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# Roommates

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Weyrlingassistant Shahara let the echoes of her last sentence die. An uncomfortable silence fell over the classroom while she let the lesson sink in. She surveyed Weyrling Class 37. They weren't squirming *too* much, considering they'd just received the infamous maturation lecture the weyrbrats told exaggerated stories about.

It was one of the most important lessons in weyrling training. Their enforced celibacy would come to an end today, and Shahara could tell from their expressions that several of the weyrbred candidates were already champing at the bit. Some of the holdbred candidates, on the other hand, were red to the ears. She suppressed a smile.

"Today," Shahara said, breaking the silence, "you will be moved out of the Weyrling Barracks into shared cots. You will be assigned cotmates -- and just to curtail any complaints, these assignments are not made by luck-of-the-draw. We've taken into account personality types and temperaments. And before you get your hopes up, you will NOT be assigned a cot with your best friend. You will be expected to get along with your cotmate as part of your training. After all, you can't pick your wingmates. You don't have to be friends with them, but you have to learn to work with them. They very well could save your life someday.

"We will only entertain transfers following complaints of a very serious nature." Shahara gave them all a very stern look. "For your own sake, I suggest you do NOT make such requests lightly.

"Now. I want you all, with your dragons, to assemble immediately on the Drill Grounds. From there, you will be paired off and assigned. Your belongings have already been taken to your assigned cots. You will have the remainder of the afternoon to get everything in order and acclimate yourselves to your new living quarters. Dismissed."

There was silence for a moment. The weyrlings did not all get up immediately, and they all seemed to be trying to avoid each others' eyes. Soon enough, though, someone cracked a quiet joke in the back. The ripple of giggles broke the tension, and the students started to rise.

In the bustle that followed, Shahara summoned Layketh, who sent a sleepy response. 'Meet me on the Drill Grounds, dear heart, and keep the weyrlings in line as they arrive.'

*I will help with the young ones,* Layketh said.

Shahara smiled. This was one of the most exciting days in weyrling training. In many ways, things would be very different for them from here on out.



Dwayana kept her smirk to herself as she stood. She preferred her company to seek her out, rather than the other way around. Now that she was a goldrider... well. She wondered how long it would take for the bronzeriders to start vying for her attention. She scanned the classroom, eyeing the handful with bronzerider knots. D'rian? She glanced towards the Benden weyrling. He had a smug smile pasted on his face. She shuddered. Never, if she could help it. She scanned the others. B'shan? Maybe. J'lan? Perhaps. K'syr? He was certainly bold enough. T'syr was a lost cause, though... everyone knew his affections leaned elsewhere. 'Too bad,' she thought.

*They must prove they are worthy of you,* Arohath said, her tone implying that none of them were.

At the very least, Dwayana could anticipate having her own private cot. Gold weyrlings traditionally roomed alone, once the weyrlings were assigned shared cots. That was going to be a pleasant change.

*And only right for MY rider,* Arohath stated. *All the males will attend you and will ease your every need.*

Dwayana allowed herself a smile.

She passed Lina as the holdbred girl stood. Her cheeks were flushed. "Well," Lina said, a little too loudly. "That was, umm... to the point!" Her cheeks turned even more pink, if that were possible.

"You're blushing, Lina," Cybris said dryly as the group moved as one to the lecture hall door.

Lina gave a forced laugh. "Blushing!" she said, her tone shrill. "You're lucky my ears aren't burning! I can't believe they want us to just go out and... Well, just go out and..." She flapped a hand ineffectually as though searching for a word. "Well... You know what I mean."

Dwayana stifled a chuckle. Lina might be trying to hide it, but she was still a prudish holder.

A little ahead of them, Sapherlin walked with a bouncy step and a keenly cheerful expression, showing clearly how she felt about their change in circumstances. Sapherlin was looking around the group as though trying to guess whom she'd be paired with. The whole class of weyrlings formed a trailing line to the Drill Grounds, where they would join their dragons – most of them sunning themselves while they waited for their riders.

*The sun is good, Arohath said. My hide shines and the bronzes admire me, as they should.*

This time Dwayana really did laugh.



Weyrlingassistant Shahara stood at the head of the classroom until all the students had filed out, and then she followed them out the door. She took her time walking toward the Drill Grounds, enjoying the warmth of the day. When she was half-way there, she sent a query to green Layketh.

*The weyrings are nearly all here with their dragons,* the green reported. *Face forward, Cinanth,* Layketh reprimanded. *Those whitewings will still be there when we are done here.*

Shahara smiled. Brown Cinanth was hard to distract when something had caught his attention, but he was learning to focus when it came to drills. The whole weyring class was progressing well, when it came to it.

She arrived on the grounds to see her class spread before her in two neat lines, green Layketh presiding at the farthest right of the group. Sujath was eyeing the weyrings on either side of Cybris, as though the green didn't trust them. Bremnoth looked eager, and his rider K'syr lazy as always. Yengarth and Hassanth both hid their excitement behind airs of importance. T'syr's dark complexion almost hid his blush.

Others among the young dragons had picked up their riders' excitement and were eyeing each other. Still, it would be a Turn more before the dragonets themselves would be sexually mature... plenty of time for the uninitiated among the weyrings to gain enough experience not to put their dragons in danger when they finally did rise.

Gold Arohath stood proud, surveying the class over her rider Dwayana's head, but snapped to attention quickly when Shahara stepped onto the grounds. Some unheard signal went through the group and all the dragonets and their riders faced forward.

Shahara walked to the midpoint at the front of the group. At her prompting, Layketh gave a half-hop and glided over the heads of the class to land front and left of the group.

"Attention, weyrings," Shahara called out, to stifle the last whispers among the ranks. The weyrings all stiffened, and the dragonets stilled. Even Sujath, who could seldom stand still during drills, was motionless. Cybris was learning to control her green. "As I call out cot assignments, move with your cot partner to form a double line in front of Layketh."



With the lecture over, Arlynnna found herself more excited than she'd expected to find out who she would be rooming with. She certainly wouldn't be assigned her friend Ivahla, so who would it be? Probably someone younger – well, they were *all* younger, actually -- and not one of her fellow Bendeners. Hopefully someone fun. Other people she'd talked to earlier had said that the Kadanzer weyringstaff tried to pair up weyrings who could learn something from each other, so they would probably put her with someone interesting. Wasn't Ivahla always telling her she needed to loosen up and live a bit?

Then Weyrlingassistant Shahara called out the first pair. "Arlynnna and Dwayana!"

For a moment Arlynnna stood stunned. All her life she'd wanted gold, and now that she knew that would never be, they were sticking her with a goldrider? She glanced towards Dwayana, who blinked and hesitated before moving to the head of the queue in front of Layketh. Arlynnna glanced to Weyrlingassistant Shahara. The weyringassistant was eyeing her. Arlynnna wondered if she was waiting for some reaction.

She might even have expected one from Dwayana, what with goldriders usually getting private cots. Arlynnna was struck for a moment with both jealousy and... was it longing?

*What is wrong?* Cerauth asked plaintively.

*Oh, I'm sorry, dear one,* Arlynnna said, smoothing over her feelings. *We need to move up in front of Layketh now, next to Arohath and her rider.* The golden pair were already moving to their new position. As she and Cerauth moved up to stand beside them, Arlynnna looked at Dwayana and saw her frowning; no doubt the red-haired goldrider had been looking forward to a cot to herself.

'Well, I guess I was right that they'd put me with someone interesting,' she thought. She couldn't help admiring Arohath's golden form for a moment before returning her attention to the front.



When Arlynnna her green moved to the queue, the weyringassistant called, "B'shan and T'larin!"

Cassia's eyes followed the bronzerider and greenrider as they stepped forward and joined the queue. She'd never had a problem with either T'larin or Benden-bred B'shan, though she'd never been exactly sure of the greenrider. It might do him some good to have a steady-tempered roommate. She wondered how they would do together, considering T'larin's leanings, and the lecture they'd just had...

"Byalla and Cassia," Weyrlingassistant Shahara announced.

Cassia felt a brief flash of something very like disbelief and dismay. However, she firmly schooled her face to a neutral mask as she stepped forward. Inside, though, was very different. 'Isn't this just lovely,' she thought sarcastically. She'd hoped for Cybris, or Sapherlin, or Ivahla or any of the weyrbred girls... instead, she was paired with Byalla, and her determinedly holdbred attitudes. It would drive her mad! She'd try her best not to start everything off badly, but...

Cassia glanced around Senrhaeth to the girl and green Aleoth, who had joined the queue. Byalla looked steadily ahead, her face showing nothing. Cassia sighed, and faced forward as well.



Cybris felt a stab of regret as Cassia moved into place next to Byalla. Cassia had been her most promising choice. Sujath would have been far more polite and tractable towards a blue dragon roommate than to any of her green sisters. Cybris was good enough at obscuring her feelings enough to get along with just about anyone... but Sujath was another story. She hoped the higher-ups had considered Sujath in her roommate choice. She could only wait and find out.

She didn't wait long. A short pause, and Weyrlingassistant Shahara called, "Cybris and Sapherlin!"

Cybris's heart lifted. What a relief! Sapherlin was one of her better friends at the Weyr, and Sujath got along with Lorsenth well enough. She hurried forward, Sujath prancing like an over-zealous runner at her side and giving those left in line sharp looks. Cybris allowed herself a tight smile, though she was sure her eyes were bright and happy. The

Weyrlingassistant would be watching Sujath and her carefully because of their poor history in the drills. Even so, she could not resist looking over at her friend as they lined up together. Sapherlin beamed at her and gave a cheerful wave.

**Lorsenth says that we will do circles around the gold!** Sujath proclaimed.

'You already do, Sujath,' Cybris said, biting her tongue to keep from laughing. 'And the bronzes, and the browns, and the blues...'

**They are slow and stupid,** Sujath said comfortably.

'Well, I'm sure Lorsenth will keep all the bronzes and browns out of your hair,' Cybris answered.

**I don't have hair,** Sujath said, perplexed. **But I will tell Lorsenth that she can have the bronzes and browns.**



**Duhonth talks of fishing afterward,** Yengarth said, as if trying to fill the waiting. **I might like that. They need a bronze to go with them to...**

Then Weyrlingassistant Sahara was speaking again, and T'syr wrenched his attention away from Yengarth just in time to hear "D'rian and T'syr!"

T'syr hesitated for a moment, stunned. Then he glanced toward D'rian and Hassanth. The other bronzerider was looking back at him with an expression both stony and smug. 'What's *that* supposed to mean?' T'syr thought. But D'rian's expression was fleeting, and soon he and Hassanth were moving towards the queue.

T'syr shot a 'help!' look towards S'var before following suit. D'rian was a good student, and followed the drills to perfection... but he had never lost his disdain for his Kadanzer classmates. And now T'syr was stuck with D'rian's attitude for the rest of his weyrling training.

T'syr had known it would be as likely for him to be assigned a cot with S'var as it would be for a herdbeast to fly Thread, but he thought he might have been happier with anyone else in the class than he was with D'rian.

**Our classmates all feel sorry for you,** Yengarth relayed. T'syr suppressed a snort, and shot a glance towards D'rian. The other weyrling looked ahead without faltering.

**And Duhonth says his rider invites you to stay at his cot whenever you want to get away from Hassanth's rider,** Yengarth continued. T'syr blushed a little. He resisted glancing at S'var.

**Lorsenth would like to catch fish afterward, too. She tells me I catch fish well now. Of course I catch fish well. Radanth says he catches fish better than I do. But he is a brown.**

T'syr sighed. At least Yengarth could distract himself with conversation with his clutchmates... T'syr was stuck with D'rian as a cotmate, and stuck in this line.



The weyrlingassistant paired blueriders R'lander and K'senal, who shuffled quietly to the line. Then she announced, "Harmina and Vershya!"

Vershya moved forward promptly, more because she heard her name and could now stretch her legs than because

she had been assigned. As she and Shoaliant stepped into line, she finally registered who she was rooming with.

'Just great,' she sighed. Not only was Harmina meeker than a woolie, she wasn't someone Vershya could bed. They must have been picked just because they were polar opposites! Well it wasn't like Vershya couldn't find company else where... she was just hoping she might find it close to home.

She turned and stood once again at attention.

**Dimilluth is not a blue, a brown or a bronze,** Shoaliant complained. **I will not sleep next to her. Radanth is fine and strong. Bremnoth is smart and very handsome. They may share my wallow.** Shoaliant rumbled in her chest, turning her head to peer at her brown and bronze friends.

'Of course, my love,' Vershya replied. 'They are very fine males.' Vershya rubbed her green's foreleg.

**Cerauth's rider wants to swim with you. We will go swim. I tell her so.** Shoaliant stomped the ground, scattering sand over Vershya's boots.

'Be still, Shoaliant, or we will be doing nothing this evening!' Vershya glared up into her green's swiftly rolling blue eye.

The green made as if to snap but stopped moving. **I am not like Sujath. I will behave. I am not like Minyith. I am fast!** Shoaliant proclaimed loudly at her rider.

Whatever Shoaliant and her clutchmates were talking about, Vershya couldn't be sure. 'I'm glad you're not like Sujath or Minyith,' she said.



Sahara then assigned the brash, boyish bluerider Yindi and an equally loud and outgoing greenrider, and then called, "H'riro and W'tor!" Both boys moved into line, looking pleased enough with their assignment. They were followed by J'ran and W'den, S'gall and D'ghal, then two more bluerider lads, and then Sahara called out "Ivahla and Lina!"

The holdbred Lina and her Tayath stepped forward quickly to join the line. Ivahla gave Minyith a slight slap on the shoulder to get her attention. *Come on, lady, we're up!* she said, and the pair followed their new cotmates to the queue. Lina gave Ivahla a quick smile as the two joined the line, and Ivahla answered it with a small but stiff smile and nod, but inwardly rolled her eyes. The weyrling staff would saddle her with a holdbred after all. 'Ah, well,' she thought. 'Maybe Kadanzer holdbreds aren't quite as bad as Benden holdbreds.'



With only two pairs left, Sahara announced both at the same time: "J'lan and V'les, and K'syr and S'var! In line, please." And she waited for them to join the queue.

K'syr's expression went blank for a moment, his gaze then shifted to the bluerider. S'var? So that workhorse T'syr would be butting his head into the cot all the time. Not that he particularly cared. If they liked each other then they weren't chasing after women, so his success rate could

go up. If all the men of the Weyr would decide to take up with each other, then he'd have all the girls to himself!

He slowly moved towards the line. "This might be troublesome..." he muttered under his breath.

***It will only be troublesome if Duhonth hogs the wallow...*** Bremnoth chimed in.

"All right, everyone," Weyrlingassistant Shahara announced, "I will now lead you to your assigned cots!"



'At last,' Dwayana thought, shaking out her legs from standing. Even so, she was not ready yet to face her shared cot. She had so been looking forward to a place of her own, and the privacy that was her right as a goldrider. She had longer to wait, it seemed. She fought hard to reign in her irritation, because it wouldn't do to –

***I will not lay by that green,*** Arohath said haughtily.

Dwayana sighed. '*We don't have much choice, dear heart,*' she said.

***I will command her to sleep somewhere else. The wallow is MINE!***

*You will do nothing of the sort!* Dwayana responded. *Besides, there are two wallows at the shared cots.* She had to get a firm hand on this now, before... She glanced toward Arlynnna. The other girl seemed absorbed in her own thoughts. Arohath had not pressured Cerauth yet, then.

*Dear heart,* Dwayana said firmly, *this is part of our training. We must get along with our cotmates, and you will NOT bully Cerauth. Of all your brothers and sisters, Weyrlingassistant Shahara chose to pair them with us. She must have a reason.*

Arohath seemed to mull this over. ***Very well. She is MY wallowmate... but I will have more of the wallow, because I am bigger.***

*There are two wallows, dear,* Dwayana reminded the gold. *You'll have your own.*

Seeming satisfied with that, Arohath settled into observing her fellow classmates, commenting now and then in a superior tone on what they were doing and saying. Dwayana sighed again, this time in relief, as they were brought to the front of the first of the available shared cots in the weyrling complex.

"Dwayana and Arlynnna," Shahara called. "This will be your cot."

Dwayana walked past the weyrlingassistant and entered the cot. She took in the spare furnishings, the small sitting area on one side of the privacy screen, and two pallets on the other side. Their two chests of belongings sat side by side in the sleeping area, waiting for them.

"Um..." Arlynnna's voice cut through Dwayana's thoughts, and the goldrider turned to her cotmate. Arlynnna extended one hand. "I know you were expecting your own

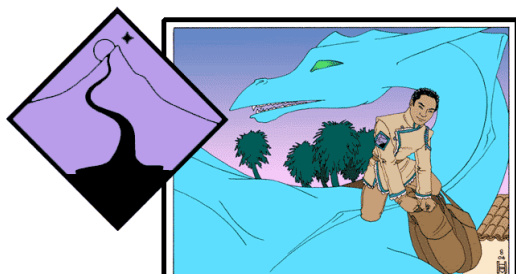
cot," the greenrider said. "I hope we can still get along well."

Dwayana gave a half smile as she took Arlynnna's hand. "I've shared a sleeping room my whole life," she said. "Another Turn isn't going to hurt me." She stifled the pang of disappointment she still felt. It was just one Turn. Then she'd be in the Queen's Wing -- at Kadanzer, or wherever else she was sent -- and have all the privacy she wanted.

Dwayana could hear the scratching sounds of talons digging in the wallows outside. Arohath was ordering things how she wanted them to be. ***Cerauth, you may sleep over there. This wallow is MINE!*** Dwayana chuckled.

"I'll keep Arohath from bullying Cerauth as much as I can," she said. Arlynnna smiled gratefully, and she smiled back. Dwayana could face this Turn with a bad attitude or a good one... how it all went would be up to herself. She wasn't about to let a little thing like sharing a cot mess up her life. "So," she said, turning to scan the rest of the cot, "which bed do you want?"

END



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