
Aggravation, Anticipation

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"D'rian and T'syr, here is your cot," Weyrlingsecond Sahara said, with a gesture. She signaled to the line of weyrings still needing assignments, and left the two bronzeriders standing between the two wallows in front of the cot that would be theirs for the coming Turn.

T'syr tried to catch bluerider S'var's eye as the group walked past, but his friend was lost in his own thoughts and didn't look up. T'syr would have to catch up with him later, to see what S'var thought of sharing a cot with K'syr... and to commiserate about T'syr's own foul luck.

As the rest of the weyring class moved on to other cots, D'rian pounded up the steps into theirs. T'syr followed him reluctantly. Impression might have softened the Benden-bred weyring a little, but only just. He still acted like he owned the world. Impressing bronze had only confirmed his high opinion of himself.

And now T'syr was stuck with him as a roommate.

'Don't think of that,' he told himself, and thought instead about the Lecture earlier, and about S'var, and about what the evening might bring. The two of them had never consummated their mutual affection... but now that the possibility for lovemaking was back, he couldn't help thinking that S'var might be more willing than he had proved before they both had Impressed. Now it was different; now they were under orders, for the protection of their beasts. He felt a wave of anticipation, and was glad of his dark complexion that would hide the blush he knew had infused his face.

With that on his mind, T'syr entered the cot – roomy, compared to the crowded Weyrling Barracks they'd left. Someone had opened the shutters to air it out that morning, but it still carried a bit of an empty, un-lived-in smell. It couldn't have been unoccupied for *very* long -- the last group had graduated two months ago -- but even with the group of weyrings from the 9th Pass, there weren't enough weyrings to fill all the cots.

The window over one bed had a good view, overlooking the Weyrling beach and ocean. Even as T'syr noticed it, D'rian grabbed his chest of belongings and dragged it to the bed in question. The window over the other bed looked out on a clump of trees. T'syr stifled a sigh, but not well enough. D'rian smirked at him over his shoulder. T'syr smothered a stab of irritation, not wanting to let D'rian bait him. He quickly grabbed his own chest and lugged it over to the remaining bed on the other side of a small privacy screen. 'It's not like we'll be here to enjoy the view much,' he told himself.

On the other side of the partition D'rian gave an exaggerated sigh. "Whatever Kadanzer's faults, it sure makes up for it with its scenery," he said. There was a crunching sound as D'rian lay down on the straw-filled mattress. "At last," he said. "It's too bad we're not at Benden, though... flighted weyrings get to move into their own weyrs."

T'syr wasn't sure how to respond to that, so he didn't. He'd never been North before; had certainly never been to a Weyr in a volcanic cone. What he didn't know, he couldn't miss.

A heavy thump outside, followed by another, announced the arrival of their dragons, and the bronzes began inspecting their own new living quarters.

Wallows! Yengarth crowed. *I have my own wallow now, and it is big. Oh... Hassanth wants to try this one. Why? They are the same. I do not care where I sleep; they are both big. Hassanth, you cannot have both.* Yengarth's mindvoice became prickly with irritation. *Why do you need to try both before you decide? They are both better than the little things we had before.*

T'syr huffed. Like rider, like dragon. He pulled his trunk into position at the end of his bed, and glanced around what would be his side of the room. He couldn't bring himself to try to personalize it yet. He had so few possessions anyway.

His train of thought was interrupted by his roommate. "Just want you to know up front," D'rian called from his side of the room, "I like girls; guys just don't *do* it for me. So no advances on me, right?"

Shocked, T'syr just stared at his bed. As it dawned on him what D'rian was implying, T'syr felt his face burn furiously.

Before he could make it clear that he *never* would consider D'rian an eligible partner, D'rian said, "If you're really itching for that kind of action, I'm sure V'les would be willing. He'd be lots better than that greasy stick you hang around with."

T'syr bit his tongue in an effort not to say the first thing that came to his head.

You are angry! Yengarth declared, and a low rumbling from outside the cot had to be coming from the young bronze.

T'syr quickly controlled his anger, as they'd been taught throughout their training. He sent reassuring thoughts to Yengarth. *Hassanth's rider just said something I didn't expect, he explained.*

I will tell Hassanth to tell his rider--

NO! No, don't do that.

Aloud, he said, "S'var is not a stick, and I'd thank you not to talk about him like that."

"Suit yourself," D'rian said. There was more rustling of the straw mattress, then a thump of boots as D'rian sauntered over to T'syr's side of the room. "To each his own, I guess."

T'syr did not want to look at his cotmate, and busied himself by pulling his riding strap care supplies -- his awl, his waxed cord, and a container of oil -- from his trunk. He scooped them up and headed for the storage area that he would share with D'rian, where they would both store their riding straps. D'rian waited where he stood. T'syr avoided looking at him.

"You're a good sort, T'syr," D'rian said at last. "For a holdbred, at least. I'm sure we'll get along fine."

"Sure," T'syr said. It was a backhanded compliment, but a compliment nonetheless... From D'rian, that was saying a lot.

Hassanth still has not decided, Yengarath stated with some heat. **I have just gotten settled, and he wants me to move. No, I will not move. You are taking too long to decide, and I am ready to sit in the sun.**

"T'syr, tell your bronze boy to lay off," D'rian said. "Hassanth says he's being difficult."

"Difficult, my eye!" His still-simmering anger made his response more heated than he intended. He toned his voice down a little, seeing D'rian draw himself up. If it came to fisticuffs, D'rian was sure to win. "If Hassanth loses out on his chance to choose because he's being too picky, then it's his own fault. I'm not making Yengarath move just so Hassanth can --"

"Whatever. Just think of this, pretty-boy." D'rian jabbed a finger at T'syr's chest. "We have to live together, but we don't have to get along. We can make this easy on each other, or we can make it hard. I'll be sure to remember this the next time you want any favors from me."

T'syr gritted his teeth and met D'rian's eyes glare for glare, but didn't reply. When D'rian turned away again, he allowed his fists to unclench. *Yengarath, you don't have to move or do anything Hassanth tries to bully you into doing. But I've got to get out of here and away from this ass.*

Hassanth cannot make me do anything I do not want to do, Yengarath replied with some hauteur. **He is not a queen. You may visit Duhonth's rider. He always makes you feel better. I can ask if they are ready for visitors.**

T'syr felt a different kind of warmth at the thought of seeing S'var... and the thought of other things brought him a feeling of heady anticipation. He couldn't walk out of the cot -- and away from D'rian -- fast enough.



Six months of weyrlinghood hadn't changed K'syr in the slightest. With a heavy *whump*, he flopped down on the nearest bed, lacing his hands behind his head and giving a satisfied sigh.

"This bed," he announced, eyes closed, "is mine."

Bony arms folded over his chest, S'var had to remind himself that he'd been paired with K'syr under the expectation that they learn to get along. He heard the sigh in his own voice. "Sure."

Stooping to catch the handle of his trunk, he pulled his things to the other side of the cot, grumbling as he went, "Thanks for asking."

"No problem," K'syr drawled lazily from behind the wicker screen.

S'var shook his head. Had his cotmate been any other bronzerider, the arrogant disregard would have passed without a blink. But with K'syr it went against the grain, making him bristle and want to shake the bronzerider until his teeth rattled. K'syr had never had consideration for anyone but himself, even when they'd both been no better than drudges, and it disgusted S'var that he'd managed to

get a bronze and all that went along with it. The last thing he needed was more reason to accommodate his sluggish, selfish—

S'var cut the thought off without finishing, frowning at himself. *Shells.*

Arranging his few belongings for distraction, he reached for the ball of perpetual good cheer in his head. *How's the new wallow, Duhonth?*

Bigger, the blue answered with a swell of childlike delight. There was a sound outside similar to the one K'syr had made hitting the bed. **The sun makes the earth warm, and the grass is soft under my head.**

S'var smiled a little. It didn't take much to make Duhonth happy. *Good.*

The others are pleased with their wallows as well. Except for Yengarath. Hassanth cannot decide which wallow he wants, and will not let Yengarath have one until he tries them both.

S'var snorted softly – poor T'syr, having to deal with that wher's ass and his equally arrogant beast. Although he had an idea of why the weyrlingstaff had paired the two together, he doubted that it made the situation any more bearable.

He closed his trunk and sat on the edge of his bed, gazing around. This was the most private space he'd ever had before, and the feeling was both intoxicating and unnerving. He might keep to himself, but he was used to having people around him. Having lived in a barracks of one sort or another for most of his life, he almost couldn't comprehend what it would be like when he got a cot entirely to himself after graduation.

Well...maybe he wouldn't have to live entirely by himself. Maybe T'syr would...maybe...

The Lecture – and he knew now why candidates and weyrings put such emphasis on it – that Shahara had given them before assigning them their cots began to tumble around in his head. He felt his face go hot. He had other things to worry about before graduation, when it came to him and T'syr...

K'syr's head suddenly poked around the divider. S'var wanted to bury his blushing face in his hands, but knew it was too late. His cotmate grinned at him. "Thinking about getting laid?"

"No," S'var growled. It was only half a lie. He was thinking about it...and everything else that it brought to mind. Some of which wasn't nearly as pleasant as K'syr seemed to think.

He'd been dreading this day for the past six months. Before he'd Impressed, it had been easy to keep things from progressing beyond a kiss, a touch – neither he nor T'syr were experienced with that sort of thing, and both were too nervous to suggest taking things any further. Once they became weyrings, being able to hide behind the celibacy rules made things even easier. But now...now there was more than just their own desires to consider. Now there was obligation.

And S'var didn't want to have to explain why the idea made him flinch.

"Of course you are," K'syr countered. "A Harper's tale couldn't cover how big of a blushing virgin you look like. You're so red I'm surprised your nose isn't bleeding."

'Virgin' was just not a word S'var was prepared to deal with, and to cover his mortification he snarled, "If you want a bleeding nose—"

"See? You're even spouting empty threats of violence," K'syr said, as though he'd scored a point somewhere. "A sure sign of sexual frustration."

"K'syr," S'var fumed, his face burning hotter with anger and embarrassment, "go away."

"Good idea." Without a single feather ruffled, the bronzerider strolled towards the door. "There's an entire flock of highly available women out there to seduce, after all."

As the door banged shut, S'var noticed that all of K'syr's things were still piled beside it. For Faranth's sake...

Yengarh says his rider would like to come see you, Duhonth said, his mindvoice warm with sun-drenched pleasure. ***Hassanth and his rider are already making them cross.***

S'var laughed weakly. *Tell him he's welcome. I'll come out there to make sure he can find which cot is mine.*

I will tell Yengarh.

S'var spent the wait petting his dragon's head and listening to the blue chatter about his clutchmates and their impressions of their new homes. K'syr had left Bremnoth behind, but the big bronze ignored them, not even deigning to watch them with his half-lidded eyes.

T'syr wasn't long in arriving, and S'var offered him a sympathetic smile once he was close enough. "Let me guess. Between D'rian and his ego, the cot felt too small?"

"You have no idea." T'syr smiled back, but there was exasperation in his voice.

"Oh, I think I might..."

Duhonth interrupted by shoving his nose at the bronzerider, and T'syr patted his muzzle with a chuckle. "Yes, hello to you too, Duhonth."

S'var shook his head at his blue. "You'd swear I starve him for affection or something."

T'syr laughed again, but there was something in the sound this time that made S'var glance at him warily. The smile on T'syr's face had changed, and there was more than just warmth in his voice when he teased, "Speaking of starved for affection..."

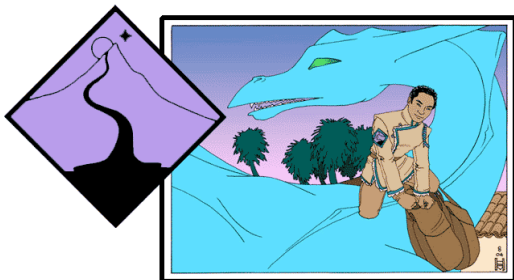
S'var's breath caught, and he looked away. "About that..." He swallowed, and his mouth had gone dry. "I know what the weyringssecond said, but...can we...I mean, do we have to...right away?"

Fingertips touched his jaw lightly, beckoning, and he raised his gaze again. The heat in T'syr's eyes had been dampened by disappointment he couldn't entirely hide, but his expression was understanding. "No. We can go as slow

as you want."

S'var knew he couldn't put it off forever, but the crushing weight on his chest lightened, and when he drew T'syr into an embrace, it was one of relief as much as affection. The kiss didn't make him shudder. A kiss was good. A kiss was safe...

He couldn't put it off forever. Just a little longer...



Kadanzer Weyr

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