

*You Are Going To **Die**.*

...It's a bit hard to believe that, isn't it? That somehow eventually your existence will come to an end. How everything that makes you *who you are* will slow to a stop and cease functioning. It is something you cannot picture or imagine, because your mind cannot process that. Because doing so would require experience in some degree. The way your brain works is by sending out forms of Scouts to seek out information about something, then return with that information. These Scouts would be your senses. And even if one of them tends to fail, like your sight within darkness, another will still succeed in obtaining some form of intelligence.

But death cannot be experienced. It cannot be recorded, it cannot be savored or remembered in any way. Other deaths can be, and that's what often drives those who are afraid of it. They see the way others End. Stop moving, and because there is a lack of information about what happens, your mind cannot understand it. So it chooses to fear it instead.

Regardless of what you do to survive. Regardless of how long you attempt to prolong your existence. Regardless of what you eat, how strong you are, your durability, or your constitution. You. Will. Die. That is the the ultimate promise, the largest form of Truism that Life can give you: That everything will eventually come to an End.

As the new Force Of Death, you will need to understand this.

Fear Is The Weakness - Death

March

By Dexdor

Chapter 1

The road was nothing more than a constant stream of water, as the man attempted to drive carefully through the storm. Worried that the old back road would suddenly get washed away any moment, sending him and his family somewhere off the road. He couldn't see four feet past his headlights, let alone to the sides of the SUV.

"Henry. Maybe we should just stop."

"That's not a bad idea, but I can't find anywhere to stop. And I really don't want to just park it here, in case someone runs into us." The man replied to his wife. Hearing her and their three children in the back yelp everytime a loud crack of lightning covered the sky. One hitting a tree nearby and hearing it slam into the ground, thankfully not on the road. "Keep an eye out on the sides, everyone. See if you can find me a driveway."

As the vehicle kept it's pace, it's windshield whipers working frantically to keep the vision cleared, it eventually fell into a very deep puddle. Rocking those inside the the shelter. "Son of a gun..." Henry slightly cursed, trying his best to move the car out, but the tires kept spinning. "Come on, girl. You've been through worse than this."

"Dad, there's a driveway!" His daughter pointed out the driver's side. Getting everyone else to attempt to scout through the thick rain.

"There might be a house there. Maybe someone who can help?" One of boys said.

"I don't know. I really don't want to meet the wrong people." The mother said, just before another lightning strike hit the car. Thankfully not hurting anyone inside. "Nevermind, lets try it!"

"Okay, careful everyone!" They grabbed a few things out of the back and started moving in a group. Trying their best to get through the washed away dirt road without losing balance. Barely making out a large old house through the water and running up to the porch. Trying the door and thanking whoever above that it was unlocked as his family rushed in.

It took some effort to fight against the wind, but he got the door shut. From the thirty seconds they were in the rain, and shivering already in the cold room. Completely painted in darkness and many old objects. A few tables and chairs for guests, as well as a stairway that lead upward. "I wonder if anyone is home?" The daughter asked.

"I wonder if anyone even lives here anymore." The older brother muttered.

"It does seem pretty old. Let's see if we can find something to dry with. Carefully search for a bathroom or towels or something. But watch the floors, I'm not sure if they'll hold." Henry said, passing out a few flashlights as they started moving through the old mansion.

Passing through a long hallway, one constantly barraged by the rain and flashes of light, the family came to a rather large room. "Wow, look at all this stuff." The younger boy said in amazement. Looking over the many collections of weapons and trinkets all on display.

"Be careful, Evans. It's possible that they might be rusted."

"You heard you mother, nobody touch anything-Adam!"

"These look like horns. Almost freshly cut too." The older brother said, getting an uncomfortable groan from their mother.

"I wonder who collected all of these things?"

"I did." The family all yelped as their flashlights scanned the area quickly. All landing an upright Tirix with a shaded monocle. Slightly grunting at the bright lights but not losing his posture. "What are you doing here?" The grey furred creature asked rather politely.

"Our car got stuck in the road outside. We were just looking for some shelter." Henry said, still overlooking the creature in the rather old, yet formal outfit. "Can we talk to the owner of this household?"

"That would be me."

"O-oh. Sorry, you're dressed like a butler." The creature pulled out a pocket watch and looked at the time. "We just want to take shelter from the storm, if that's okay."

"It will last another twelve hours or so, so you will be here for a while." The Tirix said rather calmly. "You may stay the night, but do not touch any of the... Collectables. They are irreplaceable."

"Y-yes. Thank you, erm...?"

"Raccel. You may call me Raccel, Ma'am. There are plenty of towels in the bathrooms down this hall and to the right. As well as one bathroom upstairs, then two doors left. Feel free to change into some dryer clothes if you can find something that fits. There's nothing of importance outside of this room and the basement; which tends to flood during these massive storms. So please, for your own safety refrain from that area." He took a breath, looking at the watch again. "I must tend to something for now, please make yourself at home."

"Thank you, Raccel." Henry said, motioning his kids to do the same.

"I will return in a few hours."

"Where could you be going in a storm like this...?" The mother asked, but got no reply as the creature walked down the halls. His footsteps disappearing into the darkness.

It was a quiet day in the town, as people began their morning tasks. Greeting everyone they came to, helping with the gardens and livestock that kept everyone healthy. Everything seemed rather delightful, until a large winged creature startled everyone by flying rather closely overhead. Barely seeing the brown blur as it circled around a nearby mountain within the village's sights. Worrying several of them of a conflict, or worse; an agreement with the one inside.

As the dragon landed in a rather flat area near the top of the mountain, it took a quick glance at the village down below. Licking the space between his nostrils with a rather slender tongue, he was indeed hungry. However, he knew he could not just pick up anything and devour it any longer. As tedious as such a thing was.

Letting out a grumbling sigh from his rather long muzzle, he tossed it while turning about. Walking into the gigantic hole that was nearly twice his size, his brown scales clicked loudly. Enduring the rather chilly shadows that

remained inside. Barely spotting the several piles of glittering objects of wealth, faintly jealous that it was more than his own. At least his domain had a better view.

Overlooking the many gems and shiny coins in a single pile, he picked up a pawful. Gazing within the rather scrawny grasp at such wondrous objects. If only he had pockets to perhaps take them home. Then again, maybe he could just hide them under his tongue for the time being-

A harsh ram sent the brown one against the wall loudly, getting him to release growl and get up. His spines flared as he was suddenly pinned against the wall by a thick arm, nearly deafened by a louder growl. "Taath! Overreaction much?" The brown one hissed, not getting any relief from the pressure against his collar.

"What the hell are you doing here!?" The larger one growled. Though they did seem to be around the same size, this one was built in muscle much much more. Keeping a firm grip on the scrawnier dragon with one paw, while holding several sharp objects with another.

"I'm only here because someone slept in." The brown one snorted, glaring at the green eyes with his own yellow ones. "Apparently Raccel wanted all of us to attend the feast, and was a little worried when *you* didn't show up." A low growl from the larger one. "Having pleasant dreams about becoming the Force of D-?" A sight choke of his windpipe gagged the brown one.

"That tongue of yours is going to get you killed, Sig'eaal." The green eyed beast growled. Taking it's time to enjoy the silence before releasing his grip on the dragon's throat.

"And here he was worried about you starving to death. Clearly you still plenty of energy within that titanic body of yours." The smaller one snorted, still getting a challenging glare from the larger one. "You coming or what?"

"First, get out." He growled, getting Sig to toss his snout and start moving towards the exit. Stopping to observe the massive shadow for a moment, only to feel that forceful hit once again. Pushing the dragon towards the exit, but not before hissing loudly at the large one.

"Happy? I'm out. Now come on. I'm tired of waiting for your meatstick of a body to catch up."

"Are you seriously attempting to provoke me on an empty stomach?" The green eyed creature finally stepped out into the light. Finally revealing his own draconic form of blue grey scales and heavy muscle mass. Letting his clear mane of icicles glitter in the sun.

"Say what you want, but it takes more energy to move that titanic body of yours than it does mine. You're bound to be winded before I do-" A sharp shard of ice shived through the air, nearly getting the brown one in the neck.

"Who says I have to move?" He said, getting another hiss before the two took off. Once again worrying the villagers nearby for a moment until they passed over them. Exhaling a sigh of relief, knowing they get to live another day.

Chapter 2

The Tirix stood on the flat landmass, miles away while looking out towards the city. Glancing a bit at his pocket watch with his one good eye, and leaning on an old cane in the other paw. Releasing a heavy breath, and barely flicking an ear to something landed behind him. Waiting patiently for the large pawsteps to approach the Grey furred one, then sit beside him. Getting Raccel to take another breath, before glancing at the rather large Red dragon. "How are they?"

"Dried. But will still catch a cold if they do not obtain warmth anytime soon." The scaled one grumbled, annoyed at the tedious work. "Why do you have insects in your home?"

"They did not have any place to go."

"Which is not your problem-"

"It doesn't matter-"

"As an Outsider, OR a Force." The Tirix glared at the dragon's light grey eyes, ones that almost looked white. "Yet, you insist that they survive."

"It's not their time yet." His gaze returned to the city.

"When will it be." It wasn't a question, getting the furred one to just take a deeper breath.

"...Things are more complex than just taking lives, Nalchulus. Someday you might understand that for yourself."

"Unlikely."

"If a Force is changed, you are able to challenge them again." The two shared a look. "You are in a rather unique position to do so."

"And I'm supposed to be thankful for that?" He snorted.

"It's better than dying, isn't it?" Nal remained quiet, not wanting to get into the argument again. After a few moments, two large creatures landed behind them, almost sinking Raccel's heart a bit.

"About time. Here I was expecting you to be fast." The red one growled.

"Faster than you." Sig'eaal snorted, getting a hiss from Nal. "And we would be feasting right now if *someone* didn't hibernate." A loud growl from the other side. "Yes, I called you slow. Bite me." The much larger dragon swat him in the shoulder, getting a few scratches with his claws and the brown one to hiss back.

"Maybe we should be devouring you instead." The blue one growled.

"Don't bother, Beo'Kros. Siggy barely has anything worth eating anyway. You'd be wasting your time, and mine." The red one snorted. Getting a growl from the scrawny one.

"Like you have anything better to do than to grow old." A hiss from Nal and Beo hissed back.

"Enough." Raccel said rather loudly, still looking at his watch.

"Someone's still cranky." Sig muttered, getting another growl from the blue one. "Seriously, musclehead is so cold he needs to be measured in Kelvins."

"Stop." The furred one grumbled, trying to glare at Siggy with his one good eye. As the three dragons stared over the city in the distance for a few minutes, he sighed. Blinking slowly at his watch once again before taking one more breath. "...Go." And the three took to the sky.

The hundreds of citizens were going about their busy day. Though

unusually clouded and dark, they didn't seem to notice anything out of the ordinary. Often glued to their portable tablets or phones while walking the busy streets, they only seen it as a chance of rain. That is until the screams started.

The streets and roads were suddenly engulfed in a carpet of flames, incinerating anything it touched into a burnt crisp as those just outside of it started to fly away. Barely making out the red blurr in the sky between the large stretch of buildings. But where one went by, another brown one swiftly came around the corner. Spraying several nodes of electrical sparks that fell like rocks.

Anything that went within two hundred feet of a node was suddenly attached to it by a large arc. Burning the very fabrics and matter that it grabbed until there was nothing left but dust. When the node had its fill, it exploded sharply. Shattering even the buildings made of brick and concrete like paper mache.

The carpet of red flames was soon met by its counterpart from another street, as a painful sheet of frost quickly layered nearly two roads. Though it didn't look like much, it froze everything within the buildings completely solid. Making the next pitch of screams shatter it in a chain reaction of dust and frost, as the very buildings collapsed.

From afar, all the Tirix could do is watch and let out a heavy breath. He heard their screams and cries for help. Each and every one of their prayers and curses. But they waited long enough to feed. As the three dragons harvested their hunt, Raccel looked at his watch once again. Not even ten minutes ago, that entire city was still standing. Now, it was reduced to complete rubble, and not a single soul was left alive.

The rest of the world would look at this as a complete mystery. Not a single clue as to what happened to these people, and probably end up calling the event an Act of God. Striking down a Utopia for taking such technologies for granted. But the truth was, their God abandoned them... Their Counterweight Abandoned Them.

Though they were not very comfortable, they were at least dried clothes. Finally being able to navigate through the old building and find something in an ancient wardrobe, the daughter was half struggling to get the dress on. They always looked skin tight in the movies, but she never imagined they would be this difficult or discomforting.

Struggling to fit herself in the white dress quickly, the shadows started spooking her out. Still couldn't believe such a creature existed, something that almost looked like a werewolf. She couldn't imagine what else was hiding in the darkness. Jerking at nearly every little sound and creak the walls made, along with the howling and thunderous noises of the storm. It was all getting to look like a horror movie. Something she's seen too many of.

But all the clues were there: the unreal storm that knocked out the power and snared their vehicle. Stranding a family in the middle of the woods, almost trapped in a house owned by some unknown creature. Now, she was wearing a dead woman's dress. Sending chills down her spine. All that was left was-

A sudden creak in the floor made her hold a breath. Slowly scanning the room with her flashlight and seeing it's rays bounce off many old objects. Some shiny, slightly tarnished, yet they seemed to be well taken care of. But then there was a suspicious desk, with a letter on it.

Slowly taking a few steps towards it, the wind began to blow once again. Almost feeling the entire house move with the harsh breath of nature, and getting the building to make an eerie wail. At the very corner of her eye, she seen something move in the doorway, getting the woman to almost scream. "Amanda, there you are."

"Mom?" The younger one took a few breaths. "You scared the hell out of me. I thought you were something else."

"Sorry, this place gives everyone the willies." The mother said, giving her flashlight a few taps until it flickered on again. "I think this one's got a short in it or something. I was sure I charged the batteries before we left." She said, looking at her daughter in a dress. "You look like my mother when she was younger."

"I can't imagine why these things didn't stay in style." Amanda grumbled, trying to adjust the sleeves again, and accepting her mother's help. "Thanks. That's better."

"Yes, they were quite difficult to put on alone." She met the younger one with a sad smile, though seeing a rather disturbed look on her face. "Something wrong?"

"This doesn't feel right. There's something wrong with this house, with that... Creature. I feel like this is some kind of horror movie."

"I know what you mean, this place has gotten under my skin already as well. But it's better than the car, or out in the storm. I think we're still safe here." A faint nod from Amanda. "I'll try to dry out your clothes for now."

Another odd as she didn't take her eyes off the desk, letting the older woman pick up the wet clothing. Taking a few steps towards the desk, and hearing her scold. "Don't go snooping through things."

"I want to make sure we're safe. If there's something that we should be warned about, someone might have written it down." A few drawers, and an old letter stood out. Opening it and reading it closely, she sucked in a breath.

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Chapter 3

"This thing itches." Evans, the younger brother, complained. Still scratching at the old clothing's side. Looking through the old kitchen with the others.

"That's because there's moths in it." The older brother said, getting a worried look from Evans. "You did whip it before putting it on, right?"

"Stop it, Adam." Their father grumbled, still looking through the kitchen's cabinets. Hoping to find some food or washed dishes, but everything seemed so untouched for decades. Seeing the older one turn on the sink and not get anything. "The power's out, the pump won't work with out."

"So, no water. Don't think we should trust it anyway, giving how old this place looks."

"Maybe we should just wait for the storm to calm down, then get some of the camping food we brought."

"It's all cold, Evans. And you're the only one who likes eating cold food." Adam muttered.

"But there's a fireplace."

"Yes, but I'm wondering if the flu is cleaned out. Sometimes birds or other animals make nests in them." The father took a breath. "If the smoke can't get through the flu, it's coming back inside." The house creaked steadily above and away from them. "Looks like your mother found Amanda." As the two women entered the room, the younger one scanned it. "Something wrong?"

"We need to get out of here, dad."

"And go where?" The older brother grumbled.

"Anywhere. Even back into the car. But we're not-" The front door closed, getting her to jump and look towards it. "Shit, he's back."

"Language." Henry scolded her. "And what's wrong, Sam?" He asked his wife, who also shared the same disturbed look.

"I don't think we're safe-" She started to answer, then the sound of something heavy landing outside came from behind the house. Then another in the front, along with a third near the right side. Getting the entire family to get close together as the Tirix started walking in, carrying two bags.

"Please stop with the lights." He half grunted at the glare. "It makes it difficult for me to see." Slowly, they pointed the flashlights upward like a torch, allowing him to set the food bags on the table. "I should've asked if anyone was a Vegan before purchasing these, but I only thought of it on the way back." The silence made him question them, studying the rather frightened look on their faces, but more so on the women. "Is something wrong?"

"N-no." Amanda started. "But I think we should go."

"It would be a bad idea for you to leave right now." The beast said rather calmly. "I see you've all found clothing. No troubles I hope." He replied to the silence. "Sit down and eat." He gestured, almost losing his patience. The males started to, as well as the mother, but Amanda still didn't move. Even after Sam scolded her silently.

"What are you?"

"You mean Species?" The Tirix questioned, adjusting his cane in front of him. "I'm not sure. I've never found out the exact term for it. Perhaps a hybrid of some sort, but it hardly matters. Such a thing should never define a person, should it?"

"And what about... Death?" She asked, attempting to be brave while getting a lot of weird, yet frightened looks from the others.

"I see... Went snooping, did you?" He replied, rather calmly. Feeling the several looks over him, until a loud crash from behind the house broke the silence. Getting the beast to half grunt in irritation before a faint hiss. Along with several loud snaps and sparks before the sounds of a generator-like motor started. Soon after, the lights started to come on in the house. "Excellent. We have power-"

"What was that?" The younger brother whimpered.

"Ignore it. Nothing you need to concern yourself with." Another distrustful look from them. "If you must know, Amanda, Yes. I am the Force of Death, but I am not keeping you here against your own will. You may leave at any time, as soon as your car gets unstuck." A bit of a loud smash came from the front, getting Raccel to sigh in annoyance. "Which I apologize if it has a few scratches on it."

A few moments of silence, and he looked at his pocket watch for a moment. "I'm serious, you are free to leave anytime you want. Clothing, food, anything. I don't mind in the least. But you might not find someone else so kind if you do get stuck-" His ear flickered just before something large tore through the wall. Swinging a massive maul [Hammer] at the grey furred one with insane speed, and knocking him out of the house. Nearly getting Amanda at the end of the swing before chasing the Tirix into the woods.

Following the well-dressed creature launch into the stormy forest within a blink of an eye, the red dragon half watched the creature that looked almost shaped out of rock chase him down. Granted, not moving from his spot, and just snorting at the idea before muttering. "How tedious."

"Apparently they'll let *anyone* initiate a challenge nowadays." The brown one snorted, equally uninterested in the event as Nal was. "Worm is so out of his league, it's not even in the same sport."

"It's not for us to care what it chooses to do with its existence-" The red one started.

"Who says I cared to begin with?" Sig grumbled, turning around and slightly hitting his tail on the house wall, startling those inside.

"He didn't excuse us."

"Kiss my stones. He asked me for *one* favor, and I did it. If he wants anything else, the mutt can call." The brown one snorted. "He can even get you to sniff me out." A loud hiss from Nal as he got one back, just before Siggy took off.

The grey beast crashed through a few trees, breaking them down while trying to slow down the knockback. Eventually skidding to a full stop in a small clearing while releasing a small growl. Brushing off the blow to the chest like a bit of dirt on his suit, his ears flickered a bit in the heavy rain. Getting the Tirix to dodge to the side, as the heavy warrior landed a leaping strike with his maul. Releasing a shockwave that made the rain stop for a moment, then come crashing down all at once.

As much as he disliked water, be it on his fur or his shaded lens, Raccel just studied the Rock for a few moments as it chuckled rather loudly. "Death, is it? It took a long time to find one of you. I'm assuming you got my invitation."

The beast exhaled with annoyance as his ears spaded. "Why do I always get the cocky ones?" He muttered to himself. "I'm pretty sure the request came through, something I clearly could not just oversee." A slight glance in the direction of the old house.

"Such as the effects of delivering it yourself. Leaves quite the impact, wouldn't you say?" The Tirix rolled his eye and took a breath. "Shall we then?"

"If you really wish to throw your life away in the pursuit of power, then it is not my decision to reject. However, I refuse to step down." The Boulder grinned.

"Well then, we have a conflict. Just what I was hoping for!" The large one readied his maul. "They call me Wardren."

"Raccel." The Tirix flicked the cane to the side and it extended to about three times length. Lightly tossing it towards himself and grabbing the midsection of the pole, a very large, scythe-like blade supernaturally shot out of one end. "And I accept your challenge." With that phrase, the Rock slammed into Raccel's weapon, releasing a massive shockwave. Once again causing the rain to stop, and most of the leaves to be ripped from the trees.

The clashes of their battle easily echoed through the storm and high winds. Even reaching the ears of the family inside the house faintly, especially when there was a heavy hit. Often shaking the ground a bit, or knocking over a few trees. Along with that, a few grunts of the red dragon sitting patiently in the rain, watching the fight from afar. "Fool has no chance."

"We were all that Fool once, Beo." A grumble from the colder dragon. "Some of us still are." A growl that time.

"Watch your tongue or it might just fall off."

"Threaten me all you want, but I know you long to Challenge him again." The larger one growled a bit, but didn't respond. "I'll tell you right now, it would be a mistake."

"For you to, maybe. I was the closest to actually defeating him." Beo snorted. "He got lucky with one shot-"

"And that one shot was all he needed." A hiss. "It's not about strength, it's about strategy. Something this wyrmling is about to learn."

"Or the old furbag might slip." A glare from Nal's light grey eyes. "Even your sight is getting weak." A hiss from the red one. "You might be content with spending whatever years you might have left being his *Pet*, but I'm not." Beo turned and walked away.

"Where are you going?"

"Elsewhere." He snorted. "I can feel their ears staring at me." The green eyes glared at the house for a moment and resumed walking.

It's a wonder he wasn't deaf by now. Every solid object the maul collided with sent out another wide shockwave, making it rather difficult to move around. And the Tirix admitted, Wardren's attacks were not savage or primal. With every evade, there was an object in close proximity for him to crash against, releasing that shockwave at the expense of a tree or rock. Making it really difficult to get around the rather Offensive Defense. Clever, in a way.

But Raccel was not out of tricks of his own. Though trying to be on the offense enough, the scythe was not a good weapon to attempt to overpower the sheer force of the Rock's hammer. Taking a few quick slashes from the sides, the beast provoked an overhead swing. But before the attack could land, the furred one caught the head of the maul in the crook of the bladed weapon. Pulling it aside while doing some damage to the neck of the hammer, before getting a deep gash in the Boulder's chest.

Wardren retreated for a moment, holding the cut in a bit of pain, but nothing for blood was leaking out. Perhaps it wasn't that deep after all, but it did make him angry. Enough to growl, and strike the ground heavily to open a

fissure under the Tirix. Though the slam did shake the land quite a bit, Raccel took a slight jump backwards and slipped into a void of darkness. Blinking [Teleporting] on the opposite side of the Rock and going for a heavy swing upon his exit. Barely getting the top of Wardren's helmet off, as well as a bit of his... 'Hair.'

A few quick upward slashes kept the Rock on his toes, retreating a bit before attempting to counter again. Though it was a foolish idea to attempt such a thing against a heavy weapon, Raccel started a deadlock against him. Pinning both weapons against their own shafts, while avoiding the hammer's head. A reckless idea, for the Tirix was never one to have raw Might, especially verses a species like Wardren's. But with a bit of struggling and lining up his weapon, a second scythe blade ripped out of the bottom of Raccel's staff. Getting the Boulder in the leg and parrying the deadlock soon after.

With the Tirix's weapon now having the basic shape of an N or a Z [Double Scythe], he was able to get in a barrage of cuts. A minimum of three or four for every evade away from the heavy maul. Not just directly on Wardren's body or armor, but the shaft of his weapon as well. However, it wasn't until another heavy ground slam that the sundering attempts started to become more visible on the maul. Cracking it's handle loudly around the neck of the hammer, and the vibrations of the shockwave only weakened it more.

With a desperate wild swing across, attempting to end the fight early, the Rock nearly got Raccel in the shoulder. But Blinking into the void for a moment threw the entire attack's weight into an actual boulder, splitting the staff of the heavy weapon to the point of no use. However, just to be sure, the Tirix exited the void from above, and sundered the head off the maul. Leaving Wardren unarmed.

The living Boulder growled, throwing the broken weapon to the side and slightly covering his deep wounds. "You don't have to go through with this." The wet furred one said calmly, though there was a hint of sadness in his voice. Regardless, Wardren stanced himself. Still ready to fight, and making Raccel sigh while withdrawing one of the large blades in his staff.

"I don't have a choice." He muttered angrily. "This is my only shot to save my brother!" The Rock took a heavy swing with his fist, then a few other ones. Eventually landing a blow against a nearby tree and still omitting the shockwave. Though it was not as drastically powerful, it did almost daze the Grey one. Nearly leaving him opened for a solid hit. A short Blink sent the Tirix behind Wardren, and hit the Rock heavily in the calf with a sharp swing.

The gash sent the larger one kneeling, unable to stand on that leg.

Then soon felt the very tip of the scythe stick slightly into the side of his neck. Stopping about half an inch, when it could easily decapitate him. For a few moments, the only sound was rain, as neither of them breathed. "...Your brother has already been taken." Raccel said heavily, nearly breaking the Boulder then and there. "There's no more reason for you to fight. Please accept your defeat." The large blade slipped back into the staff, and with a heavy breath, the Grey one walked away.

Once again, the silence was only broken by the rain. Trying it's hardest to pierce through the trees and soak the grounds with a tropical chill. All the while, the number 248 was placed in the Tirix' mind. Regardless if it was the perfect weather for a defeat, then again... They never seemed to accept such a thing.

Expecting the projectile to be launched through the thick water, Raccel swatted the airborne rock away with the cane. However, the shockwave caught him by surprise. Not knowing that the living Boulder could attach such a power to something thrown, and getting stunned just long enough for Wardren tackle the furred one into the wet ground. Making him drop the small staff in the process.

Getting a large hand on Raccel's throat, every hit sent out another stunning wave. Regardless if it hit the Beast or the ground. A few more heavy hits to ensure the daze, and Wardren started to pick up a very close, heavy rock. "I need this power, Force. You understand-" The sharp snaps of water turning into ice got the Rock's attention, seeing several trees nearby covered in large spikes. When he finally made out what they were through the rain, a heavy blast of concussive force sent the two towards the shards.

Wardren got impaled by several of them, but Raccel was low enough to slam into a large rock. Hearing several dozen trees become leveled before the blue dragon landed. Looking at the two: the Rock still struggling to get himself out of the shard in his chest, and the Grey furred one starting to get up. Beo snorted at Raccel and placed a heavy paw onto the living Boulder, shoving the shard deeper inside. "You lost." The dragon growled, before inhaling the creature's essence out of his body. Then snapping a hold of it with his jaws before ripping the snack out. Leaving Wardren's body still.

Raccel stared at the larger blue one angrily with his one eye. "You're not supposed to interfere-!"

"That duel was over, and you know it!" Beo hissed, getting the Tirix to growl. "If you would quit being so damn soft on others then-"

"I'd be like every other Force-!"

"You'd still be **unscathed! Victorious!**" He roared, nearly pausing the rain itself for a moment. "How did someone so weak become Death to begin with?" The dragon snorted, turning about and slapping the frozen trees with his tail. Shattering them before taking off to the storm, and leaving Raccel to take a breath before heading back.

Chapter 4

The Tirix walked out of the forest. Now no longer staggered by wounds, but still soaking wet from the heavy rain. Still seeing Nal patiently wait for his return outside of the old house, but no sign of the other two. "Where did they go?" Raccel asked, still irked from being drenched.

"They left, obviously." The red dragon snorted. "You're getting careless."

"I've heard enough of that from Beo-"

"Clearly you haven't." Nal growled, getting the two to glare into each other's eyes for a few moments. "How many times must you show Mercy to those willing to throw their lives onto your weapon?"

"As much as it takes-"

"And how many times has that nearly gotten you a Defeat?" Almost a roar, overpowering the howling of the harsh winds.

"So what? You think Beo was right? I should just slaughter everyone that dares point a weapon at me?"

"Yes." The large one said coldly.

"Even you?" That time, he remained silent. But still kept his harsh glare into the Tirix' eye. "Things are not as simple as Kill or Be Killed, Nal."

"Maybe they are, and you just don't want to believe that." The dragon snorted, spreading his wings to take off. "I'll get them back to the Hub. You have an infestation in your home to show Mercy to." And he took off, getting Raccel to exhale in frustration before entering the hole in his dining room.

He could feel the concerned and frightened looks in the darkness, even though the cold water that layered his clothing. With a faint clear of his throat, Raccel spoke. "Sorry about that."

"...Are you alright?" The mother asked the question the family was already pondering. After a few moments of studying her with his only good eye, the creature sighed through his muzzle.

"I'm fine. Just wet from the rain." He faintly looked at the damage to his old home with spaded ears. "I'll, get this fixed immediately. Try to enjoy your meals in the meantime." Raccel dug through the pocket on his chest and pulled out the shaded Monocle. Just now realizing it was cracked, most likely damaged from the fight. "Please watch your step in the meantime. I need to make a call."

"You have a working phone?" Henry asked.

"It currently cannot connect to anywhere local with this storm, but it can reach the ears of others." He gazed at their puzzled, yet frightened looks. "It's a long story. Eat for now, and I'll get a fire going soon." And the furred one left the room, almost making the entire family share a look.

"...We should eat." Sam suggested, getting the rest to nod after a bit. At least the table wasn't damaged, but the food was getting cold. As much as they wanted to discuss what they were to do or how to escape, odds are the creature would've heard them. Regardless, the tension in the air spoke words of anxiety to him, even if he was a room away.

All at once, the debris and wreckage began to move on its own. Quickly piecing everything back together and sealing the holes like nothing happened. Even whatever was broken behind the home, near what almost sounded like a strange generator, was even fixed. Getting the entire family to freeze in place as the entire dining room went dark.

A few pawsteps of the Tirix, and a flick of a switch turned on the dim lights overhead. Something else that seemed so drastically outdated, yet it was still light for them to see. He observed the wall for a moment, nodding, while wiping the water off the shaded monocle that no longer had a split. "She does work fast, at least." He commented a bit quietly. "I'm sure you have alot of questions, but I'm afraid I must attend a meeting first."

"Should we be worried about those...?" Amanda asked, slightly

gesturing outside where the larger voices were coming from.

"No. Odds are you probably will not encounter them again." Raccel took out the pocket watch and observed it. "In the case of event you do come in contact with them, just pretend you are not impressed or afraid of them. Such things might make them feel insulted, perhaps a bit angry, but gocking at them is more likely to provoke them. Such are the ways of dragons."

"Dragons?" Evans, the younger one questioned rather excitedly.

"You have been staring at me for a good total of seven minutes, and you are surprised that dragons exist?" The grey one chuckled rather heartily. "Henry, do you know how to start a fire?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then feel free to do so. The flu is still in good shape and recently cleaned." He closed the watch and placed it back into his pocket. "This will be the last of my events today. Then I will answer any questions you may have about me and my motives, Amanda. If you wish to take your chances in the storm, feel free to. But you are safe here."

"What about that thing that attacked you?" Adam asked with his mouth half full, getting a faint slap from his mother.

"He was after me, and me alone. No other should have any reason to appear here." With no more responses, the Tirix started to make his way out. But stopped in the hallway for a moment. "Just keep in mind that some things are better off not knowing. Ignorance is Bliss, after all."

The long hallway was rather bright and spacious. Reflecting every little movement on the floor, as if there were a separate dimension below the Tirix' footwear. Mimicking his every movement, along with everything else. Coming to a large black set of doors, the structure still astonished him after all these years. A building in the shape of an old lantern, made entirely out of a crystal-like rock, planted in the middle of space. Nothingness, not even a single piece of evidence that perhaps there was a planet around this never moving object.

The thing was beyond Ancient. Older than any of the Forces could comprehend. Stories told of it being a home to the Counterweight that once existed in this universe, that is if one even existed in the first place. Since then, it's been a neutral place for the Forces to meet up and perhaps stay if

they needed some time to recover. Whereas no other creature seemed to be able to enter its doors.

Because of such, the dragons had to wait outside. Though, it was oddly designed for spectators as well. Being able to perch themselves above in almost a landing zone, and view the meetings through clear windows. That is, if they were ever interested in the first place. The politics of others never seemed to intrigue them, but Raccel wanted the three nearby just in case.

As the door opened and the grey furred one entered, he was greeted faintly from the other two. One, a female serpent with an overdone sense of fashion, and the other a male Iguana. Rather colorful in a series of tattooed stripes, along with many golden accessories. "You're late." The male muttered, barely looking off the old tome in his lap.

"Raccel was challenged earlier, I told you that."

"Well, I barely pay any attention to the garbage that comes off that tongue of yours, so."

"I see Ekaballus is in one of his moods again." The Tirix muttered, taking a seat and looking upward to meet the red dragon in the eyes. Though the icicle mane of the blue one's tail could barely be seen, the other two were not looking.

"Doogan, dearie. Why do you have vermin in your home?" She asked Raccel, though looking towards Ekaballus for a reaction.

"Don't care." He replied, not looking from the old book and feeling the gaze.

"It's a long story. But thank you for your assistance."

"It's what I do, dear. We've all had those challengers who like to make a grand entrance." The serpent said, walking behind the furred one's chair and almost studying his body with her hands. "That's just another favor you owe me. But what I can't understand is why you would waste it on something so tedious. Instead of something useful, like fixing that eye of yours-"

"-No." The tirix said rather quickly, almost jumping out of the seat. Instead, just keeping her soft paws away from the wounded eye while clearing his throat. "No, it's fine where it is, Levian." She gave a soft smile that was almost devious, growing a bit slyer when the Iguana groaned at them.

"Can we please get this over with? I have somewhere I need to be." Half ignoring him, the serpent shook her head. Still staring at the grey one

and giving a long pet under his chin while returning to her seat. Closing the tome, the lizard looked at Raccel. "First thing I want to discuss is the disappearance of an entire city recently..."

Sig'eaal groaned out of boredom, flicking a claw at an Ion Storm in the far distance and manipulating the lightning within it. "Why. Are we even. Here." He grumbled, it barely being a question to begin with.

"Because he wants us to be."

"That's a poor answer, Nalchulus." The blue one grumbled, equally bored. "Then again, you enjoy being his shepherd, don't you?" The red dragon hissed at him.

"You two should have more respect for him-"

"Why? Because he starves us and plans to make us old as you?" Sigggy got a hiss that time.

"The hatchling does have a point." Beo grumbled. "Every decade I find myself getting thinner. Soon we'll both be as scrawny-" A hiss before the dragon could finish.

"Shut up, meatstick."

"You have nothing to worry about, Beo'Kros. It'll be ages before your that physically unhealthy." The brown one hissed at Nal.

"Considering you're not there yet, I do have a *long* ways to go." A growl from the red one. "Or, things just might change soon. The old dog just might expire."

"The hell are you talking about?" Sigggy asked, barely glancing at the blue dragon. Then noticed him staring at the red one. "What the hell is he talking about?"

"Rumors, I'm sure." Nal snorted.

"Your little secret meetings are not so secret, dinosaur." A grumble from the red one. "Raccel doesn't have too many Challenges left."

"Why, did something happen after I left? Is the old furbag crippled?"

"Do you want the honors of telling the hatchling the truth?" Though he wanted to hiss at the blue one for the insult, Sig'eaal was just too damn curious to let out more than a grumble. As Nal stared at the Green eyes with his cold grey ones, he remained silent. "No Force has ever gone past

Challenge 250."

The skinny one snorted. "So?"

"That last one was 'Victory' 248." The yellow eyes studied Beo. "He's got one victory left, then he will lose. According to history, that is."

"Please, coincidence if I've ever heard any-"

"That's always happened on the 250th challenge. To the last one thousand recorded Forces." Another moment of study, then Siggy looked at Nalchulus. Still giving the larger dragon a cold stare.

"Is that even true?" Nal didn't answer, but released his gaze. Looking down at the meeting below again.

"Of course, he just might slip number 249. Either way, once he does, the next Force of Death will be very short lived." Beo smirked deviously, resting his head again.

"And perhaps the one after that as well." It got the blue one's attention and a growl.

"Is that a threat?" A faint grumble and a snort from Nal, but no other response. "Just don't die of old age before our Challenge is up. It'll be a hollow victory." That time, the red one glared at him.

"Whatever, if you two want to fight to the death to be the next Force, go for it." The brown one yawned.

"Coward." Siggy hissed at Beo.

"Hardly. I would just die of boredom during the first meeting of this. Besides, after hanging around with you three, this Force stuff is horribly tedious. You two want power so badly? Fight to the death. Soon as the dog croaks, last you'll be seeing of me is the backside of my tail."

"Tucked between your legs, I'm sure." The brown one hissed at Nal. "He does more for us and this universe than you know-"

"That we care to know." The blue one grumbled.

"And you want to take hold of that responsibility? To keep together a universe that's falling apart?"

"It's better than doing errands for him."

"The runt has a point." A faint growl, making the red one just sigh through his muzzle.

"You two just don't realize how good you have it right now. And how things could be so much worse-Have been so much worse-"

"You would know, wouldn't you?" A hiss from Nal at the brown one.

"It's a wonder he would be able to remember so long ago." A frustrated growl.

"Spray your bile all you want. If Raccel had the choice to pass on the torch, it would be to me-"

"No, he would pass it to himself. The universe would be falling apart around us if you were in charge-" A hiss at Beo.

"Better than letting it decay and fall into darkness! Making everyone, including other Forces be afraid of Death-"

"You saying they shouldn't be!?" The blue one roared back. "At least I would act like a damn Force! Not to be stepped on by insects and livestock! What good does it seriously do you to pity the life you step on every day!? It's a waste of time!" After a long silence, Beo snorted.

"...And that's why he wouldn't choose you."

"*Ooo, Ooo. Do me next.*" Siggy said so lackadaisically, it hurt. Getting the other two to stare at him for a moment, unimpressed. "That's okay, take your time." He grumble, flopping his head on the floor.

Chapter 5

The loud crash of thunder nearby made his scales click, almost in excitement as he awoke from his slumber. Purring loudly at the sound of

another rumble, as it echoed across the land. It was one of the rare things in this universe that made him smile to this day, as he stretched his thin limbs and wings. Getting his long, unusually thick tail to flutter a little bit before slapping some old treasures.

It was the cool tropical air of the storm that made him long to go outside and tend to his parched throat. Not that he really needed to any longer, but it was more of a comfort thing rather than an obligation now. Still getting a few kinks out of his brown scaled body, he made his way outside of the cave. Adoring the air and warm breeze he was greeted with, and once again, the dragon smiled.

Gazing at the dark clouds that covered the lushful green forests, ones that spread past and up mountains from afar. Until it got to an old wall in the distance, making him snort at the memory of what idiots would possibly build on his territory. Staining such a gorgeous view with a pathetic structure. He did what he could against it, as well as prove once again how inferior such creatures were to his magnificence, but the stubborn wall remained solid. Once in a while, he would fly and assault the structure when he needed to expel some wrath, but the damn thing would just take it.

Another loud thunder relieved him of irkful memories. Once again sending that chill down his back and making him moan rather loudly. Ending with a purr that echoed behind the vibrant sound. Sig'eaal loved it so. The only friend he's ever really had visited this area quite often, actually. For most that could not deal with the heavy rain, the harsh bolts, and the unforgiving winds, this place was hardly suited for a habitat. But not for him; it was perfection. Nearly loving the area more than himself, but it was a close second.

Taking off, he let the winds of darkness guide him. Faintly feeling the sprinkle of rain as another crash of thunder nearly split the skies in two. Such a sound took him back to the days he was a lone hatchling. Being hunted down as a runt and bullied by those who were supposed to care for him. Such hatred filled his small heart, but the storm... It was the storm that saved him. Scaring off predators and sending the wyrmlings fleeing, nearly pissing themselves.

It was the only thing Siggy felt protected by. Even embracing the harshness that the larger storms brought. Be it knocking down their rock homes with high winds, flooding their caves with water, along with their possessions. Or even striking those who wronged the brown dragon, the Storm was there. Almost punishing those who dared lashed out at its child. And in that acceptance, Siggy was gifted the power of the storm.

He devoured the Monsoon towards the end, which only enhanced that

power. Then used it to lash out against others. Though, relying on such things meant his physical body was left behind, it was his Thunder that struck fear into those below him. Others may have had size, but it was Sig'eaal's focus and sheer force that threw them down to a grovel. Overpowering dragons nearly twice his size and getting them to beg for survival.

It was then Siggy knew he was a God. When he appeared before lesser creatures, they offered him Tears. When he destroyed their homes, they offered Penance. And when he brought death to their families, they offered Sacrifices. Prideful, Sig'eaal was. Becoming a force of Nature much like his real Guardian. But eventually he found someone else, the Force of Death.

Gliding past a large town, the dragon hissed loudly. Spraying a few jolts of sparks throughout the town, and doing minor damage to some of the buildings. Loving the yelps and whimpers they made within their homes, completely frightened by both the storm, and what they believed to be the cause of it. Rotating in the air and banking to the side quickly, the brown dragon took off. Still being able to see the damages to the land from that harsh battle with that furbag.

It was the hardest scrap he was ever in. Even with the aerial and weather advantage, that Tirix was the very first thing to overpower him since he was a Hatchling. He never hated a creature more than that damn mutt, and though Siggy was not proud of it, he nearly cried at it in frustration. About how unfair it all was, how surreal. How such a pathetic being could be so fast, so durable. His first encounter with an Outsider was what ended Sig'eaal's trend of victories.

It was then that he seen Raccel, though actually smaller in size, was even larger in spirit. Somehow showing mercy to the small, bullied wyrmling that only grew physically. Instead of claiming the dragon's life, he gave Siggy the option to live. Become something greater, but be under Death's hand.

A loud snort as a heavy thunder passed over him, making brown dragon roar after it in pride. It was hard to tell if accepting such a thing was for the better. Perhaps he could've convinced that dog thing to just let the dragon live. But the thought of always knowing that something out there was stronger would forever drive the brown one mad. Even then, he would still have to fight others to get to that spot, then fight more to remain Top Dragon.

Landing on the other side of that old wall, Siggy slapped it heavily with his tail. Hearing a few pieces move and crack around it. *Perhaps being a Force isn't all that it's cracked up to be*, he thought to himself. Raccel was always busy doing something, attending to something so drastically boring that it irked Siggy to always tag along. He couldn't imagine having to go through such things and actually have to participate. All the dragon wanted

was Power, Status. To remain free, unowned by anyone or anything.

Flopping up against the old wall, Siggy snorted. Sure, he knew that as soon as that furbag kicked the bucket, the dragon was free. Regardless of who took the place of Death. However, if it was either Beo or Nal... Odds are they would hunt down the brown one. Perhaps bully or humiliate him to submit and maybe even toy with the runt like *they* used to. Either live with humility or die in the hands of one of them. It was a tough decision to make, even in theory.

However, Raccel never made him feel that way. Yes, the stupid request of charging a generator so those damn insects could have some lighting was tedious and annoying. But it never put the dragon into a position of humility. The mutt never demanded that Siggy would have to put on a show for them, do a few tricks for the furbag and balance a biscuit on his brown muzzle until commanded to eat it.

Snorting loudly at the thought, he did lick the space between his nostrils, and suddenly have the craving for biscuits. But first; water. Taking off again to a nearby river in the cold air still made him think. Perhaps maybe it was better off for him that Raccel remained the Force of Death. As much as he would hate to agree with the walking, rotting set of scales, Nal perhaps had a point. Maybe the cat-dog-thing does more for the universe than anyone knew. Maybe he did more for Siggy than he knew.

After a healthy drink of some cool water, the dragon sighed. Half grumbling. Perhaps he could figure out a way around this so things remain the same. But first, he needed to find someone in a city. For their God required, of all things, Biscuits.

The storm still raged against the old home, though it was dying down. Still seeing the SUV poorly parked in the washed out driveway told the Tirix that the family decided to stay inside. Most likely for the night. The better decision indeed, or else the extra meals he just bought would've gone to waste.

He opened the old doors and hear the casual chatter in the living room come to a silent stop. Raccel didn't expect them to be trusting, regardless of his manners as a Host. They were just frightened, as anything or nearly anyone would be if they came to Death's doorstep. A feeling the Grey one himself was familiar with.

The generator was still running well. Though a few of the old lightbulbs

have already expired, there was still enough to see well. He supposed asking the serpent to 'Fix his House', she just assumed to repair the damage the living Rock made. Instead of any of the other problems the old structure had. Perhaps it wasn't necessarily a bad thing. After all, the atmosphere of the home made it just that: Home.

Racel expected the stares as he entered the room. Seeing the bags in his arms, Sam got up to help him with them. Giving his thanks to her aid as the mother set them on the table in the next room. Taking a seat in the Living Room, overlooking the many objects and trophies displayed while a warm fire snapped loudly, the Tirix sighed. Waiting for Sam's return before starting. "What have you decided?"

"On asking, right?" Adam asked. Getting the grey furred one to nod casually, and the rest of the family to study each other. "Are there any rules?"

"None but the consequence of knowing. I'm going to assume you've already either discussed or thought through that." He replied, as if he's done this several times.

As everyone looked at who would go first, until the younger son spoke up. "Do you go out like that during Halloween, or do you-?"

"Evans!" His parents scolded, rather surprised at the chuckle the Tirix let out.

"You're not the first person to ask me that." He gave a sad smile. "The only time I attended that Holiday of yours, I did not actually dress up. It was a really difficult to find a costume that didn't look like... A creature trying to pass off as something else." They gave off a nervous smile as he gestured for the next one. Getting Amanda to clear her throat.

"You called yourself... Something Death?"

"The Force of Death, yes."

"What does that mean exactly?" She tried to almost sternly say, as the Tirix inhaled.

"I'm the one who deals with the afterlife and necessities when it comes to the end of Life. Your typical Grim Reaper of leading those who de cease to different destinations, but it goes much deeper than that."

"And you got this... Position, how?" The tone got the young woman a scolding look from her parents.

"It was considered a Gift, when the last Force of Death retired."

"The last one? The one who wrote that letter?" A puzzled look from Raccel, as if to question which letter. "The one on the desk upstairs."

"I know of the letter you are talking about, but that was hidden rather well."

"It was just lying on the desktop when we found it." Sam added, getting a strange look from his orange eye, then it started to stare into space a bit.

"You didn't leave it out?"

"I did not. I've read that letter enough to recite it word for word. But thank you for admitting that. It's something I'll look into tomorrow." After a sigh, he gestured for the next question.

"What's the meaning of life?" Adam asked, almost getting an eyeroll from the other siblings. "What? Someone had to ask it. And it's better than your stupid Halloween question." Another scolding from the parents, but the Tirix thought nothing of it. Far from the worst children or teenagers he's been around.

"There's no such thing as a stupid question." Raccel lightly smirked. "And this is one I actually do get asked a lot. The answer is as simple as it is complex: the meaning of Life, Existence itself, is to Change it."

"Change it?"

"I wish I could say For The Better, but that's not always the case. Whereas some might disagree which is morally or logically the best decision." Their faces were painted with both understanding, yet unsettledness. "You were expecting an answer like Love?"

"A little bit." Sam admitted.

"It doesn't mean that Love cannot be the answer or cause of Change." A little bit of odd silence was broken by harsh winds. Getting everyone to look towards the outside for a moment.

Henry spoke up. "What was that thing that crashed through...?" A faint grunt from the creature, as he took a breath.

"That was a species known as Gravinock. They look like golems, a mix of flesh and rock for a body."

"But why did it attack you?" The mother asked.

"The way... Positioning of Forces work in this universe is, you can

challenge a Force in a fight to the death for its power and Position. Some are just... Less settle about initiating the Challenge."

"And that's why it blew you through a wall?" The Tirix casually nodded at Evans. "Then that means..."

"He lost." The room got a little cold. "It understood the consequences of the duel, and Wardren... Accepted them." There was a dark silence over the room, as Raccel took a breath. "I didn't write the rules. I only play by them." Another faint silence, and he gestured a paw.

"...What about the Dragons?"

Chapter 6

The brown lands were silent. Desolate. Completely lost of life, besides the red one attempting to remain in his slumber. Only the sound of a small waterfall and the faint clash of a few rocks colliding occupied the still air. A cursed land, it was claimed long ago. As much of the land here was in fractions, they defied gravity with every movement. Floating around endlessly, unable to fully root itself with the rest of the large courtyard.

It was hardly the same kingdom anymore, despite what the ancient ruins still remembered. Clinging to the old, dried rock as if trying to hold onto a distant memory. Completely in denial of its own demise thousands of years ago. Regardless if it's walls were now unstained with their blood, such a thing could only last so long before dissipating into nothingness.

But perhaps that's why the dragon remained here. He knew it was no longer his kingdom anymore, regardless how often vermin and insects attempted to convince him otherwise. Usually with cold steel and weaponry. No, he liked this area because of how desolate it was. Distorting and unnatural. The rules of the Forces had a hard time playing a role here. And

that lead to a land without age.

Sighing, the red one pushed his limp body up. Almost feeling his old scales crinkle along with his bones. At least here he didn't feel the pain much. Making his way towards a pool of water, filled by an endless waterfall that seemed to come out of nowhere. Filling a pond that was never full, nor empty. Just non-existent.

After a few laps of cool water, faintly poisoned with the taste of aged ashes, the ripples in the water quickly evened out. Displaying a red dragon that must've been twenty thousand years old by now. The scales around his muzzle were mostly grey, with a faint red tint to them. Hardly recognizable that they were the same person, whereas now Nalchulus looked younger. Still old, yes, but this place made him young.

Granted, the 'Nature' of such a thing was unknown. It was aging him backwards very slowly, but there was no telling what exactly it would do. How long it would possibly last. And what would happen if this land lost its mystery? It's magic? Would he become that ancient wyrm that stared back at him through every reflection? Or would Nal just simply turn into dust? Perhaps ashes?

It made him a mix of both sad and angry, swatting the water with a paw while turning about. Then slamming against it with his tail. The only person who ever knew of it was that Mutt, and they've both done well to keep it hidden from everyone. Granted, it didn't help that those two bastards found the old dragon's weakness, and often struck that wound with their tongues.

Flopping back to the only patch of dead grass left, his aching body stunned him. Getting Nal to grunt and endure it again. His gaze almost floated to the remains of the castle gate, still recalling when he was young enough to walk through it. Barely remembering the town beyond that was still frightened of him. Ever since the day he stepped through it proudly.

He snorted, cursing his younger self for its youth. Such a brash tactic was indeed bold, yet foolish. Only dumb luck that such a thing worked, only because the kingdom's main army was fighting against some other threat. All the young red dragon had to do was walk through the gates without a single hiss or roar. Climb on top of the castle with a flat roof, and claim it. In one single moment the dragon had nothing, then had thousands of acres of land. A hefty amount of treasure, and hundreds of servants. Willing or not.

Of course such a thing wasn't to be accepted overnight. And what really made such a foolish risk succeed was the fact that the kingdom's army lost that battle. Upon retreating, they didn't have the men to fight off a dragon. But Nal wasn't threatening the kingdom, nor its leader. He wasn't

punishing those who lived within the land, even if they chose not to follow his orders. However, it was the kingdom's enemy that really won their trust for the dragon. For Nalchulus fought the invaders, and drove them to retreat.

Oh, what a force of nature he used to be. Silently cursing such envious youth once again, longing for that power once more for his own. But to be clear, Nal was not fighting for the people or their land. He fought for **Himself** and **His** land. It took them decades for them to discover that... Then attempt to fight back.

Every century held dozens of wars against the Red one, battles he never took to the enemies. After a while, the land he claimed fell to the taint of war, but he was too stubborn to leave it. With all the pain and anguish concentrated into one area, the land started to morph. Mutate into what they called a cursed land. Regardless if it was cursed or not, it was still Nalchulus' home. And it still is.

Granted, the dragon was still aging. And when he nearly lost a battle, he got scared. Desiring more power, immortality. To be young again and back in his Prime. With no interest in claiming or ridding the dragon of such a desolate place any longer, he was free to search for such power. Which only lead him towards that Tirix with one eye...

They fought, yes, for what seemed like days. If he attempted to fight such a creature when Nal was younger, perhaps he would've won. But after the two took a serious beating, both covered in many gashes and burns, it was basically over. Regardless, the dragon foolishly tried to remain fighting.

Standing up only ripped apart the scales on his side, letting out more of the precious warmth and making him shakily fall to the ground again. His wings were both broken, endless amount of the membranes torn like an old warflag. His tail severed, and was still seen in the background laying limp. Horns chipped and broken off in several places, and claws, along with a few fingers, were still missing. He was finished, but refused to accept it.

Though Raccel had his fair share of painful wounds, Nal wasn't able to focus on them. With a single ear still functioning, he made out the sharp scrape that the grey one's odd staff made. Hearing the creature slightly stagger towards the dragon, he knew the end was coming. With no means to defend himself, even the glands that created his breath weapon were punctured, Nal still tried to get up. Feeling a paw between his nostrils, it was like time stood still in the old ruins around them. "...You're done..." The Tirix said sadly, but the red one couldn't argue.

For those few minutes, he thought Raccel had raptured him. No pain was felt through his body, and he felt like before they even started fighting.

Making him slowly open his grey eyes and look at the smaller one's orange iris. Still noticing all the wounds over his furred body, while the dragon's was completely healed. Not even seeing his tail in the background.

Nal stared at him in silence, not getting his hopes up and almost preparing for a ruse. When Raccel let go and staggered to sit down on a nearby rock, the dragon spoke up. "...Why?"

"Because I'm tired of it." He replied sadly, tending to his own wounds in the same manor. "I'm tired of taking people who just throw their lives at me... I want it to stop."

"You can't make it stop." The red one growled, getting up. "It's their lives and their choices. If they want to throw it away for an attempt of power, then you can't deny that-"

"But you can." Nal slowly curled his neck. "You've got to be the most difficult fight I've ever had... Why struggle so hard?" No response. "Who did you lose?"

"No one." The dragon snorted rather quickly.

"Then why Death?" Nal didn't know how to answer the creature. Not wanting to admit that he was terrified of growing old and weak. "...Just accept your loss, and go home. Please."

"And if I have nowhere to go?" The two stared at each other for a long time.

"...What would you have done if you won?" To this day, Nalchulus still didn't know. Perhaps keep himself forever young. But the Tirix eventually explained how difficult it was to do, let alone the strain it put on the body. Something to do with how this universe functioned when it comes to Time and Age. As a Force, you can halt your current age, but it's difficult to make yourself actually younger. Those like the Serpent were lucky enough to obtain the title of Force rather young, therefore keeping her youthful self.

It was a harsh thing to hear, knowing Nal would be forever doomed to just age. However, Raccel said he could try some experiments on the dragon if he was willing. Old ones that the mutt found in tomes left behind from his master. One of the results of such things was this place. Allowing the old one to very slowly regain his youth.

But the dragon did also lose the duel with Death, and there needed to be a punishment of some sort to that. Instead of claiming the challenger's life, Nal became owned by the Force. A servant to Death, only freed when Dismissed, when the Force dies or retires, or when it finally claims the

dragon's life. The other Forces were not fond of such a decision from Raccel, but there was no rule against it.

He didn't enjoy being Owned by something else, but it was worth his while. Let alone a better choice than dying, regardless of how humiliating it could be. After a long time of it, that humiliation faded. It was still embarrassing, yes, but it came to him like it was Truism. Much like the very thing he despised to begin with: Aging.

A heavy exhale left his throat as he flicked an old, tattered ear. Hearing the pawsteps of the very creature he was enslaved to and a greeting it with a faint snort. "Finally done with your interrogations?" The large one grumbled, not hearing a response. "Why do you even insist on letting them question your actions or wellbeing? Not like it's going to help you any."

"You'd be surprised sometimes, Nal." The dragon growled at the response, but left it. Hearing the Tirix exhale while looking at his home.

"...What." The red one grumbled, not bothering to look at him.

"...Something's wrong."

"There's a lot wrong with many things. You being a Force, for example, eludes any form of logic that ever existed. Let alone any that would possibly exist." Nal snorted, still not getting a response from the canine got him to grumble and finally look at him. seeing the rather serious look in his only good eye, staring into space. "...What is it?"

It irked him to no end. Even with a full-ish belly, he still couldn't sleep. Even after adjusting the massive treasures that made his bed, cooled the temperature of the old cave, and stretched out the kinks of his thick body, he still remained restless. Making him want to take it out on some lesser creatures miles away. Perhaps even some livestock or animals in the forest. Suddenly create a blizzard in the middle of the autumn and watch as they panic while they begin to freeze to death.

Granted, he would have to fly for a bit. Then again, a good flight didn't sound like a bad idea. Perhaps just what he needed to get his mind to stop racing. Constantly trying to figure out what good that Mutt is doing, was doing for all these years as a Force. And what that old sack of scales was hiding from the blue one.

He would deny that the furbag was anything but right, at least to their

faces. It was very possible that Raccel actually did something else for 'A Universe That's Falling Apart'. It was obvious that Nal knew the dog alot more than any others. Beo was the second Pet of the furred one to join, but the two hardly talked or knew each other.

He often wondered if Raccel actually still Feared Beo'Kros. Perhaps avoided him at nearly all costs. The more the dragon thought about it, the more it started to make sense. The furred one would always send Nal or Siggy to retrieve Beo. He's never been inside the blue one's residence. Never casually talked, rarely asked for a favor unless it would cripple one of the other two. Granted, these were never bad things to him. Except for the visits of the other dragons.

Speaking of visits, his white ear flicked. Picking up something rather small wandering into his cave. Wanting to growl and roar at it, watch the foolish critter or thief scamper away in fright. But perhaps instead, he could have some fun with it. Perhaps even sneak in another snack.

He watched the shadow from afar, as it tried to scan the darkness and piles of treasures. Leaning over one of them to examine something that might've caught its eye, and now was the perfect chance. A heavy concussive wave shot the creature back, along with a bit of Beo's wealth. Then quickly freezing the vermin to the wall before nailing several large spikes of ice into the cave wall. Barely missing the creature's head between them and getting the dragon to examine the intruder closely. "I should really invest in a Door of some sort." Beo growled while overlooking the lizard. "I hate having guests."

"The entrance to your cave says otherwise, with its wide path down the mountain." He coughed, getting winded from the blow, but trying not to show fear of the blue one. "We haven't actually met yet, face to face. I'm Ekaballus-"

"And?" The larger one snorted, unimpressed.

"The Force of Fate-" Beo let out an annoyed growl while tossing his snout. Even getting the Iguana to get irked at the dragon's disrespect. "I suppose I shouldn't have expected manners from someone so primitive to begin with-" A heavy paw shattered the ice snaring Eka, getting him to feel the full force of the slam before falling to the ground. Grunting in annoyance, he started to get up, only to get slammed heavily towards the exit. Getting stopped by an improvised wall of ice and knocking the wind out of him again.

A few heavy breaths, and the lizard coughed. "You don't hold back, do you-?" A concussional slam made him skid out the cave entrance, nearly falling off the large landing zone to the dead drop down the large mountain. Climbing up the edge and seeing Beo casually walk out of his cave. "Okay-

okay. Wait. Just hear me out!" The green eyes of the dragon stared at him. "I've come to warn you about Raccel-!"

"Perhaps you missed the point about me caring." Beo snorted, looking off to the side of his home. "Maybe I should make a sign. Perhaps several so visitors stop assuming things about me, and stop *Existing* in the first place." A quick raise of his paw, palm up, and Eka tried to deny the dragon of its attack. Only to have nothing happen for a few moments, and the large one to look at him in question.

"Whatever you're doing... Don't-" The Iguana tried to say, only to be shot forward towards Beo, then slammed into the rocky ground in the center of his landing zone. Getting him to cough a bit. "I'm trying to-" Four consecutive blasts crushed the lizard into the ground, forcing him to spit out some blood. "S... Stop...!"

"How do our Forces get so Pathetic?" The dragon laid down, almost towering over Ekaballus, as he slammed him down a few more times. "Honestly, I'm questioning whether or not to go after Fate or Reality instead of Death, if it's going to be this easy."

"You can't... Challenge me...!" The Iguana coughed, finally able to speak again. "Not as a Servant of Death!"

"Who said *anything* about me currently Challenging you? I'm just ridding my home of a pest, is all." The large one snorted. "Besides, the dog will fail a Challenge very soon. So you have time to worry about your current position. Or should I say... *Existence*."

"And if he decides to take out Reality instead?" A noise in question from the dragon. "His Challenges will renew...!"

"You cannot be the Force of Reality and Death. It's in your rules-"

"He doesn't have to be! He can pass Death, and become Reality!" Eka hissed at him, getting the blue dragon to stare at him for a few moments. "It's what I came to warn you about! Maybe you can talk some sense into him-"

"Then you came to the wrong dragon when it comes to foolish chit-chat."

"But not the wrong one when it comes to beating some sense into others." Another cough, as the lizard was finally able to get up. "The red one is probably in on this plan. And that scrawny one doesn't have the means to convince him. But you..."

"I heard that." The brown dragon landed, snorting and getting the blue one to grunt. "What the hell are you talking to him about?"

"Nothing. He was just delivering a pointless message." Ekaballus made a noise in question at Beo's remark, just before getting blown backwards. Flying off the mountain and into the forests far below. "What are you here for?" The larger dragon growled.

"Just wanted to talk." A very frustrated growl from the more built one as he tossed his snout. "And you're in the mood to hear me out, like always." The two snorted at each other as Beo turned towards his cave.

"Of course, but this one will have to wait. Possibly until forever." The blue one grumbled. "I got more important things to do-"

"Like hibernate, I'm sure."

"Exactly. Perhaps you're finally beginning to understand that everything I decide to do is more important than your need to gnaw on someone's ear. Didn't you have a wall you used to talk to?"

"Besides you?" A growl from the larger one. "I had a wall to beat on, not-"

"Which I'm assuming won every battle thus far-" A hiss from Siggy.

"What you said about Fleabag's challenges... Were they true?" Beo stopped at his cave entrance for a moment then turned around towards the brown dragon. Getting almost in his personal space, as if trying to intimidate him.

"So what if they were? You don't want the powers of a Force anyway-"

"And I still don't." Sig'eaal hissed, taking a step back from the ice dragon. "But it's possible that what Nal said is true. About Raccel doing more for-"

"It's also possible that he's beyond senile-"

"Something I don't doubt, but... That might not make him wrong." The glare from those green eyes didn't ease up. "Look, all I'm saying is... I don't think we've ever had it any better than we do now-"

"Are you joking?" The larger one grumbled.

"-No. I'm not." A snort from Beo. "I know you don't like being a Pet- neither do I. I honestly can't say for the dinosaur, but if something happens to Raccel, we might lose what we already have." The brown one looked off into

the distance, trying not to give in and shutter his scales from the cold stare.
"We might even lose ourselves-"

"Speak for yourself-"

"We **Lost**, Beo'Kros." A hiss from the icy one as Siggy hissed back. "You really think the next Force of Death is going to overlook that? You really believe that you can seriously struggle against sheer existence? If so, for how long!?" The blue one growled at him, but didn't respond otherwise. "If we can control this, maybe we can finally break that 250 limit."

"And how exactly do you expect to do that?" A smirk from the brown one got Beo to irkfully exhale. "And I regret asking-"

"If we each Challenge him again then throw the fight, he'll break past that limit-"

"We can't Challenge him again, it's in the rules." The Ice dragon snorted.

"Maybe not as Sig'eaal or Beo'Kros, but there's nothing written about Challenging as a different persona. Say, Siglint, and... Mr. Muscles?" A very angry, yet blank stare from the larger one. Eventually Siggy snorted at him. "Or whatever you want to call yourself, I don't care. My point is, we're uniquely positioned to do this." The blue dragon sighed through his muzzle as he looked off into the distance for a long time. Leaving the scrawny one to almost regret asking.

"...Fine." Beo replied, a bit optimistically. Getting the brown one to double take.

"R-really? You serious?"

"Yes." He looked into the smaller one's yellow eyes. "Run the idea by him again. Granted, you're getting your tail handed to you first. I want to be able to see it." Siggy tossed his snout at him.

"Whatever. Just don't oversleep for your fight." The brown one snorted, taking off to the skies. Getting Beo to deviously smile as he returned to his cave.

"Believe me, I wouldn't miss it for the *world*."

Chapter 7

"You..." The Tirix took a very heavy breath while pressing his paw into his own eyes, trying to relieve stress. "You... **Assaulted** the Force of Fate!?" The blue scaled one tossed his snout, ending in a glare at Siggy desperately trying to hold in his laughter. "...WHY!?"

"The worm was trespassing." Beo snorted, still not releasing his glare at the brown one. "And unlike you, if something attempts to infest my home, *I Take Care Of It.*" He and Raccel glared at each other for several moments.

"You realize that you put me in a difficult position-"

"Hardly." The blue one growled. "And if you laugh, I will hit your stones so hard they end up behind your eyes!" Sig'eaal desperately grasped his own muzzle, yet the smirk and a series of high pitched giggles leaked out.

"He'll probably want you to be put down."

"Then tell him to do it himself!" Beo growled. "Last I checked, it was Survival of the Most Powerful. If he cannot fight against me, why should he force you to instead?"

"Because you're my responsibility!"

"But not for very much longer, right?" The largest one snorted, getting a look in question from the Tirix. "He said you were going to topple Reality after passing Death to the dinosaur." Even Siggy looked at him in surprise. "And wanted me to beat some sense into you. That's when the stick here interrupted our conversation."

The brown one looked back and forth between them during the silence. "Is that true? Are you going after Reality?"

"No. But why would he make that conclusion?"

"I think the real question is, why come to Beo for help?" A glare from the green eyes, and the scrawny one snorted at him. "It's an honest question. You're far from the most eager to help."

"Fair point."

"Besides, means my plan would've been useless." An odd look at Siggy, as the dragon double taked at Raccel.

"What plan?" He asked rather thickly. Seeing the two dragons share a look.

"We know about the Challenge limit." Beo grumbled. "I overheard you talking about it with Nalchulus." The furred one sighed, looking away.

"I came up with an idea that if the two of us challenged you and then threw the fight-"

"It wouldn't work." The Tirix muttered.

"But if we were in different personas. It says nothing in the rules about-"

"It. Won't. Work." Another thick statement, making the brown one's ears lower a bit. "They've already tried."

"As in the ones before..." The canine nodded at Beo, getting him to sigh through his nostrils. "Well then, dibs on Fate then."

"Seriously?" Siggy hissed at him.

"It's not my problem. The old dog had its day."

"You're wrong." The red one landed from afar, getting the blue to growl. "It's all our problem. Especially when whoever claims Death next appears."

"Did you find her, Nalchulus?" Raccel asked him, getting an exhale from the red muzzle as it lightly swayed side to side.

"What? Did you lose one of your rats?"

"Like that would be a great use for my time, Twig." Nal snorted at him.

"Please, you'd roll over if he asked you to-" A hiss at the brown one.

"Enough." The canine tended to his head again in stress, getting the scrawny one to toss his snout and look at the older dragon in irkful question.

"Fate is missing." The red one said bluntly, even getting Beo's attention. "No one has seen her for some time after that last meeting."

"Maybe she got sacked." Sig'eaal shrugged his wings.

"I would know if she was dead or not. Let alone, Reality has a specific... Scent to it."

"We really don't need to know where your snout has been." The blue one grumbled.

"What I mean is, she's either made herself invisible, or..." The Tirix sighed, getting that same irkful questioning look from Siggys yellow eyes. "She's vanished."

"Meaning, so has the Force of Reality itself. It's hard enough to run a universe with Three Forces, two is basically impossible." Nal snorted.

"Annnnd without the viper being found, there's no way we can get that power, right?" The two nodded at the brown one, as he let out a grumbling sigh. "So, what? You want us to comb the entire universe for one person? That sounds like work."

"You are pathetically lazy." Beo snorted, getting a hiss from the smaller dragon.

"The people that were staying at my home-"

"The vermin-"

"Insects-"

"Pests-"

"Silence!" Another frustrated growl from Raccel. "One of them found a letter on my desk. One from... The last Force of Death."

"So they invade your home."

"Eat your food."

"And snoop through your-"

"Enough!" An exhale of almost pure stress came from the Tirix. "I swear, you guys are hardly worth keeping alive-"

"Then why bother keeping *them* alive-?"

"Because they are the damn Blood of this universe!" The furred one roared at Beo, getting all three dragons to curl their neck. "*They* keep the universe alive! They're more important than any of you are! They do more for this place than any of you do!" Foul and insulted looks from the three larger ones, but they remained silent. "They're more important than even me."

"I highly doubt that-" Nal snorted.

"Doubt it all you want, but they can live and survive without Forces."

We, however, can't live without them." More silence. "Same goes with all of you." The Tirix took a breath, looking off into the distance, in the direction of his home. "That's what Sol Salsha discovered."

"Your Mentor?" Siggie grumbled. "What the hell does that old-" A harsh glare from that orange eye and the brown one trailed off.

"He was close to finding a way to make the universe go on auto-pilot. So no one had to struggle with these damn challenges anymore... So no one could abuse this power." Another heavy sigh from Raccel.

"But someone got to him first." The red one muttered, not getting a reaction out of the grey dog. "Just after he appointed you..."

"And before he could write down how it was done." More silence. "Why they culled him: I don't know. Maybe they were afraid."

"Regardless, it doesn't matter." The blue one snorted. "That Force is long dead anyway." After a frustrated sigh, he gestured a thick paw to carry on. "Your infestation found some note, what about it?"

"It was a letter. One I kept hidden away." Raccel exhaled. "She found it just lying on the desk."

"So, someone went snooping through your stuff. And you're thinking it was whatsherface?" Sig'eaal half grumbled.

"That, or it's what they want us to believe." Nal exhaled, getting a faint look from the Tirix. "My ears might be tattered, but they still function. With Beo's encounter with Fate, I've seen this story a hundred times."

"Given your age, I wouldn't bet against it-" A loud hiss at the brown dragon, as it lashed out one back.

"So, what? You think it was Staged, Nalchulus?"

"Fate doesn't need to look at any letters." Beo snorted. "That Force can read minds easily-"

"That's the point." A hiss from the blue one at the harsh tone. "You really think the Serpent would be that sloppy to just leave the letter in the open? It was a breadcrumb, leading directly away from the one responsible."

"Lizard guy?" The brown one grumbled. "So what? You think he got to Reality?"

"And possibly did away with her."

"Forces can't Challenge other Forces, dinosaur." A loud growl from the

red one, as Beo snorted. "What would be the purpose of killing her or driving her off?"

"You'll have to ask him. What other solution would he have that would involve 'Recruiting' *you*." A loud growl back, getting Raccel to sigh quietly.

"...There's only one way to find out." The three larger ones looked at him.

The old crystal halls still looked new, shimmering the reflection of the present and the past through the Tirix' eye. Almost being able to see the viper's face through the sea of millions transferring from room to room. Even seeing Levian's neon green eye as it softly greeted the Raccel through a time barrier. Just before widening in shock and pain, then her body falling backwards into the sea of traffic. Making him exhale once again.

It doesn't get easier, it never gets easier. As he gave a sign of respect in passing, he walked up to the large doors. Still capturing the scent of Ekaballus on the other side, as if he was waiting. *This will end one out of two ways.* He pressed the large crystal walls opened and stepped through, almost accepting his final Challenge. One that could only possibly end in a Victory, while the next would surely end in Defeat.

The Iguana barely flicked an ear at the doorway, still glued to that old tome that he carried around. Standing in the middle of the room, no longer housing the large table and chairs that were once occupying such a beautiful place. "You're late."

"But not the latest, it seems." The Tirix kept his composure, still walking with that cane towards the lizard, but standing far enough apart. As if staging the duel without a word. "Levian is missing." No response. "But you already knew that, didn't you?"

"I heard she was Challenged and it was a double kill. First time for everything-"

"Actually, that's happened a number of times." Eka half grumbled. "In the event of a Draw like that, the favor goes to the previous owner." The two exhaled lightly, knowing Raccel figured it out. "Why?" He asked the colorful one rather calmly, getting nothing but silence for a bit.

"Tell me, Raccel." He didn't close the large book. "Do you still think about her?" A light tap below the Iguana's eye, gesturing the Tirix' bad one,

but getting no response. "Does your death still haunt your dreams? Do you still taste her throat in your mouth-"

"Shut it." He said rather thickly, finally getting the attention of the pearlescent eyes. Ones that seemed to shift from bright blue to a dark teal. "Where is she?"

"Nowhere." A growl from the furred one. "I'm serious. The snake is Nowhere in existence. She has been... Casted away."

"Why?" More silence.

"How much can you really see out of that Eye-"

"Stop Evading the-"

"What does it really do for you?" No response. "It's a memorial thing?" A growl. "For some reason, you want to remember her shoving a shard of-" A large blade erupted from the Tirix' cane, and he threw a wave projectile at the lizard. Getting him to deflect it away with a weapon of his own, crashing it into a crystal pillar and leaving a heavy wound.

As the two stared at each other, the bright light shined off of the double-sickle in Ekaballus' hand. One that kept the shape of a C, with a golden chain attached to the handle. "It's rare to see you lose your composure, Raccel." The lizard mocked him. "Is that a Challenge."

A heavy exhale through his muzzle. "Maybe it is." The cane extended to hold the large blade easier. "But not for your power." As the two got into armed stances, Eka flicked his offhand. Getting a second Chained Double-Sickle to appear and whip towards the canine. Clashing with his weapon in a bright spark, and echoing through the entire crystal palace.

The two weapons rapidly clashed loudly inside the crystal lantern while the three dragons followed the fight from above. Though they would never admit it, they were all slightly nervous about this conflict. Nalchulus more than the others. Exhaling through his muzzle as if to curse the clear barrier from keeping them out of the fight. "There's nothing we can do." Beo muttered, as if he wasn't entertained by the display. "I'm not even sure why he bothered to do this to begin with."

"Unlike you, some of us actually have a home worth fighting for in this mess of a universe." Siggy snorted. "Him especially-"

"What home?" The blue one almost snapped. "He's got an old shack in the deep woods. What could possibly be of value in there?"

"Memories." Nal joined in, not taking his light gray eyes off the two inside. "Ones he's trying to preserve."

"Like that ever did him any good." The larger one snorted, getting the other two to go quiet again. Then brace when both of Fate's weapons slammed into the wall below them. Causing the entire building to shake.

"I think he just moved this." The brown one tried to hide the worry in his voice.

"Moved it from what? It's hovering in the middle of nowhere-" Another slam nearly interrupted Beo.

"Sig'eaal is right." Nal grumbled. "It's actually tilting. They knocked this thing out of its own orbit."

"So?" The younger one snorted.

"That means, this fight is going to get a lot more complicated if we don't try to balance it out." The red one exhaled, getting all three to study the structure a bit.

"What if we *did* make it more complicated?" The blue one gave them a sly look, almost grinning at their questionable expressions before gesturing the upper part of the Palace. Massive large chains attached to rings floated above, as if they were once anchored to something. Although they were still puzzled by the idea, the two understood where he was going with it.

The chained sawblades threatened a very wide space whenever the Iguana threw them. Fanning across a large area while keeping a distance

from the Tirix. Granted, though the very ends of the weapons were the most deadly, getting wrapped by the golden chains themselves was more of a disadvantage. A single grapple from such a design could leave Raccel opened to attack from the off weapon, or even disarm him.

The canine even attempted to disarm or sunder the weapons. Luring Ekaballus to attack the Tirix and snare his weapon on some of the smaller pillars. But the lizard just simply let go of the chainblade and summoned a new one. That is, if he didn't break said pillars and attempt to use the debris as an improvised weapon.

Being warded back with a series of attacks, Raccel could understand how he obtained his title. He never seen Eka fight before, nor even any evidence of him being challenged. Whereas from time to time, the furred one and the viper would come to meetings a bit roughed up. But the old dog now knew why; no one could get near him. And even if they could...

Seeing the wide slam with both weapons windup, the Tirix slipped into the void. Waiting a few moments and teleporting closely behind the lizard and coming in with a heavy swing. But as soon as he exited the black mist, he felt the thick chain wrap around his midsection. Though hitting in a faint cut on Ekaballus' arm, the second chain snared Raccel completely. Keeping him tied down and anchored by the two sickles, nearly losing hold of his own weapon. The Iguana just summoned another blade in his hands and stood over the canine. "I've seen the end." Eka said, almost softly as he went for the coup de grace. "Your new world will be in good hands, Raccel-"

The entire palace suddenly shook and changed direction, just enough to make the lizard lose balance and only slightly cut the dog's throat. Not deep enough to be threatening, but spilling some blood. Kicking the Iguana's balancing leg to force him to fall on top of the Tirix, then his staff ripped out another large blade. Gashing through Ekaballus' eye and his face, as well as even cutting into Raccel's own ear and skull. Reckless and stupid, yes, but a desperate attempt none the less.

Withdrawing the scythe blade, the lizard cried in pain. Rolling off and loosening the binding chains enough for the Tirix to get free. Trying to take his own stance, but felt the building begin to move as well. Barely seeing the wings of the dragons flap a bit through the window as Eka got up. Not tending to his new wound, but also not giving up.

The two got their balance as the turbulence subsided, gathering their strength. "What the hell did you mean by New World?" Raccel growled.

"Exactly what it sounded like." The Iguana tried to snort, only to exhale and cough blood. Grunting at the pain of the deep gash. "A world that would

no longer need three Forces-"

"But one?" The dog grumbled, not impressed. "Sounds like the legend of the Counterweight." He threw his scythe at Ekaballus as he barely dodged the weapon, then slipped into the void. Blinking on the other side to catch the large blade and attempt to strike with it. Trying to stay close to the lizard as the Crystal palace flew through the cosmos.

"That was no legend." The Iguana growled, deflecting a few attacks and attempting to get some distance. Striking with his weapon was much harder with the room constantly moving, often getting his ranged attacks to easily miss and lose control of them. "The Counterweight did actually exist!"

"But it left us! Abandoned us!" A second blade ripped out of the lower staff on the same side as the first. Making Raccel's weapon look more like a D. Though it was much heavier, lopsided, and a bit harder to control, it was also harder to guard against. Especially with the lizard's current weapon design.

"You're wrong! It died trying to defend us! It was eaten alive by another, something much stronger!"

"And your plan was to worship this creature!? Let it in and devour our home!?"

"Would that be so wrong!?" Eka roared as the two got into a heavy deadlock [When two weapons lock together in a Pressure battle]. "What is there really worth fighting for here!? In a dead land!? Do you really want to be stuck child-sitting something that will never change, or ascend it into something greater!?" The cane slightly slipped between the two double sickles, causing the canine to lose balance for a moment. Opening him for a cut to the muzzle, a deep one to the chest, then an entire sickle blade directly under the muzzle. Getting Raccel to almost growl and whimper from the harsh wound as it's cold blade stunned, getting ripped out and pushing him back.

"Things aren't looking too hot for him." The brown dragon grumbled, barely being able to make out what was happening from above. As the three kept trying to move the crystal building through space.

"Damn Furbag! What are you doing in there!?" The blue one growled, though knowing he couldn't hear him.

"This isn't working-"

"Only because he's messing up!" Beo hissed at Nal. "Got any better ideas?"

"Actually, I got one-"

"Great." The largest one tossed his snout, getting a hiss from Sig'eaal.

"Well?" A brown wing gestured an Ion storm nearby. "You're joking."

"There's no way we can steer through that thing." The ice dragon snorted.

"You can't, but I can." Siggy got a growl, but nothing else. "It's an idea, and the only one we've got so far."

"You sure you can even survive something like that?"

"Please. I fly through thunderstorms all the time, like that's any different." He snorted, getting a bit of silence. "...Right?"

"Dibs on his soul if he dies." Beo said, rather confident in the fact.

"Not if, but when he dies." Nal got a hiss from the scrawny one. "Alright, we'll pull it near, then fly around!"

"Nothing else will end this cycle of madness, Raccel." The lizard heaved, kicking away the cane from the paws of the furred one. "You know this better than anyone. The only option we have is to bring about a new world." A heavy breath as he spit out a lot of blood. "By following its destruction."

"It won't..." The canine tried to speak, but it was hard with his tongue cut in half. However, the sudden flashes on the floor caught his eye, as well as two large shadows departing separate ways.

"It will. And you can't be here to see it, unless you give up that power." Another heavy breath as the Tirix scanned for his weapon. "Aren't you tired of holding it? Constantly fixing their mistakes? Hearing them curse you over and over?" Another few coughs. "All you have to do is sleep-" The sudden scamper of the old dog provoked the Iguana to attack him, as he lunged for his scythe. Taking the whipped blade to the side, but getting a paw on his weapon. Enough to guard against a second chainblade, then Raccel cut the air in front of him, opening the void enough to pass through it.

The heavy mist and dark red light covered the palace as heavy bolts stuck the massive object. Along with anything connected to it, including Eka. Letting go of his chained weapons and trying to stay into the air, the Tirix exited out of the void just to cut him down. Shoving him back against a wall before re-entering the void once again. Shock after shock, the lizard screamed painfully, almost as loudly as the dragon outside until they exited the storm.

The mist parted as the crystal lantern flew out, still getting a few strikes of lightning as the two dragons reached around. Landing on the large building and trying to ignore the aching stun that it currently carried. As well as hold up the brown dragon that was hardly pulling the massive structure. "Dumb wyrmling." Beo snorted at him, hearing the scrawny one chuckle a bit and try to shake off the pain of a few billion volts per contact. His aching muscles completely tense and unable to relax.

"I'd have to agree. Out of all my years, I've never seen anything that stupid."

"You give him too much credit. That was the age of the entire universe record of stupid." The blue one snorted, getting another chuckle from Sigg.

"Aren't they basically... The same thing?" The brown one coughed, getting an irkful growl from the red one, but still helping him take off the chains. "Told you I could do it."

"Hardly." The older ones snorted at him. "That was the only thing you were good for."

"Come on, Beo. It was stupid, yes, but no need to be that harsh." The two carried the smaller one off and let the palace drift a bit. "Besides, the wyrmling has eons ahead of him to do something equally as foolish."

"Perhaps you're right."

"You guys are, like... The best friends."

"...*Friends?*" The two curled their necks.

Exiting the void still shocked the Tirix, but not nearly as bad as the

Iguana got it. Laying against the wall and floor, completely burned of most of his natural color, he breathed dryly. Indicating that he was still alive, not that Raccel couldn't tell. "Damn pests of yours..." Ekaballus choked, still trying to stand.

"I'd have to agree with you on that one, but they're only protecting me." The canine grunted, trying to look out the window for a moment. "...I think, anyway." A few more breaths. "That's why you chose this place, isn't it? Why you were waiting for me in here. You didn't want to fight them as well."

"Yet, they persistently find a way to be a nuisance. In the most inconsiderate ways possible." He summoned two more blades, but his hands were too damaged to wield them, making the Tirix frown and spit out a bit more blood.

"...You don't have to do this, Ekaballus." It made the lizard grunt in anger. "Just tell me where she is."

"You really think you can fix this? That you could just let Fate go? Retire safely somewhere without being completely imprisoned?" There was silence between them. "There is no more Reality. And there will be no more Death." With one last desperate attack, he swung the two weapons at Raccel wildly, getting him to jump backwards and blink outside of the building's window. Almost placing a paw on it to say his farewells before kicking off onto the back of Nalchulus, trapping the Iguana inside.

Though it was hard for him to, Raccel opened his bad eye. Letting the scarred sphere leak out the mist-like abyss over his scytheblade and take a heavy swing towards the palace. Cutting far behind it, into the space itself and wounding the universe with a heavy gash. Leading to a dimension that held a large eye with several slits in it. Roaring loudly at the sudden change.

As Eka desperately broke through the crystal window, the ice dragon flew in front of him. Getting the two to pause for a moment before Beo threw a wall of concussive force at the lizard, sending him and the gemstone structure into the wound before it sealed up. Leaving nothing but silence and faint wingbeats.

The four landed on an asteroid, finally giving the old dog time to deny his wounds, as well as Sig'eaal's. Looking over the many galaxies in the distance, he released a heavy sigh. "We can still try." Nal said, overlooking his

furred friend. "It would be hard-"

"And not worth the effort." Raccel muttered, still almost feeling his tongue having a hole in it. "There's no Fate or Reality. There's nothing left here but Death." He turned around to see all three of them stare at their master. "There's nothing that can be done for them."

"So what? You're just going to abandon them?"

"Do you want me to Mercy Kill them first?" The Tirix snapped back at Beo, then took a breath. As the four stared in silence for a bit, he sighed again. "Maybe it can survive without us."

"It's possible." The red one muttered. "But unheard of."

"Meaning, it will probably collapse all around us." Siggy grumbled, releasing an irkful exhale. "The sounds of an Universal Apocalypse is so tiring."

"Lazy sack of scales." The blue one snorted.

"When you get struck forty times by an Ion storm, then you get to be lazy. New rule, I'm calling it."

"That was your idea to begin with." Beo growled.

"So?" The older two just rolled their eyes a bit and the Tirix walked past them, away from the stars. "Where are you going?" It got the furred one to stop for a moment.

"I think I finally understood why It left." Raccel said, covering his bad eye with a paw and almost painfully pulling out a dark light. Looking at the gift he carried for so long. One that he fought for so hard, and took countless lives with. Casted away with a simple toss behind him. Letting it float into the endless void of space. "I'm leaving. And you should too."

The three paused for a moment, then Nal followed the Tirix. Leaving Siggy to watch them, look into the direction of his home, and then turn about to follow as well. Beo, on the other hand, stayed for a few moments. Keeping his eye on the dark light as it floated further away from them, longing to chase after it. "Hey." His attention turned to the brown one. "It's not worth it."

With one last look towards the power he so desperately craved for eons, the ice dragon released a heavy, grumbling sigh and turned about. Leaving behind everything he worked for, much like the others. Who knows? Maybe someday he could find some power that would be even greater.

His eyes slowly opened up, gathering the scent of a warm campfire against his cold scales. He never felt so cold, in need of warmth, as his green eyes scanned the small campsite. Letting the fire's light absorb into those dark specked lenses for a moment before making out a white humanoid figure. One dressed in black. "Hey." It spoke to him, getting the dragon to grunt a bit and get the unusual stiff kinks out of his body. "How do you feel?" The figure asked him.

But he didn't respond. He wasn't sure how to, let alone to something that he couldn't quite see. As it walked around the large fire and added a few more pieces of wood to it, the large one was able to make out the muzzle of a bear. Slowly smiling at him, and getting the dragon to curl his neck a bit. "It's okay, I know it can be hard to find the right words." He said rather calmly. "Do you have any pains? Lingering aches?" No response, just stares into his brown eyes. "I'll take that as a No. And as a good thing." He sat down in front of the large dragon, and for a few minutes they just stared at the fire.

"...Who are you?"