

# **Destruction Preventer - The Mass Of The Earth**

By Dexdor

Chapter ---

*"Nearly a year of this, yet you insist on calling him that. It's supposed to be pronounced..."*

*"What game would you like to play?"*

*"If you don't eat, you won't grow. You'll need your strength later."*

*"We'll play afterwards, I promise."*

*"What I'm trying to say is... I'm proud of you."*

*"You always have control over your dreams-Don't ever be afraid of them."*

*"All things eventu-eventually-"*

*"You want to aim for the head. Don't make it suffer."*

*"All things eventu-tu-tu-It's why we tell you to be careful alot."*

*"You need to Focus! Concentrate! Grasp it like it flows through your own blood!"*

*"You found a Sponge?"*

*"I know I asked you to find us some food, but feel free to kill-kill-kill-kiiiiIIIII--"*

*"I'm not going to lie to you-We're not the best of friends around here."*

*"What are you doing!? Finish it!"*

*"-They can rip weaponry out of their bodies."*

*"You Don't Do That To An Animal!"*

*"All things eventually come to an- come to an- come to an- come to an- come-"*

*"But your mother isn't-"*

**"GET AWAY-"**

*"-So why aren't you more like her?"*

**"-FROM HIM!!!"**

*"...The planet won't let its weapon die. Let's just say that..."*

*"All Things Eventually Come To An*

*End."*

A dream. It was all just one long bad dream he had. A nightmarish surrealism that felt so real. So much so, that he could still feel the pains in his body like glass shards. Piercing the armored scales of his back. Feeling each one of them drain a faint warmth from within his mass of scales and horns, slowly making him cold.

A faint whimper leaked out of his muzzle as he tried to move. He felt heavy, like he was being crushed by something. Perhaps the weight of the world. And with every faint movement of his numb body, he could half study where he was laying. The scent of ash. The fine burned dirt that had this odd comfort to it. Welcoming the dragon to just lay still for now. Catch his breath with his sore, burning lungs. But making his parched throat scrape with every inhale.

How he longed for something to drink. Some clean, fresh air to breath. Perhaps a cool breeze to help his burning muscles regain their strength once again. Instead he got ash. Warm, dry ash that covered this scaly body with its rain. Greeting his trust with a sting in the eyes, and forcing them to leak out a precious wet tear.

With a forced deep inhale, he grunted heavily. Pushing his ruined muscles to work, and ignore their painful warnings. With another attempt to

study his surroundings with his last good eye, he could barely make out a glowing orange city in the distance. But it didn't stop there, everything was glowing. The warmth of the roaring flames could be heard now over the high pitched feedback of his ears. Sending out the very last few drops of adrenaline in his blood, and letting him focus just a bit more.

With a heavy attempt to get up, the black dragon was forced down by something unseen. Making him collapse once again and whimper at its pain it caused to his muscles. "I told you." He could barely make out a female voice nearby. Tracing it's bipedal steps to the back of his neck. "Didn't I tell you? I swore I did." A heavy press on his neck. "You can't fight it. You can't stop it. An abomination like you barely has a place in this circle. Your only purpose is to put an end to it, and let the cycle restart." A faint press of an elbow was very close to his ear. "Weapons don't get to socialize with the locals. They don't get to have little lives, friends, play favorites. There's only one thing you're capable of, and that is following your instincts. And... Well..." She chuckled at him. "You know what those instincts are." She flicked his ear a few times, getting the larger one to whimper.

"Pathetic really. But I suppose the original is dead. If the planet chose you, it chose you for a reason. Perhaps under this lovey-dovey personality of yours is a heartless animal like the rest." She grabbed the ear, making the dragon snarl. "And when we want to see that animal released again, we expect to actually see it released without another struggle. Understood?" The large one didn't respond. "Walk it off. I'll send someone to clean up this mess." She got off him, and soon after did the massive weight. Making the black one have an easier time to breathe. And almost sob. "You can't deny the animal you are, Weapon. Like everything else, you obey your instinct. Always remember that."

## Chapter 1

The bird's loud hiss echoed through the city at early morning. The sun

was just barely coming up, just able to see the faint pink paint the sky. Another loud hiss ended in a growl. "Is it tight enough yet?" The griffin grumbled sarcastically at the several humans around him. "I believe I can give you a bit more room, y'know if you don't want me to breathe."

"Quiet, or you're getting the muzzle." The warden said. Barely being able to see his figure through the mix of darkness and faint streetlight. "Load him onto the pulley."

"This is a bit drastic for a few apples." The bird grumbled again. Trying to hold his flex against the chains. Feeling the large disc he was strapped to begin to move backwards. "I mean, honestly. You eat a few, throw one at a cow for dinner and a show, and you lock someone away for several months?"

"It could've been several years, griffin. Now shut your beak. I won't let the Red Flag be the end of our city, nor be disappointed with our festival because of your boorish actions."

"I think you mean Bored actions. And why did you bring down the sentence?"

"Are you seriously questioning that?" A man working the pulley asked.

"I wasn't talking to you." The dark grey bird grumbled. His green eyes slowly making out another griffin in the shadows walking forward. "Oh, no... Not her." He grumbled in frustration.

"Be thankful for what you were given, Anton." The white bird said. Finally making out her owl shaped head and yellow eyes that seemed to pierce the darkness quite well.

"Allow me to express that gratitude with a standing bow. Just loosen these chains a bit for me, will you?" Another sarcastic gesture.

"As bitter as the day you left. I suppose the wild hasn't treated you too well."

"Oh please. Leaving your nest was the best day in my life." He swayed his hawk-like head towards the man at the pulley. "You. Be a pal and just lower me down already so I don't have to listen to her anymore."

"Anton-"

"I won't apologize for a few apples."

"What about the barn?"

"The barn wasn't my fault. If I could reason with a stampede of cows,

then that event could've possibly been avoided. But alas, I suppose I'm the one who gets punished for being smart enough to not ram into a large wall with a larger series of friends. Seriously, start lowering me down already." The man waited for a signal of the warden and it was received. Hearing the large contraption begin lowering the bird into a large hole, he could barely hear the Owl sigh over it.

"Anton, this is ridiculous-"

"What? I can't hear you. You have to speak up over the sound of me falling away from you!"

"Just apologize to them! You don't need to do this!" The warden came up beside the large white griffin, petting her neck gently.

"Don't worry. We'll take good care of him. He's already assigned a caretaker-"

"Caretaker!?" The hawk squawked in question. "It better not be human."

"Is it a human?" The white one asked, seeing the man nod at her.

"Was it human? It better not be a griffin either! ...It's human isn't it? Is it too late to pass on that arrangement? Just throw something down the hole, and I'll eat it."

Another heavy sigh from the owl. "He's stubborn. Always has been."

"I'm sure he was."

"You realize that wading on him is going to be a punishment for that person as well."

"That's the plan, ma'am." The warden said, walking away from the hole. "But it's the only way this conflict is going to get resolved without Him stepping in." When the contraption halted, the hole was covered by thick steel. Locking the bird away under the streets.

The dungeon was completely dark. Aside from the occasional shines and high gated windows, there was darkness. But the griffin let out a relaxing sigh. Easing his tense muscles and letting them relax. Trying to get up, him flexing wasn't enough to really make enough room to get out himself. He would still have to wait for someone to free him from the disc for now. And odds are it was that... Caretaker.

But who could this Caretaker be? Other than a complete thorn in his side. Much like some of these chains were. Grumbling, perhaps he was worrying over nothing. Maybe he could convince this caretaker to just bring him needs and leave him be. Away from an entire world full of ignorance. Perhaps even a few drinks from the festival-

Something moved in the shadows beside him. Almost following it with his creased leather ears. Moving behind him? No. Above him? For several moments, he lost the creature. Unable to move his neck enough to look around and observe. Until it landed on his back. With a loud hiss, the bird struggled a bit. Feeling his feathered mane puff out from instinct, until he heard purring.

Anton sighed. "A cat? Seriously? You're letting the darkness get to you already, Anton..." The griffin grumbled.

"I'd say." A childish voice said. Making the bird squawk and halfly struggle against the chains, only to feel the creature on his back paw into him a bit.

"Get off me!"

"Why? You're very comfortable." The little one said.

"As much as I admit that, that gives you no reason to touch me! Now off!"

"Mmm... Fluffy." The little one nuzzled, getting the bird to growl. "But why are you covered in collars?"

"They're not collars, they're chains. Now about this getting off me thing-"

"They're... Steel?" A loud purr in question. "I've been looking for some steel." The little one struggled to get a firm grip on the link.

"Hey! I earned this bling. Get your own!"

"I just want a piece of it. I need it."

"What could you possibly need a piece of steel-?" Anton started to question snarkily, but the chain suddenly gave in. Feeling the little one jump off him and scamper to the back. "...For?" The bird shifted a bit, feeling strap by strap begin to give in a bit and allow him to be freed from the disc. Stretching out his wings and elegant form, he tried to study the darkness. "...Griffit?" He called, no longer being able to see him.

Within the darkness, he started to make out a few things. A pile of old

wooden benches that were stacked up on purpose. Almost in the shape of a child's gym. Some aged bricks from a crumbling wall helped hold a few things together, lift up a few of the broken benches, and some even used for stepping stones.

A few tings of metals and a few creaks got the griffin's attention. Leading him past a few thin broken walls in a narrow area. One that once looked like a large prison cell, but the walls were slammed outward. "Well, I know where the bricks came from." The grey one muttered, taking a few careful steps and landing a paw in something wet. Getting him to grumble and shake it. "That better be water."

"It is." The child voice came from the next room. "I like to have a close stream nearby where I sleep." A few steps closer and the bird could see alot more light enter the room. Possibly from the sun coming through a nearby window overhead. Dozens of old blankets, pillows, and a shelf full of random trinkets could be seen. As well as a small bowl of possibly stale oats.

"So you live down here?" Anton asked, disappointed. Still trying to find the little one.

"From time to time." The voice came from above him, causing his mane to puff out a bit. "Sometimes I move around. Travel the world." He said, finally being spotted working on a small hammock. The light barely letting the larger one see through the shade, but held his breath at the sight of something Red.

"Are...?" The little one made a noise in question, looking down with almost glowing blue eyes. "You're too small to be the Flag. But perhaps it's...?"

"I'm not the Red Flag's son, no." The little one giggled. Gliding off to a section of the broken wall. One that held a flat surface between two of them. Most likely an old table with a broken leg or two. From there, he was in the light while digging through a small pile of metals.

Red scaly wings. An armored body, covered in small scratches, scars, and other injuries. Small horns, and a wedged shaped head. "But you're actually a dragon?"

"Yep!" The little one chirped, pulling out a small chain link. "This one should do." And the little one took to the air once again. Circling around to get back to the hammock, and carefully landing on it. Hearing something above grind with the stone bricks.

"But dragons never existed. The only one to, was the Red Flag." Anton grumbled. "Are you sure you're not just some mutated lizard?" It got the little

one to double take, and almost hiss. Seeing his scales suddenly turn to a thick orange. The change made the bird step back for a moment. "...Or a giant chameleon?"

"I'm a dragon."

"You sure?" The griffin arrogantly teased. "Do you breathe fire?"

"W-well..."

"Steal princesses?"

"No dragon does that."

"Clearly you've never been read stories by humans before." Anton snorted, making his way towards the little one's bed and wiping his wet paw on some of the blankets. He then noticed the drastic amount of reflective objects in the little one's possession. "I see you got the hording thing downpacked as well."

"I don't horde anything. I just collect objects."

"Shiny objects." The large one overlooked them, counting them in his head. "A lot of shiny objects."

"So?"

"So, you're either as egotistical as me, or-"

"I'm a dragon?" The wyrmling giggled. "That's such a stereotype." The term made the bird grumble.

"In any case, I have a proposition for you." The now yellow one looked at him, getting the griffin to curl his neck for a moment. "How about you go back to one of your... 'Other homes' for let's say... Seven months, and I'll stay here. Alone. With only one other person to worry about."

"Why?" The little one questioned, quite innocently too, as he focused back on the hammock.

"Because: Reasons. That's why." Another snort. "Besides, why would you want to live in a dark old dungeon when you could be living it up out there? I mean, seriously. You could just lie to anyone and say you're the Red Flag's son, and get nearly anything you wanted out of life." The larger one said, overlooking the possessions, and sniffing the old oats in the large bowl.

"Who says I don't have everything I already wanted?" The question made the bird grumble. "But I suppose you're right. I do have a few things to do today-don't touch that."

"Please tell me you haven't been eating these."

"No. I sleep in them once in a while."

A very lackadaisical stare from the griffin for a few moments, getting the dragon to double take and giggle. "You sleep in stale oats?"

"Better than letting them go to waste." The little one shrugged his wings while the sound of metals clapping together echoed through the darkness. "There we go." He carefully leaned back into the suspended net and let out a relaxing sigh. "I've been waiting for another one of these. Now I can swing without worry."

"What exactly did you take from my chains?" Anton tried to take a closer look, spotting a semi familiar link that would've been impossible to remove. "How did you get that?"

"Talent." The vague answer annoyed the griffin. "But It's almost sunrise, I should be going. Lots of things to do today." The little one chirped while rotating off the bed and into a glide. Climbing up towards a window with a slightly broken gate. "Don't touch my stuff, birdo. If you do, I'll set your tail on fire." He said rather cheerfully.

"You can try!" The grey one hissed, but couldn't stop his smirk. "Damn Griffit..."

He loved watching it. Flying up to the very peak of the city's monuments and watching the sun rise. It seemed with every ray of light that touched the street, it was soon populated with the busy citizens that lived within it. The children, whom just finished their breakfast, ran and played with each other. The many adults, who weren't even related to those children, still looked after them while tending to their works. People helping each other out constantly, it all put a bright smile on the pink dragon's muzzle.

It was a wonderful feeling. The warm sun, the cool air, the slight breeze behind him. He couldn't ask for anything more. Or so he thought. What he seen that morning still half worried him, but he had a good place to start looking. It was a long flight, but he would make it there within time. Not to mention, upkeep the faith in the people once again.

Changing to his ever-popular red tone, the wyrmling took to a glide. Seeing a few people who already spotted him from below give a wave, and send almost an entire chain of them within the streets. Letting the small

dragon greet them all with one loud chirp while flying through.

There were many people still working on construction of buildings and pathways. Even more prepping for the festival in a few days by setting up red decorations and banners within the streets. People setting up tables, moving kegs, and gathering items needed for festive treats. A few people were even practicing performances to appeal to the Flag, in hopes it would visit this year. Regardless if it showed up or not, the people were never disappointed. They still got to enjoy such things, the arrival of their guardian was just the cheery on top.

The thought of it put a warm smile on his muzzle. A large, infectious grin that seemed to be contagious to the people who he flew over. Most of them human, but a little bit of nearly every species in this town. All helping each other out in harmony.

Hearing a large group of children giggling by a large fountain made the wyrmling want to land on it for a moment. Once again being greeted by several of them. "Hello everyone, how do we fair this morning?" He asked them, as if he was playing as the adult.

"Very fine indeed, Mini Flag." The red one snorted at that, turning into an orange and getting several of them to laugh.

"We're just teasing David."

"I'm sure you are." He smiled at them. "It's such a beautiful morning, isn't it?"

"Yes, though you can really feel the autumn setting in." Another child played along.

"Are you actually going to be here for the festival this time, David?"

"I can only try. I have such a hard time staying up late enough to see the full thing." He overdramatically tossed his muzzle and flicked a paw at them.

"You always say that." Another giggled. "Ever since I can remember."

"Nearly every year that any of us remember. Even my parents say the same thing about you."

"Which does beg the question, how old are you David?"

The dragon curled his neck, but broke into chuckles. "Older than you think, I suppose. I just... Stay young." He smiled.

"But for how much longer? I want you to get bigger so I can ride you."

"Me too!" Several children cheered.

"Well, if the Red Flag visits this year, perhaps you can ask him for a ride. Since he's the only dragon big enough to hold children."

"If he ever visits us." One of them moped. "It's been several years since he has visited a human city." It lowered the blue dragon's ears.

"Well, if I run into him, I'll try to convince him to come this year. How's that?"

"You mean, you're leaving again David?"

The small one sighed. "I'm afraid so. Hopefully I'll be back for the festival, but there's something I need to take care of. If I miss him, say hi to him for me, will you?"

"Okay." David nodded at them and took off. Hearing the group of children cheer and wave at him always fluttered his heart. But that stopped when his lower region growled at him. Making the little one chuckle once again and change direction.

A few banks inbetween streets and alleys lead him towards the front gates. Where several wagons were parked in a line, seeing a steady stream of people help unload them. Landing on one of them, the driver greeted the little one. "How are you David?"

"I'm a bit famished, but fine." The adult man chuckled at him. "You almost expect that now everytime you see me out here, huh?"

"For the most part, yes. But don't worry about it, I always save you a small basket of your favorites." The red dragon's ears perked up, making the man smile while retreating into the back of his wagon for a moment. When he came out, he handed a small basket with several apples and cans towards the wyrmling. "There you go."

"Thank you, it looks delicious!" David set it down and took an apple with both paws. Biting into the bottom of it with a big chomp and letting out a thick purr at the juicy fruit.

"I'm glad you like them. They turned out amazing this year as well. That's the fifth year in a row." The man handed down another large basket to a young girl. "Even past that, they were still quite good. Clearly, the Flag has blessed us. I just hope we can please him again this year."

"I'm sure you will. I heard he was going to visit this city this year too."

The dragon went to take another apple, but his eye was caught by a reflective can.

"Wouldn't that be something. I remember seeing him when I was younger. He was quite a sight, really! Large and majestic. Just like the legends say he was." Handing down a few more baskets to people, the man made a noise in question. "David?"

"Y-yes. I was just... Thinking, Chris." Seeing the very end of the dragon's now brown tail half told the man otherwise.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah. Just something that I've been thinking about alot." He sighed, putting the reflective can down and grabbing another apple. "Can you do me a favor?"

"Sure thing."

"Can you send this basket to my window in the back district?"

"I can do that for you, David." A woman said, getting her basket. "I'm heading over there to drop something else off."

"Thank you." He carefully handed down the basket. "I have something to take care of." He placed the smaller apple in his muzzle and took off to the skies. Leaving the two humans to look at him with a bit of concern.

## Chapter 2

The evening was quiet, very cloudy and making the light disappear almost too early. The stress on the tribe's leader was above normal, but that was to be expected. It was for his people that he would push it down. Act calm, and with strength. Tomorrow he'll need that strength, and his people will need morale.

Overlooking the maps once more, he went over his battle plan again in

his head. Taunt them, lead them through the valley while the two groups go around the mountain paths. Leading out behind the enemy, and getting them flanked. "Chief Kalawah." A whisper at the door was heard.

"You may come in, Desareghi." He whispered back, hearing the door quietly open and a woman step through, wearing some light hide armor and covered in green markings. "Is everything ready?"

"Of course, Chief. The men are even sleeping in their armor, just in case of a surprise attack through the night." The man nodded. "The women are ready as well."

"Good. We'll have to get the flanks up a few hours early, so they can take the paths as planned." She nodded. "Is that everything?"

"Yes, sire. Those tribesmen won't know what hit them."

"I would at least like them to know how they were beaten. If not, just a little." The man smirked, and listened for the woman to withdraw. Looking back at the map for a few moments, and the door opened again. "What is it now?" He asked, seeing the door open, but no one step through. He cautiously stared at it for a moment, then closed it on his own. Only hear a faint growl come from behind him. Turning around while withdrawing his crude weapon, all the man seen was a large red paw coming for his face, along with a louder growl.

The sound of running water woke up Kalawah, as he felt the faint rocking of his hard bed. The air was full of moisture as he groaned awake, being slightly blinded by the early morning sunlight. The slight movement of him getting up intensified the rocking. Making the iron cage he was in sway back and forth a bit. Moving an iron pot full of food across the floor a bit and hit the bars. "Where-!?"

"Kalawah!?" The voice of his enemy was heard on the other side of the river. Barely being able to make it out with his non light-blinded eye. "Was this your doing!?"

"Gunnar!?" He growled at the larger man. "Of course it wasn't! This looks like one of your cheap tricks!"

"Silence! Both of you!" A loud roar came from the light, splashing a divider of water between them for a moment and getting both men wet. Stepping forward on the river's liquid, the creature spread its wings highly.

Allowing the two men to study the large Red dragon.

"The Red Flag!" Both of them whispered. Getting a harsh glare from the beast.

"Yes. This was my doing, and my doing alone." The red one stepped forward, walking on the water like it was solid ground. "And you two have some explaining to do."

"I know not what you are talking about, my lord!" Gunnar pleaded, but was snarled at. "Our tribe follows your every word!"

"So does ours-!"

"Shut up! You claim such things, yet you plan a relentless battle between you two the day before my global festival!? Did you honestly think that I would be so busy that I would not notice such a thing!?" The large one growled at both of them.

"Sire, if you will let us explain-"

"I don't need an explanation. I know why you attempted to start a War between your two tribes."

"...War?" Gunnar asked, not familiar with the word. Almost looking to the other Chief for an definition, but Kalawah just shrugged.

"An event of slaughter between both of your people, all for some stupid apple?"

"That tree is planted on our soil, the fruit belongs to our tribe. It can cure diseases-!"

"No, if the apple falls on our side of the river, the fruit is ours!" The larger chief argued, getting the dragon to grumble while covering his eyes with a paw. As the two men yelled at each other, their cages suddenly gave a little bit. Almost hitting the water, but silencing the argument.

"Enough! If you cannot resolve this conflict with peaceful methods, then I will drown both of you." The two men stayed silent. "You have until sundown. I've left you both enough food to survive until then. If you cannot reach a conclusion, you both will sink into the river, AND I will End your tribes. If one of you tries to escape, I will slaughter both of your people. Do I make myself clear!?"

"...Yes." The two men said.

The creature glared at each man with sharp blue eyes, then turned

about. Flying up the river a ways and leaving them behind. Once he was out of eye sight of nearly everyone, he circled a mountain and landed. Flopping his haunches down hard, to the point where it ached his stones and made him whimper, he placed a paw over his eyes once again. Not to just deal with the bright sunlight, but the stupidity of the event.

"It'll be fine." A small dove said to him, landing on a nearby tree. Getting the red one to half look at it. "We heard you from here."

"I'm pretty sure the entire world heard me from there." He grumbled, getting the avian to chuckle.

"I think you handled it pretty well. Mankind tend to have a harder time with their instincts."  
*-Instincts.*

"...Yeah." The dragon sighed, blinking slowly.

"I know it's a bit early..." The red one flicked an ear. "But Happy Flag Day."

It got the large one to chuckle a bit. "Thank you. I'll be getting that alot today, I'm sure." The bird bobbed its head to nod before it flew off from a sudden twig snapping. With another deep breath, the red one gathered his strong, slightly frightening mask once again, and headed towards the Chief's villages.

It took a while to get all the blankets spread out enough, and comfortable enough, for the griffin to lay down and rest. Though, he would half miss the softness of the grass, the winter was coming soon. And that meant either build a nest, or find some shelter. And this shelter would do fine. Even if he had to do something about those windows.

Still, the small nap wasted enough time to finally get some light within his new home for the next few months. Now, he could finally study it, and find out what the little pipsqueak did to the place. Let alone, which area he was using for a... Litterbox.

The grey one's belly growled at him, demanding food at once. As Anton stretched out a bit, he pondered where his food was, let alone the thought of a caretaker bringing his food. He slightly grumbled at the thought, it was bad enough the wyrmling slightly spoiled his plans. But at least the little one could leave. It's still possible for the grey one to convince the Griffit to leave

for good. Or at least until Anton's sentence expired.

Another loud grumble from his mid region broke his thoughts, getting the griffin to sigh before feeling a heavy object land on his head. Hissing and cursing at the sudden thing while holding his crown got his stomach to stop growling at him. "What the Helgah!?" Anton shouted, not getting a response. As he got up to see what landed on him, he found a small basket with several apples and a few cans. "I know I told you to just throw it down here, but damn...!" He cursed again rubbing the crown feathers.

Sighing, he took a bite out of an apple. Noticing how good it tasted, he slightly moaned at it. Soaking up every little bit of juice with his dry mouth. Eating the entire thing without leaving a trace before getting a second one. Once that one was finished, he gathered the basket's contents and set it up on a small table. His green eyes caught some movement in the corner, making the griffin's feathers almost stand on end and his ears constantly flicker around. Studying his surroundings.

With every faint step, he could half see the movement, until he spotted the small mirror. Anton sighed in relief. "Damn Griffit." He grumbled. "Really enjoys his mirrors, doesn't he?" Looking around, he began to spot several others. Then more around the dragon's sleeping area. "And I thought I was Narcissistic. This is a whole new level of it."

Turning back away to navigate through the darkness, a bright shine caught the grey one's attention. A ray of sunlight that was within a pipe along the wall. Puzzled, he took a closer look, studying the pipe up close and noticing a small latch on the side of it. His eyes traced the small pipe going along the wall and far into the darkness, eventually looping back below the wyrmling's hammock.

A soft grumble in thought escaped the bird's throat as he traced back to the latch. Tapping the pipe both above and below the switch echoed with every touch, indicating that it was empty. With a faint snort, he flicked the latch, almost seeing the bright sunlight pass through and illuminate the metal tunnels.

Every ten feet or so, there was a large gap where the light could flourish, brightening up the dark dungeon more than expected from such a device. And allowing the bird to easily observe his new home. "How in the Helgah did he build this?" He muttered, looking closely at the pipe the best he could without getting blinded. The cuts were very clean, though the contraption was rather rusted now. Possibly much older than the dragon that claimed this home. Within the gaps of the tunnel were clear crystals. Finely cut from as much as he could study. Something that only humans could really do.

It made sense to him now. This was a human city, always has been. What they called a dungeon was just an old storage room that was long since forgotten. Almost useless to them now. And while not very many species tend to even take punishments into their own hands.

Anton snorted at the thought of it. Of course if someone caused trouble, they would just tell their babysitter to resolve it. And it's hard to tell exactly what the Flag would do to them. Out of the many stories that the bird was forced to hear, much of those 'Criminals' were never seen or heard from again. And, of course, the people just accepted that. Never bothering to even question the Red one's actions.

The thoughts put him into a bad mood, grumbling and almost growling as he studied the large room. He easily found the area that the little one was using for a toilet, a small underground fountain with a large hole that lead into darkness. A small stream of running water, possibly leaking from the public fountain above in some way, was constantly washing out the area. It was honestly a good time to test it out, in hopes nothing actually lived down there.

After his business was tended to, the griffin moved on. Finding the large double doors one would claim to be the Main Entrance. Close to that, several large piles of junk that were carelessly thrown into the room. Many things were broken beyond repair, including half a dozen benches like before. Random objects and old tools, along with some older technology. Spring powered clocks and the like. The piles almost seemed organized in a way, like they were already dug through. Meaning most of its valuables were already taken. And that little one did seem like quite the tinkerer. There's no telling how long a Griffit like that was actually down here.

Several heavy clinks from large chains could be heard from the other side of the door, getting Anton's feathers to puff out a bit. More out of annoyance than anything else. As he grumbled, he casually walked back to the large disc that the griffin was lowered with, and laid on the floor beside it. Trying to look as relaxed as possible when he heard the large lift land, and the barricades of the door begin to remove.

The doors opened loudly with a rusty groan, riding the acoustics of the dark room. A faint chatting and whispering could be heard from the people within, one of them being the Warden from before. "About time you made it down here, I'm starving." The grey one grumbled, following the faint lights from the distance.

As the small group approached him, they became a bit cautious. Overlooking the room's light source from afar, and also studying the griffin. "Who let you out of your chains?"

"I believe you mean: How did I get out. From which the answer would be 'With Talent and Magnificence.' Something your species is clearly missing." The large one snorted. "Now where's my breakfast?"

"Your meal will be down here shortly. But your caretaker has been... Delayed for a day. Due to the recent events upon us, her assistance is needed for the gathering. However, after her work is done, she will be attending to you, Festival or not." The old man took a breath. "Now, I want to go through a few rules in the meantime." The Warden overlooked the large room, almost like it was ages since he last been here. "It's been a long time since I've had to do this to another person." He looked at the griffin for a moment.

"...So I've heard. But about this caretaker thing-"

"She's being punished as well." The grey one double taked. "For fighting with you."

"Fighting with me?" Anton curled his neck, then let out an angst sigh. "Don't tell me-"

"This is what I wanted to talk to you about. I don't believe that if anyone gets into a scrap-"

"It was hardly a scrap-" The feathered one tossed his head.

"That they should be thrown to the Flag's feet to be dealt with. If we can resolve this conflict without getting him involved, I'd rather do that. So within these several months that you and Cennet are going to be stuck down here, I want this dealt with." The man said thickly.

"There is another way to deal with it, like me not even engaging in others? I'm sure it will be less of a headache for everyone that way." Another snort.

"No. It won't work. I talked about this personally with the Flag the last time, the conflict still lingers, regardless of the distance put inbetween."

"Of course you would believe every word it says." The bird grumbled quietly. "And if this conflict with her isn't resolved?"

"...Then the Red Flag will deal with you. I can't tell you how that will go." Another snort in response from the griffin, and the room fell quiet. "So, get along. No more fights, especially this close to the festival. There's rumors going around that he'll show up here this year, and if you cause me too much trouble, I'll just get him to deal with you now and save him the trip."

"...Fine." Anton grumbled. "But I can't be expected to be pleasant company on an empty stomach."

"I'll send the waiter down right away. Men, with me." They turned around and started to walk out. "Oh, and Anton, is it?" The grey one made a noise in question. "Thank you for cooperating."

"Sure, sure. *Anything* for the Warden." Another sarcastic gesture still made the old man's face a bit cross, but he let it go. Closing the large doors for the time being. Once they were out of earshot, the grey one let out a heated sigh. "Well, this is a bit of a mess."

The iron cages hit the soft ground with a loud thud, making the men inside grunt and struggle for a bit of balance. As the Red dragon overlooked both of them in the dusk light, he exhaled loudly. Removing a few bars to let both of them free. "I shouldn't have to tell you anything else, correct?" The large one said thickly.

"No, my lord."

"Of course not, my Grace. But..."

"We have come to a solution for the apple-"

"It's too late for that. I've already eaten it." The dragon said rather calmly. "I'll be back this way again soon enough to treat your ill. Just have them ready." The two sighed slightly in relief. "Let this be a lesson that you pass down for decades to come: if you argue pointlessly over something so foolish as a fruit, it will be removed from both sides. Understood?"

"Yes." The two chiefs said together.

"Leave." The red one gestured, turning about himself and walking away while silently grumbling over the situation. An apple that could cure diseases, just a fool-hearty tale that someone made up. The only thing that apple could cure was dehydration and famine.

When the two men were out of earshot, the dragon sighed heavily. Lowering his head and slouching his wings, feeling a few small birds land on his back. "It seems no matter what rules I enforce, they'll attempt to find any reason to conflict. Even with one another."

"They are not hopeless, Great one. But sometimes they must be reminded where the lines lie." Flag nodded faintly at the bird's tweet. Though he disliked the formalities they tended to use, it was just a sign of respect. Something that he grew to accept. "Where are you off to now?" The robin asked, getting used to the dragon's slow walk.

"I was thinking the northwest for a bit. Pay the large nest a visit this year. Then head east, maybe southeast."

"You go southeast every year." Another bird said, putting a smile on the larger creature's muzzle.

"Yeah, I know I do." He chuckled.

"Is it because you like someone down there?" One of them faintly pecked at the back of his neck, digging out some of the dirt that got inbetween the scales.

"I bet it is."

"I don't think the Flag has ever seeked a mate."

"That's enough." Flag playfully snorted, but closing his eyes to hide some pain. "You're getting to be worse than a murder of crows."

"But have you ever considered it? Perhaps that's just what the world needs."

"Another form of celebration?"

"I think the world has enough to celebrate as it is." A shuffle of his large wings got the birds to start resting on the branches. Though he did his best to keep them still for the ones riding, it was harder than it looked. "Sometimes I wonder if that's all they do."

"Of course not, my lord."

"They're living a good life."

"One that I'm almost forcing them to live though. Without giving them a choice." The dragon muttered.

"But you've given them a choice before, have you not?" Flag slowed to a stop, releasing another sigh. "You're doing the best you can."

"Please do not doubt yourself, Flag. Especially so close to your holiday."

"I suppose you're correct." He gazed at the sky, looking for the correct direction. "Will you be traveling with me?"

"We cannot, the cold is setting in."

"We should fly south while the weather is good."

"I understand. Have a great flight, my friends." Red raised his wings

high, letting the birds take off and tweet their goodbyes. The sight made him smile sadly, as they flew off into the distance. When nothing more was around him, Flag sighed heavily once again. Letting go of the pigment he was straining to hold, and letting it fade to a deep blue. He couldn't help but feel that he didn't do something correctly. But for now, the world was safe.

Another deep breath made his chest feel heavy. Perhaps he just wanted to go back home, lay in that hammock, devour an apple, and sleep the night away. In the morning, he would take off to the northwest. Make it there even if he had to ride the lightning, like his father taught him.

### Chapter 3

The morning sun was shadowed that dawn, covered by a blanket of light grey clouds. Though it never seemed to darken the mood of the entire city. The rain was a blessing all in its own way, and the people knew it well. Even when there was nearly a month without rain, their protector would perform miracles that would save their crops.

However, those stories always irked him. And the more the Grey one heard them, the more grumpy he became. It was a terrible way to start his morning, but at least this time he didn't have to go looking for a new bed. Be it rain or snow, this dungeon he was trapped in was more of a shelter. Protecting him from the harsh weathers from above. Though, that might change during the winter, due to the cold being a problem. Perhaps he could convince this caretaker to place in a furnace for him? Bah, one thing at a time.

For now, Anton still had to worry about this caretaker. And how this bump in his plan was going to be resolved. He also had to think of the worst case scenario, that being probably gifted to the Flag and dealt with there. Odds are, judging from the stories, the Flag took the criminals far away to be

executed, possibly by the Red one itself. And the griffin was not looking for death.

As the doors of houses could be heard opening and shutting, and the streets began to crowd over, it started to disturb his lazy slumber. Rolling onto his other side and adjusting the many blankets he moved towards the center of the dungeon, he tried to get comfortable. But they started to almost feel deflated and unclean. Not to mention, they smelled like old oats. It's quite possible that the wyrmling did not wash these for a long time. No wonder the little one was excited for his completed hammock.

A soft murmur could be heard from behind the griffin, getting him to half grumble at it out of instinct. With a few more deep breaths, it suddenly came to his attention that something was on the large bird. Laying between his wings. With a louder grumble, getting closer to a growl, he knew right then what it was. "Didn't you just make a hammock to sleep in yesterday?" He muttered loudly.

It half yawned in response. "M'yes, but I never had a feathered bed before. You're almost as comfortable as the bowl of oats."

A slight look behind him, and the large one half snorted. "That explains alot about these blankets, actually." A thick yawn came from his beak, allowing the many small spikes along his tongue to stretch out and flare for a moment. "And I thought I told you to take off for a few months."

"M'I got tired, so I came back here." The wyrmling mumbled badly, getting Anton to take a few moments to make out what he said.

"Okay, but now that you've made it all the way back here, you've now just wasted an entire day of travel."

"Maybe for a slow griffin." That one came out rather clearly, getting the large bird to growl loudly.

"Off." He shook his body, getting the little one to moan and make a noise in refusal. "Off me you little changeling!"

"Just a few more minutes." The dragon held on, but the two froze when they started to hear the door begin to unlock. Staring at it as the large barricades began to creak open, and the figure of a woman pulling a large tray came through. "Were you expecting company?"

"Hoping not for another day." The grey one grumbled.

"Morning sunshine." The woman shouted a little too loudly, trying to raise her voice above the noisy cart.

"I'm right here." Anton grumbled, getting up and stretching the rest of his body. Even arching his long, male lion-like tail and letting the end thump on the thin bedding. "You're earlier than expected."

"Is that a bad thing?" The woman asked. The two could see her looking around as if she couldn't see. With a faint rusty creek from the far side of the room, a bit of light dimly did its job.

"It works better when it's sunny out." The hatchling yawned, snapping his jaws a few times while climbing on the head of the griffin. Getting the grey one to growl and try to toss him off.

"Pest." He faintly whispered. "And you must be Cennet."

"Anton, I presume?" The large bird stood proudly as he approached her. "Yes, I'll be your caretaker."

"By punishment, I assume." The dragon giggled. Getting the woman to double take as she heard Anton grumble.

"And who might this be?"

"I'm his roommate." David chirped.

"More like a pest. An infestation that I will leave you to rid of." A paw to the top of the head got the large bird to hiss loudly, almost trying to swat it back as the wyrmling jumped off and landed on the cart.

"David." The purple dragon introduced himself, lifting a paw for her to shake and she took it. Though it was dim, she could faintly see the many scars and marks that covered his scales. "Soft hands for someone that works pretty hard." He flirted, getting her to chuckle.

"And you know this?" She asked, stroking back a string of dark red hair behind her ear.

"Of course I do. You're the Cennet that lives and works out in the Janesfield apple farm. Ever since you were little, you've done wonders for your family."

"Like tackling undeserving griffins." The grey bird grumbled. "One who is getting hungrier by the second."

"How do you know all this David?" She asked, ignoring the rude one.

"Isn't it obvious? The lizard is a gossip. Speaking of gossip, I've heard that a certain griffin is hungry. Tend to care to its needs, caretaker?" The woman rolled her eyes and shook her head at the dragon, who did mostly the

same.

"Just feed him to shut him up for now." The little one giggled, feeling a glare of hate on him. "Let me guess..." He turned yellow which almost startled the woman, and sniffed the domed silver platters and plates a bit. "A roasted pig that was stoked almost overnight, faintly sprayed from time to time to keep it moist, at least on the outside. Within has various greens stuffed in it, along with a few carrots. And at the bottom," Another sniff. "Grilled fish... From the southern lakes, giving them a nice tangy coating with the orange juice."

"That was way too good for a guess." The little one shrugged his wings at her. "You speak with the head cook?"

"You would not believe the chefs in my family." David giggled at her. "Only my uncles didn't know how to cook very well. Though they knew how to enjoy food at least. I can't say I was forced to learn, but promoted to. Very heavily." The woman chuckled, as he gestured her the honors.

"But he's quite right. Some of the cooks were up during the nights anyway, so your first meal from me is special. And a token of apology."

"Of course it is." The grey one studied her bemused.

"Let's dig in, shall we?" The dragon said, toning to a red and trying to lift up the silver dome, only to have the griffin place a heavy paw on it.

"What do you mean We?" He grumbled at the small one, who only hissed back at him. Almost instantly turning to a bright orange.

"You ate my apples and my canned peaches from yesterday, it's only fair that we share food if we're going to be living together-"

"We are not living together." The grey one grumbled, looking back and forth at the woman and the wyrmling. "You're moving out in a day or so, and you're going back to Greenvill-"

"Janesfield." The other two corrected him, getting Anton to toss his beak.

"Whatever, where you belong. This dungeon is mine, and I shall reside in it undisturbed." The large one grunted. Almost silencing the two until David started to giggle in his muzzle.

"Oh, the cries of the lonely." The statement made the bird groan. "So, appetizer first?" The little one climbed down.

"Let me help you with that." The woman offered.

"Anton, over in the back is a makeshift table, mind bringing it over?" He growled at the little one, but turned about to find it. Lashing the end of his tail at the cart and causing to move a bit. Almost knocking the wyrmling off-balance.

Though his ears were back, the orange one let it slide. But not without a harsh glare. "Easy you." Cennet slightly scratched the spineful mane, seeing them rise and almost puff out a bit. "You don't want the Flag to be eyeing you as well." David took a breath and nodded. "Speaking of him..." The half a statement made the dragon turn yellow and look at her. Perking his ears.

"Oh, no relation. If that's what you mean. I've met him a few times traveling, but we're not from the same nest."

"You sure? I mean, we haven't seen or heard from too many dragons other than him or you..." The woman took a look around. "How long have you been down here?"

"Not terribly long..." He mumbled, trying to get his voice over the obnoxious sound of a metal table dragging across the stone floor. "A few years perhaps."

"Seems like longer, according to your habitat." The little one playfully snorted, leaning into her hand. Stopping when the grey one came close enough.

"Happy?" He grumbled sarcastically.

"Quite. Let's eat, I'm sure we're all famished." David said, hopping on the large surface. Gazing intently at the plate of fish that made both of their stomachs growl loudly. The seven fish on the platter look delicious, and the two males took the ones at opposite ends. Devouring them almost in one gulp.

The dragon purred loudly, and Anton groaned in satisfaction. He loved human food, but would never admit to such a thing. "I'm glad you like them." Cennet commented with a smile.

"They are simply amazing. Aren't you going to try one?"

"Nah, I've already ate this morning. Besides-"

"It's my breakfast." The bird grumbled. "You shouldn't even be eating it." He flicked a paw at the dragon who only snorted at him.

"Yeah, to be fair, it is his." The woman chuckled, seeing the two grab for more and more. When it came to the final one, they both laid a paw on it.

"It's my breakfast, lizard."

"And you ate mine yesterday." David stared him down.

"Well, I'm bigger, so I need more food."

"Just feed on your ego a bit, that'll-" He made a purr in question as something along the back fell. Getting the attention of the griffin and lifting his paw. Only to have the fish slide under it and into the dragon's maw.

Anton hissed at him loudly, trying to swipe him with extended claws but barely missed. Making David jump into the arms and chest of the woman who was taken by surprise. "Griffin!" She scolded him. "He's just a child!"

"Of course he is." The griffin sharply rolled his eyes. "He's only been living down here longer than anyone, including himself, can remember. Along with living everywhere else on the planet." A loud snort, and the woman just kept her glare that the grey one. "Tell her I'm wrong." He snarled at him.

The wyrmling slowly looked at her, with half a fish still hanging out of his muzzle, and his ears slowly started to go down. Looking into those brown eyes and slightly whimpering gifted him a few pets behind the neck. "I think you're just..."

"Jealous? Trust me, if you want to take that vermin out of my claws, and I do mean claws, go right ahead. I'm sure he'll love the apple fields of your home better than this dark place." Another loud snort, but the large one retracted his offense. As he turned to the cart and placed his grey paws around the handles of the platter, Anton sighed slightly. Seeing the dragon lean towards the table to tell the woman to let him stand on it once again, David was a deep blue. Deeper than the color of his eyes. "...You get one slice of this." The bird said thickly. "After that, you're not getting anymore of my food. I'll sooner hunt you down before letting you get away with taking again, understood?"

The dragon didn't reply, but only lowered his head. With a bit of a grumble, the griffin lifted the tray, and awkwardly brought it over to the table. Not being used to walking on hind legs very well, let alone while carrying something. And the pig was a bit heavier than expected.

The tray landed on the table with a loud thud, on top of the platter that held the fish. Walking around it to cut the wyrmling's piece first, Anton caught David staring at his reflection. Turning a deep green, which made the griffin's neck curl. "David? Is something wrong?" The woman asked.

The bird could just barely see it, from the very top of the young one's iris started to change colors. Starting with a bright red, and fading into a

rainbowish hue until it got to about the quarter mark. Then back to its normal blue for the rest of it. The sight made the dragon's breaths a bit faster. "I-I have to go." He scampered off towards the back. Barely seeing him climb up the walls and through the broken barred window.

"What was all that about?" The bird snorted. Looking at his own reflection to see if the same thing was happening to him. However, nothing but a handsome grey male stared back, almost making the griffin smirk.

"Is something wrong with him?"

"How should I know? He's an oversized chameleon with wings, what *isn't* wrong with him?" He grumbled, grabbing the cloche and carelessly tossing it at the cart. "Now, how are we going to work this out?"

"Work what out? David you mean?" A sharp glare almost speared the woman as the bird's mane started to faintly raise in annoyance.

"I meant us." It made Cennet's face a bit cross. "If you don't have any suggestions, perhaps I'll preset my plan."

It worried him to no end. Not even the thrill of flying could force him to his red state. Instead, he was a light grey. Soring through the many dark clouds that were covering the skies. Perhaps it was for the better. They did aid him in a quick escape. Though he did learn another trick to become invisible, it was alot more difficult for him to grasp. Something his father could never understand.

His father... What would he do at a moment like this? Find whatever is threatening the world and put a stop to it before it consumed him. Find and track down nearly every possible enemy that he could, but over an entire world... It was hard to feel for the spikes in conflict. Usually his dreams and premonitions aided him, but recently, he seen nothing.

Stress overcame him, but so did hunger. The fish was nice, but not enough to keep his belly full. Regardless of the size he chose, the resources he required never changed. He tried to get by with just a few things from the town, but often it wasn't quite enough.

As much as he hated doing it, he dove down closer to a field. Landing far away from a large heard of buffalo. Lifting his paw up to feel for the ground underneath, the dragon hesitated. "*You need to Focus! Concentrate!*"

*Grasp it like it flows through your own blood!"* His father's words always interrupted him. Making his heart race and covering his scales with that same dark green. The large one took a deep breath. Then another, before slamming his paw down and sending a rock spike through the brain of a random animal.

The pain always got to him whenever he did this. Even without touching them, he could feel the sudden sharpness like it was entering his own body. The very back of his jaw splitting wide open from under, and separating its way to the top of his skull. He could taste the fear like it was his own, even if it lasted for an instant. Along with the fears of all the others as they scampered away from the noise and into the forests. And then, of course, the feeling of fading away. It almost always collapsed him, sinking the dragon's heart and making him shed a tear. All for what? So he could have something to eat.

It got to him, tormented him so badly. And it only got worse when he looked up at a few remaining buffalo that remained, gazing the Red Flag in the eyes. His scales fell in hue, while he got up and slowly walked towards the limp body. Hearing a young bison morn from a short distance only made the feeling worse.

It was very strange in a way, how every once in a while, the animals would stay around. Look and watch the dragon as he claimed a life, almost wanting to speak or reason with it. "My lord..." One of them spoke up in a very heavy voice. Getting Dia to stop and study him with sad blue eyes.

"I'm sorry..." The dragon whispered.

"I know. But..." The buffalo looked at the young one. "He has a son. I know you wish to eat, but... Can you take me instead?" The question almost broke him, forcing the blue one to look away and try to hide his few tears. Eventually leading him to sit down to keep himself from falling over. Every deep breath was only harder when the bison tried to comfort him. Nudging and stroking the back of the dragon's neck, even giving a few moist licks. "Please."

"...I can." He whispered, feeling the buffalo attempt to help him up. Walking towards the large body that laid there, and placing a deep blue paw on it. He concentrated, morphing the damage he caused to the head to a repaired state on a monocular level. Then gently motioned the other bison to take a step back. Shocking the dead one and getting it to breathe once again.

He could do this, only if it was not already taken by the Force. Even then... Dia's been caught before. An event that did not end well for him lead a mental scar that he could never remove. A few heavy breaths from the first

buffalo got his child to rush towards him, a sight that only brought the dragon a few more tears and heavy breaths.

A small nudge to his side from the second bison only worsened it. It hurt him to think that such a species would just accept such a thing. Being hunted from time to time so that others could feed. They didn't deny it. They didn't try to prevent it. Frightened, yes. The fear was always strong when it came to the animals. How much they wanted to keep living, how they strived so hard to. Yet, no plots for vengeance came from their deaths. No desire or any form of revenge nor harm for the hunters. They just accepted it.

A faint whimper escaped his dark blue throat as he took another breath. Turning to the standing bison and wrapping his paws around it, stroking the thick mane with faint claws. "...I'm sorry." He whispered, feeling the creature nod. Then froze completely as the dragon let go. Walking past the remaining buffalo that stood to witness the event, and the Red Flag sparing all their lives. Even if he was famished, it wasn't worth the pain he would bring to the world.

## Chapter 4

It was the fruits from the trees deep in the forest that kept Dia from passing out. Let alone the critters that helped him retrieve those foods. In return, he sped up the growth of the ones already picked. The dragon admitted that he tended to eat alot, and the animals took it humorously. At least now they had food before the winter started to hit. Food that would last the autumn.

But that meal only lasted a few hours. Luckily by that time, he reached a small village that started their celebration early. It got his mind off of the events earlier that day, let alone yesterday. The village was so glad to see him, though Dia was never really fond of Yuan-Ti foods, he was glad to at least eat something. And pay a visit to a small neglected village.

After tending to a few of their sick and other requests, the Red Flag was off. Giving the snake-like people a formidable farewell and resuming his

path up northwest. It was going to be several days of travel, to the point where he was questioning if they should start calling it Flag Week. But the dragon could not visit every place in one night. He performed miracles in front of their eyes before, but he was not a God.

Though the thought of him trying to visit them all in a few days came to mind, he was almost ill from everything. From all the foods, the drinks, the activities, and the requests. It was too much for him. However, he tried his best to at least visit each area for the requests. Letting them have the celebrations themselves. It even got to the point where after Flag day, the smaller villages and towns would often transport their ill to a larger city, in hopes that they would not miss the Flag's visit.

He felt bad for those left behind. It seemed that no matter how hard he tried, he could never be rid of Sickness entirely. Dia did very well to cull a few diseases and plagues before they got out of hand. It was suffering like that the dragon would not tolerate, regardless of what Force was behind it. They could claim a life without it suffering.

Before he got into a bad mood while thinking about them, he spotted the City of Lions up ahead. Which, ironically, didn't hold any Lions. It was actually a city of Griffins, one built in a large mountain. For the most part, it was aerial. It required wings to go about and explore each exit towards the city. Let alone to get to the many nests that were built on its walls. Over the years, they've started getting many air-burdened visitors, so they started working on forms of transportation for them.

The dragon loved seeing this. Species always working together to create a world for everything to live in. Even if he almost had to make himself the bad guy, Dia would take it. As long as there wasn't any bloodshed. But as luck would have it, they accepted the dragon as a protector. As savior perhaps.

The red one took a deep breath. Releasing a loud roar that echoed far away and beyond the large city. It was a greeting, and one that often got everyone who heard it excited. So much so, that dozens of griffins launched from their nests to fly with him. It was an entire swarm, a large flying blanket of feathers and beaks. Faint squawks and chirps that greeted the dragon back.

He slowed down and slowly merged into the flock. Getting tickled by all their small nudges and faint licks. But during a curve, Dia seen a young one trying to keep up. Getting farther and farther behind. Slowly, he used another one of his father's tricks; turning insubstantial via mist. Slowing himself down and probably surprising a few of the birds as the cloud flew behind the struggling chick. Reforming below it, and resting the little one on the top of

the dragon's head. Letting her still feel the wind under her wings and letting it fly at the same speed as the rest.

The flock greeted both of them with many opened wings. Flying around the large city in circles before landing. Many of the birds returned to their work or nests, and Dia returned the little one home safely. Scouting from afar a parent that matched the chick's DNA. "Here you go." The red one lowered his head and let the mother take her child.

"Thank you Flag." She gave him a tight embrace, and he returned it. "It was very kind of you to do that. She's still too young to really fly well."

"Your Griffit was doing fine. Probably become quite a performer when she grows." He purred, giving the little one a lick and receiving a very bright smile from her. Shortly after, the scampering and cheers of younger griffins were approaching.

"Flag! Red Flag!"

"How did you do that!?"

"That was amazing!" He couldn't help but chuckle at their expressions. "You turned into a cloud!?"

"Yes. It was an old trick my father taught me a long time ago."

"You had a father?" One of them asked with such surprise, it made the dragon laugh out loud.

"Yes. Everything has a father, little one." He noticed a sad expression on another bird in the back. "What's wrong?" The others stepped aside, following the Flag's eyesight.

The smaller griffin lowered his head. "My... Father is ill, my lord." The dragon took a few steps towards him and tried his best to gently lift his head with the tip of his paw.

"Then let's go cure him. I promise we'll have some more flight time, everyone. But I want to tend to the wounded and sick first." The group chirped and lead the way to their hospital, getting the Flag to smile and follow them.

He finally had some peace and quiet. After that big breakfast and a

little bit of a large dessert towards noon of an apple crumble, topped with a sweet frosting and a slight lemon glaze, the griffin felt relaxed. It was nice and cool in the dungeon, though still a bit dark. Giving him the opportunity to finally lay back and get some rest without his belly saying otherwise.

If only he could relax. Though the environment was just about perfect, something was itching at the back of his mind. Guilt perhaps? Maybe. He knew it was going to be hard to understand for the woman involved, it's half the reason why he didn't want a Caretaker to begin with. But if the people demanded such a thing for her, Anton could not *completely* blame them. Though it wouldn't hurt to try.

"You want us to fake it?" He recalled the woman's reaction through the darkness and silence of the large room. "Why?"

"Because I wish to be alone for the next several months." The griffin replied in a heavy grumble, still tearing shreds of meat off the pig. It was very close, if not sarcasm, but it only got Cennet to look at him a bit stranger. "Look. Would you rather spend the day relaxing, and doing your own things. Or try cleaning up, feeding, and grooming a griffin."

"I'm not sure what I would-"

"Precisely. You would rather do Cennet stuff." He answered rather quickly, showing that he really wasn't paying attention to her. "And if we just report nothing new or drastic to the warden, he'll let you go back to your normal life. Back in I'mNotEvenGoingToTryTown-"

"Janesfield?"

"Whatever." Anton grumbled, tearing off another serving.

"But it's my responsibility-"

"It's not your responsibility to do anything down here."

"I'm the one who captured you-"

"You didn't capture me, I let you contain me." He grumbled, his leather ears going flat.

"Still, I'm the one who tackled you. And because of that, I'm responsible for our conflict."

"Only if there's a conflict." The woman looked at him a bit strangely, and the bird rolled his eyes grunting. "Look. I'm not holding anything against you for that. I'm not going to let a grudge fester between us because you gave me a flying hug into a pile of hay." The thought of it made her chuckle.

"It was my mistake to disrupt your neighbor's cows, and I accept my punishment for such a thing."

"But I... 'Hugged' you without permission or sport. And the Flag says-"

"The Flag didn't see it, and the Flag did not give you the responsibility to resolve this. The Warden did. Last I checked, he's bordering Senile." Anton snorted. "Because of these circumstances, you are officially wasting your time down here. And the autumn is busy for your family, I'm sure. They could really use an extra hand around the woods-"

"Fields."

"Whatever!" He hissed. "My point is-"

"But Johnathan is taking my place for now."

"But who is taking Johan's-"

"Johnathan's."

"Jimmy's place?" Another chuckle from the woman. "Eventually someone somewhere is going to come up short, all because you need to, do what? Take care of a magnificent griffin that doesn't need to be taken care of?" Another bite. "Not that such a thing would be bad, but in my situation; I'm perfectly fine with this. Providing that vermin is out of here."

"You don't like David?" Cennet's voice echoed through the relaxing griffin's head. Finally returning from that memory. Only because he didn't have an answer for her. At least not one that she wanted to hear. Let alone, if he did say what he felt...

The bird growled, turning over on the half pile of blankets. The woman wanted something to do, so Anton sent her to wash some of these things. But now he was stuck trying to get that question out of his head. "You don't like David?" It rang again, getting him to grunt.

No. He didn't. Perhaps it was the little one trying to steal his spotlight. Perhaps it was just the fact that the dragon was even here, putting a bit of a hole in his plan. And if he said such a thing, they would probably force the two in a room until they made up. That, or the griffin would end the little one, which would only lead to his execution.

Another restless grumble morphed into another turn to get comfortable. If only he could figure out a way to drive the little one away without getting the Flag's attention. Aggression or Violence would likely no go well. Perhaps...

He glanced at the large doorway, slightly opened for the woman to freely move in and out. Still hearing the faint sounds of water moving, probably washing those blankets in the tub within her room. It was definitely a job for delicate and gentle hands. One without sharp claws and that could tend while wet.

It was strange to the griffin really. He's heard stories of the humanoid cities and their work habits. Even seen a few in the village Anton grew up in. They were great workers really, making high quality crafts to the point where it was an artwork. But at times, he often wondered if they were somehow manipulated into such things. No one would even dare to think of calling these species as Slaves, but they were constantly working. Always having something on the go to keep them busy, and never really ponder why.

But when it came to a species like Griffins, there wasn't as much they could do for work. Many of them were taught to write and be bards, nurse some species' children, or even use as transportation. Sometimes even entertainment as well, especially for airshows and other festivals.

But otherwise, Griffins were often able to relax and enjoy the world. Visit many places and sore the skies. It wasn't until recently that Anton started to question these things. Why they lived this way, while others were almost forced to live another. And the worst of it all, why every other species... Every other person accepted it.

Another faint grumble as he stretched out his restless body. His wings reaching towards the ceiling, then sideways. Still far from the prison's restraints. Once again, seeing something move in the back for a moment, getting his feathers to almost puff out. An aggravated sigh got him to relax a bit. "Damn mirrors." He growled. He would probably break them all, but didn't want to risk the bad luck.

Kneading the dirty blankets a bit, then preening his wing, Anton started getting lost in the faint memory. Mostly revolving that coloring on the wyrmling's eye when he looked into something reflective. Trying to imagine what it could've meant. The little one seemed to be afraid of it. Maybe it was- "Alright, these are done." Cennet's voice interrupted his thoughts and spooking him. Getting to pull out one of his feathers and hiss at the pain. "S-sorry!"

"Be *quieter*, please!" He growled in pain. Overlooking the area like it was a scratch on a beautiful painting. "That'll be a bit before it grows back."

"You shouldn't be so rough in the first place then." She half giggled at him, getting a harsh glare before resuming.

"I have to be in certain areas. Especially where the feathers are thicker." The griffin grumbled, retending to his grooming. But stopping after a few moments of noticing she was standing still. "Yeeeeeeesss?" He asked in a very harsh and sarcastic tone, getting her to laugh.

"You want me to do the rest of the bedding?"

"If you do the rest of the bedding, I won't have anything to lay on."

"And if I don't get at them, they won't be clean."

"I don't see how that's my problem." He snorted.

"You're the one who wanted me to wash them." She shrugged.

"Yes, and you can do the rest when the first half is dried." The woman couldn't hold in her giggle, making the grey one's ears flatten against his head. "What is so funny?"

"You." The answer made the larger one growl. "I've never met anyone so grumpy as you. It's quite entertaining."

"Your taste in humor is just terrible, that's all."

"How did you get this way, anyway?" The griffin glared at her with green eyes while she walked over to pick up a fallen chair and bring it over. Not catching the sharp look until she sat down and sending her into giggles again.

"You enjoy tormenting me with that cackle, don't you?" A reverse beak toss ended him back to his scathed wing. "I got this way through experience. Happy?"

"That's hardly saying much." With a bit of silence, she pried again. "Don't you believe you're down here for a reason?"

"Yes, a reason that I'm responsible for."

"So you admit that you threw the apple and caused-"

"I meant that I'm responsible for my *Choice*, you harlot!" He hissed at her, but it only made her laugh louder. "I wasn't actually planning to make the cattle tear down a barn. That was simply entertaining."

"B...But..." She tried to calm down and hold back her laughter. "But don't you think that maybe you're down here to repair your fai-"

"Are you implying that I'm broken!?" He curled his neck, and the woman fell out of the chair flabbergasted. Unable to recover from the

seriously shocked look on the bird's face. With a loud growl he got up and snorted at her. "Just wash the damn bedding!" Anton hissed, walking away.

## Chapter 5

He absolutely loved flying. Ever since he was little, it was the one thing that constantly brought him joy. And after flying alone for countless years, the dragon absolutely loved sharing the skies with others. Even if it meant the much larger one had to be more careful with his surroundings. It was flying in a flock that was only recently a new thrill for him. No wonder birds often did it while migrating.

The happy cries from all the others fluttered his heart, very young to the past adult. It must've been quite a sight to see from the ground. Nearly the entire city's population that could fly soaring in one large wave around the city and beyond. It lasted nearly hours, until sunset was near and the group could take no more. All of them landing safely along the outskirts first and resting before retreating back to their nests.

The Flag landed in a rather spacious area himself. Though his wings were a bit sore, a few minutes of rest would be enough for him to carry on through the night. Shaking the soreness of them out a bit, several of the earthbound came around with large pails of water. The dragon greeted an older woman with a smile as she set one down for him. "Thank you kindly."

"Of course my lord." She bowed, stroking his mane and under the jaw a bit while he quenched his thirst. Slightly grumbling how it almost burned going down.

"Added some lemon to it, did you?"

"And some sugar as well. Was it too much?"

"Just a tad. Kinda burns going down, especially on a dry throat." He lightly nudged her, showing that he wasn't unhappy. "Try reducing the Lemon

Juice by about one eighth, it should be more enjoyable then."

"I'll be sure to do that. Would you like some of us to massage your wings before you turn in for the night?" She seen him stare into the lemon water with a glimpse of sorrow in his eyes. Almost seeing something different in it before he blinked.

"No thanks. I better keep flying during the night. Maybe stay over in the next town."

"Awwh, you're leaving already?" A small griffin pouted.

"Now now, Arcadeaus. We're not the only city on the planet." The woman tapped the little one on the beak. "He'll be back again someday, but we must always think of others first."

The griffin moaned sadly, getting a few licks from the Flag. "Always listen to your elders, Arcadeaus. They carry my teachings well." The small one nodded slowly.

"You sure I can't go with you? Even to the next town over?" He whimpered, getting a rather sad look from the Red one as he trailed his blue eyes back to the woman.

"It should be fine. We make trips back there nearly every day. And he does have a few friends over there that he could stay with." The woman shrugged, but the sadness in the dragon's eyes didn't fade. "What's wrong, my lord?"

A quiet exhale left his nostrils. "Can you two keep a secret?" He whispered at them, and they nodded. "There's... Something wrong. Something bad trying to happen, and I haven't been able to find it. I can sense it, but if I can't find it..."

"Then you cannot halt it." The woman whispered. "Is this the reason why you want to leave tonight?"

"And why I don't want to take anyone with me. Normally, I wouldn't mind in the slightest. But if I encounter this... Problem, I might not be able to protect him."

"But you're the Red Flag. You can do anything." The little one whimpered a bit.

"I can't do everything, little one. And I'd rather not take the chance of you getting hurt or worse. Even a bad experience can cause a large ripple of devastation within your life..." Another quiet exhale, and the dragon closed his eyes. Trying to hide the blue discs.

"How about next year, then? Or even the next time you come this way? Would that be alright Arcadeaus?" The little one nodded a bit happier, but a little bit of worry was in his feathered expression.

As he put a small paw on the Red one's muzzle, the dragon opened his eyes, almost going cross-eyed looking at him and making the griffin giggle. "Be careful, Flag." And he gave the larger one a full hug on the muzzle. It made the dragon smile brightly, tossing the little one slightly off his hind legs. "You'll find it. I believe in you."

"As we all do. Please be careful, Sire."

"I will." He licked the griffin one last time as it let go. Looking around and seeing the many faces of various species, he raised a right wing as if to wave goodbye. Though a little puzzled, and a bit sad, they gestured the same thing. Seeing the dragon leap high into the air and circle around the mountain one last time. Roaring his goodbyes and receiving the same calls before taking his departure.

Night came quickly. Almost too quickly, like the sun was grabbed and forced down over the horizon. Taken hostage by an unknown force so that darkness could cover the lands. Though many of the distant villages were outlined with a few torches that could scarcely be seen through the trees.

But the dragon could feel it. Some ominous sense that something was wrong this night. That someone was in trouble, perhaps? Creating a large chain reaction of events that his eyes were trying to warn him about. His dreams aided him little, which is very unlike them. The people in the cities were getting along just fine. And he was sure it was that battle over the silly apple.

Feeling some fatigue already told him he should've slept at the City of Lions. He's got quite a ways to go before the next city, and now he was beginning to fly into a storm. The rain started pelting his already sore wings. Hissing as soon as they touched his overheated body. Or at least it felt like that. Regardless, he didn't have to worry about the lightning. That was a relief for him.

The Flag still tried to search the grounds. Scanning desperately to find this problem, this issue to take care of. His mind kept wandering out of concentration as it grew more and more exhausted. Reflections of those tribesmen and that grey griffin flashed in his mind. As if it was warning the dragon it was them over and over. But it wasn't, he knew that. Those issues

were resolved already.

Violently shaking the fog out of his head, his body felt like it was collapsing. He needed rest, especially after a long straining day of constant flight. Not to mention, some recently obtained-

His eyes glimpsed something along the path. what looked to be wagon tracks that slid off the main road. New ones, maybe only a few hours old. The Flag immediately dove down, scanning the fields once again with his second wind. Trying to separate the darkness and mist to find the accident. Grunting when he couldn't find it, he made harsh winds to clear the area.

Quite a ways off the road, he found a tipped over wagon. A faint light inside of it. Landing heavily in the wet grassy fields was a bit risky, but there was no time to be careful. "Hello!?" The dragon shouted at the wagon while approaching it. "Is anyone in there? Are you hurt!?" Making his way to the back and finding it rather opened. Then flicked an ear to the murmurs through the darkness.

The faint light was from a small candle, just bright enough for a glare. Getting the Flag to squint and make out what was inside. The murmurs grew louder and almost panicky when the dragon's muzzle entered the back. "Don't worry, I'm here to help!" He whispered, just now making out that the man was tied up. With a cloth around his mouth. "Stand still." The red one said. The man shook his head a bit but didn't move for a moment, enough for the draconic claw to cut the cloth loose and pull it down.

"My lord! You must run! They're baiting you-!" The dragon's roar in pain interrupted him as a sharp pain came from his neck. Feeling something heavy cut its way through his thick scales and almost to his throat.

The Flag pulled his head out of the wagon, feeling the weapon slip out from his neck as he covered the wound with a paw. Barely seeing a figure in a dark blue cloak. Something humanoid rebalancing themselves for a heavy swing. "For our Freedom!" He shouted, throwing his entire body into the attack.

"Freedom-?" The Flag asked, still stunned from the neck wound, only to get another. The heavy axe head cut deep into the dragon's muzzle, getting nearly halfway and dazing the large one even further. The cold steel of the warn axe almost made the wound numb at first, until it was pulled away. Tearing some of the flesh with it and making the beast roar in pain. Feeling another sharp sting on his left hind leg, then the tail. A pierce in his right haunch. There was too many of them. "Stop!" The red one tried to roar, but the lack of a nostril made it more difficult.

With another blade entering his right shoulder, the dragon had enough. His instincts took over, glaring sharply at the figure in front of him, going for another sideways swing. The handle of the tool suddenly snapped in half, shifting the power of the attack's primary hand to turn too sharply and run the axe head into the wielder's shoulder. Nearly severing the entire arm. Before the person could even examine what happened, the steel axe morphed into several spikes, shooting through the creature's body and ripping several chunks of it outwards.

The dragon's next target was the person on his right. With the arm still rather functional, the Red one slammed a paw into the ground. Causing two rock spikes to drive the creature's knees backwards and scream in pain. Grabbing the figure's upper body with a single paw and slightly crushing it with shear strength, another flatter spike of rock severed through its waist dully. Enough for the beast to tear it in half and slam it into the ground with a unsettling crunch.

A few more wounds could be felt, but at this point the Flag was in a frenzy. Another paw slam on the ground caused the grass to freeze very quickly. Leading back towards those standing on his back left side, and snaring their clothing, at first. The cold grew quickly, causing insane pain through the two humanoids, to the point where they dropped their weapons and tried to struggle free. With the frost reaching to the very bone, it took next to no force from the injured tail to shatter their lower halves. Lying on the ground, a heavy slam of that same tail ended their lives quickly.

Another new wound on the dragon's right haunch got his attention, seeing the creature flee into the woods. Still lacking much restraint, the Flag roared loudly at it. Getting it to suddenly burst into flames and cause a large inferno. The sound of the creature's sinking terror told him that it was caught, and the threats were over.

Dia calmed himself down. Forcing the instinct away, and just focused on breathing for now. Still feeling something attached to his haunch, he pulled it out. Examining a semi-crude crafted longspear. That last figure must've thrown it to get it stuck in there like that. He looked at it rather confused and puzzled, but the struggles within the wagon broke his focus. Seeing the man inside still struggle with the ropes he was bound with. "It's over." The dragon panted, walking over to the man and cutting the ropes on his hands.

"Are you alright my lord-?" A loud snap came from the forest away from the road. Within moments, a large bolt about the size of a tree pierced into the dragon's left side. Throwing it onto barrels and several rolls and making the ballista tear the wound opened even wider. The hostage's scream

was the last thing the Flag heard before blacking out.

A few moments passed, and the dragon came to. His entire left side felt like it was draining. Leaking much of the warmth in his body. Struggling to get up off his back, he tried to lean forward to look at it. Only to get several of his other wounds to hiss at him. With a few more rapid heavy breaths, the dragon reached a paw over, and started searing the wound shut. Still stinging like hell, it would need to be treated later. For now, he was still furious. "My lord! Flag!" The hostage shouted at him.

"GO!" The dragon ordered. "Get somewhere safe!" Though he could barely make out the man in the darkness, even with blurred vision, he seen him go back into the wagon. Then into the woods. Possibly getting some survival supplies.

Struggling to get back up, the dragon's entire body hurt. But he ignored it's warnings. Shaking his head to once again relieve the fog, he sensed something moving deep into the forest. Getting its exact location, he created a forceful wind that launched the creature towards the dragon. Bouncing a bit in the fields and bringing it into the light of the inferno. The same dark blue cloak. Hooves for feet, goat legs, but human arms. Coughing a bit, the creature whimpered while looking into the Flag's blue, angry eyes. (A Satyr...) The large one thought. (There's a village of them nearby...)

The dragon's eyes barely let off the scared creature. Only slightly wandering off to the spot where he impaled the pair of knees with rock. Barely making out the same style of fur coating the legs from afar. Another sharp glare at the goat before him, only got the dragon to growl. There was no apology. There was no misunderstanding, other than the fact that they thought they could kill the dragon... 'For our Freedom.'

The cold blue eyes trailed off towards where the large, metal bolt rested in the wet grass. Slightly bent from the tumble, and heavily rusted. He could almost hear the creature's heart beating loudly, and it swallow.

The small village was at its peak of celebration. Though the night was dark, and a bit cold, it was still Flag Day, and the Satyrs couldn't wait to celebrate. The large bonfire kept many of them warm regardless. Not to mention, help cook some interesting treats, mostly for the children. All while the adults and young lovers danced to music and songs. After one of them was finished, they all stopped to take a short rest. Get refreshed and mingle a bit with mugs of cider.

Some faint winds caught their attention before performing another song, wondering if there was a storm on its way. A moment later, the Flag landed heavily, scaring many of the goat people and getting their hearts racing. Seeing the dragon covered in new wounds, sticky with large patches of deeper red, and even more so on his left side. The fear only grew when he slammed the tail end of the ballista into the ground, with a cloaked Satyr, synthetically hooked onto it. Clearly dead.

Silence rained over the village. Everything but the heavy breaths of the Flag and the roaring of the bonfire dared not to speak. "Freedom!?" He roared at the villagers. "Is that what you want!?" But many of them gave him puzzled looks. Slowly overlooking them, he could read their emotions. Fear. Startled. And Confused. Not a single one was Guilt.

"...How many of you know about this!?" The Red one ripped off the late Satyr's blue cloak. Holding it up for all of them to see. Overlooking them again, no one knew. Another series of heavy breaths, and the dragon dropped the rags. Growling a bit, he started to turn about. "If I ever get assaulted by a pack of Satyrs again, I will **Extinct** Your **Species, Understood!?**" He roared at them, only to get the people to lower themselves, and almost hide. Another heavy growl, and the dragon morphed the metal ballista through the late goat. Ripping out its limbs and leaving them hanging by iron spikes.

The gory display got several of them to almost star crying in fear, mostly children. And the dragon took off to the skies once again. Leaving the village in the most unsettling manner in the planet's history.

## Chapter 6

It was beyond stupid. To fly in such a state. With such wounds. But Dia was determined. He wanted to go somewhere he knew he could trust. Be with someone he could trust. Though he's come close to death several times, he's

been closer than this before. The planet wouldn't let him die, he knew that. If anything, not for very long. It wasn't much of a problem when he was young, but the older the dragon got, the longer that support came. And if it waited too long...

But he overlooked his wounds quickly using mirrors before setting off. None of them were terribly fatal, at least not for a while. Then again, he was getting faint from blood loss. Even with his larger wound seared shut, he was still losing a lot of blood from the other opened ones. At least he wasn't too far away. He knew the forest under him, he knew the buildings in the distance. The large windmills they often used for power. And the river from which they often harvested fish. As parched as he was, it was too big of a risk to attempt a drink.

(Just a few more minutes...) The Red one struggled to stay airborne. Every flap of his left wing sent a staggering amount of pain through his side and back. Though it's what was keeping him awake. But it was getting to the point where it was burning drastically. He started long glides, and using some wind control to keep him up longer at a time.

The forests below cleared into large green fields with a road within it. He could hear the cries of excited people coming from the city already, but soon started to die down a bit. They knew the dragon's arrival well. And to not hear him roar from afar only meant something was wrong. With a large group of people and other creatures coming out of the city to greet him, They gave him a landing space. Trying his best to make it settle, his front right leg gave into its wounds on the landing. Causing him to drag into the grass a bit and lay for a few breaths.

"My Lord!" Several people questioned him, asking him what happened. If he was alright. Though he didn't say it, it was a dumb thing to question. The current events, and the lack of proper rest was getting him a bit cranky.

"Sire!" A female voice came over to him. He could feel her furry paws on his snout, though it stung him. Letting the dragon release a faint growl, then some slight pressure on his neck. "Okay, Ellinisos and Klaude. Turn him over on his back. There doesn't seem to be any wounds there."

"Ressa..." Dia grunted, trying to focus his vision on her yellow eyes and her Lioness face. Though he could make out the dark markings that went from her snout and under her eyes. Often mistaking her for a spotless cheetah.

"You made it here, Flag. Let us take care of you for now. We'll talk about it later-" He grunted a bit, trying to get up enough to fold under a wing. "Easy, easy." She ordered the three males while she tended to the dragon's

head. "How long ago did this happen?"

"About six hours."

"Dumbass." He couldn't help but laugh at that. "There must've been eight different places you could've gotten medical attention, but you wanted to fly for six hours with..." She studied him a bit. "Six large wounds?"

"Seven. Right haunch." He corrected her. "And fractured ribs on the left side. Possible injured back." She tossed her snout.

"What happened to you!? Did you crash into a barn or something?" He reached up and grabbed her arm for a moment.

"...Blue Cloaks." She curled her neck. "I don't know any more than that. They..." He hissed at the sting of his wounds, as the people started cleaning them up.

"Don't try to explain now. Just..." Ressa sighed, laying down towards his head. "I follow you where ever you go." The dragon grunted. "The more of me you take, the more you leave behind."

"Pawsteps." He half growled. "That one is for children." The Flag grumbled, still grunting against the burning of the medics.

"It's the first one you ever told me." She smiled brightly at him.

"And you were a little sphinx back then." Dia lightly chuckled, trying to lick her, but hurt his neck in the process.

"Just keep your mind off of them for now, okay. Though this snout is going to need some special work." He grunted sadly at that. Enduring against alot of the pain before the got up to his neck. Trying to nudge and get her attention again.

"...How is it?" He whispered. Getting the lioness to look deep into his eyes and make a bit of a sad face. Getting the dragon to sigh a bit.

"About... Four o'clock."

"I can't tell if that's up or down anymore."

"How long have you been seeing it again?"

"...Past few days. I thought I found it back in the southeast. But..."

"And you're thinking it's these... Blue Cloaks?" He nodded at her, feeling someone begin tending to his neck. "Come here, you." She carefully embraced his head, being very cautious of the wound. "We have a place you

can stay for now and get rested up."

"It won't take me long."

"You stay for as long as you need to. Nevermind the rest of the world for now, let them carry their own weight until you're ready to pick it back up." The statement made him whimper a bit, but he didn't argue. "Now, the question is, how are we going to get you over there." She pondered, overlooking the much larger red beast.

"I'll just walk."

"I think you mean Limp. And no."

"I'll be fine, Ressarkio." The Flag grunted, fighting to turn himself up and around. "Just help support me. Watch the Left hind and this arm."

"You seven, go to the west center building and clean it up quickly. You three, gather all the spare blankets and pillows you can find. You, go to the hospital and grab a few dozen Frankincense sticks. Everyone that can help support him, do so on his left arm, right side, and right haunch. Those who cannot, keep the celebrations and children at bay. Feel free to spread the word out as well."

"Take me to your hospital first." The sphinx double taked at the dragon. "I can heal your wounded-"

"No one here is fatally ill. They can wait." Ressa almost demanded, seeing his ears sink. "Let's go."

The semi cloudy day made it much easier to study the dungeon with the breaks of sunlight. Though, once in a while the contraption would dim with the passing clouds, it was still bright enough for the griffin to see quite clearly. Pawing his way through the many piles of shiny objects, it only added to the stereotype of hoarding dragons. At least the little pest didn't keep pets. Or so the bird was hoping.

Though it was hardly an entertaining form to past time. It almost felt like he was trying to unscramble the messages of a mad person. Someone confined, perhaps troubled. He began to wonder if it was the wyrmling's actual parent or guardian of his. The little one did claim that he was not related to the Flag. Though, being cynical as the griffin often was, he didn't

believe him. "Still not sign of him?"

Cennet's sudden appearance got Anton's feathers to puff out. "Crickets make more noise than you do." Glaring at her trying to keep in a chuckle, he growled. "And I mean in the daytime." That released it, causing the bird to sigh. "Nothing. But I'm not waiting for him to return-"

"You're just snooping through his things." She teased him, getting another growl.

"I'm not snooping. I'm examining. If I'm going to be down here for a while, I might as well know what that lizard is keeping." He turned away from the piles and started studying the makeshift table. What almost seemed like a prison bathroom stall was broken down in several places. The small walls, made from concrete bricks, only went up a few feet from the ground on each side. A large piece of plywood was placed over it, making a small table which was used for ages. Judging by the marks.

"How long do you think he was down here?" She asked, not getting the grey one's attention away from the table. Seeing him take a step back and look down under the roofing it made, there were faint traces of stripped cloth and possible thin shavings of wood. The rags under were withered from both time and moisture, never being able to be dried out. The shape of everything honestly reminded Anton of an incubator.

"...Probably his whole life." The griffin murmured. Gesturing under the table, but the woman couldn't quite make it out. "That's a nest." He bluntly said, getting a rather surprised expression from the woman. "Something else was living down here with him. He was just small enough to escape."

"What happened to it?" The question made the bird grunt and put a paw over his eyes.

"How on earth should I know?" He snorted, getting the woman to giggle at him a bit. "The weird thing is, he wasn't too big to keep sleeping here. Why move so early?"

"Perhaps to save the clothing and blankets from the water?" She tapped the small trail of water leading across the floor. "That's probably not very comfortable to sleep on."

"Probably not." He once again glanced at the mirrors, seeing his own green eyes from afar and recalling the odd color change in the dragon's iris. The more Anton thought about it, the more it became a symbol. Something the little one feared. So much so, he surrounded his habitat with the ability to keep watch of it.

The lift from the far back of the room echoed through the dungeon, getting both of their attentions. "Sounds like your supper is ready."

"Supper that *you're* supposed to deliver, not pass it on to someone else." The grey one grumbled, only getting another smile from the woman. "I guess it matters little who arrives with the food. As long as it's delicious." She just shook her head. "Looks like someone is taking my advice in getting some more Cennet Time."

A faint chuckle from her. "You could call it that." She winked at him, getting the bird to stop and curl his neck.

"...Don't look at me like that." He grumbled, only getting her to chuckle a little louder. Making out a single man coming through the large doors. And only a single man. "Approaching a hungry griffin without any food is not a good idea." The bird growled loudly. Scratching his claws on the stone floor and hearing them rake into it.

"Your food is cooking, be patient."

"I am patient. It's just wearing thin by the second."

"Ignore him, Johan. He's always grouchy." The woman said. Getting a loud snort from the large one.

"Am Noooooot!" Anton grumbly chirped just to irritate them. "Seriously, why come down here to *tell* me my food is almost done? Unless you're planning to present yourself as an appetizer."

"Actually, I came down here to bring some news about the Red Flag."

"Of courrrrrse." Anton overdramatically tossed his beak. Turning about and heading towards his fresh bedding. "You stall my meal to bring the wonderful news that it's coming to this city this year. Forgive me for not leaping for joy. Still hungry, you know." A loud snort.

"Actually... Word came from the Sphinx City, Vabbi. He was attacked last night." It got the griffin to stop for a moment. But only for a moment.

"That's terrible!" The woman said after sucking in a breath.

"And this concerns me how?"

"I was only planning to tell Cennet."

"Is he alright?"

"He's alive, but might need a few days to recover. He might not make it here for a bit." The man took a breath, overlooking dungeon and seeing the

bird flop down on the bedding. Giving the young man a glare of dark green eyes, and returning it with a puzzled look.

"Food." The grey one bluntly said loudly. Getting Johan's face to cross.

"We'll be back down shortly, Anton." The woman said, leading the man back to the lift.

"Thank you." He grumbled sarcastically in reply. After hearing the lift go up, he rested his head on his paws. Taking a deep breath, and releasing it as a snort. "...For Our Freedom... Dumbasses."

The entire world was devastated. Completely reformed into a darker, desolate place now only populated with ash. The skeletons of civilizations remained, and would eventually become fossils for the future to find... If there was a future left for such a place.

Exhausted, beaten, starving, and parched, the dragon still carried on. Dragging his now completely black paws through the black snow. Still somehow lifelessly falling down from the skies. The remains of everything that ever existed in the home he once knew... Gone. In less than a day. In less than a moment to him.

He tripped over something within the black snow, almost afraid to dig it up and see what it was. Instead, he took a few steps to the side and leaned against a building. Collapsing and almost giving up. Looking around, he knew this street well. Spent a few years in this city with some friends. And now...

He sighed heavily, wanting to bury his muzzle in the powder, but it would give no relief. Looking down at himself, still tattered, cut, and scared. He could barely pick out his deep blue color anymore. Even under his wings barely kept such a thing.

It was getting to him, the sickness of the storm. The famine and despair. As he swung his head towards the building to rest, something caught it. Getting him to whimper in surprise as it shoved something in his muzzle. A cooling liquid started soothing his dry mouth and throat as he tried to swallow every last drop. Until it was taken away from him and released the hold on the dragon.

Coughing a bit, he tried to focus on the thin figure before him. Wrapped in bandages, which were now coated in black like he was. And it's fur... "I know you." Dia coughed. "You were... When the sun went out." The panther nodded, giving him another drink out of the large bottle. "...Thank you." Another faint nod. "Right... You can't talk, can you?"

A bit of a thick stare from her got him to get a strange feeling. "...You can. Just not with a voice. I remember now..." He took a few breaths. "...Sinality, right?" She nodded. "And you... Know me." A nod. "As well as who did this." The dragon whimpered, lowering his head. Only to have it harshly caught and pulled back up.

"...It wasn't me? But it was me?" She pointed into the dragon's chest. "...Something deeper. Inside me. A hidden... Power?" The panther shook her head. "A hidden..." He sucked a breath. "Instinct." A nod. "An instinct that..." He looked around at the dead city.

"...I'm sorry." Dia whimpered. "This is all my fault." The panther just crossed her arms and leaned against the building. "I seen it. The sign, I just didn't know what it was. I just didn't know what to do with it. It just kept... Going further and further. And when it completed..." He sobbed a bit, then got a faint swat on the side of the muzzle. "I just... I couldn't stop them. I didn't know how-" Another swat, a bit harder this time. But the dragon got the message. There was nothing he could do about it now. And crying wouldn't make things right.

"...What happened to... The green guy?" She looked at him. "...Stagg?" A nod, and a gesture away into the distance. "...He's alive." A nod. "Just not here. How did you guys survive?" A harsh glare from her only lowered the large dragon's head and ears. "N-not that you... Couldn't, it's just..." She pointed down. "Underground? Does that mean...?" A shrug, and he sighed.

"It doesn't matter much now. If they seen me, they would know..." He mumbled, seeing the panther raise her hand again, and get him to step back a bit. "O-okay, okay. No more sulking." An irritated exhale. "But... Sinality?" It didn't grab her attention. "Where do I go from here? What do I do?" A faint look at the dragon's blue eyes, and she once again exhaled. Pushing off the wall and walking away. He faintly whimpered at it, until she looked back at him. Getting their eyes to meet once again.

"...Keep... Mo...Ving." She whispered with her breath, he barely picked it up with his ears, and she left him. Dia sat up, looking down at his blackened paws. His eyes caught some movement in a window, but it was only his reflection. Just now noticing that the colors were gone from his eyes. All that remained was Blue.

"...This isn't going away." He whispered to himself. "It will never go away..."

The smokey room almost startled him at first, wondering if the nightmares were once again real. But how thin the smoke was, and how it gave off a pleasant, relaxing scent told him otherwise. Though there was something else within it, something he couldn't quite place. The faint light of candles surrounded the bedding they were on, giving him a comfortable warmth, as well as the lioness' coat.

The lioness... From across the room, he could see a large mirror. Reflecting the dragon on his back, and the sphinx somewhat on top of him. Her chestnut brown color looked wonderful in the light, and the faint white stripes on the bottom feathers of her wings seemed to illuminate more though the smoke. Then there was her mane; long and thick. Often kept together in sections of a dark shimmering gold. Though there was this blackened stripe that went acrossed it. Lining the back of her neck.

The dragon found his paws on her back and shoulder. In an oddly comfortable position. Taking a deep breath himself made the sphinx do the same, letting the Flag know that she was awake as well. With a faint yawn and a few snaps of his jaws, he murmured something to clear his throat. Feeling her claws stretch out and lightly scratch his scaled armor. "I have seas with no water." He started, getting her to moan and snuggle up against his bad arm, though he felt no pain. "Coasts with no sand. Towns without people, and mountains without land."

The female gave out a faint pleasure moan which only made the dragon chuckle a bit. "Give me a minute." She said, licking at his neck a bit and making him purr. "...A Map?"

"Yes." He gave her a lick between the eyes. "Your wit isn't as sharp in the mornings. For a moment there, I thought I stumped you."

"I bet yours isn't so great either." She teased. "Your natural color..." He held his breath for a moment. "Is black? I never knew that."

"...Yes. Only when I don't have control over it."

"I knew you changed color, but..." She noticed a bit of pain in his eyes.

"What's wrong?"

"...People were often afraid of my father because he was black. I..."

"Is that why you called yourself the Red Flag? Because you thought people would fear you if you were always black?"

"Y-yeah, a little. That, and Black Flag sounds like a symbol a pirate would use." The sphinx gave him a strange look, and he double took.

"What's a... Pirate?"

"Nevermind. They don't exist here." She shrugged and let it go. Wasn't the first time he's mentioned something of the sort.

"Why Red then? I'm curious." The question made the Flag smile a bit.

"...You know how I change color with... Moods, right?"

"Yes, quite drastically when you don't hold onto one." She chuckled at him trying to toss his snout.

"Well, Red is... Like, Excitement. Adventurous. It's how I feel when I fly."

"And that's how people started to see you. From the sky." He nodded.

"They gave me the name. A loooooong time ago." She smiled at him and gave the dragon a rough lick. "After a while, it just stuck."

"And you've protected them ever since." There was a bit of sorrow in his eyes, but he faintly nodded. Almost telling her to change the subject. "Another one." Ressa stroked under his chin. Getting him to lightly double take with his eyes.

"Okay, okay." He took a few moments, trying to adjust his body a bit and feeling the tug of many bandages. "Often I will spin a tale, never will I charge a fee. I'll amuse you an entire eve, but alas," He nuzzled her, grunting at the slight sting from the wound. "You won't remember me."

"Sounds like a One Night Stand." The two chuckled. "But I'm sure anyone would remember you, so that can't be it."

"It is not a One Night Stand." He chuckled again. Taking a very deep breath and getting a thick smokey scent.

"A... Dream?"

"Damnit." She laughed at him. "I'll get you someday, Ressa."

"My turn, though I want to get back to that dream subject." He made a noise in question, but nothing past that. As she climbed up a bit higher to him, She stroked around his eye and down the good side of his muzzle. "I'm rarely touched, but often held." A sandy lick from her. "If you have wit, you will use me well."

"You're giving me too big of a hint." The sphinx laughed at him. "Tongue."

"Yes. Now for your reward." She climbed a bit more on top of him, hearing him grunt a bit. "You okay with me putting weight on you?"

"I'll live. A lot of it is repaired, just sore."

"Good." She leaned up a bit, and let her human-like breasts surround his muzzle. Getting it to instantly start purring at the soft fur covering and between them.

"Damn you." He grunted, getting the female to chuckle. "You know my weakness too well."

"One that, I must say, I enjoy taking advantage of. It's not every day that the Flag tells you that he has a fetish for such things."

"It's not a fetish. It's perfectly normal to like such attractions on females." He half grumbled, trying his best to lick her neck.

"It should be a fetish for your species. Dragon females never have such things in tales." It got him to stop purring for a moment, but was soon manipulated to resume.

"No, they don't."

"So where did such a thing develop?" He half whimpered at that. "You've kept bigger secrets within me. Though, I would like a bigger one sometime." She motioned behind her, and he let out a louder whimper.

Clearing his throat and stroking under her wings a bit, he sighed. "...My mothers always had them." Ressa made a noise in question, followed by a very puzzled look. "They were... human. And well... Equipped. Perhaps I got the..." She gave him playful shoves. "Attraction from them."

"You are way too embarrassed about how you grew up. You know people won't think any less of you for such things." The sphinx gave him a few licks.

"I know, but... I haven't had a mate for a very very very very-ow." She pressed a bit hard into his muzzle. "You get the idea."

"Yes, Mr. Broken Record." He laughed a bit. "Doesn't mean you can't ever have another. You're immortal, we get it. And well... There's plenty of people who would love to be your mate."

"I find it odd how you state 'People'." The lioness chuckled at him. "I swear, judging from the tales my father used to tell, you're just like a female dragon."

"Perhaps I'm just a dragon at heart then. Meaning, you should stop wasting my precious years and just submit already." She slid down, getting muzzle to muzzle with the Red one. "Now, am I going to get your consent this year? Or should I take advantage of this opportunity of you being more helpless than usual?" She kissed him, getting her rough tongue inside his muzzle, but feeling the dragon tongue push out a bit. As well as the male grunting a bit and giving her a bit of a sad look.

"Ressa... I want to." He sighed. "I really do, but..." He looked off to the side.

"We live for a long time, you know. Maybe not as long as you, but..." She almost whimpered, getting him to double take.

"N-no. It's not that." The sphinx perked her ears. "That ballista was rusted."

"That what?"

"Thing that give me the side wound." She tilted her head, then tried to look at it. "Picture a really really big metal arrow."

"And you were shot by this." It was barely a question, leaking out an embarrassed whimper from the dragon. "I thought you could change the direction of arrows. Let them go around you or something."

"That's not the point." His ears went back, getting her to chuckle. "My statement means... I have Tetanus."

"Which is curable and not contagious." She stated, still giving him a strange look.

"Which also might lock up my jaw and bite your tongue off." He whimpered, getting her to laugh.

"Always thinking of others, aren't you?" He lightly shrugged. "Alright, fine. You win this round. But I have the upper hand for round two."

"Round two?" He tried to curl his neck. Then suddenly put something together. A few more sniffs of the smokey air, and she smiled deviously at the

dragon. "Is that... Jasmine?"

"Even his Olfaction is second to none." He whimpered loudly. "I snuck in a few of them before letting you rest. They've been burning quite a while now."

"No wonder you're thinking such thoughts." Another whimper from the Flag.

"And that's why..." She brushed her tail acrossed his lower region and made the larger one whimper blissfully. "You're still rock solid. At least I hope."

"Ressa..."

"Just relax, Dia. After last night, you deserve a little treat. Besides." She gave him a lick between the nostrils. "You said so yourself, that you taste amazing."

"I-I was joking about that." He cleared his throat awkwardly.

"You were flirting. That's what happens when you drink too much Vabbian Wine." She started to slide down, feeling the now purple male's lower red horn under her fur. Separating it like an arrow in the wind. "But ever since then, you've had me curious." She carefully stepped over his hind legs, putting out the candles at the far back with a quick few swooshes of her tail.

"Ressa, just..." He sighed, trying to look away as he felt his member rest between her breasts. With a deep breath, he sighed. Looking upwards at the floor, and making a faint gust of wind blow out the candles around his head. Then grabbing some extra blankets for his neck to sit upwards a bit more. "I can't believe I'm letting you do this to me." He whimpered, and motioned for her to continue.

## Chapter 7

The dragon leaned his head back in a more relaxed position and closed his eyes. Taking deep breath after deep breath while trying to hold back any embarrassed whimpers. Only to hear the Sphinx start to giggle a bit and send

his ears back. "You are some nervous about this." That statement caused a whimper to leak out. "I can't be your first."

"First Gynosphinx, yes." He muttered, still feeling his red tower pulse between her chest pillows.

"But not just Sphinx in general." An embarrassed whimper as his ears turned a deeper purple.

"T-that's not what I meant." He half snorted, getting the lioness to chuckle. "Considering two out of three types of Sphinx are males, you'd be correct. You're my first Sphinx."

"Then why are you so nervous about this?" She semi-concerningly asked, finally getting Dia to look up and glare at her. Meeting him with a smirk while stroking her lion-like paw in circles on his good side. Slowly getting closer to his lower region.

He answered the question with a quiet sigh. "...Have you seen it?"

"Nope." He looked at the sphinx, half surprised. And she shrugged a bit, getting the faint movements to half stun him. "My, you must be some sensitive down there. Is that what this is about? You're afraid you're going to release-"

"Please." He whimpered. "Stop." A few taps on his belly to get the dragon to cough out the excuse. But when that didn't work, she leaned forward a bit. Letting the fur brush him into a bit of a squirm. "Okay-okay. It's because it... Looks weird."

"Looks weird?" She repeated him, curling her neck, then trying to look down at it between her chest lumps.

"And I don't mean the tip either... The full thing." Another whimper. "I've been told it looks a bit... Scary. Painful even."

"By who?" He didn't answer. As Ressa rose up, she took a few steps back, sitting on the second half of his tail. Getting a good view of the red weapon. In its current state, it was about as long and thick as a man's forearm. The head of it curved to a point, then quickly flared out into several spines on each side, along with a long line of rather large spines, all flowing together. The rest of the shaft had dozens of smaller points, along with small gaps for them to sink back in. Probably when it was no longer in use.

When a pulse echoed through the tower, these smaller spines pushed outward a bit. Flaring themselves as they pointed down towards the rest of the dragon's package. Including the five stripes of flesh that circled around

the base, just above the sheath. "Wow..."

"Kinda looks like a mutated mess." Dia muttered.

"Well... Yes. But..." She looked at it a bit longer. "It does look painful."

"And Scary."

"And Scary." She repeated him. "But so... Unique. Very deserving for the Flag, to be honest." He whimpered at that. "Trust me, I was more worried about you having something incredibly bland." A grunt that time. "Can I?"

"At this point, I really don't think I have a say anymore." The purple one snorted, getting Ressa to laugh at him before laying back down. Feeling the lioness study the thick member with a paw, and listening to him grunt at every little movement. "Watch the claws."

"Quit being a kitten." Ressa teased him. Almost afraid to touch the points of the spines, but was rather surprised that they all were quite flexible and soft. Though the smaller ones along the midsections were a bit harder, they were also much smaller compared.

When the paw reached towards the base, the dragon suddenly squirmed sharply. Getting her to stop and raise an eyebrow at Dia. "Ridges are... Extremely sensitive."

"Really now?" She asked, a bit sarcastically. Teasing them with a single paw and getting the Flag to hiss while breathing very harshly.

"Stop!" He growled, and she did. Just chuckling as she went up and down the tool slowly. The second time she got to the ridges, he whimpered loudly. Even though she went softer.

"You were not kidding. Wow-" She barely cut herself off there, lifting the paw up and seeing a faint clear liquid over it. Looking at the purple one for an explanation, he just gave an embarrassed look once again. A small sniff of it, then a lick made it near tasteless. But rather oily.

Setting back down, the sphinx took a closer look at his member. The tip and head still seemed to be mostly dry, but the middle areas were slightly coated with the same liquid. A few more playful teases in the ridges got the dragon to hiss and growl again, but also see the smaller spines flare out. Releasing the liquid from the small holes they often hid in. "...Oh. A type of lubricant?"

"Y...Yes." He muttered, almost hearing her purr out of curiosity. It was enough to make him smile and feel less uncomfortable with it. Laying his head back down and just trying to relax. Feel what she was doing with such a

sensitive area. It was a good feeling when the lioness was using the paw, but a few sandy licks of her tongue on the flare was not pleasing. "Do... We have any water or something?"

"Thirsty?"

"Not exactly." She perked her ears a bit. "Your tongue is... Dry, to say the least."

"Dry, huh?"

"Like a desert." He grumbled, feeling her get off his tail for a few moments and drink something out of a nearby bowl. Returning to give the tower a full lick and getting Dia to grunt again.

"How's that?"

"...*Better*." He said a bit bitterly, it only got Ressa to chuckle again.

"What if..." A few more strokes to the ridges got the larger one to growl a bit deeply. Then feeling her lick the sides where the oils were coming from. Then a few quickly licks to the head made it much more comfortable. "Now?"

"Much better."

"Looks like your 'Mutations' are helping out quite well." A faint whimper slowly started morphing into a purr while the sphinx slowly tended to him. The slower she went, with both the paws and the tongue, the more of a deep trance he slid in. Filling the room with a loud pleasurable rhythm that only grew. Almost vibrating his entire body after several minutes.

At this point, the shaft started to pulse quite frequently. Thicker and harder the longer Ressa tended to it. Soon, faint grunts were part of the dragon's symphony, and eventually they grew into whimpers. With a bit more attention on the ridges, the lioness caught the entire head in her mouth. Trying to be soft with the strokes, but progressively harder with the sharp breaths Dia was taking. With a very deep breath and a sharp grunt, she felt his paw on the back of her head, and the tool thicken in her maw. It pulsed several times before leaking out a very sweet and tasteful substance that reminded the female of a type of sour candy.

As the dragon released his grip on her, Ressa kept a hold onto the head a bit longer. Waiting until the release stopped accumulating before trying to lick and keep most of it. Purring loudly at the many flavors it really seemed to take. Trying to keep track of them all was rather difficult due to the constant changing of it. When she couldn't handle the sweetness any longer, she swallowed and took a few heavy breaths. "...Did you like it?" He half

whimpered.

"Astonishing..." She whispered, getting a shy smile over his muzzle. "I can't keep track of what it tasted like, but I swore... Lime, Lemon... Orange... Strawberry?" He nodded. "It was like... A form of candy." The sphinx looked down at the dragon's stones, noticing that next to nothing drained from the semi-large sack. If anything, it got fuller.

"That sounds about right." Dia chuckled. He knew the look on her face well, and raised a paw to interrupt her. "Long story. Rather embarrassing too. Someday I'll tell you how this... Happened."

"You mean how your... Seed seems to have the taste of the rainbow?" Dia chuckled at her. "Rather fitting really."

"That, and almost looks like the rainbow too." The dragon closed his eyes, then opened them up wide when he felt the lioness' curious stare. "Uh oh. Ressa-" Before he could stop her, she pawed at his ridges a bit. Getting the large one to turn orange and grunt loudly. "Easy, Easy, Easy-!" He whimpered, digging his claws into the blankets and almost arching his sore back. Containing a roar while a few heavy squirts launched onto his belly and chest. Fading back into a purple as soon as the sphinx let go and started taking deep breaths.

On his belly, even in the dim candle light, the white substance was constantly shifting colors like it was alive. Fading from one hue to the next in a very relaxing manner. "Wow..." She looked at it with deep eyes. Poking it a little bit with a claw, almost wondering it was going to jump at her. "Now what would happen if you put this in a jar?"

"You'd have the coolest light show for the next Flag Day. What do you think?" He grumbled, trying to sit up, but got a paw to pin him. Seeing her lick at the seed and purr a bit, getting most of it off then meeting him muzzle to muzzle. He rolled his blue eyes, but didn't fight it. Wrestling her semi-dried tongue with the sweet and slightly sour tastes, as the lioness got completely on top of him.

After they haggled a share, they swallowed and kissed a bit again. Chuckling at the silly idea. "Joking about tasting it, huh?" She mocked him, only to get another eye roll.

"I'm not going to openly admit that I masturbate to taste the rainbow. No matter how drunk I am." He snorted, hearing her laugh but trying to keep quiet. "All finished?"

"Maybe. You don't get tired after a release? Every other male does."

"Well, when you actually release me, yes. But-" He grunted again, and whimpered in defeat. Another laugh from the female as she kissed him again. "It's the jasmine talking, I swear."

"Yet not enough to tell me of your embarrassing experiences. I'll have to do more tests to see how much will get you to talk. In the meantime..." She looked down behind them, still feeling the member between her legs a bit and giving him a sly look.

"Ressarkio." He growled. "No."

"Why not?" She teased.

"Because I'm over 25% your size and well... I won't fit easily. And I don't trust reducing my size right now due to the bandages."

"You don't have to completely enter me." She started licking the side of his head, near the ears. "Just a little?"

"How much is a little?"

"As far as I can go." Another growl. "You have nothing to worry about. I'm pretty sure I can take it. If not, I'll stop."

"Sure you will." Dia grumbled, his ears back. "Ressa, I can't-"

"Please?"

"I might not be able to control my... Instincts." He tried to look away. "And... They might hurt you. Especially if I can't hold them back."

"But any harm done to me can be repaired, right?" A faint grumble. "I trust you, Dia. And... I would like this gift, if you're willing."

A few moments of just staring at her, and he whimpered loudly. "You're not in Heat, right?"

"Nope. About 7 months away."

Another sigh. "...Just... Be careful. If I need you to pull out, you *Need* to pull out. Got it?"

"That's if I can take it." She smiled at him, kissing his lips. "Thank you." The sphinx took a step up, resting her breasts on the dragon's throat and getting him to start purring again at their softness. A few small licks and kisses, and she took another step. Feeling the dragon's tool under her tail and tried to line it up with her tri-pointed sex.

The tip was still wet, as was her own lower region. Pressing them

together softly sent a thin wave between them. A glowing warmth that let them focus on their muzzled a bit longer. Slowly pressing the parts together and back again. With every rock, they started pressing a bit harder. Until the tip started separating her lips a bit. Getting both of them to whimper slightly and start purring.

The purrs grew louder when they kept at it. Not going too deep yet, but just prodding bit by bit. With every slightly harder press, she could really feel the side difference. When Ressa was tending to it with her paws, it looked manageable, but feeling it now... She could've sworn it grew in size. However, this might be her only chance for a long time to attempt such a thing. Pressing it a little bit harder and harder was getting more difficult, until he broke the kiss. "Slow down." The dragon said, going in for another quick one. "Slow down, or we're stopping."

She detested it when he got strict like this, but he always knew better. Nodding in agreement, the lioness did what she was told. Slowly easing up on the prods, and just enjoying them for now. Feeling the shaft very slowly open her up, little by little. And even feeling a faint wetness come out of the tip.

After a few minutes, Dia started guiding her with his paws. Slowly pushing her back a bit, and she obeyed. Feeling herself get a little closer to his slow thrusts. Letting her ride them up and down on the very head of his weapon. The sensation was growing between them, even if there was next to no penetration yet. There was something odd about it, like she could feel the dragon's own waves as he guided her. Getting the sphinx herself a bit wet from the movements alone.

Dia's paws started to get a little stiff on her sides. Feeling him slightly brace her as he tried to go in a bit deeper. Feeling the tower begin to separate her a little more took her breath away. Ressa never imagined it would be so slow, yet so worth it. Judging by the clocks, they've already been at it for at least twenty minutes, and they were still not completely engaged yet. But it was coming, and the anticipation was getting to her. Almost making Ressa want to follow her own wild instincts. But once again, those paws stopped her. His tongue keep her focused and calm.

Another brace, and the dragon pressed in a little harder. Finally feeling her lower lips start to stretch out and swallow the invader at the doorstep. The feeling started getting her to moan loudly between her purrs. As well as slightly squirm side to side during the movements. "Just a little more, Ressa. You're doing good. Just a little more." The Flag coached her. The sphinx' heavy breaths were getting her overwhelmed. With every thick prod she whimpered out loud. Her breaths shaky a bit, her sex heating up, and her breasts starting to tingle with every brush.

With a hard brace, the dragon kept her in one spot. Pressing into the female a bit harder, but not retreating the prod. Instead, elevating it and moving the intruder around a bit. Losing the Lioness' breath and digging her claws into the dragon's purple shoulders. Ressa felt the technique widen her a bit more, getting her to squeeze at it and squirt the red weapon as it withdrew. Another sharp kiss with some teeth, and the dragon nodded at her. "Are you ready?"

She nodded back, feeling his paws stroke her brown sides and letting her do it on her own. Slowly she pushed down, Feeling for the shaft's guidance and getting the tip of the flare in the center. With every deep breath, she pressed in. More and more, getting the flare to separate her slowly. Stretching out the sphinx' entrance and making her whimper loudly, but not let up. She pushed on, again very slowly. Making out the tower's shape with her lower region as it adjusted to hold such a structure.

The lioness stopped for a moment. Rapidly breathing and just enjoying the tight feeling. "You okay?" The purple one grunted, trying to comfort her. "If it's too much, we can stop." She shook her head. Ressa wanted this, for so long. Ever since she seen the Guardian up close. "Careful. The hard part is almost over." Another word of comfort, and she licked him. "But go slow. If you try to rush it, you might tear yourself." Another nod and a few more breaths. She dug her claws back into him, but the dragon never seemed to mind. Pushing herself slowly back, and feeling the shaft slowly slip in. (A little more. A little bit more. Come on, Ressa.)

With one final grunt, the head plopped inside her. Still stretching out the tunnel, but past the large barrier. With the two heavily breathing, more rapidly by the second, She squeezed the red weapon hard with a release, and he squirted warmth inside her. Tightly embracing each other leading to another sharp kiss. The two squirmed against their ties, massaging the inside and the intruder a bit before slowly starting up again. Her lips felt like they were at their limit, making the sphinx wonder if she could even get the structure out of her after this. But she was sure that Dia had a trick of two to emergency release them, if it came to that.

"How do you feel?" He asked, breaking the kiss and cupping her breasts a bit. Trying to find the nipple through all the fur, but it was difficult.

"Like I have a flagpole stuck in me." The two laughed at that. "But it's more than I imagined." She gave him another lick. "Thank you, Dia. So much."

"Done?" The female shook her head. "Alright, just be careful."

"Be careful." He tossed his snout at her. "I'll be alright. Just..." Another few breaths, and she started

moving back and forth a bit. Once again feeling the shape in a whole new way.

Every spine tickled at her, especially the bigger ones on the top and bottom. Caressing the inner walls of her sex while her lips struggled to swallow more. The pulses of the tower were very often felt, and she got a glimpse of the oils that the smaller spines ejected from time to time. Making the movements so much easier than before. Allowing the shaft to slide in and out with next to no effort.

Meanwhile, the entire sensation was breathtaking. The more she took in, the more spines she felt. Getting them to slightly grip the inner walls when the shaft was retreating, and stimulating his weapon to release more and more. The warmth of his tip started to travel deeper and deeper inside. Further than she ever expected, or ever experienced. Every few minutes, she released her own liquid in the form of a tight squeeze. One that scrunched the dragon's muzzle every time, and got her to smile. "Your muscles are... Quite strong."

"You're just too sensitive." Ressa teased, grunting at the entering weapon. With a few deep breaths, she started to go lower and lower. Hearing Dia whimper sharply and almost hold her too tight. "So." She gasped. "What happens when I squeeze this area-" A loud groan came from his throat, and a heavy amount of warmth entered her. The small pulses the weapon made fought against her walls, and once again left her breathless. If he was any bigger, she would've split open by now, no doubt.

With a few more minutes of enjoying the upper half, she gave him another long kiss. Releasing the weapon as far as she could and slowly started taking in the rest. Hearing him squirm again and whimper against it. "Ressa. Ressa-!" He hissed, holding onto her again. "Don't-!" The first ridge interrupted him. The second one made both of them whimper. The third morphed that whimper into a pair of roars and the last made their breaths rapid. "Damnit-!" The Flag cursed, trying to fight against it. He let his paws go of her sides and dug his claws deeply into the blankets they were resting on as the female constantly squeezed him.

The warmth was constantly leaking from this point, as the dragon struggled to hold back. Feeling the pulse of the weapon echo to the very tip from within, the lioness could feel the pulses make the shaft thicker. Stretching her out more and more as the tower got longer, dove deeper inside the sphinx. A contained roar was felt through the dragon's throat and chest, but there was no holding back. Especially after the female climaxed once again over the ridges.

Warmth released like a water fountain inside her, passing through the

red weapon as it got a bit thicker. Filling up an empty area in her lower belly within moments, then feeling the pressure return. It would've been painful if it wasn't so stimulating, fighting against the larger one's mating tool. But it was far too powerful, pressing against her inner walls and pushing them outward. Feeling her lower belly start to swell up. Tighter and tighter, it began to expand over the dragon's mid-section, getting her to whimper at both the pleasure, and the pressure of it. Seeing it bulge outwards farther than she ever through possible through the mirror across the room. Making her worry that it wouldn't be able to resist much longer. It even started pushing against the purple one's belly and slide the thick shaft out of her for a little more slack. Until it came to the head, the flare completely halting the withdrawal, and holding her snared on the large one as torrents forced their way inside.

As the dragon retracted his claws, he reached around the furry belly on top of him. Though, causing it to stretch out a bit more and make her worry for the worst, she cried at a sharp pain from within. The pressure suddenly eased up, making Ressa think that perhaps she burst, but instead felt the warmth start moving up her body. From deep inside. Soon enough, the sphinx' breasts started to fight against the pressure instead. Pushing them outward in a more round fashion. As Dia let go of her back, and tried to keep her balanced, the breasts were about the only thing he could use. More and more, they fought against the expansion with a thick morale, as they completely covered the orange one's head and neck.

The dragon stopped to gasp for breath, and the pressure began to fade a bit. Ressa's chest resistance kept up. Though she could still feel a few more pulses coming from below, the struggle was over. She relaxed, panting herself with the rhythm of the dragon's heartbeat. Granted, only feeling it in a specific lower region. "Too close for comfort." The Flag grumbled.

"Really? I thought this would be comfort enough." She nervously teased. Overlooking her new size from the mirror once again. Her belly was holding her up over his, unable to touch the ground any longer with her forepaws in the current state, and her breasts were about two and a half times their normal size. The new weight was unreal, unable to really move against it. "How...?" She rubbed her breasts a bit. Feeling the dragon under her grapple with the now larger one. Squeezing her and trying to move her upwards. "Careful! I don't have much room left!" A loud plop and a feeling of relief from her lower side told her what he was doing. Feeling the warmth slowly drain out.

"There. Now I can concentrate a bit more."

"Concentrate on what-?" She suddenly dropped down a bit, once again whimpering in worry. Looking around to see the mist reform as Dia without

bandages, and him tending to his sore stones. "How did...?" She looked at their significantly reduced size and her... Much larger shape.

"Y-yeah... Same embarrassing story."

"The one with the flavor?" Dia nodded. "Then how did you..." She tried to cup her breasts.

"Well... Gynosphinx' do have a placenta, but it doesn't nourish completely on its own. When you get..." He rubbed the back of his spiny neck. "You know..." Ressa shook her head and motioned for him to spit it out. "Pregnant, your... Uterus places the egg in a very specific location. Near this, is a pathway directly to your breasts."

"And...?" She looked at them again, seeing them finally begin reducing in size.

"You know that pain you felt?"

"Yeah, I thought I exploded." The lioness shuttered, jiggling her swollen parts in the process and making the dragon intently watch, as well as whimper and return to his Purple state. "Dia."

"R-right. That pain you felt was me just... Removing the membrane that enclosed it. Creating a pathway directly to your breasts so they could take some of the... Resistance." His ears were a very deep purple, just now noticing them in the mirror.

"You can do that?"

The Flag shrugged his wings and lowered his head. "A lot of the body is made of water. If you can grapple that, you can usually tear a few membranes as well. It was your best shot to survive."

"Other than turning into a cloud." Ressa teased, motioning him to come forward.

"I-I couldn't concentrate enough to..." He sighed. "...Sorry. I really shouldn't have let you go through with this." Another motion to come to her and Dia did, still keeping his head lowered until she lifted it up with a paw. Kissing him when it came in reach.

"I'm not." She said, after it was done. "Just... We gotta work on your self-control a bit." A sad glare from him, and the sphinx tossed her head. "As well as mine." Another kiss. "Thank you, Dia'vidd."

"You're welcome." He smiled back, giving her another kiss while pawing her new assets. "It's too bad you couldn't keep these at this size. I like

them like this."

"You walk around with them for a day, and then we'll talk. Until then, don't even think about making this a permanent thing." He chuckled at her, rolling the lioness on her back and laying with her. Falling asleep to each other's purrs.

## Chapter 8

The day was a bit more cloudy than before. The semi-gloomy weather really foreshadowed many things for the human city folk, and the word that something attacked the Flag really got things a bit unsettling. As much as the griffin stated that he could care less about such a thing, he would never confess in it actually bothering him. His feathery ass was still slightly on the radar, and if someone decided to throw him at the feet of the Flag itself...

He snorted loudly, letting it echo through the dark dungeon. Last thing he needed was to somehow give his apprehenders a form of sacrifice. A gift of good will towards their guardian for it to do with it what it pleased. And out of the entire city's population, Anton would be the very top of that list, by far. No doubt.

Perhaps he should ease up on those around him for a bit then. As much as he detested the thought of almost asking for mercy from the warden, it was better than dying. Given the current events, he didn't want to take the risk.

The stress made the bird toss over the pile of comfortable, fresh clothing. Though Cennet did a wonderful job at it, he would never go so far as

to thank her for such a thing. It was the woman's role for now, one that she's more than accepted, it seems. Which only irked the Grey one more.

Restless, he got up. Heading towards the 'Lightswitch' on the far side of the room. Really irked how it was on the far side of the main doors, and grunting the entire way across about its idiotic design. But that got him to suddenly stop for a moment and question it. He overlooked nearly the entire pipe by now, from end to end. That was the only switch to it. And the humans have had better technology lately, electric lights were hardly something new within the city. Why put the effort into something so complex, let alone at the far back-right of the dungeon?

As much as it would annoy him to admit such a thing in front of another person, the humans were not morons. Especially when it came to designing such a thing. The only person that the switch would benefit would be... The griffin curled his neck. Still looking around and trying to picture the little one. He knew as much about dragons as everyone else did: zippo. Including their stages of development. But for something to grow as big as the Red Flag, that hatchling must've been just about that; A Hatchling. A small, clear speaking, rather intelligent, World and Culinary Experienced Hatchling that was quite the tinkerer.

Strange wouldn't be Anton's first choice of words to describe that pest. But even in the darkness, when they met... Dia somehow released him. 'Breaking' a link in his chains and allowing him to move freely from the disc. Though, the little one had another use for such a thing, what was it? The Grey one scanned the darkness, barely seeing the Hammock being held up by a couple of pipes. (That.)

The griffin quickly went towards the switch and flicked it. Getting the half dim light to do its best to illuminate the dungeon. Circling around each wall and ending up close to the dragon's hammock. It seemed to be made from a thick net, held up and together by a series of metals.

Half climbing up the wall to get a better look, Anton was careful about his weight on the old wooden benches below. Most of the metals connected to the hammock were circle chains, larger chain links, or some thick strings. Probably silk. But the very dark one resembled the chains Anton was bound to while lowered down here. A very close study of it, nothing was broken. There was no sign anywhere that such a thing was severed. As if it was made from a brick of solid steel itself.

The large lift outside the doors landed and got his attention, Letting the large one stare in that direction for a few moments. Hearing the cart roll off of it told him it was probably time for supper. Trying to turn about, his claws slipped from under him on the damp wood. Hitting the rest of it with a loud

thud, and getting the wood to crack loudly. At least, he hoped it was the wood. Grunting and growling as he got up, Cennet came into his fuzzy view. "You okay?"

"Just dandy." He grumbled, seeing the woman try holding back her giggle. Then look at him, as well as the area he was studying.

"I think you're going to need a bigger-"

"I wasn't trying to sleep in it!" He hissed at her, getting the woman to laugh as his feathers puffed out. "I was-...Nevermind."

"You were what? Trying to sabotage it?" The grey one glared at her.

"...That actually does sound like something I would do, but no." She prepared his meal on the large table, and he sighed. "...That Griffit is hiding something. And I feel like I'm very close to it."

"So, you're snooping again?"

"Do you expect me to have anything better to do?"

"Clean yourself." She giggled, getting him to curl his neck again.

"You're implying that I'm dirty now. Wonderful. I bet you win all the Caretaker awards." Anton snorted, moving towards his desert of a fine cheesecake. Though a bit cold, it still was delicious and lifted his mood up a bit. "Granted, Preening does take hours, but I do tend to have plenty of time to spare. This dungeon is just so *full* of mysteries, I must entertain myself with them." The sarcasm in the statement was horribly dry, and hard for the woman to tell if he was serious or not. "And let's face it, the hatchling is hardly an open book."

"There's better ways of getting to know someone. The most common of which is to talk to them-Nicely, I might add." The grey one growled at her.

"I would if he were ever here."

"And whose fault is that?" She teased. Getting him to give her a clearly fake shocked look.

"Certainly not mine. He looked at his own reflection and got scared. For someone who tends to keep themselves surrounded by mirrors all the time, he must be pretty blind not to see his own reflection sooner." Cennet laughed again. Taking a seat. "Want some?"

"You cut that with your claws, I'll pass." He tossed his beak.

"Please, you say that as if they're filthy." The griffin took another bite.

"If you're going to be like that, feel free to cut it with your own wit. Even one as dull as a hammer will do." She giggled at him, and he took a few more bites out of his meal. The fish were not grilled as well this time around. There was something slightly off about it, perhaps the wrong spices, or too much of one.

He over looked the tray of fish, then looked at the entire table of food. Noticing how well it was all cared for. "...Why do this?"

"Hmm?" She snapped out of a slight daydream.

"...Take such effort into making this. All of this for a... Criminal?" It was a bit of a more-than-serious question. One that was asked it a bit of a thick tone, and one she didn't quite understand. "If anyone was to be treated like this, they would want to be punished. They would want to be placed down here. Why give them such treatment?"

"It's just food." She shrugged. "I mean, a bit fancy-"

"That picture of, what I hope is lemonade," The statement sent her into giggles. "Has a small umbrella in it. I can't think of anything else fancier than that!" He half grunted in frustration. "My point is... What's stopping people? From wanting all of this?"

She half shrugged, still trying to recover. "But you're losing something during this downtime." The green eyes stared at her. "Your freedom."

He snorted at her, taking another bite. "Everyone has lost that. You're all just too blinded by Faith to realize it." The woman's smile faded. "You're told what to know. What to do. How to do it. And do it until you're completely unable to do it any longer. You're told to make friends with everyone -everything that moves, and respect it to the fullest." Another few bites and a swallow. "You're also told what to believe in, what to put faith into. And you're shown this by some magic fireworks show from some icon that the entire world desires to have. Because they were *told* that's what they wanted."

"What do you mean?" The griffin took a breath. "Where are you going with this?"

"Everything you've ever been taught, been told, it all came from the same source; The Red Flag. You're told to obey every word from it. Every teaching, to bow down to every breath it takes. And if you don't, you get thrown at its paws. If you disobey a single rule, you're fed to it. If you *Fear* the Flag... You get taken away. And worst of all..." Anton exhaled. "...If you even question it, you get shoved out of the entire world. Thrown into an exile to **Recover** in hopes you can one day rejoin the land and sky of False Freedom." The woman remained quiet. "Everyone lost their freedom a long time ago,

Cennet. Every one of us was born without it. Except one."

"You..." Her face was cross, and a bit shaken. "You cannot question him."

"And my point is proven." The Grey one growled.

"The Flag has done wonderful things for us. He heals the sick, brings back those who were taken from us too early-"

"It does wonderful things for *your* species. Does wonderful things for *you*? You're 'freedom' was snatched away for trying to detain a criminal! Tell me, where is your Flag now to save you from this form of bitterness and negativity? How is it going to save you from your own doing? From your own choice to remain down here and take care of someone who clearly does not want to be taken care of!?" Another long silence. "Your own faith in that overgrown lizard is castigating you. Forcing you down in the absolute worst place to be in this city. Yet you just accept it, like it's some kind of punishment to stop someone from running from a crime. You convince yourself that you deserve this, for doing the right thing. You embrace it, because you think that's what the *Flag* wants. Really, you're just wasting half a year doing nothing. Nothing productive for you, nothing productive for your family. Nothing productive for your farm, or the Flag itself. And you just give into that. Because your **Faith** tells you to."

There was another long silence, and then the bird snorted. Turning away and heading back to his bedding. "Just leave the food. I'll eat it later. You're dismissed, **Servant**. Get out." It took a few minutes before the woman got up and left, getting Anton to finally release a pent up exhale. "...What was your plan, huh?" He whispered into the dim space.

He could feel it growing inside him. Without even looking at it with that special vision he developed. Every little bit of sickness, every disease that he accumulated, it was all festering in his body. Making it hard for him to keep flying, but he had to make it back. Usually, the dragon could go the full way. Reach every city in the couple of days before having to dock. But from all those deep wounds making him ill, losing so much blood, and being exhausted, it was taking its toll on his body. The Red one was worse off than usual this year.

In the meantime, he would have to stop and visit an area a bit early. That human city, but not tonight. After sleeping most of the day in Vabbi, celebrating his visit and recovery with the sphinx' and other people in the city, most of the day was gone.

Sleeping... The idea of resting was addictive when he was like this. But he couldn't stop now. Not when he was so close. His lungs started to feel heavy, like they held water. His head, foggy, and his muscles were getting weak. If he fell now, it's possible that all these illness' would escape from his body and contaminate the region. Then he would make everyone around suffer even more.

A few more glides, and he started to see familiar forests. Landing for a break would be a good idea, maybe some refreshments if he was careful. With a few heavy pants, he surfaced a bit hard on the grassy grounds. Sending a few animals into a panic, and apologizing to them in a huff. A few coughs, and he did his best to find a source of water. Not daring to drink out of it from the source, but levitating some and drinking it that way. "Are you alright, my Lord?" A rabbit asked him, nodding after a few breaths.

"I'll be fine. Just happening a little sooner than expected."

"Sooner?" It questioned, keeping one ear upwards and the other to the side.

"He does this every year." A crow said, up in a tree. "And nearly passes out getting back too. Too much drinking, methinks."

"You thinks wrong." The dragon chuckled, coughing a little bit. "I'll be... Fine. Just need a bit of rest. But you're better off not staying too close to me right now. I don't want you guys catching ill either."

"You're ill?" The rabbit asked, almost whimpering.

"It's a long story, little one. One I'll have the pleasure of telling you next time. I promise." The white rabbit nodded, and then hopped off. "Crow, do me a favor?"

"Yes?"

"Peck at me if I fall asleep. The ears work quite well as an alarm clock."

"A what?"

"Errm..." He covered his head with a paw. "It's an old device that alerts people what time it is. Usually waking them up."

"Alright, my lord. How long would you like to rest?"

"Ten minutes, tops. I need to make it there before the dusk." The black bird bobbed its head, and the brown dragon did his best to rest up. Slowly drifting into a hazy thought.

The smoke was clearing up quite well. Meaning that the incense have all burnt out. Which was fine, they did their jobs well. Very well in fact, that the pink dragon smiled at how foolish the day passed. Still resting his head on his favorite Vabbian pillow. Errm, Pillows, as the lioness' paw stroked his head a bit. Getting him to lick at the furry body, and eventually get a pleasure moan from the sphinx. "I have the absolute hardest time to find your spot in these things." Dia half grumbled, but couldn't hold back the purring in his throat.

"That's because it keeps changing." Ressa admitted. "It drives alot of males nuts."

"Yes." He flicked an irked ear. "It really does." It got the female to chuckle, holding his head tighter against her now original sized body. "Good. Everything looks and feels normal."

"It better." She half growled, getting the dragon to chuckle and nuzzle her again.

"...Ressa?" She made a noise in question. "Can I tell you a secret?"

"You told me plenty of secrets, Dia. From your name, your colors, to bone in your Closet... Closet being your sheath." He half cringed at that. "You can tell me anything you wish, and it will forever be safe-"

"I don't like Vabbi." The blunt statement sent her laughing, giving the now light grey one a few playful paw slaps. "It's hot, humid. There's sand everywhere. Even in places that have been sealed up for thousands of years, there's sand in it. I don't like it's food, it's unusually dry water, it's strong wine-"

"Okay, okay." A few taps on his nostrils got him to snort a the paw. "Then why do you visit here every year? And I mean, every year for like the last twenty, give or take."

He was quiet for a moment, and then took a breath. His form now purple in the mirror, meaning it was something once again embarrassing. "...You." It made her smile brightly. "I come here to see you. Ever since you grew up and become the... Mature... Errm."

"Adult?"

"-Sure. Mature adult you are today, I've wanted to..." He swallowed, getting a few strokes from her. "I never stutter this bad with anyone else."

"That's a good sign." The sphinx smiled at him. "But you made me wait twenty years to mate with you? Talk about playing hard to get."

"That's because I knew I wouldn't fit! And I'm glad I waited that long. I'm more than positive you were at your absolute limit to containing my..." He whimpered again, covering his head with a wing.

"I suppose you're correct." She did her best to slide down a bit and hug the dragon tightly. Giving him a few licks. "Thank you, Dia. It means the world to me."

"You're welcome-"

"And next year, we get to do it again." He came out of his wing and looked at her with wide eyes.

"W-what?"

"You want to try it sooner? Perhaps before you go?" The level of serious in her expression made him whimper loudly. Clearing his throat.

"Claimed to be Shy and sometimes Mean-"

"No you don't!" She hissed at him.

"I'm often heard, but never seen."

"Dia." A playful growl.

"But if you are few with quite a view, I will speak back if spoken to." Another growl from the Sphinx as she whimpered. Closing her eyes and thinking while the dragon smiled at her. Seeing her lust die down quickly and purr at the riddle.

"Cheater." She grumbled, licking at his ear.

"Give up?"

"Never." Another bit of thought. "An -Flag?"

"Nope."

"What do you mean, it fits perfectly. You only hear it when it comes back to you. You need the acoustic to hear it, hence the View. An -Flag! has to

be it. Besides, if anyone is yelling any anyone else, they could be called mean."

"You said... Flag?"

She curled her neck. "I said Echo."

"Then who said-?"

-Flag!

The dragon's head shot up, getting the crow to squawk and fly back to the tree. "You okay, my Lord?" It asked, getting the large one to take a few breaths. "You turned black and I was concerned."

"I-I'm fine. Thank you for waking me." The dragon took a few breaths. "How long was I out?"

"Only for a few minutes. But it is getting late."

"Yes. I should really..." The Flag struggled to get up, his sore weak muscles were almost burning, along with his chest and lungs. Some placed felt stiff, mostly around the joints. But his wings were fine for now. With helping leap from the air around him, the large one took off once again.

He reduced his size a bit before eyesight of the human's city. He didn't want to arrive sick just yet. All he needed to do was get down in that basement. He could do his withdrawal down there, away from others. Hoping that no one was around that window's entrance, let alone pass out before he could reach it. Last thing he needed was to infect his people.

The skies were still a bit cloudy, and the celebrations were distracting enough. Once again thankful for them as he snuck down into the broken barred window of the dungeon. Slipping from a weak grip and landing on the hard stone floor with a loud crack. Whimpering, and half cursing that there should've been blankets there to ease the fall. "Seriously, I have enough food for tonight! Stop throwing your garbage down here!" The dragon's heart skipped a beat, wondering who was down in his dungeon. Then it all came back to him: the Griffin.

Hearing the claws of his pawsteps come forward through the darkness, Dia almost spotted his sharp green eyes. "Oh, you're back. Wonderful. Just

when I finally got rid of one pest, I get reminded of another." Anton snorted, seeing the little one get up slowly and stagger a bit. "Are you seriously drunk?"

A few dry coughs from the little one, and a spit of something caught in his throat. "Not now, bird." The little one grumbled.

"What the Helgah is wrong with you?" It got the blue eyes to look at him, almost painfully, and then shake his scaly muzzle.

"Not now." A few steps forward, and his right arm tensed up. Constantly flexing and causing him pain. Unable to relax it. "Damnit...!"

"Seriously, what is this? You dying or something?" The grey one snorted, as the wyrmling started to hobble across the ground. Only to once again collapse in some light. Letting the bird witness some new wounds. "What happened to you?"

"I just need to get over there."

"...You're sick. Probably carrying-..." The griffin growled loudly at the darkness. Clacking his beak before sharply glaring back at the dragon. "It is you, isn't it!?"

"I don't know what-"

"Don't play stupid games with me, for once '*Guardian*'!" A heavy exhale from the little one made him fall once again. "The intelligence, knowledge of the world-of Cennet! Your ability to manipulate the matter around you! You're not the Flag's son, you *are* the Flag!" Anton hissed at him. "Just my luck! What the Helgah did I-"

"Do Not Use Her Name In Vain!" The little one roared loudly, much louder than what the bird expected, shaking the entire dungeon a bit, and letting some dust fall from the walls and ceiling. "...Just help me get over there, Anton. Please."

"Why should I?" He asked coldly.

"Unless you want to catch every disease I'm currently carrying, you will do what I say." Another attempt to get up was rejected by his sore muscles.

"...You don't even cure the sick." The griffin walked over to the little one, shoving it a little. "You just transfer it to your body instead? Why." It was hardly a question, but it got the dragon angry.

"So they won't suffer with it."

"But you do. Always the hero, even if they probably deserved-"

"They Didn't-!" Another roar, but much less intimidating when he started coughing. With another loud snort, the bird carelessly picked up the orange creature and threw him on his feathery back. "They don't deserve to suffer any more than they need to."

"And you think babying them constantly is a better solution?"

"Shut up." Anton growled at him. "You haven't seen the things I have-"

"Oh right. I completely forgot that you were wise and all knowing-"

"You haven't seen them destroy each other! You haven't seen them destroy their own world! Their own Families! Cities! Loved Ones, Because They Were Suffering! You haven't seen them hell bent on weaponizing everything to defend themselves **Against** themselves!" A few coughs. "And you're not the one that has to clean up the damn mess they leave behind. Destroying everything they had left -Innocent or not!" The bird was silent. "Don't question my actions, Anton. I'm only trying to make things better with what I have..."

"...Sure you are." Dia let the remark go. Waiting until they came to a series of benches. "You're planning to cure yourself with wood that's been sat on for forty years?" No reply, and the griffin started rocking the little one on his back. "Hey! Hey! Wake up!" Another few coughs. "What did you want from here?"

"...Move them."

"Sure, just let me get my pulleys that I carry with me for just an occasion." Anton snorted, getting the dragon on his back to groan loudly in frustration.

"I'm starting to see why you got kicked out of the City of Lions."

"You give them waaay too much credit. I left."

"Same thing."

"Completely different." The little one grunted at him. With a loud grunt, the bird double taked at him. "Don't you dare piss on me-!" The wooden benches suddenly got thrown across the dungeon with a large gust of wind. Making a very heavy crash that echoed in the underground for a while. "...Completely. Different." Another painful grunt from Dia. "Now what?"

"Door." He half pointed up at the wall, and the grey studied it.

"This is a furnace."

"Thank you, Captain Obvious." That time, the bird grunted.

"What do you want me to do with this?"

"Put me inside." A heavy double take, seeing Anton's green eyes look at him with both surprise and a bit of pain. "I'll be fine, but it might need a bit more wood."

"From..." He looked over at the totaled benches. "Right. And your *genius* plan is to-"

"Cook the illness within me. Kinda like boiling alive without the water."

"...And you're okay with this?" As cold as it was, the statement actually held some concern.

"I've been doing it for eons. This time it won't be any different." Dia started to get up, trying to balance himself on the griffin's back and reach over. Getting a hold of the door and swinging it opened. Almost getting fully inside, but his muscles gave out once again, making him fall to the floor.

"You're pathetic." Anton lackadaisically offered to help him up.

"Shut up." The orange one grumbled, accepting the help. Getting almost shoved on the rack and taking a few breaths. It still smelled like ashes in here. Dried and harsh. Looking down, he started a small fire on some older pieces of wood, but they wouldn't last. "I'll need a few more boards."

"Fiiiiine." The griffin tossed his beak, getting a few broken pieces and throwing them a lower door. "How much more?"

"Three should do it."

"Two it is." The feathered one tormented. Getting four and adding them to the fire. "So, what now?"

"I sleep. And you enjoy the warmth." The little one coughed, but he didn't seem to be in any pain from the heat. "After... We'll talk."

"*Wonderful*." The bird grumbled, going back to his supper and eating some of it. "Happy Flag Day, by the way." He sarcastically said, lifting up the glass of lemonade towards the furnace. "Cheers."

The dragon walked for miles. Unable to tell the difference between the place he was in, and the place he was in ten minutes ago. If he didn't know any better, he walked across the entire world. Due to the falling black snow covering up his tracks, it wasn't so unbelievable really.

The loneliness ached his heart. He's never been so alone. Even during the flights and nights staying in the woods, he could always talk to the animals. The same way his mothers could. But now, nothing else existed. Besides a panther that couldn't speak. He could look for Stagg, but... Something told him that it wouldn't be worth it. Odds are, those two would be getting off the planet and searching elsewhere.

The pain was like a heavy weight. Much like how those forces would 'Deny' the actions of others. Including standing. It seemed no matter what the dragon did right now, there was no correct place for him. He started to wonder if that's what She meant by abomination. He survived this because he was the cause of it. And that was the greatest weight of all. The mass of the Earth.

He sighed dryly, half looking at his surroundings and wondering how far he made it. How far the ocean was, and how much it was polluted. Wondering if there was even a place still remotely standing in the world. A few of the buildings were leaning, and hazardous really. Ready to finally fall and lay to rest as ruins of an ancient civilization. One that would be forgotten by everyone but him. A constant reminder of a planet that failed to live in harmony.

With another sigh, he started to look away. But something caught his eye. Like a distant memory of his childhood, him looking at the city at this angle. It was a memory of happiness that was resurfacing in his mind. He remember seeing his father, so glad to be held in his arms. Calling him David, which was something he rarely did.

He recalled his mothers, being so happy for him. The Feys, giving their

own pair of smiles. As well as those four... Sinality, Stagg... Saber and... Stratacast? Yes. That was it. Odd how they all started with S, but he remembered them well. All of them happy, in one small spot. But why were they happy?

It's because this is where his father performed another miracle within the Son's eyes. When he thought that he might never see that big black dragon again, he appeared. Crashed in something that was completely wrecked, yet leaving him unharmed. Something his mother told him was the work of someone special. And years later, you could still find some of the debris of that wreck here.

Pawing at the ground a bit, he smeared some of the ashes on a large, dull shard of the glass cube. Almost being able to see his pink, draconic self with it. The world could use more of that Pink now. Not really the color, but the feeling it meant to Dia. Letting him take what felt like his first breath of fresh air for a long long time-

A hidden trap door suddenly blew opened from the glass shard, and a man in a purple robe yawned and stretched loudly. Scaring the dragon half to death and making him jump twelve feet in the air with a loud yelp. Hearing the man's bones crack a bit, and very unproportionally climb outside of the door. A mug and a coffee picture in his hands. Walking up to a metal barrel, he dipped the picture inside, and poured the dry ash inside the mug. Sipping it very, very loudly for a few minutes. "Ahhh. That's black-tastick."

He turned around and looked at the green dragon with an ash colored mustache before giving his own shriek of fight. As well as throwing the mug and picture away with a loud 'Fling!' and hearing them break a window that clearly wasn't there. "Who... Are you?" Dia asked him, trying to take a step closer, and sniffing the wide opened trap door coming out of the shard of glass.

"Don't touch that!" He yelled at the dragon. "It's very delicate! Even the slightest little thought could make it expl-!" And the glass shard exploded with a large concussive force. Knocking the dragon out.

*The End.*

End.

But Seriously. It's Not The