Why are you here, Sierra?" I ask in a bored, who-gives-a-fuck voice.

Like she doesn't have a care in the entire world, she sits on the side of the bed with absolutely no fear of me. I know I look like hell and she looks the exact opposite. Her curly reddish-brown hair swirls around her delicate face, and thick lashes accent her dark eyes. They literally brush her cheeks when she blinks. She has a small, elegant pixie nose with high cheekbones. She's nothing like the other female bear shifters I've seen. They're pretty enough, but larger like their men. I've admired Sierra's beauty on each occasion I've been close enough to sneak a glance or two, which isn't often. To top everything off about her delectable body, the outfits she wears are outrageous.

The nightclub has a strict dress code for employees—the perfect combination of sexy and elegant. Unless you work behind the bar as Sierra and her brother do. They rock the leather in tight, suggestive clothes that have men and women ogling them every minute of their shift. Today, Sierra is dressed in a tight, black, midriff bustier, black short-shorts that show off her legs, and thigh highs with stiletto heels. The damn shoes must be six inches high. Who the hell wears this shit in a rustic cabin in the middle of nowhere? Then there's all that wild hair. A man could get lost in it while fucking her.

Until now, she's avoided being near me even though I always felt her eyes. When she works behind the bar, she always watches me. Though, in the past few months it hasn't been as blatant. Not since she peeked into my room at the nightclub after I'd spent a night carousing. I had the pleasure of two naked ladies asleep in bed with me, which Sierra witnessed after she opened the door. Her steely gaze held disappointment and sadness.

I don't give a damn, though. She can join the club. Bastian, a dragon shifter

from the dragon realm, came to see me and his gaze held disappointment too. It also contained the added touch of anger, which I deserved. In my grief over the death of my beloved bride, I tried to kidnap Bastian's son, Ashrac. The human bride of Laryn, another of my dragon brothers, tried to stop me. I practically burned her to a crisp, incinerating most of her body. The horror of what I did haunts me, and forgiveness is not what I seek.

I don't care that Laryn's bride transcended to dragon and survived. Our brides are sacred. What I did is unforgivable. I'd like to think I'd have given Ashrac back to his parents after he assuaged some of my loneliness, but who knows. What it comes down to is that I all but killed another dragon's bride. Calista, my last bride, would never forgive me any more than I can forgive myself.

When Bastian came to the nightclub, he demanded I return to the dragon realm. I told him to go to hell. Not that I wanted him to join me because really I just wanted to be alone in hell and drink myself to death. Damn Bastian and damn this pint-sized female for not leaving me to my nightmare of constant self-loathing.

"Are you done glaring at me or should I just sit here and give you a little more time?" Sierra asks, cutting off my pity party.

I try again and add biting venom to my voice, "Why are you here?"

She watches me with such intense appraisal I'm actually surprised when she answers. Her head cocks just a bit to the side, a spring of hair falls over her cheek, and again I see no features that resemble the bear clan females, though I sense her shifter blood. "I've decided to nurse you until you're able to help yourself. I needed a break from working the club and this position is open. You've chased away everyone else." She puts her hands up and tips her palms toward me a little. "So here I am and you're stuck with me."

Until now, male bear shifters delivered my food and water and emptied my bucket if I couldn't make it to the bathroom. No words were spoken between me and the bears, so I know Sierra lies. And none of them sat on the

side of my bed and judged me like she's doing. I can see it in her eyes. She finds me lacking in every way and worst of all... she pities me.

The uncontrollable fury that turns into a blazing circle of pain begins taking over again. "I don't want you here," I groan on a warm breath of air. Too warm. My body heats with the need to expel fire. I watch Sierra wipe moisture from her brow.

Her stare remains intent and she continues to be unaware of the danger she's in. "I know nothing about dragon shifters. Is the air warmer because you're angry?" she asks in her calm melodic voice. Insane!

"You're crazy." I fight the need to grab her shoulders and shake her. "I could turn you to ash in the blink of an eye. Don't think your bear shifter blood will save you."

I'm surprised when her laughter fills the cabin. She really is nuts. I watch as she continues laughing until finally she wipes tears from her eyes. "I'm not a bear shifter," she says, letting me in on her inside joke. It wasn't that damn funny.

"Then what the hell are you?" I demand.

"How about I show you," she replies as she stands.

"How about you get the fuck out," I return sternly. It shocks me that the fire inside me settled low in my gut at her laughter. I'm even more stunned at what she does next.

She quickly unclips the fastenings holding her bustier and lets it drop to the floor. I gulp in a breath at the sight of her breasts. They're small and firm and perfect. She unzips her too tight, body-molded shorts and pulls them down her legs along with her panties. If you can call the string contraption that catches for a split-second on one foot a form of clothing at all. The heels and thigh-highs are next. She's a pro at rolling the stockings down her legs and making my dick hard. I'm so fucking turned on I forget my need for alcohol. At last she stands naked before me like it's the most natural thing on earth. And she's exquisite. It doesn't matter that my stomach continues

rumbling or that my head aches so bad I want to scream, my cock wants to bury itself deep between those gorgeous thighs.

“None of that,” she says with a tinkling laugh as she looks at the part of me that’s growing to the point of combustion. A cool burst of energy runs across my skin and in the next blink, she’s a large wolf with a red pelt of dense fur that looks soft enough to roll in. She shakes her entire body starting at her head and her fur puffs out more. Her tail is down and sweeps behind her with an unhurried slashing movement back and forth. Her brown eyes are the same as she carries in her human form. I’m looking at about one-hundred and fifty pounds of wolf completely stunning in her wildness. I’m back to needing a drink.

I’ve only seen two bears shift. I felt their magic when it happened. Very similar to hers. I don’t even realize I’ve reached out my hand until her tongue makes a slow warm slide across my palm. I’m sure I don’t taste good. I can’t believe I’m looking at a wolf while my cock remains thick and ready. I’m a pathetic bastard.

I know she can understand me if I speak, but I’m not sure she can cast her thoughts into my mind while she’s in wolf form. That’s a clan thing here in the earth realm and I’m not part of her clan. I can speak and hear her telepathic thoughts if I choose, but I don’t care to reveal this secret just yet. I wonder if she’s part of the bear clan. If not, she most likely accepts being unable to communicate in her wolf form. It’s actually quite hard to resist yelling my telepathic voice into her stubborn head, though.

For some reason my rage builds again. It’s been uncontrollable for months thanks to the liquor. I’m back to just wanting her gone so I can continue my one-dragon pity party. “Get out,” I yell and point to the partially open front door. The room grows warmer, but she remains standing a few feet in front of me, her tail giving a continual swish. Who does she think she is? I’m dragon. I don’t need her prancing around on two legs or four. I don’t need her making me think of all the things I can’t have. I’m totally unworthy

of anything good or in her case beautiful and innocent. It doesn't matter how sexy her clothes are. Her innocence comes through loud and clear. And because of it, I refuse to touch her.

There are twenty-four years before I'm granted another claiming for a bride. Sex with willing females is one thing, but Sierra makes me feel things I have no business feeling. She's not a one-night fuck and I know it. Her twin brother, Roland, would kill me, or at least try. He's been standoffish from the beginning and at first I thought his a typical bear shifter personality. Then I figured out it was because he'd seen the way his sister looks at me. Maybe he even noticed how I look at her when she's not watching. And now, I'm fully aware that neither of them are bears.

Sierra finally turns and with a swish of her tail, she runs from the cabin. Now I can be alone to wallow in more guilt. I don't deserve her kindness, I don't deserve to live, and I sure as hell don't deserve to have her in my bed. I lean down to the floor and snag one of her thigh-highs and bring it to my nose. It's not Calista's scent, but it holds the sweet herbal tang of a woman. I can't help the tears that fall as loneliness swamps me. Death would be a welcome escape.

Chapter Two

Sierra

That didn't go well at all. Not that I really expected it to. Hell, the man is stubborn. I've watched him for a year now. Watched him drink himself into a stupor for at least two-thirds of each day. He paid Dmitri a mountain of gold to stay at the club or the vampire would have booted him out months ago. Roland, my twin brother, isn't happy that a dragon shifter has been under the same roof as me. Not that my brother spends too much time being happy. The only person grumpier than him is Sarn.

It doesn't help that the damn dragon shifter is the most gorgeous man I've ever laid eyes on. Even with pasty, white, detoxifying skin, he's beautiful. His shaggy head of dark blonde hair needs washing and cutting. I'd give anything to run my fingers through the strands and do both jobs. More so, I want to sink into his odd-colored eyes. The pupils turn amethyst when he's angry or aroused, as I just discovered. The violet hue does strange things deep inside me.

I shake my head because now I'm lying to myself. He affects me right between my thighs in my sex. A burning ache of need builds whenever he's around. My inner wolf grows erratic and I worry if I let her rule, I'd have Sarn on his back with me straddling his cock within a minute of entering a room with him.

Dmitri was almost at the end of his hospitality regardless of Sarn's gold, so I broached the subject of drying out the angry dragon shifter against his will. I think one year is long enough to be angry at the universe. I know little about the dragons and their world. I only learned of their existence when I came to work early one morning with my brother.

We are both past the age of sexual consent for beastkind. We need mates, but the elusive magic that chooses our life partner hasn't materialized. We came to Dmitri's territory because we were restless and needed change. The

nightclub was the perfect escape. My father, Ivan, wasn't exactly delighted, but he knew where one of us went, the other followed. More times than not, it's me pulling my brother from some scrape or another. I was a hellion as a child, but when I reached twenty-one, something in me settled. Not that our parents noticed. Roland is the golden child and can do no wrong in their eyes. I alone know his secret and when the time is right, Roland will tell our extended family.

Most shifters only have one clan, but Roland and I were raised in our early childhood by Marcus and Amy, the liege vampires of the Southwest Clan. Then we went to live with our father when he finally found another mate and settled down. I don't remember my mother, though her death destroyed my father and he left us for years while he grieved. The mating bond is devastating when one half of a pair dies. I might not understand how our father could leave us for that long, but I don't hold a grudge. With my past, I think that's why I have so much sympathy for the dragon. In my mind, he needs to find something to live for. Not that I think I'm it, but he needs distraction from his pain and I may be able to help with that.

Roland and I have two clans, and now we work at the nightclub alongside a third clan. We seem to fit in. Well, as much as any outsider can fit in with a bunch of reticent bears. Honey, a bear shifter, and his mate, Mandy, who is a wolf shifter, have been visiting her family, so she hasn't been around during the past few months. With her absence, I've grown companionable with Dmitri's mate, Nikka. She's mute and I can't mind-share with her because I'm not a member of her clan, but that never stops us from communicating. I remain in wolf form and head to her home now. I need a sounding board.

Vampires are unable to produce children, so Nikka, a cat shifter, mothers the entire clan. She's amazing and I've seen her get between two fighting bears three times her size and put them in their place. She bows to no one and she is also the last person you want to be on the outs with. For such a gentle woman, she is fierce when push comes to shove.

I shift to human and enter her home naked. Nikka doesn't mind me walking around without clothes, but Dmitri has rules. I head to the clothing cabinet and take out a set of unappealing sweats that look like they'll do. As a wolf shifter, I'm smaller than most of the bears, so the clothes are baggy. I don't care how they fit as long as I follow Dmitri's ridiculous house rules. I roll my eyes when I pull the hem of the shirt over my head. Vampires are strange when it comes to nudity. Unlike shifters they aren't as comfortable seeing everyone naked. In a shifter home, nakedness is more the rule. When a beastkind child is young, it's impossible to keep clothing on them. They shift back and forth between their human and beast form rapidly so parents don't bother. And though Nikka is shifter, she gives into her husband on this point. I glance up and Nikka is gazing at me with a knowing smile. I have no doubt she knows my every thought on the subject.

"You can tell him I obeyed his rules," I say and watch her grin widen. "I need an ear so I can whine a bit and get a few things off my chest."

Her smile disappears. She turns and walks to the large sectional couch, sits down, and pats the space beside her. I sit then swing my butt around so I face her. I pull my knees in and wrap my arms around them. It isn't very ladylike, which suits me just fine. I've never considered myself a proper, boring lady anyway.

Nikka waits patiently for me to start talking. I take a breath and let the entire story out. "I'm enthralled with the dragon shifter. I have no idea why. Dmitri told me of their bride claiming nonsense." I hold up my hand when she shakes her head. "I know they have no choice and I know it's some type of curse. I have sympathy for his loss but that doesn't mean I'm happy about it. When he's near, I can't take my eyes off him. He is nothing but a big, bad, ball of heartache and it makes no difference to my wolf at all. She wants to lay her claws into his back as I ride his cock." I drop my arm and feel utterly defeated.

Nikka takes my hand and gazes intently into my eyes. I feel her

understanding.

“I know I can just fuck him and get him out of my system. It’s not like I haven’t had a little experience with the opposite sex. I’ve just never felt quite this way.” Nikka shakes her head slowly. “No, it’s not the mating bond. It’s something different. I’ve scented mated pairs and this isn’t about mating. Thank the Goddess for small favors.” A slight giggle escapes me and I continue. “I know the dragon will leave eventually. I also know there is a mate out there somewhere waiting for him and that woman isn’t me.” Nikka squeezes my hand and I look away as I speak again. “He has twenty-four years until the claiming. There is something deep inside me that wants to make him happy until he chooses his next bride even when I know it will kill a part of me when he does.”

I don’t realize I’m crying until Nikka pulls me against her soft chest and soothes my back. I rarely cry and I have no idea what’s wrong with me. Loneliness maybe. Even in the close-knit shifter community, I feel alone. My brother is the only one who ever sees my tears. He comforts me much like Nikka is doing now. But he has his own problems and even though I know they are of his own making, he’s been the one in need of a shoulder lately.

Roland is gay. He’ll barely admit it to himself and refuses to speak to me of it. Our parents will still love him, he just doesn’t understand that. He’s also a fierce warrior. Who he loves makes no difference when it comes to protecting the clans. He won’t talk to me even though we shared the same womb and he is a part of my soul. Most days I just want to slap him for being so stupid. And I’ve taken on an angry dragon shifter who needs more than a slap upside the head. Even if everything works out and we connect in bed and out of it, twenty-four years from now, he will go to another woman.

Damn my life sucks.

I pull away from the warmth of Nikka’s embrace and wipe my tears. I give her a half smile and say, “Thank you. I guess I needed that. I just keep hoping the Goddess brings me a mate so I can get on with my life and not feel this

way. I also know there are shifters hundreds of years older than me who have never found their mates. I'm afraid I will be one of them. I would even be happy to mate with another wolf and give up children. It's love I want." I wipe away another escaping tear. "Having a mad passionate affair with the dragon might alleviate some of this pain. I desire him so very badly." What I don't say, because I have no idea why I feel as I do, is that I want the dragon for more than a quick affair. I want him forever, which is completely unrealistic.

Nikka's smile is gentle and I read acceptance in her gaze. Whatever I decide, she will back me. Twenty-four years is a long time and just maybe my mate will show himself before those years have passed. If so, Sarn and I can part ways with no one hurt. He would have a bride to choose and I would have a mate to live the rest of eternity with.

I'm glad I came here today. It has cleared my thoughts and I know exactly what I will do. I have a dragon to seduce, though a lot will need to take place before the seduction. The man seriously needs a bath.