

Light Escapes - Intoxicated

By Dexdor

Chapter 1

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"Let's talk about school." The older woman said, barely taking her eyes off her notebook. Even when laying down lazily on the couch, the younger one had a hard time to get comfortable and relaxed. These sessions were always hard on Trisha, forcing her to always analyze her life in the real world constantly. Something she just never wanted to think about. "Have you gone to school since our last session?"

"...Yeah. But I really don't want to talk about that."

"Did something happen?" She asked. Though, Trish couldn't really blame the therapist. She was just doing her job, but it didn't make it easy on the younger one.

"Not really. Just people... Talking." She mumbled, hearing a few more scratches of the pen.

"Talking about what? You?" A deep sigh as Trisha covered her eyes with her hand and massaged the space between her eyes. Remaining quiet about the question and hoping the adult would get the hint. "What did your teachers say?"

A heavy sigh and swallow came from the younger one, staying quiet for a moment while she gathered her words. "...I met someone a few weeks ago." It got the scribbles to stop for a moment.

"In real life? Or in a game?"

"Game." She muttered.

"Is this the same ones you've been playing? Escaping to?"

"...No. This is a new one." She heard the older one sigh through her nose, telling Trish that the therapist was not impressed with the answer. "He's... Different from everyone else I've met."

"How so?"

"...He said he trusted me. Placed his entire life in my hands."

"You mean his virtual life." The younger one shook her head. "Have you met him in real life?"

"...He doesn't exist in the real world. He keeps telling me that he isn't a player, but... He doesn't talk like an AI."

"AI? As in Artificial Intelligence?" Trisha nodded. "How did you meet this AI?"

"...I bought him. From a trading post type thing. He's what is called a Companion. An NPC that fights with you within the game."

"So, kind of like a pet?"

"...But he's more than that. He talks sensible. Thinks outside the box, and in Meta."

"Meta?"

"Like, he knows it's a game world. That it's all digital, virtual."

"What did you name him?"

"...Endzeit."

"Endzeit?" The older woman muttered, taking a few notes. "Why would you call him that?" A light shrug was all she got in response. "You said he trusts you. Do you trust him as well?"

"...Yes."

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Her vision started to sharpen and focus on the digital world around her. The room they last rented looked familiar to her as the morning sun started to glare over the wooden walls. Along with quite a few small HUDs [Heads Up Display] above her belly a bit. Feeling the small red tail instinctively fluttering around while the dragon started typing. The faint noise she made while she started to move got the small critter to close everything and try to leap off her torso before she woke up, but Sarious snatched him in midair. Getting the little one to yelp.

"Busted." She muttered, hearing the dragon whimper a bit while it was

bringing brought back to her body. "You're never going to learn, are you?" Another loud long whimper while he was being stroked by her.

"...I'm getting... Mixed feelings, here." He eventually whimpered. "Unless you're planning to rub my scales off as punishment."

A light chuckle from her. "Not really. It's been about two days since I've caught you." His furry ears lowered. "Yes, I knew. You leave a rather warm spot on what you usually lay on."

"But bonus points for trying not to get on your bad side in the mornings?" Endzeit looked at her with really sad eyes, getting her to chuckle and shake her head.

"You mean trying to sneak in your comfort urges?" The dragon snorted at her.

"Well, when you put it like that it just sounds selfish." He grumbled, resting his head on the lumps within the white cloth. Still feeling her stroke him made the red one release a noise of discomfort. "Seriously, you're getting under my scales. Are you going to punish me or not?"

"I swear you're a masochist." The dragon's ears went back and he grumbled, but didn't argue. As Sarious sighed, looking towards the ceiling, she took a moment to think. "I guess I've been thinking about what you said a few weeks ago."

"About what?"

"About... Not doing it to make me mad. But just doing it..." Another moment to think. "Actually, I'm not sure why you're doing it-"

"Because you're comfortable."

"Because I'm comfortable, apparently." That time, Endzeit chuckled. "I suppose I should stop punishing you for it, providing you don't do it in public."

"Why?" He questioned, getting a very odd look from the woman.

"You seriously enjoy getting beaten, don't you?"

"I meant about doing it in public!" He hissed, getting her to laugh. Tossing his snout and landing a bit heavily on one of the mounds.

"Because it's embarrassing! People might think-" She stopped herself, feeling her face start to blush once again as the dragon's ears perked. After a bit of silence, he tried to study her with curious golden eyes.

"Might think what?"

"N-nevermind Endzeit." Sarious place a hand on his head and eyes, making his yelp at the first sight of it. "You're such a wimp."

"You usually beat me to near death whenever you cover me like that, I have a reason to be a wimp towards you." He snorted, pushing the hand out of the way to look at her again. The dragon seen her eyes trailing off towards the side, a bit hurt. "What?"

"Nothing." She tried to keep her original tone, but it slightly choked. The red one just grumbled and padded the body pillows a bit, getting her irked attention as he flopped his body on them.

"What is it?" He grumbled, feeling the hand behind him once again.

"...You know that sound you make when someone other than me touches you?"

"My growl?" He curled his neck.

"Not that one, the other one. The one where you like it." A loud snort put a small smile on her face.

"I don't know what you're talking about." He grumbled and closed his eyes. "You must be hearing things."

"Really now?" The woman gave the small one a sly smirk, which only made him feel more uncomfortable. As the dragon tried to raise up, the heavy hand on his back pinned him in place. Getting him to hiss towards it as the glove started to grope the back of his neck and mane. Making the red one instinctively start to purr silently, regardless of how much he was trying to fight against it. "There it is."

"It's... Your... Imag-" He tried to say, but gave into the harsh strokings. Pushing himself towards the glove and almost guiding it around his collar and shoulders. Sarious chuckled at him and slowed down, hearing him growl a bit. "Don't stop." He grumbled.

"Too bad. It's time to get up and get some leveling done. If you're good, you might get more later."

"What about breakfast?" He grumbled, getting on the nightstand, then her shoulder once she was up.

"It's either get pet, or food in the mornings."

"Oh, come on! Don't make me choose!" He whimpered loudly, getting the woman to chuckle. Another loud whimper told her to look at him and see the bit golden saucers. "Please?"

"Didn't you have enough last night?"

"That question is illogical. You can never have enough food." He snorted, seeing her smile even got him to. "Please?"

"How about a small breakfast then?" Seeing him toss his snout half got on her nerves.

"I know what that means..."

"Hey, you're the one who wanted me to take the cooking expertise."

"Yes, but I didn't think food could come out so poorly-!" A loud yelp as the hand came up over his head once again.

"Practice makes perfect. And you either get used to my cooking, or you go without."

"Fiiine. Let's go beat on some dough. Better than beating on me this morning." The dragon grumbled as the two left the Inn.

"No-no-no. You fold, then press. Fold and press in. It's how you knead bread." The red one coached the woman, who was clearly getting annoyed at her companion. "Put some effort into it. I don't want to see any two caramel stripes touching. Like right there."

"Put a sock in it. It's perfectly fine if they touch. Besides, you couldn't do a better job."

"Of course I could!" The dragon hissed. "Here, I'll show you how it's done." Endzeit leapt off her shoulder and aimed for the pile of dough, but she quickly removed it. Landing with a white floury Poof.

"Don't you touch this! I'm planning to at least try it after it's finished!" The small one groaned as he got up and snapped his jaws while searching for any loose fangs. Getting the unpleasant taste of the white powder on his forked tongue forced him to make a face.

"What's the big deal if I touch it or not!?"

"Trust me, I know you don't wash your paws." Sarious glared at him, and the dragon growled back.

"You don't have to every time. I don't know why you're so obsessed with your food being held by someone so clean." He grumbled, giving her the workspace once again.

"It's just sanitary."

"Please, my claws are not venomous. There is no way you could obtain an illness from bad food within Skyline." The little one snorted loudly.

"Well, I don't want to be the first. Let alone by failure Dragonbuns."

"We'd be using Maple if it was Dragonbuns. These are... I'm not sure what these are." The woman double took at him. "What?"

"Maple!?" She whined in defeat. "You said Caramel!"

"I questioned caramel, and pondered what it would taste like if the maple was replaced." Another harsh glare from her. "Why are you looking at me like that. It's not like it's going to explode or something."

"Is it?"

"Shouldn't." The dragon said, taking a slow step backwards and getting another glare from her. "I'm... Just going to wash up."

"Sure you are." A moment later, the dough started to glow blue with a faint light as it completed into a loaf of bread. "Well... I was expecting something else, like sticking it into an oven first, but okay." She looked around, but couldn't find the small red one anywhere. "Endzeit?"

"It didn't explode, did it?" A muffled voice came from her left, seeing the red one slowly lift open a lid to a can and stare at the loaf of bread.

"It apparently did not. Thank you, noble pet, for the concern." Sarious grumbled sarcastically.

"You're welcome." He said, quite seriously while climbing out. "Want the honors of the first slice?"

"And the only slice." She muttered, cutting the heel of the loaf and taking a bite. "Not bad, really. Probably the best thing so far I've made-" A loud swallowing sound got her attention of the missing bread, and the dragon licking his paws for crumbs. "...Did you even taste it?"

The little one looked at her for a moment, and cleared his throat.
"...Yes."

"Are you saying that because you actually did? Or because you don't want me to force feed you a boulder?" She put a hand on her hip, then instantly regretting it.

"...Yes." He replied, getting her to sigh. "It tasted like... Caramel."

"You could hardly taste the caramel in it."

"Maybe on your half."

"My slice. Not half. About my 5% of the bread."

"It was 7.4698."

"That I made!" It made him whimper and lower his ears. Sighing once again, Sarios grumbled. "Did you get enough?"

"...Yes."

"That means no." She pressed on the space between her eyes and heard him whimper again. "Well, I suppose we can both get something else to eat." Putting away several of the cans and Tupperware made Endzeit think for a few moments.

"Wait." She made a noise in question as he scratched the back of his ear. "No. I didn't have enough. But..." She stared at him and waited for the red one to finish. "Let me make you something this time."

"Pets can't cook."

"I'm not a pet." He grumbled, pushing against the can with the flour in it, until the can fell over and opened up. "I'm a Companion. And Companions can cook, if they're smart enough to."

"And you're going to start from scratch?"

"I'm going to use your cooking skill, actually." He pulled up his HUD and typed in a few things. A faint grunt came from him as the windows closed. "There, now just let me--"

"Wash your paws." A double take from the small critter, then his ears went back. "Do it." A toss of his snout and he flew off towards a sink. Plugging the hole, adding some soap, and bathed in it for a few minutes. Coming out and drying himself off with other people's clothing.

"Happy?" He grumbled, getting a smirk from the woman as well as a nod. "Alright, we'll start with the dries, then do the wets." Endzeit struggled with measuring cups, getting them in a much larger bowl.

"You could always use your larger form, you know."

"That form is for combat use only." He wheezed, trying to add some sugar into the bowl. "If I use it, the game might register me attempting to attack the table or other objects, instead of just interacting with them." Sarios rolled her eyes. As much as she did enjoy the comical struggle of the

red one, she got up and helped him. "...Thanks." The dragon muttered.

"No problem. What are you going to add next?"

"That'll be a surprise." She looked at him oddly. "Don't give me that, you wanted me to make you a small meal, I'm making you a small meal." He climbed up onto a small container. "A little bit of this."

"You realize that's salt."

"Yes. And I require a little bit of this."

"What exactly are you making?"

"You'll see." Endzeit said, searching the containers on the table. Then flying off to another cabinet. "Here we are." He pulled out a bottle with a near black liquid inside. Squirting some within the wet ingredients.

"Is that Maple Syrup?"

"Nope." When she tried to examine the bottle, he covered it with his body and halfly hissed at her. "No peaking!"

"Is it brown?"

"Well... Yes."

"Is it sticky?"

"Yes." His ears went back.

"Then it's maple syrup."

"It is not maple syrup." He grumbled. "You'll see what it is after. Now I need to find another dark substance-that is not Maple Syrup!" A faint chuckle from the woman as she motioned him to go on. Placing a few more odds and ends at his lead, they poured the wet ingredients into the dry, and started kneading the dough. "I never knew this stuff to be so sticky." The little one grumbled, prying his leg out from the large mess and struggled to get it off his claws.

"Just needs a little more flour. I'm glad it seems to regenerate."

"The system isn't that picky. I cannot imagine what it would be like to only have a set amount of ingredients that could possibly expire." A few minutes of working on kneading, and the meal completed in a faint glow. Revealing a set of twelve rolls that were stripped with an orange and brown filling. "Looks like they turned out well. And you even got some Proficiency Experience out of this one."

"What are they?"

"Try them." The red one nudged, his ears went back when he met her uncomfortable glare. Trying to think of what that mystery ingredient was, she took a breath while tearing off a roll. Biting into it and getting a very slight salty, but sweet molasses taste out of the fluffy bread. "What do you think?"

"They're rather good. Surprising really."

"Surprising?" He lifted an ear with a rather irked look on his muzzle. When Sarious shrugged, he let it go. "And check out the middle." She did, seeing a faint orange and brown design within the white fluff that almost looked like a fireball.

"What is this?" She asked, taking another bite.

"Dragon Balls." He answered, getting the woman to almost choke while blushing. "What?" He studied her for a moment, and his ears fell. "Uh oh..."

"No-no... Just..." She half tried to cover her face, getting the little one curious.

"What's wrong?"

"You called it... Dragon Balls." He motioned her to go on. "The treats from the festival were..."

"Dragonbuns. Do piecing together themes make you... Red?" The dragon tilted his head at the woman.

"N-no. It's just..." She took a breath. "I can only imagine someone made a long loaf of bread named after a dragon's..." She half whispered.

"You mean Dragon's Pride?" This time, she whimpered and completely hid her face. Losing balance and sitting on the floor. "It's that bread that's like six feet long. A bit thick too-"

"Stop. Please." Her whimpers made him chuckle.

"I don't understand why you're so Red. They're not hot, are they? I didn't really put anything spicy in them." He took a roll and bit into it. Releasing a purr before devouring the rest of the treat. "I love Dragon Balls." Another whimper from her. "I don't know who doesn't. But the bigger ones are much better, though harder to get off-"

"Endzeit!" She yelled through her clothing, getting the red one to laugh.

"Seriously, what's wrong with you?" He landed on her shoulder with

caution. Almost expecting to be snatched. "Sarious?" When she didn't reply, he started to bring up a HUD. Sending some slight tingles through her body for a moment. "Your Blood Pressure is a bit high, as well as your Body Temperature." It got her to look up at the panels he was examining. "And you're getting a slight increase in energy, probably from your adrenaline."

"What are you...?" He looked into her eyes for a moment, and it shown concern in his golden ones.

"You worried me. But you seem fine overall." He closed the menus, only to find the woman still looking at him. In result, he sighed quietly. "...I looked up that word a while ago. Allergic. I was half thinking that maybe..." He looked towards the rolls on the table.

"I shouldn't be. And no, it's not... That." She rubbed her arm once again.

"You sure?" Sarious nodded at him. "Alright. But now you've got me worried sick about you. Players can be allergic to nearly everything." The dragon sighed.

"I don't really have any allergies. And It's doubtful that people will break out or have attacks when exposed to anything in a digital world."

"I hope so." He nudged her until the woman looked at him again, meeting Endzeit's smile. "I cannot imagine anyone being allergic to food." It made her chuckle.

"It's not just all food, but types. Nuts is a very very big one." She got up and walked towards the table once again.

"I remember water being one as well." He shuttered, getting a very faint clicking noise out of his scales that almost sounded like a beetle's wings. Getting the woman to almost try to move away from him by instinct. "Not much of a life if you have to watch what you eat and drink."

"Or lay on."

"Still want some of my Dragon Balls?" A faint whimper again from her, as well as a bit of blushing. "There it is again. Why do you do that?"

She halfly looked around, though only a few players fixed on what they were doing, she didn't feel comfortable telling him here. "I'll explain later. But yes, I'll take a few more rolls. They are rather good."

"Wait until you get a glaze on them." Sarious covered her face, getting the dragon to chuckle at her.

Chapter 2

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"Is there any specific reasons why you trust him?" The older woman asked, finally putting down her notebook. But keeping the pen in hand.

"...He's given me every reason to."

"But nearly every NPC is trustworthy, is it not?" Trisha didn't reply. "It's usually their reason for existence within a virtual world, for the players to rely on to play a certain role. How is this Endzeit any different than the others?" The younger one glared at her a bit harshly, getting the therapist to lift up her hands slightly in defense. "It's just an honest question. Something I want you to think about."

"Because he talks like a person, not like an AI."

"Nowadays, most NPCs talk sensible-"

"The way they talk is still somehow fake. You can feel the difference in them still." Trish sighed for a moment to calm down. "The Uncanny Valley still exists, if only faintly within them."

"But not with your pet?"

"...No. He's just..." A moment of silence. "Somehow alive."

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"Innuendo?" The dragon tilted his head at the woman.

"Yes. And once you learn about it, you start seeing it everywhere."

"But how did you get Sexual-" A hand covering his head made the small one yelp.

"Don't say that out loud." She whispered under her breath. "I don't want people to hear you." They looked around the half busy streets of the city, not seeing anyone pay attention to what the dragon said. However, getting a few points here and there from other players. The thought of it bothered her, being pointed out and talked about almost in whispers.

"But where do you see that from rolls?" He whispered, eyeing out a bakery stand with breads on display.

"You called them Dragon Balls." She grunted, trying not to get embarrassed once again.

"And?"

"Balls are another common term for... You know."

"Rolls?" The woman covered her eyes.

"You've never seen them, so it makes sense why you can't piece these together."

"So, it's not about the rolls? Hmm." The small one pondered. "I can't say I understand this."

"There's a news flash." Sarious grumbled, sarcastically. Getting yet another confused look from the small one. "Nevermind, you're better off just staying innocent."

"I'd rather know things than remain ignorant of them. You never know when this kind of information could prove useful." Another whimper from her. "What was the other one that incapacitated you, again? Dragon's Pride?"

A mix of a whimper and a sigh from her. "The long one, yes. I can only imagine the idiot who made it a thing in this game."

"I can't. Bread has nothing to do with dragons." Endzeit snorted. "I can't see who would take pride in a loaf of bread."

"That's not what it means."

"Then... They add them to the hoard instead? Who in their right mind would collect food and not eat it?" He curled his neck.

"Not you, apparently."

"Seriously, Serious." A sharp glare from her got him to chuckle. "I still

don't understand."

"And I think it's better if you remain that way. Now if you don't stop asking questions about it, I'm going to end up as red as you are."

"Just one more question." A loud growl from her got him to sink his head a bit. "...Are you going to eat those leftover Balls?" A sigh in defeat from the woman, as she flopped down on a bench and opened up her inventory.

"I can't believe you're still hungry."

"We were talking about food for ten minutes straight, can you seriously blame me?"

"I can only try." She gave him the rolls, but took one for herself. Taking a bite out of hers while she watched the dragon eat one almost whole.

"So." He tried to say with his mouth full. "If the bread is supposed to be symbolic-"

"We're not talking about it."

"Of something sexual-"

"We're not talking about it."

"What's the glaze supposed to be?" A heavy grunt in frustration from her, as the woman covered her face once again.

"You're going to eat bench by the end of this conversation if you keep this up. You realize this, right?"

"And it just might be worth it." He chuckled. Finishing the rolls while Sarious composed herself once again. Feeling a shadow fall over them. "Hey, it's this guy." The red one said with a full muzzle. Making the woman look up towards a large, navy-blue panther with several volts of arcing lightning around it. Mounted on the feline was a man in abyss-black and red plate armor.

"Oh, hey." He said to the woman, as she tried to get a good look at him away from the glare of the sun. "I haven't seen you for a few weeks. How are you making out?"

She studied the man for a few moments, not really knowing how to respond. "We're doing fine." The dragon answered, swallowing a roll. "You?"

"Been alright. Still recruiting people for the Faction though. I don't suppose..." The woman's face went cross and he chuckled. "Alright, alright. Just asking."

"Don't take it seriously. She has a habit of turning friendly gestures into insults." A sharp glare from Sarious made him whimper a little bit. "Don't look at me like that. You know you do."

Half a grumble from her made the man chuckle again. "Why does everyone think that I need a Faction?"

"Don't you?" Endzeit asked, getting another glare, but it was weakened by shyness. "You can't complete this game alone." A quiet sigh came from her exhale.

"I take it you've been asked alot, huh?"

"Like you wouldn't believe. At least three or four times a day it seems." The dragon nodded, agreeing with her.

"Here I was thinking that you were just not invited to any others after my offer." The black knight pondered for a moment, then dismounted his large cat. "Dalton." He offered her a handshake.

She looked at him oddly. "...The main character from Roadhouse?" He laughed out loud at that and nodded.

"From the original. Not the remake several decades ago."

"Can't say I've seen that one." She looked at his gauntlet for a moment, seeing a strange contraption on the index finger and thumb of the metal glove. Shaking the hand eventually. "Sarious. And this is Endzeit, my Companion."

"Companion?" He questioned. "I thought he was a miniature."

"Miniature!?" The red one hissed. "Why would you think that?" He curled his neck at him, then noticed the two look at the red one rather blankly. "...What!?"

"Apparently it's not obvious." Another chuckle from the man. "So he's actually a Tamer's Companion?" He leaned against the Thundercat, stroking its neck.

"Yeah, and a melee one at that. It's kinda hard to believe from the look of him." A growl from the dragon as he tossed his snout in the air away from them. Looking back at Dalton, she noticed something strange in his expression. "What?"

He exhaled, rubbing the back of his dark blue hair. "Sorry. If I knew that, I wouldn't have pressured you so badly when we first met." The woman lifted an eyebrow. "Remember when I offered to buy him? I thought he was a

Minipet." She made a noise in agreement with a very slight head nod. "Sorry about that, by the way. It was a bit impulsive on my end to do that."

"Don't worry about it. I'm just glad I turned it down, kind of."

"What do you mean Kind Of?" The little one growled, getting a smirk from Sarious.

"He's a complete pest at times. And eats a truck load. I've probably burned over a million in the past couple of days just feeding him."

"Oh please! I'm not that bad!"

"I still don't know how you haven't gained a single pound." The man chuckled at the two.

"Sounds like you've been getting along quite fine. I'd love to have you in Draconica." She looked at him again, seeing a similar word under his nametag.

"I'm just..." She sighed quietly, and he held up a hand.

"You need to be ready for one, I know. But I would love to have a Tamer with a dragon pet in the Faction."

"Companion." Both the woman and the red one corrected him. Dalton chuckled and lifted his hands while nodding.

"Force of habit, forgive me. But seriously, consider it. Please Sarious?"

"You want me in your guild?" He nodded. "Even if it means I'm not optimal?" She asked a bit coldly, getting a puzzled look from the knight. "I'm a... Melee Tamer, if you can even call me that. I don't use magic spells or anything."

He shrugged. "Whatever. I don't mind. If you made it here alright, especially after those patch changes over the weekend, you're perfectly capable in my books."

"And the others in your Faction?" Another cold question.

"Their opinions don't matter. I'm the Leader, and they can't argue with me. If they try, I'll warn them how much my greaves sting when I kick them from the guild." He studied her for a bit. "Now you've got me curious."

"About what?"

"About this... Melee Tamer idea. Could you show me how it works?" The woman studied him for a moment, wondering what he meant. "A friendly

duel. Doesn't mean anything to whoever wins."

Sarious got a very uncomfortable look on her face when she turned to the dragon. "Basically what it sounds like. A Player vs Player in-town event. The game will end the duel whenever one of them reaches 1 hp." An exhale from her. "No one can die during these, but any consumables will be affected as normal."

"And you want us to fight you?" He nodded at her.

"Two against one is fine. I'm used to fighting multiple targets."

She looked at the dragon once again, and he shrugged. "There's no risk, but it's entirely up to you."

"If you win, I'll buy you guys dinner-"

"Okay, now we have to fight." Endzeit said, getting the woman to roll her eyes and shake her head.

"What the hell, let's try. But I'm not holding back." She got up to stretch, and the knight gave a friendly salute. Tapping his mount to make it disappear in a flash of lightning, and reach back for a large greatsword that appeared stowed on his back. Pulling it over his shoulder while walking out in the streets as the red one flipped and landed in his combat form. "He's a much higher level, isn't he?"

"Yeah, 87." He whispered.

"Figures. I was hoping maybe that armor was just an appearance skin from the Cash Shop." She sighed, walking towards the middle of the street facing Dalton. "We've got no chance."

"Don't say that!" He hissed. "If we somehow win, we can make him spend a million on food! Maybe even fluff up your body pillows-" She swatted him hard on the shoulder and he laughed. "Okay, okay. But seriously, he's going to have some wicked defenses."

"What was the thing on his gauntlet?"

"The lock, you mean?" She half shrugged. "Keeps from being disarmed. Basically making you never let go of your weapon."

"I guess that's never been an issue with me."

"Considering how often you tend to do it, it's no wonder some players pay the extra for that." He chuckled. "You ready for this?"

"Ready as ever. We Rampage As One, okay?"

"Got it." The dragon slammed his fists together and faintly roared, seeing his Hitpoints deplete about one third and start regenerating, while his second bar jumped up a quarter full. "I love this damn thing."

"Just don't abuse it." She gave the knight in the distance a solid nod, and he returned it. Sending a Duel request towards her and seeing the small UI [User Interface] pop up. Sarious stared at it for a moment while her heart beat faster. Taking a breath to relax, she accepted. Seeing a ten second timer pop up.

Collision Course 3 (Linkin Park & Eminem) - Dead

Space

"I'll let you make the first move." Dalton hollered from the other side, getting himself into a defensive stance and pulling down his full helmet.

"Initiative advantage. It's something." The dragon mumbled. Waiting for her orders. Another breath, and she got into her stance. As soon as the buzzer went off, the two charged side by side, getting into a position to flank the knight. At about six feet away, the red one did a small hop and stomped on the ground hard. Sending a shockwave towards the man and exploding into a massive force that he barely blocked. But not without being pushed back a few feet.

Before the debris could even clear, Sarious dived at Dalton with a heavy kick. Cracking the road when she landed, and just barely missed the knight. As he went in for an overhead slash, the dragon came in from the smoke with a front flip. Trying to scrape the black knight with a hind claw that marked the flat side of his blade. Continuing the assault with a rising body blow interrupted Dalton's counter attack, and feeling a heavier than usual hit through his armor. A heavy downward red fist followed that attack, pushing the man back a bit more.

Swinging the greatsword across to hit Endzeit, the dragon ducked under it. Sarious stepping off of the red one's back and getting in close with another dive kick. Getting the man to curse at the constant barrage while she punched him in the face, then the chest. Going for a slight uppercut with her palm didn't quite reach, and gave him enough time to swing back at her side. Feeling the blade actually hit the woman felt like hitting a wall, as a green lightning effect covered her body for a moment. Allowing Sarious to continue her attack on his solar-plexus; a thrust with the vertical fore-knuckles of her fingers, followed by a very quick rotation and hitting him a second time with

the back knuckles of the same hand. The step she took with it added Inner Strength to both attacks, pushing the knight back once again.

Before he could even breath, the dragon's roundhouse connected with the cheek of his helmet, almost hearing the thing crack and sting his face. Barely seeing the red one spin backwards for another kick, Dalton ducked under it. Finally getting his first real hit in with a swing against Endzeit's torso, putting him down a quarter health.

As the woman entered the fray once again, she spun backwards and slammed her elbow into the knight's face, getting him to curse once again and spin with the attack. Hoping to get refooted before her next one. Guarding his midsection, his left shin took a heavy hit from her back kick, getting him to almost stagger forward. Leading him getting rammed by her entire back and shoulderblades. Staggering backwards, she tried to continue the attack with a shoulder ram [Not to be confused with Shoulder Tackle, like in football. Using your shoulder as an attack, not your entire body's momentum. This is sometimes called Mountain Splitter], and Dalton did the same. The two hitting each other in a heavy deadlock for a moment, until she gave in early. Sidewinding behind him while the dragon slammed down on the knight's helmet in a hammer-like fist.

Rising up, Dalton tried to slash the red one, but barely missed his mane. Trying to follow through with a backwards slash as well, Endzeit interrupted him with a heavy kick to the ribs, which lead to another one from Sarious on the opposite side. A fist to the knight's chest, then a slam against his back, Dalton almost growled. Hating being flanked, defending his mid-section from the dragon's knee, and trying to back kick the woman behind him. Only to have his armored foot grabbed by her and lifted upwards. Getting him to almost yelp while keeping balance, until her foot tripped his grounding one. Sending him rotating in the air before landing heavily on his back.

The two backed off, giving the man a chance to get up and take a breath while they did the same. "You really don't hold back your punches." The knight chuckled, adjusting his helmet correctly. Looking at the dragon, then the woman behind him, he got into a ready stance once again. "I hate being flanked." He grumbled, taking another breath. With his free hand, he gathered some black mist and threw it into the ground beside him. As Endzeit Dashed forward, Dalton swung his blade upwards, throwing out a shockwave along the ground towards the red one, then a heavy swing across from him. When the sword got near the black mist on the ground, a large bomb came out from it. Getting hit by the great weapon like a baseball and launched towards Sarious.

As the dragon jumped over the shockwave, the ground projectile exploded beneath him. Just barely avoiding the debris it created, but landing on uneven grounds. While the woman slid under the bomb, just barely seeing the skull and crossbones painted on the side of the thing to make it look almost like a Roundshot, she got back up. Only to be pushed back by the knight's very quick dash attack across the ground. The attack stung, and took about a third of her HP away, unable to get in her defense in before she seen it.

As she rolled to recover, the bomb exploded a ways behind them. Seeing Dalton come in with an uppercut-like swing, Sarious got her Lightning Defense in on time, covering her with Green Bolts once again, but only enough to not take the damage. The attack still sent her upwards into the air, and see the knight come in for a second one. Activating the defense once again took alot out of her stamina, but she was able to block the attack. Riding on the large weapon the full ways over the man's head and rolling on the other side of him.

Landing on her feet in a crouch, the black one continued his assault with a heavy jumping slash onto her. Seeing Sarious raise up and block it with her forearm, this time with a more pink and purple colored Lightning around her body, which then exploded outward from her, pushing Dalton back and staggering him for a moment. "Endzeit!"

The dragon dived in, hitting the man once again in the helmet with a heavy punch and getting it to crack. Letting the heavy right fist follow the rotation to a light back one with his left paw, then a right hook. The hook put him into a boxer stance, pushing the man back with two very quick punches to the helm, then a heavy straight to the chest. When one set was done, Endzeit weaved forward and did another, starting with the opposite fist. As much as Dalton tried to block one, the other two would often get around his defense.

Soon enough, the knight was backed up to a wall, and the heavy straight to the chest knocked the breath out of him. Trying to retaliate by using up some of his Hp, the greatsword cut off a spike of the dragon's mane, and nearly his ear. Rolling with the sideways swing, the red one kicked the black knight in the gut, then a Knee to the ribs. Following with two body blows to the opposite sides. A quick hook to the right cheek, then a right kick to the side was slightly deflected by the large weapon. Trying to shove the red one away, Dalton got a heavy backfist to the side of his helm, hearing the thing crack loudly and loosen up. Then a second backfist to the other side did the same, splitting the nose guard quite a bit.

A kick aimed at the gut pushed the man against the wall again, telling

him there was enough room for a slash. He took it desperately, only to hit nothing but air and see that the dragon crouched under it. Rising up with an uppercut to the chin finally broke the helmet off and sent it upward into the air. Rising his free hand to guard himself, he seen Endzeit slightly retreat, and the woman jump off the red creature. Doing a rotation kick in the air, and snapping the airborne helm straight back at Dalton. Getting the black one to catch it with his face.

The massive sting behind it got the man to growl in a bit of rage. Realizing that he really shouldn't have underestimated these two, despite being a higher level. Roaring, the knight activated an ability that increased his attack speed. Cleaving through the wall behind him with ease for a full-circle swing got the woman to evade backwards out of the attack's range. Swinging the blade upwards covered the ground in a black mist in a liner attack. Exploding a moment later in a backwards force. Though, Sarious managed to sidestep the attack, the dragon's HP depleted by quite a bit. Very close to 7% remaining, but getting his Wild meter to regenerate quickly.

A few very quick slashes from Dalton was getting too close for the woman's comfort. Waiting for a good time to counter attack was difficult with his increased attack speed and trying to foresee his ability effects. The one that was quite clear was his right eye glowing red and leaving a long trail of his previous movements. With the same jumping slam as before, Sarious evaded to a wall, and jumped off it for some extra height. The landing strike of his attack cracked the ground with a very large area, almost exploding in force and dust, but still missing the woman.

Landing rather close to him got Dalton to try another overhead swing at her. But with Sarious' sidestep, she landed a very heavy blow to his ribs. Hearing the plate armor crack loudly with all the previous damage it took from the dragon. Another one to the opposite side of the ribs did the same, leaving an opened way for the final slam in the gut and push the man back, winded.

For a moment, they caught their breaths. Her eyes glancing over towards the dragon's UI, and seeing that he was still conscious, but not really knowing where he was. Turning around and looking for him would only give the knight the upper hand, and the duel could be finished with a few of the black one's blows.

But he was taking his time, getting back into his defensive stance with a rather crossed face. His eye still glowing red, and following his heavy panting. It was reasons like this that she detested PvP [Player Vs Player], one would usually take it too poorly or personal. Demanding rematches over and over while trying to reclaim their pride with one simple win. She was caught

in those messes from other people before, getting harassed because they found out they were beaten by a girl. And it looked like this high level player was no different. This day, what almost turned out to be a friend was turned into an enemy within a minute. What made matters probably worse for them is the rather large crowd that was developing to witness the intense fight. Most likely being heard from the other side of the city.

With a heavy grunt from the man, she refocused. Seeing him nod, and her as well, they engaged each other once again. Deflecting each other's attacks, avoid taking damage as much as they could. But eventually a back-spinned, downward slash got the best of her. Thinking it was actually a horizontal one and knocking her down to 20%. Seeing Dalton go for one final thrust forward, Sarious barely got her deflect in, pushing the blade upwards made her take a fraction of the damage, leaving her with 9%. Activating her Lightning Guard, she locked the knight's gauntlet down with her hands, having the greatsword's blade rest on her shoulder and pin him down.

Fighting against his strength was rather difficult, but through his one cleared eye, Dalton gave her a very strange look. "Aren't you forgetting someone?" She grunted with a smile. Ducking her head at his widen eye, and seeing the dragon's Wild completely drain out, Endzeit dived behind her. Spinning around three times and roundhousing the knight in the face with a loud crash. Feeling the impact, Sarious let go of him and defended herself from the massive force of the fully charged kick. Hearing the buildings crash and break apart in the distance, as well as the word "Victory!" appear largely over the two's head.

As the crowd cheered for the two, the woman laid down in the streets to recover. Just now noticing the large grove in the ground from where the dragon tried to stop his final attack in the road. Sitting down himself, he panted heavily. "Damn that hurt." He chuckled, rubbing his left foot and half rocking to ease the pain. Making Sarious laugh and shake her head.

"That went better than expected." She smiled at him, while shyly waving at the audience. A few moments later, the sound of the Thundercat mount could be heard coming through the damaged buildings. Just barely getting through before the game repaired everything. With Dalton riding it, he stopped it in front of the two. Noticing a rather crossed look on his face, made the two worry a bit.

"...I just want to know one thing." He said, a bit sternly. After hearing the noise in question from her, he took a faint breath. "What level are you?"

An exhale came from her. (Here we go...) "...43."

"43..." He repeated it, almost in a raspy voice. Only to soon start

chucking afterword, leading to a loud laughter. It made the woman uncomfortable while looked at Endzeit and seeing the red one shrug at her. Unexpectedly, Dalton picked up Sarious and the dragon with each arm, still laughing and spinning them around once. "43! You're half my level, and you beat me!? Unbelievable!"

"Wait, you're not mad?" She asked, still feeling rather uncomfortable.

"Judging from his laughter, I think he is." Endzeit whimpered. "But that might be our fault. Too many blows to the head."

"I just can't believe it! Wow!" The knight set them down, taking a good look at them. "I mean, I've played with skilled players. Even dueled quite a few, but nothing like you guys. You barely leave any openings, don't just rely on the heaviest damaging attacks-" He interrupted himself, holding his head while smiling. Then going back to hugging the woman. "You, Sarious... I Salute you! You've gotta be the best player I've ever met!"

"N-no. I'm nothing without Endzeit." She blushed.

"You hear that? It was all me." A small stomp on his foot made him yelp and fall down. "Not the left one!" He hissed, holding it up and grunting.

"Anything you guys want, it's on me." Dalton finally let go, looking at the two and waving at the crowd. At first, she just thought he was putting on a face for good sportsmanship. But everything that he said... There wasn't a bit of falseness in it, none of it seemed fake. She really impressed this player, and he didn't come off as jealous, envious, or...

"...I want to join your Faction."

Chapter 3

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"What makes him alive?" The older one asked. Half chewing on the end of her pen. "The way he talks? The way he moves? Because devs have been getting better at programing these things."

"...It's not quite that."

"Then what is it?" Some silence. "Is it possible that you've been without someone you can lean on for so long that you've developed an attachment for-"

"He has hopes." Trisha said. "And fears. They're not fake or programmed in, either. They're... Developed. Learned. Like a real person would."

"Is that what you think makes someone alive?" Another silence. "Because many AIs are being programmed to learn and-"

"Insult the players? Joke around with them? Play around with them, and actually understand terms like YOLO?" This time, the older woman stayed quiet for a bit. "He thinks outside the box. He knows the programming language that is used in Skyline. He's found access outside of the game, and I'm guessing the entire internet. He learns and understands how a real person would. Better than most, really." A sigh from her. "Whoever 'Developed' Endzeit programmed something else into him that makes him different."

"And what would that be?"

"...They gave him a soul."

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"You are not a Tamer." The black knight halfly joked at the restaurant booth. Highly amused at the accumulating dishes that the dragon was burning through.

"That's what I keep telling her." The red one spoke with his muzzle full. Moving onto another plate, but the woman beside him place a hand on it.

"Taste your food, you. Okay?"

"Why? He's paying for it." He tried to snort, but just pulled the plate

from under her hand and devoured it.

"You were not kidding about how much he eats." Dalton chuckled, making her a little embarrassed. "You sure you don't want anymore? I really don't mind."

"I'm alright. I know the drawbacks to over-eating. He clearly never experienced it."

"I never found anyone rich enough to experience it." Another full muzzle of the dragon's words, as he tried to swallow the entire thing. Eventually getting it down and exhaling. "But I'm reaching my limit."

"Really? Only 43 plates?" Sarious grumbled sarcastically at him.

"How much does he usually eat?"

"I cap him at 12. Sometimes less if he makes me mad or causes me other bills." The little one whimpered, trying to look innocent.

"Getting close to four times that. Here, I thought you were almost starving him to death."

"As if. I'm the one suffering in this relationship."

"You mean your wallet is." Endzeit picked something out of his fangs. "And we earn enough to keep you stable."

"Only out of dumb luck. We could've bought a house by now with your food budget. And I've only been playing for like three weeks!"

"Maybe rent an apartment. Lands in the city are very expensive."

"You haven't seen your bill yet." Just then, a small UI appeared before the black knight and he looked at it with surprise.

"...Okay, you could afford a house." He chuckled, accepting the charges.

"How much did it come to?"

"I'm not saying. Only because I don't want you to feel bad." The woman crossed her arms. "But it didn't make a dent in my wallet, so don't worry about it."

"That means I can eat more-?"

"No." The two players strictly said, making the small one whimper and lower his head.

"But back to the main topic, have you ever thought of calling yourself something else? Tamer is very misleading to players now."

"We've been... Brainstorming here and there, but nothing decided." She said, rubbing her left arm a bit.

"I keep suggesting Dragonmaiden, but she says-"

"No." Sarios answered rather quickly. "You don't own me. If anything, I own you." A decent in his ears and a small whimper made her roll her eyes.

"She kinda has a point. But you should try to stay away from names like that. Try to find one that tends not to state one over the other." Dalton pondered.

"Meaning what exactly?" The woman asked.

"Well, from what I've seen, you guys treat each other equal-"

"As if." The red one grumbled.

"I meant on the field. Not one of you really have a specific job, but you make it work as a team. You should find a name that represents both of you, instead of just one over the other."

"Like Tamer does?" Another grumble.

"Well... Yeah. Come to think of it, it does kinda give control to a specific person." The man scratched his chin in thought.

"Don't worry about it right now, I'll think of something eventually." Sarios muttered towards him. Pulling up her HUD, she let out a slightly disappointed sigh. "We're behind on schedule. I wanted to get done a few tasks around Hilterwood by lunch."

"That's my fault. Let me come with you, might be able to speed things up." The knight said, getting out of the booth.

"How exactly?" The woman questioned while doing the same. Seeing a large mist of blue pixels disappear from both booths that they used in the past hour. Still shaking her head at the ridiculousness of it.

"I got an idea. It's when I got Impenetrable." She gave the man a questionable look. "The reason why you guys took a while to take me down wasn't because my level, or that your damage was bad. Actually, it was very good for 43. It's because of that buff. It drastically reduces the damage I take, on top of the plate armor."

"So you're more of a tank then?" The dragon asked, getting a chuckle

from him.

"I can be whatever you need me to be. But for you guys, I'll tank." He lead the way out and summoned his Thundercat. Getting on it, and offering a hand for the woman with the dragon on her shoulder. Letting her ride it in front of him as the large panther took off to the nearest teleport system.

The meadow was rather quiet and unpopulated by players. A rare sight to find in Skyline, which almost gave a feeling of loneliness with the dark clouds passing overhead. Within the faint darkness, a black figure was rushing through the fields, disturbing the large herd of hairy Bo-Bisons. Causing quite a few of them to panic and trample the fields with their six hooves. Leaving behind the ones that always looked a bit deformed and on edge. A quick slap of the shadow was all it took to set off their rage and follow it. Tagging one cow and bolting straight for another. While also getting a few extra dire wolves in the process.

Gathering them all in the center, the black one stopped. Activating his defenses and slightly roaring at the group. Seeing his right eye once again glow with a deep rage. "Ready!?" He shouted outwards, but it didn't seem to be towards the large group he provoked. Soon after, he charged the mob of enemies. Cleaving through the first few, but getting heavily surrounded by the sheer numbers.

A heavy quake from the already shaking ground seemed to stand out from the rest. And a moment later, several wolves and a couple of bison were shot upward from a red explosion coming from the below. Making the heavy creatures land on another and stun them briefly.

From the outside of the pile, the woman struck one of the Bo-bisons hard, sending a large electric shock between several of the creatures. But not harming the Knight in the center, who was still managing to cleave through several enemies at once while grunting through all the gores and bites. Hearing the dragon's roar as his Hp depleted quite a bit got Sarious' concern, but the sudden jolt in his Wild meter put her a little at ease. Though, it also warned her to step away, especially when the meter suddenly drained quickly and a massive impact could be heard.

Nearly half of the creatures exploded into a shower of red pixels while the Endzeit rebalanced himself, shaking his right paw. Meanwhile, Dalton used the new cleared area to turn the flank around on the enemies, now surrounded by the three. A quick slash upward, and another rotation one

across, the knight took out two wolves.

A step forward provoked a dire wolf to attack the woman, but she leapt over it. Landing on a bison, she braced herself from one of its awkward, jagged back horns, and pried open its large shoulder blades while charging up one of her strikes. Very quickly letting go of the armored plates within its mane, she struck the bare spine with a heavy palm. Sending an electric shockwave through the large beast and exploded in a wave of lightning, culling the Bison and a few nearby enemies.

The rest of the enemies were already weakened, and it took no time to finish the group. Once the final bison was taken out, the dragon cheered loudly into the meadow with a roar. Making the other two smile while the clouds passed by. "That was Intense!" The red one shouted.

The knight chuckled. "Yes. A bit reckless, but it makes it more fun and much faster. I started doing this when I got my Iron Defense ability. Granted, I was loaded with Hp charms to make sure my health didn't go below half, so."

"I can see why you suggested it. Though, now I kinda wish I invested more AP [Ability Points] into my AoE [Area of Effect] attacks." Sarious said, looking at her UI and reading the summery of the battle. "Three Tasks complete in ten minutes. That would've taken me all day with how hungry and lazy he tends to get."

"Lazy only because doing them one at a time is boring. This is just... Invigorating!" A slight purr came out of him when he detected the respawn. Going after a few of them in a playful motion.

"Hey, we're done with these-"

"Don't care." The dragon replied, getting another chuckle from the man while the woman sighed. Shaking her head and returning towards the road that lead to another area.

"Just let him play around a bit, I guess. More exp can't hurt." Dalton shrugged, walking beside her. "Just as long as he doesn't try the pulls I did just yet. I only make it look easy." Another head shake from the woman.

Another loud quake from the red one's direction go their attention, chuckling at the dragon's howl afterword. "Endzeit, if you really want to try that, go after the grey wolves on this side. I need a few things from them." A slight purr came from him, then he started prowling to the other side. "I swear, it's like he's on catnip or something."

"I guess it just really excites him. Here I thought over-eating might ruin his performance. Apparently it makes him better-" She covered the man's

mouth with her glove.

"Don't you dare say that out loud!" She whispered, getting him to laugh. "Seriously, if he hears that, my wallet is going to remain empty for the rest of my days."

"Okay, okay." They chuckled. "Not to ruin the conversation, but... Are you sure you want to join the Faction?" She sighed and looked away. "I only ask because I see you struggling with it." A bit of silence from her. "Can I ask why?"

"...My last one, in another game... I guess took me for granted. I never really felt like I was good enough for one after that. I felt like I was just better off alone, or with someone else I could trust." She looked at the red dragon in the distance, toying around with several smaller wolves like he was herding them. "It's why I wanted to choose Tamer, so I could rely on something..."

"That wouldn't betray you. Take advantage of you, and always listen to you. I can't say that's exactly what you got, but..."

"He will still obey. He feels more alive than any other pet that I ever thought I would have. Even if he does have a few... Quirks." Another glance at the red one, finishing up a group of enemies. "Not the Giant Manti, Endzeit. I don't need those for anything." She shook her head with a smile. "You've influenced a bad habit on him, I think."

"Eh, call it a more exciting way of playing the game. It's still kinda easy until you get up to the elite wraiths." That term always half worried her. The deeper Sarious got into the game, the more grotesque the wildlife seemed to get. Even the Bo-Bisons that were notoriously aggressive here almost seemed corrupted and deformed compared to the rest of the herds. The extra back spikes that always came out crooked. The swelling bulges that could be difficult to see within the thick manes. Sometimes even growing fangs and tusks, claws on one of their six hooves. "A Sacrificial Assault can just wreck an entire pull and become very dangerous."

"Sacrificial Assault?"

"A type of Elite Wraith. Sometimes they get prefixes that make them stronger in some ways. Sacrificial Assault tends to have half the Hp of a normal, but they do double damage."

"So, Glass Cannon style, huh?" The woman pondered.

"Yeah, it's unreal when it's something ranged, or just already does a lot of damage to begin with. That's why it's good to play in a party, it's so easy to get ambushed and overrun by some of them later on."

"I can imagine why..." She said a bit sadly. "...And I'm guessing you want me to party up with others too."

Dalton exhaled. "...Yeah. But with people I trust. Maybe a few newbies still getting used to the game, but overall..." Another exhale from Sarious. "Like your companion keeps saying, you can't do this game alone."

"...I know. But-"

"You don't like putting your hands in other players, thinking they'll let you down." She looked at the knight for a moment. "I felt the same way. Granted, with my extra cash backing me up, I could get alot farther than others, but eventually..."

"You would still have to party with others." She mumbled.

"Welcome to Skyline." The man muttered and chuckled a bit. "It's just something you're going to have to accept if you're going to stay here. And I want you two behind me in the later raids."

"Later raids..." The woman whispered in thought. "They probably have those prefixes too, don't they."

"...Yes. But only way later on." She nodded faintly. "I won't force you, Sarious. But I would like to nab you before anyone else does." The woman exhaled quietly.

"Can you give me a few minutes with him? Just to kinda..." He held up his hand.

"No need to explain. I'll be on all day, and I do have a Faction Meeting to host tonight." He brought up his HUD and hit a few things. A moment later, Sarious got a UI for a Friend Request. Once again, taking a painful look at it made her heart ache. "Am I your first?"

"...No. But..." He lightly chuckled, still smiling at her. With a deep breath, she accepted it. Seeing him and Meowmix currently online.

"There. If you decide, then you just need to send me a voice message." Another silent nod, but looked at him when she got a hand on her shoulder. "Just don't get ahead of yourself, okay?"

"...Alright." She muttered. Hearing the dragon's purr getting closer to them, she couldn't see Endzeit anywhere in the fields, but could still see his Healthbar. Getting suddenly grabbed by a red frame from behind made her yelp a bit, feeling his muzzle and stupid hair behind her. "What's with you?" She almost growled at him, getting Dalton to chuckle.

Taking a hold of her hand, the red one made her pull up her HUD and then her inventory. Scrolling down towards an item called Mantis Blade, and a good twenty three in the stack. She made a noise in question about them, and then he checked the records for them on the Trading Post, selling for 345k a piece. The sudden shock almost made her speechless for a moment, getting the knight to look at them as well. "Yep. Seems about right."

"The hell?"

"They're used for crafting, but not very many people seem to go this way to find these enemies."

"Which explains why we never seen anyone yet." She muttered, looking around. Getting a large lick on the back of the neck and up her ear, the woman growled and tried to grab the red one. Still hyped up as he went towards the respawns. "Damn thing." She grunted, wiping off the lick.

"He's just being affectionate. It's weird, I don't see any other pet do that or act the way he does." Another chuckle. "Alright, I better go. I got a voice message a while back asking for some assistance." She gave him a bit of a worried look, as if to ask why he put her first. "Don't worry about it. It's nothing major, and it could wait. Still, just take some time to consider the invite, okay Sarious?"

"Okay." She said, a little lighter this time. Seeing the man pull up his HUD and his Thundercat appeared before them. Mounting it and saluting her before taking off towards the nearest Teleportation Center.

With a heavy sigh, she watched him run off, then watched the dragon take out his last group. Focusing his heavy attacks for last and shattering the remaining enemies quickly. "You're learning that a little too fast." She shouted at him, walking through the long grassy field.

"It's just soooo much fun!" He purred back. Catching up to her and circling around her in the air. "We need to do this more often. I wonder if I can edit one of my abilities to take the hits better." He pondered.

"The more we do this, the worse off my repair bills are going to be." The woman grumbled. Punching a respawning Mantis in the face, then locking one of its bladed arms by stepping under it and putting pressure on the back of the shoulder. Dropping to the ground and causing the appendage to dislocate. Hearing the creature hiss in pain, then muffle when the dragon sat on its head. "Do you mind?"

"But it's so much more exciting and much quicker. I mean, after a while, you can only punch someone in the face so many different ways."

"Would you like me to demonstrate how many different punches I could do on your face?"

"Maaaaaybe." He teased, trying to tickle the occupied woman with his tail, until she tried to bite it. "Okay, fine." Endzeit tossed his snout, bouncing off the creature's head and flipping backwards into the air. At his peak height, he somehow changed direction into a frontflip and landing heavily on the Mantis' head with a heel drop. Shattering it into pixels.

"Show off." He gasped overdramatically, getting her to smirk and chuckle a bit before carrying on past the tall grass. It opened up into a larger meadow with many hills in the back ground. All surrounded by forests, stretching on into the distance. Only seeing the one real road; the one they came from. "It's beautiful, isn't it." She said, taking a seat. Feeling him sit directly behind her, crossing his legs under her knees, and resting his paws on her waist. Hearing her once again almost growl only made the dragon nuzzle her on the neck a bit. "Seriously, you are way too affectionate today."

"Think it was something I ate. It made me feel so..." He murred a bit. Breathing deep while looking in the distance. "*Sariously* though, it is beautiful." An attempt at a harsh glare only made him chuckle, and her as well.

"...What do you think I should do?"

"You know what I think you should do." He muttered. "Find out what I ate and give me more-Ow." Feeling some of his fingers begin to bend backwards by her well only got him to chuckle. "Okay, okay. Mercy, you."

"Like you really deserve it." Another nuzzle. "If you don't stop doing that, I'll punish you."

"You like it." Another sharp bend backwards of his paw got him to yelp as she turned around and grabbed his muzzle. Blowing into it point blank got him to whimper and cough. Snorting out the air and sneezing constantly for a good few minutes, stumbling along the grassy grounds as the woman laughed at him. "Why!?" He asked so seriously, but even he couldn't help but laugh.

Eventually they recovered, and Sarious pushed the dragon over, resting her head on his belly. Still holding and massaging his muzzle from the very strange feeling like he somehow sneezed inward. Occasionally cursing a bit and making the woman smile. "But seriously-"

"Sariously." He mumbled strangely.

"You want another one of those?" He did his best to whimper in reply

as she tapped his chest with the back of her hand. "Should I join them?"

"You're gonna have to join someone's eventually, unless you want to go through the pain of making your own." She never really thought of that. "Trust me, if you're having a hard enough time bringing yourself to join one, trying to recruit for one will probably kill you."

"I suppose you're right..." She was quiet for a few moments, looking up at the clouds overhead as they passed through the sky. Still unbelievable how real it looked.

"Why are you hesitating so much?" She didn't look at him. "Just do it."

"I just don't like other players-"

"And you think I do?" That time she glared at him, still tending to the strange feeling in his muzzle. "But like it or not, you can't do this game solo. That's just how it is. So either you get to know others within a guild, or forever team up with PUGs [Pick-Up Groups]."

"Don't even get me started on those. They're horrible to work with." She exhaled loudly. "I just have a hard time bringing myself to..." Trailing off, she faintly seen his paw motioning for her to go on. "What if I'm not good enough to suit them?"

"You're good enough." Endzeit replied without a second thought. "We just beat up a player twice our level. I'm pretty sure we qualify." A bit of a sour look on her face almost stated otherwise. "I think I get it though. You don't feel like you've met the requirements yourself. You think you need to be overly prepared, beyond expectations. Or perhaps..." He scooted down so her head was resting on his red chest. "You're expecting them to expect too much out of you." There was a pain in her eye that she was trying to hide. "I know what it's like though."

Sarious was quiet for a while, petting the end of his tail that curled up and fluttered every so often. "...How much do you think a place out here would cost?"

"As in Real Estate?" She nodded, not even paying attention to his strange look. He sighed, closing his eyes. "About 2.5 million."

"...Really?" That time the woman looked at him, only to see him nod.

"It's way out of city limits, let alone teleportation limits. An area near Wraiths, regardless of how much of a threat they actually are. And well... There's nothing around for miles. It wouldn't be expensive, but why?"

"...You wouldn't like to live here?" He shrugged.

"I wouldn't mind it, but it's just almost better to pay for a room every night. I mean, housing is quite expensive when you get down to building the damn thing. Then to decorate it, mark off your land. Defending it from enemies..."

"Can it be reclaimed or damaged?"

"Well, reclaimed if certain payments are not made or something. But not destroyed by other players. If the land is destroyed by future patches, yeah. It can be removed that way."

"I guess it wouldn't cost much to replace it."

"...Where did this come from anyway?" She didn't reply. A faint grumble from him, and he left it alone. The two falling asleep in the grass.

Chapter 4

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The older woman tapped the pen on her arm rest. "They gave him a soul?" She asked, not believing it. Sighing and fetching her pad once again. "No offense, but I think you're imagining this, Trisha. Perhaps maybe there is something different about this AI, but-"

"That's the thing, though. He's not an AI. He's more of a person." She sighed.

"...What do you think defines a person?" A long silence filled the room. "What do you think defines Endzeit as one?"

"...He's just... Sensible. He seems to have been through pain like I have. Experienced it before I met him."

"What do you mean?"

"...He was... I guess you could call him Second Hand. I'm not sure how many other players he was with, but it's possible that a few of them hurt him."

"Have you hurt him yet?"

"...Yeah. Alot. Mostly mistaking him for an AI. It's no wonder he dislikes players like I do."

"Dislikes players?" The younger one was quiet. "Why do you dislike other players?"

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The Faction Hall was huge. Almost already lost from the Teleporter, if it wasn't just a straight line behind her. Hearing the dragon on her shoulder whistle and echo through the dark castle gave a very uneasy feeling. "Well, this is... Nice? I really like the blood on the tattered tapestries." The red one muttered.

"It was a Halloween special. I've always loved haunted castles like the bad guys have in fantasy movies." Dalton chuckled. "The only reason why I started a Faction was for this beauty. After that, and a few other failing guilds, mine started to get some members. Here we are, breaking 150 in like a year and three months. Hard to believe really." He opened up some large doors to a very large and long table. Several people already sitting and chatting with one another. "It's very easy to navigate, as long as you don't go snooping around. If you ever get lost, then you can always leave the Hall from your Faction Menu. Just remember, you'll teleport exactly where you left off in the field."

"I'll keep that in mind." Sarious muttered, already feeling uncomfortable seeing the other people begin to half eye her. She took a seat away from others while the Knight took the large chair at the far end. Kicking out another player goofing around with him.

"Looks like Boss brought us some new chow." The young man who's seat was abducted teased from afar.

"Ahh, Fresh Meat." Another jested, in a very deep and rather scary voice.

"This isn't the first Diablo, DarkFlames. And you are not the Butcher." Dalton chuckled. "Everyone, this is Sarious and her-" He cleared his throat, nearly making a mistake. "Companion, Endzeit."

"Companion? So she's a Tamer?"

"Not exactly. If anything, a different variation of one."

"I thought you didn't like Tamers, Boss." One of them grumbled. Dressed in rather noble robes.

"I'm not a Tamer." Sarious grumbled back.

"If you have a pet-"

"No. Seriously." The black knight interrupted again. "She isn't a Tamer. She's something else entirely. Better than one, I'd say."

"Then what are you?"

"We're an... Iconoclast"

"Yeah-We're a what?" The dragon questioned her rather seriously.

"I've heard of that term before."

"It's like... A destroyer of religious symbols or something." Another explained.

"Close. It's more someone who almost attacks settled beliefs. Destroying the image of Religion, in a way." The robed man answered.

"That... Actually fits quite well." Dalton pondered, getting a few strange looks from his guildies while they went back and forth between him and Sarious. "You'll have to see it for yourself. But Iconoblaster fits."

"It's Iconoclast." The Noble and Sarious grunted at the same time, covering their eyes.

"I donno. Iconoblaster sounds kinda cool-" A loud whimper as she placed a hand on the dragon's head. "...Or Iconoclast. That works too."

"Wait... I thought we only recruited 65+." A woman asked, looking at the knight once again. "That is a level 45 Glove. Either she's severally outdated in gear, or...?"

"She's unique, and if we run her with Regondale's group, she'll catch up in no time-"

"My group?" The Noble asked, almost offended.

"We're in level 70 areas. That's twenty five levels above her-"

"Which won't be an issue. If anything, they'll be carrying you guys. Not

the other way around." The other woman gave a look of disbelief. "They beat me in a duel. The only thing I gave them was Initiative, as I usually do. I've seen how they work, and you guys are in good hands."

"PvE [Player Vs Environment, as in AI] and PvP [Player vs Player] are two entirely different things-"

"Scharlot." Dalton said a bit thickly. "Take my word for it."

She sighed and shook her head. "If she gets killed, then it's your fault."

"And when they save your asses, you can buy them dinner. Just expect the tab to be over 5 million." A rather surprised look from her, then it trailed to Sarious.

"It's all him." The younger woman pointed at the dragon.

"It's all me." The dragon pointed at himself.

"Was the tab seriously that much?" Sarious asked Dalton, and he motioned 'So-So' while lippping 'A Little Higher'. Making the woman sigh and rest her head on the table.

"Anyway. Raid talks. Can you guys get to 75 in a couple of days? I'd like to have you ready for raids by the weekend."

Dusk was settling in quickly. It's like this forest was tainted by something, and it did everything it could to keep the sunlight away from it. The air felt heavy, possibly from a nearby swamp which held alot of stories within. Many of which was the cause of many wraiths and creatures.

The creatures... At the higher levels, they were almost nightmarish by design. And just as threatening up close as they looked. Particularly these Minotaur-centaur things. It's bad enough they had four legs, and were ridiculously hard to trip or stagger, but the extra two arms at its torso were also wielding hand axes with a nasty DoT [Damage Over Time, think effects like Poison that deteriorate Hp constantly] was devastating at its full dosage.

A few wild swings from the enraged creature nearly caught the red dragon and Archer, but it was exactly what Sarious was hoping for. Blocking a swing with her Lightning Guard, she sent out a stunning shockwave, giving the team an opening that they needed. "Scharlot! Broadhead Arrow!"

Regondale shouted, keeping up a protective shield on everyone. Though at times rather arrogant, he knew what he was doing while taking command.

Scharlot drew a specific arrow in her shortbow and fired it at the centaur's head, getting the large creature to growl and become disoriented. "Sarious! Strike the horn!"

"Better idea! Sarious!" Endzeit suggested, taking a stance beside the beast at its hind legs, while the woman took one at its front. With a heavy forward hit, the two struck at the leg joints together, tripping the Minotaur and making it fall on its side. As the two pinned it in place, the dragon hit the horn with a slightly charged hook. Breaking the large bone from the creature's head.

"Alright, that works. Stand back!" The Noble gave a strong motion of hitting the ground, and within a moment a small ball of white hit the creature, followed by a bright pillar. Exploding it into red shards. The group took a breath and made sure everyone was okay. "Well done. But try to follow orders a little better."

"I guess we just need to practice with each other a little more." Sarious said, looking at the dragon who just shrugged. "Whereas our skills are not in any database, it's unknown to you guys what we're capable of." With an UI pop up, the two were very close to another level. "Almost. One more should definitely do it-"

Some movement in the bushes got everyone in a ready stance. Hearing some heavy panting from players as they came through, getting startled by Sarious' group. Especially Endzeit. "A-are you...?"

"We're allies. And that's just a Tamer pet." The archer's explanation put the dragon's ears back, but he didn't argue.

"Are any of you White?" One of them asked.

"I'm a White Mage, yes." One of them whispered their thanks to God. "Someone hurt?"

"Yeah, down to his last Hp." Two more came through carrying a player who was unconscious.

As Regondale looked at him, he muttered something. "Take a break for now guys. I'll tend to these players for a bit."

"Is it...?" One of them asked.

"It's safe here. We pull our targets to a secure zone. No respawns." They nodded in relief. As the dragon looked at the wounded one, as well as

the others, he transformed back to his smaller form. Flying up on the trees and looked around, then flying to another in the distance.

"Where are you going?" Sarios asked him.

"Just looking around. Don't worry about me, I can't Aggro [Attract Enemy Attention] like this." She gave him a less than pleased look. "I'll be fine. Just stay here."

"You better be fine." She grumbled. Still overlooking the area herself.

(It's been ten minutes.) Sarios thought to herself, as Regondale prepared the other party and rested himself. (Where is he?) Tired of waiting, she pulled up her HUD and then her area map. Seeing a small icon of Endzeit's portrait close by, she looked towards the area. "I'm going to find Endzeit, he's not too far from here."

"Be careful. Shout if you encounter anything."

"I will."

"Actually..." Scharlot spoke up. "Don't forget that you can use your Faction Hall Teleport in battle. Get yourself out of there quick if you absolutely need to." She nodded in response, and left to find her Companion.

The forest was already dark. Almost pitch black, if it wasn't for the faint light of the full moon and the slight glow from her HUD. It was a half stupid idea to run around with it up, but the woman was unsure if any of the creatures were attracted by the light.

A few noises from afar halted her, trying to make out what they were. Slightly pitched and a little bit out of place, they almost sounded like notes from an old stringed instrument. Coming from the direction that the dragon was located on the map. With a faint breath, she slowly went towards it.

Coming up to an aged path through the woods lead to an enclosed opening. Barely being able to see the small red one on the ground where the notes were coming from. Along with a few deep breaths from his lesser form. "...So watch my chest heave as this last breath leaves me. I am trying to be what you're dying to see. So take me and make me. Weaken and save me.

This hate that you gave me keeps saying the same thing-" He choked and took a breath.

"To sing when you hurt, and to sing when you cry. To sing when you live, and to sing when you die. And here at the end, at the end of the hurt. All the pain isn't the same when it's your time to burn. The hearts for the heartless, the thoughts for the thoughtless. The Lies for the Honest, We're just Gods for the Godless..." Another shaky breath and a few sniffs as the small one started playing with the strings a bit once again. A half a step got him aware of the woman's presence, and he sighed. "...How long have you been there?" He half muttered, and she didn't answer. "...He loved music. Carried this damn thing everywhere he went. Nearly off that cliff past here, if it wasn't for those poison spitters..."

She walked beside him and kneeled down to study the instrument. Slightly covered in some plantlife and faintly damaged. A string broken, and a few scratch marks here and there. "It's a wonder it even lasted this long without its durability expiring." The red one muttered again. Taking another heavy breath. "...I couldn't protect him. He didn't build me for that. All I could do was just try to catch up to him after our tank died. He just ran for his life... And I gave mine to save him. Or at least I thought I did... I wasn't sure what happened until someone else bought me from the marketplace..." Another sniff, and Sarious picked him up gently. Leaning against a tree and holding him close to her chest.

"...I know what it's like... The last thing I said to my mother was 'Fuck you. I'm not going to dad's so you can attempt to OD again.' She died in a car accident, along with my brother and sister." A faint whimper from him as he shed a few involuntary tears. "My father shot himself about four days later, and I was alone. Except for my grandmother and my uncle who... Isn't good with empathy, let's just say that." A few strokes. "I know what it feels like, Endzeit. Especially when you want to be alone, and others just keep pestering you. It makes you bitter, instead of giving you the time you need to heal. All you're reminded of are the bastardized habits they try to drown you with. You see fault and flaws in everything, to the point you'd rather just lock yourself away from the rest of the world."

"Sarious...?"

"Every one of them tells you that you need to move on. That you should rejoin the rest of the horrible world. And that 'Not Doing It' isn't an option. They can't understand how someone could not want to be with another human being... Another Player. But they're not seeing beyond their own two eyes. They... Can't."

"Yet, they force you to stay in line." The dragon added in. "Keep going,

until the day your Hp drops to 0 and you... Disappear. Because that's the only way to live. That's the only way to survive..." Another few strokes, and he tried to return it on the pillows he was up against. For once, not making her angry or uncomfortable. "...You're not a Player, Sarious."

"...And you're not an AI, Endzeit."

"...I'm sorry for thinking that you were."

"...I'm sorry too-" A slightly loud grunt came from him as he lifted himself and perked his ears high. "What is it?" She asked, though just starting to hear very strange noises back at the party.

"...We need to get back." He whispered. "They need us."

It was complete gibberish. It was almost like they were trying to speak over the commands of Regondale with cries of madness. It was nothing like Sarious has ever heard before, and considering the voices... They sounded human.

Rushing through the forest was difficult on her, and flying would be much harder. Even if it was over the forest. The dragon warned her earlier that there were flying creatures above the thick trees that would sometimes drop down and ambush players. But it was very rare for it to happen. But an ambush would explain the sudden attack on her group.

Shoving through a bush, she ran into someone, knocking them forward and completely down. "Sorry! Where is everyone!?" The person was quiet for a moment, then started speaking in gibberish, just like the echoes from afar. Jerking rapidly while standing up, the woman could make out a rather swollen 'Hive' of skin where someone's head should be. Lacking any trace of a face while it flailed its lifeless limbs around. Almost dancing in a player's armor. None specifically that she knew of, but one Sarious has seen before.

"Sarious..." The dragon grunted, growling at the creature. "That isn't a player..."

"What the hell...?"

"It's not anymore." She looked at Endzeit who was keeping a sharp eye on it. "Back away slowly. It can't see, but it can feel and hear you." He whispered. Though his suggestion was difficult in such an area. No matter where she stepped, the creature would know her exact location. Stumbling towards her with more sounds of insanity, the woman took a step back to

position herself for an evade. The single step was all this thing needed.

It held its head forward, draining its swollen head and expelling a torrent of flames from the very top. Just barely getting out of the way of the attack, the fire quickly spread to the trees and lingered for a very long time. "We need to regroup!"

"That is if there's anyone left." The dragon's words worried her, but she could hear the sounds of combat in the distance. As well as a few screams. Pushing through the forest and towards a bright light that illuminated her objective location, she could see the many shadows of these... Creatures. Jittering and jerking constantly as they moved through the shadows like she did.

Getting close to the light, one of these things got close to her. Sarious' instinct was to punch it in the face, right in its swollen head as it sprayed out a bit of flames and half wailed in pain. "Sarious!?" Regondale shouted.

"I'm here!" She replied, feeling the dragon leap off and transform as they came closer to him. Still trying to protect the wounded player that was brought by the other group. "What the hell are these things!?"

"No frakken clue! They just came in like a large army!"

"Or a herd." Endzeit stated. "They're attracted by something, like it's a beacon..."

"What exactly?" Scharlot asked, putting an arrow into another one from afar then pulling back another injured player. Sarious looked at the Red one, constantly staring at the first injured player that was brought to them.

"Endzeit..." She almost whispered to him. "Are they...?"

"They're players infected by Wraiths." He looked at her, a sheet concern within his golden eyes. But a large torrent of flames broke the moment. "Try to get them out of here, Regondale. Me and Sarious will push them back."

"You better be damn careful. I don't have much Mana [Spellcaster version of 'Stamina'] left." The two nodded at him. "Everyone, Fall Back! This way! Get him up and let's get out of here!" Another player from the stray group came over to pick up the unconscious man by the legs. As soon as he touched him, the wounded one jerked and spoke gibberish himself. His ribs bursting out of his chest, then thrusting into the player helping him. Shattering the man in a series of blue pixels after a cry of pain. "Shit!"

With a heavy punch in the chest, the dragon killed the infected man,

seeing him burst into Red pixels like an enemy would. Noticing how the game didn't stop him like before. (...I was correct.) He thought to himself, and felt a strange change in his heart.

Turning around and going after the closest Grudge, he jumped over the archer and hit one with his knee. Rotating with a right backfist against another creature, then a heavy hook with the same arm on the first one. Building up his Wild more and more with every constant strike between the two. Finishing the two with a roundhouse and a spin kick in one rotation.

With one of Sarious' kills, the two leveled up in a flash of bright light. Feeling completely refreshed, as well as a new power unlocked. There wasn't a better time for it, and the dragon went after three more of these Grudges. Stunning them with a heavy hit one at a time, building his Meter past it's limit, and turning the flashing colors into a bright white when the three were taken care of.

He could hear the heard of them still passing through the forest, but one in the far distance looked almost familiar to him. The armor worn by it, the color and slight damages to its blue uniform. All at once, Endzeit got enraged. Charging the target with lightning speed and slugging it brutally. The large crack of the attack echoed through the entire forest, and drained the entire Hp of the Grudge, but it didn't shatter.

With two heavy hooks against the main target, a large wave came from the swings. Hitting a couple other Grudges that were trying to flank the dragon. Completely focused on the target, he gave it an uppercut, then a slam down. Followed by a body blow. A swinging upward kick launched the red one into a spin and he landed a second kick before a sweep with each leg. Sending out faint waves and tripping the other two Grudges that tried to attack him.

With a rising blow to the stomach, the red one backflipped and kicked the target high into the air. Then continued his evasive acrobatics to avoid a few more Grudges that joined in. Giving him enough room to roundhouse in a large arch, covering an area much bigger than his normal range, followed by a spin kick of the same fashion. All leading to one massive pivot punch that connected with the falling target.

The hit was unreal, finally draining all of his entire Meter as it exploded from his fist. Feeling every bone, every muscle shatter and tear in a tremor that echoed loudly across the region before launching the creature and a good chunk of the forest in front of the dragon.

Sarious covered her eyes while retreating, trying to see through the bright flash of light from afar, and noticing Endzeit's Health and Wild bars deplete quickly before disappearing. Her heart stopped as she froze for a moment. "Endzeit..." She whispered. "Endzeit!!"

She stumbled forward, calling his name through the trees before witnessing the devastation of the attack. "Endzeit!"

"What?" The dragon's voice grumbled, as she looked around quickly to find him. "Up here." He said, leading her to a tree branch with the lesser formed Companion resting on it.

"What are...?"

"It's called hiding and resting. I can't really fight like this, can I?" The question puzzled her. "There's a... Defect to that ability." He grumbled awkwardly.

"Which is?"

"It disables my combat form for a while. Looks to be about five minutes. But good lordy, the Powah [Power]..." He slightly purred, smiling at the memory of the feeling.

"You're insane." She chuckled, constantly looking around to make sure she was safe. Then motioning for him to come down, and he did.

"One of us has to be." He snorted, resting on her shoulder and feeling her hand cover his head. This time, he didn't whimper, but purred into it, smiling at her.

"Let's catch up to the rest, before anything else comes this way."

"Yeah..." He looked behind, still barely seeing the clearing of the forest in the darkness. As well as a faint sorrow that came to the fate of his old companion.

(This Hate That You Gave Me Keeps

Saying...)

Chapter 5

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"Trisha?" She remained silent. "Why do you dislike other players?"

A quiet sigh from the younger one as she tried not to face the therapist. "...They suck. Even with the more realistic communication towards each other, they just suck at being human beings."

"How so?"

"...Have you ever wondered why people nearly a hundred years ago were so much more friendly and trustworthy? Even twenty years ago it started getting to that point again. Where people had to act humane towards one another. Where they treated everyone with respect because to say something insulting to another's face would probably get them hurt or worse."

"It's not that bad-"

"How many games have you played in, Miss? How many did you just study on your way to a Degree? It's different in the field than what you actually think-"

"I know what it's like-"

"No. You don't." She replied thickly. "Or else you would understand what I'm talking about. Maybe you studied it from afar, or through someone else's experience. But when it's an attack on you. On your Identity. How they treat you, because they can get away with saying anything. Doing anything to disrespect or insult you or your loved ones..." Another sigh. "You think we would've learned this lesson way back when it happened in the beginning of the millennia. It's part of what ruined the culture and forced it away decades ago. Four or five generations of jerks growing into these games without any consequences..."

"Trisha. I understand what you're-"

"Stop saying that." She replied sternly. "You don't. You don't know how much it ruins you inside. You don't understand the effects it creates in your world-" The younger one interrupted herself.

"...Our World?"

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"One bed, double if you have one in stock." Sarious smiled at the Innkeeper. Still hating having to put on this face, especially after everything that happened that night.

"Yep, Last one available too. You're pretty lucky, lady." He handed her the key as soon as she accepted the charge. "Have a good night Miss."

"You too." Another smile as she took off down the hall. Sighing heavily once all NPCs were out of sight. "We really need to get our own place. I'm getting tired of dealing with this."

"It does look exhausting." The red one said looking back at the desk.

"It really is." She grumbled, unlocking the door and closing it once they were in. Looking over the rather spacious room. Seeing the dragon glide to the headboard of the bed and look at her.

"Which side do you want?"

"Does it really matter?"

"No." He snorted, making her smile.

"At least you admit it." She sighed, shaking her head as she walked to the left side of the bed and laid down. Seeing the red one come down on the other side and start laying down against her. "Actually..." He made a noise in question. "Could you...?" Her face flushed, making the dragon curl his neck. "Nevermind. Forget it."

"Could I what?" He asked, seeing her look away. "Sarious? What is it?" He shoved her a bit.

"I was just wondering if you could... Sleep in your combat form?"

"Are you asking if I'm capable?" She didn't answer, but covered her face a bit. A toss of his snout and the dragon got up. Flipping as he usually did and then jumped in the bed beside her. "Happy?" She looked at him with

a bit of surprise, then shyly nodded at him.

Laying there beside him, staring at the ceiling for a little while before searching for one of his paws with her hand. Holding onto it and swallowing loudly as she dealt with her embarrassment. Faintly seeing the dragon's muzzle look towards her, then down at her hand. Studying it for a while, until she whimpered again. Checking up on her vitals to make sure she was alright, she covered her face once again. "I'm sorry..." She muffled.

"...Oh. This again." He looked at her while muttering. Sighing through his muzzle as he laid back and placed an arm around her. Getting her to stop for a moment, until he slightly tugged on her far shoulder. Bringing her head to rest on his chest. "Is this what you want?" He asked, rather sincerely. Hearing her exhale and nod slightly. Rubbing his scaly body with her other arm while they embraced for a while.

Listening to the sound of his heartbeat and breaths, the woman began to relax a little bit. "...I'm sorry. For..."

For a few moments, he just waited for her to finish. "...I'm sorry too. For interrupting our moment back there." It made her smile, knowing it made him smile as well. Stroking her back a bit.

"That wasn't really your fault." The red one lightly shrugged at her.

"But why are you sorry?"

Another heavy sigh from her as she almost drew circles on his abs. "...I shouldn't be treating... The best thing that's ever happened to me like that... Like this..."

"Oh? I'm not." She made a strange noise in question that made the dragon chuckle. "You treat me the way you do because you have to. Because you care."

"I care enough to beat you senseless?" Even Sarious chuckled at that.

"Exactly. Everyone else... They let me do whatever. You're the only one who really didn't let me walk right over you. You're strong, Sarious. And you make me strong too."

"By beating you senseless."

"By beating me senseless." He agreed, getting another chuckle from the two. As she tried to look up to him, the tips of their noses touched. Staring into his golden eyes, her heart fluttered. Staring into her brown-orange ones, so did his. Leaning in for a slight animal kiss, a tap of the lips as he purred a little bit, and once again she smiled. Pressing the full way.

The slight licks of each other's tongues held a very slow rhythm to their breaths. Both almost too shy to push it further. But at the same time, they pressed their slightly parted mouths together, lapping tongues very slowly. And her just realizing that his tongue was forked.

The shape of it almost tickled her, and it wasn't as slimy as she imagined it would be. It had this welcoming warmth to it, even if it was a little damp. It was almost like warm water. Granted, there was a lingering flavor within the muzzle of the dragon's favorite red drink. Leaving behind a strange blend of spicy tomato juice with faint traces of an alcohol, something the younger woman never really cared for. Or was it that she was too afraid to try?

Her mind was in a few places. But one she attempted to stay away from was her current actions. It was a strange feeling that she read with the red one's purple tongue. It was almost curious, perhaps what was inside the woman's mouth. Studying her teeth and own tongue. Almost scanning every little detail, but not so far back as to trigger a reflex. It seemed to somehow know enough.

In the meantime, she tried to study his. How the roof of his mouth had faint ripples. The several fangs that were almost threatening, yet calm like they were comfortable around her. But she couldn't reach the back end, twisting around his own oral appendage. It was fine with her though. This was fine for her.

A few minutes later, she slowly pulled away. Still smiling in those golden saucers that nearly mirrored her. She sat on her end of the bed and pulled up her HUD. Unequipping all of her armor first, then her Aikido outfit. Something Sarious hasn't done since she got the thing. Looking down at her bare figure, she exhaled a bit in disappointment. "What's wrong?" Endzeit asked.

"I figured they'd do something like this." She grumbled, laying down and letting him see a two piece set of underwear that was covering the naughty bits. "I can't take them off."

"And you were going to...?" It made him slightly blush, the same way she was. "Give me a minute." He sat up and crossed his legs. Pulling up another HUD of his own and typing in.

"What are you doing?"

"You'll see. But... It might sting a bit." It half worried her, looking down at her body.

"You're not... Going to make them so big the thing breaks or

something, right?" The question made him stop and whimper. Coughing awkwardly.

"I... I'm not sure I *can* do that. But I'm going to see if I can erase the... Barriers. But erasing them would probably leave gaps. I'm going to send a command to the machine that you use to connect to... Make a record of those areas..." She looked at him strangely.

"You can do that?"

"I can try." He mumbled, getting to half chuckle. "What?"

"You really want permission that badly, don't you?" A loud whimper as she laughed at him, then feeling a sharp pain tap through her body. But only for a couple moments. "Ow." She grunted.

"By the way, it's going to sting now." He smirked at her, getting a playful shove. "Alright, now for the... Clothing." A few key strokes, and he removed his HUD. Seeing her look at him, then the underwear she was still currently wearing.

"It didn't work?" She asked, seeing his muzzle get real close to her and purr slightly again.

"It worked. But... Are you sure about this?" She stroked his muzzle, from the whisker to the eyes. Then around the ears and through the stupid mane as she nodded. Completely staring into her eyes, he took out a single claw, putting it between the breasts, and cut the bra upward. Making the thing shatter in blue pixels. One again, that rush flowed through her. It was almost a wall that she let down within herself. Making the woman vulnerable to him.

The red beast then closed his eyes. Slowly nuzzling the fleshy pillow that he'd gotten used to the past few weeks, and giving them a soft lick. Tracing it with his tongue and slowly opening his eyes to study it further, while his paw took mental notes of the other. Hearing her breaths begin to deepen with every movement, and feeling her pulse faintly through his touch. Slowly curling up towards the center where the nipple resided.

It was the same as her own, to Sarious' surprise. It looked so real to her, felt so real to her. However, something was off. It was like she was wrapped in plastic or a thin cloth. Something keeping it from really making the connection. "What's wrong?" He spotted the look on her face, and she lightly shook her head. "Am I doing it wrong?"

"I'm honestly... Not sure." An ear flicked up towards her. "This is actually my first time, but something doesn't... Feel right." The dragon

stopped for a moment, then looked at his left paw. "N-no, I mean... It literally does not feel right on my end. It's like something's blocking it."

"Blocking? Hmm..." He pondered for a moment, pulling up another HUD with his left paw, typing and moving from window to window. "...Are you willing to try something?"

"I think we're past that stage." She chuckled a little.

"I mean, I can increase the sensitivity from your Visor in... The 'Real' world." He half grumbled at the word, but it was the term she understood.

"But?"

"Buuuuut..." Another half grumble. "It might effect you on the... Other side. I'm not sure how much, but it might make this more enjoyable for you."

"I'm okay with that." He looked into her eyes with a bit of worry. "It's alright, Endzeit. Go ahead."

A faint exhale, and he nodded. "Brace yourself, it might sting a bit." He typed in a few things, and a faint shock went down her body. It really did amplify her senses with a few moments. Feeling everything from the sheets she was laying on, to the warmth of the Red one's body. "How's that?" Her slightly deeper breaths and a faint smile on her face answered her. "Okay, try to remind me to set that back after we're done though. Pain will be affected as well." She nodded, and he closed the window. Getting himself back into position.

Just his faint breathing over the sensitive area sent a shiver through her as the woman started groping through his mane. Almost clenching her hands when he licked the nipple slowly, sending a wave through her entire body and tensing her up. With every soft moment of his tongue, muzzle and left paw, Sarious started moving with the waves. Every inhale starting a new one, making her begin to moan loudly through her closed mouth.

The tongue licked in circles, almost constantly touching a part of the rather large nipple. While the paw focused on massaging the other one. Trying not to squeeze it to the point of pain, and once in a while lightly brushing the very tip. From the sounds of the noises she was making, and the way she was almost pulling his fur, the woman was really enjoying herself. Soon enough, it was time for the next step.

He took a few more licks of the right breast, nuzzling the bottom from time to time and letting it bounce with her movements slightly. Then he pinned her shoulder down with his right paw, keeping her still for a moment while he went back to the nipple. Lightly grazing it with his fangs and almost

catching the tip of it. Letting go, giving it a few licks, then a deep kiss. Sucking on it and making her squirm, along with a slightly pitched whimper. Soon after, a sharp exhale with some very deep breaths, along with the feeling of something slightly wet around his left knee. The one that was inbetween her legs.

He released his hold on the breast, and gave it a few more licks. A few nuzzles, then another strong suck as he tried to pull on it slightly only using that force. It once again drove the woman into squirms and sharp breaths. Getting her to almost claw into his shoulders before he moved on to the other breast. Doing the same thing a few times before another shot of wetness was felt below them.

The sounds she made were getting louder, and it was making him smile. Letting him gain a bit more confidence with his actions and get slightly more aggressive. Pressing his tongue a little bit harder into the pillow, but again not trying to cause her pain. Letting the left one bounce a little harder with her own, unsnares movements, and feeling Sarious grip his horn tightly. Almost pulling it down with another strong hold of his lips on her sensitive area, forcing him to let go. "Ow-ow-ow..." He said, getting a chuckle from her as she stopped. "Not so rough, you." He teased, only to get her to move forward and lightly bite his ear. The clamp made him yelp ever so slightly, but purr at her affectionate strokes acrossed his body. Even mimicking his nuzzles a bit, and returning them with a soft lick on her neck.

As he lightly pushed her down and gave her a deep kiss, they looked into each other's eyes. "Want me to keep going?" He asked, getting a slow nod and a very infectious smile from her. Another small kiss, as he trailed his way down to her breasts once again. Giving them each attention for several minutes and starting her up again. After a few more squirms, and a few shots of wetness adding to the dampening bed, he started to move lower. Licking around her belly, and tracing the lines her slight muscles made with his purple tongue, he started to really smell the excitement from below.

Pressing against the underwear with his muzzle and trying to map out the area, as well as tease it a little bit. Endzeit pressed his nose into her lower lips, getting her to once again gasp and take several deep breaths. Feeling the wet cloth almost flooded with the woman's pre, he licked the tasteless substance a bit. Making a slight face at the texture of the clothing. "I don't know why you guys even bother wearing this." He chuckled, once again pulling out a claw on each index finger. Pressing his paws against her outer thighs and slowly moving up her hips, lightly groping them in the process. Until he found the straps to the undergarments. Getting the claw inside each strand and very lightly pull outward. Teasing the clothing against her body little by little while still nuzzling the lower area.

All at once, the underwear burst into blue pixels, and she felt the warm nose pressed against her. Almost squeezing it, but it wasn't far enough in. With a few more nuzzles, and a couple of licks, he pressed in a bit deeper. Getting her to release a squirt directly inside the snout and make him withdraw in a loud yelp. Coughing and snorting loudly as she tried not to giggle. "Thanks for the warning." He grunted, pressing against his muzzle and trying to drain it.

"Sorry. I really couldn't-" She didn't finish her sentence, almost incapacitated by the look on his face. A few shakes of his muzzle and a few breaths to recover, he leaned back in.

"Note to self: don't do that." Another chuckle from her, and then a gasp as he licked the insides faintly. Feeling the two tips of his forked tongue tickle the inside was enough to catch her up to where she was. Stroke after stroke of the appendage was making her grip the sheets hard, even more so when he slightly caught the lips with his fangs. Carefully pulling them back and getting her to release a bit more on his chin and the bedding.

A few more minutes of study, and the dragon felt comfortable with pressing a bit harder. Still stimulating the woman with every little movement. From the massaging of his paws on her outer thighs and hips, to the slight tickle from his whiskers. Getting a little deeper with every press, he came up to a faint barrier with his tongue. A small area that gave a little bit of resistance, but found that he could go under it a little bit. "Does that hurt?" He pressed on it a little bit. "When I do that?"

"...Not really. Maybe only a little..." She said inbetween breaths, making her wonder if something was wrong.

"Tell me if you feel anything painful, alright? I'm half worried about this." He resumed, getting a good feel of the thin barrier before trying to stretch it out a bit. Although the membrane itself wasn't stimulating, how his tongue was tickling her was. Teasing the very top of her inner self, to the point where she squeezed the appendage hard and made him yelp a bit. Squirting him in the mouth soon after and getting the dragon to cough it out on the bed. Making a slight face and getting her to chuckle again at him. A faint grumble turned into a purr when he dove back in. Still teasing the lower area until that membrane was mostly out of the way, allowing him to go deeper inside her. As far as his tongue could go.

A few more squirms as he tried to study the inside with the very tips of his purple appendage. But the area that was stimulating the most was the roof towards the beginning. Focusing on that, but still studying the other areas once in a while, it made the woman squirm constantly. Leaking out the foggy liquid again and again with some contracts. To the point where Sarious

started working on her upper half while he did the lower.

Her breaths became deeper over several minutes. Her moans grew louder, to the point where she couldn't keep herself quiet. A large wave was incoming, and she was trying her best to get over it. As the dragon worked harder with her, they soon came to the point of no return. A series of rapid breaths, and she caught his tongue with a faint yelp. A tight squeeze, and she force it out. Along with a heavy spray. A faint growl came from him as he went back in, fighting against the constant squirts and working her through the orgasm. Only to make her reach a faint second one where she almost shouted. Arching her back and squirting a few more times in the red one's face.

Sarious was almost breathless by the end of it. Feeling a strange pressure in her lower area, like she had to use the washroom. But in the game, you never had to, which half puzzled her. "You okay?" He asked, seeing a bright smile on her face as she nodded. He climbed back up to her side and nuzzled her a bit. Making sure her breathing returned to normal. "You should be fine."

"Yeah..." She managed to get out. "Just need a minute." He chuckled at her, resting his muzzle on her collar. "Where did you learn...?"

"You want the honest truth?" She shrugged. "After you called me a Pervert, I looked into it. One thing lead to another and well..." He shrugged that time. "Your species mates alot."

"Oh my god." She covered her eyes, laughing. "You were watching porn while laying on me? While I was sleeping?"

"They did call it porn, so yes?" He answered rather seriously, to the point where he looked at her with perked ears. "Is that a bad thing?"

"Most people would agree, yes. But if you put it to good use..." That time, he chuckled. Laying back into his original position and giving her a few licks. Seeing her pull up her HUD, and then his. A deep breath, then she removed his pants. Hearing him make a noise in question as she looked up at his bare legs. "Oh... You don't have...?"

He looked down himself to witness that his pelvis was clear and smooth. "...No. I never did." She seen a faintly sad look in her eyes. "But..."

"But what?"

"...It might be ready enough." He looked at her again. "You promise you won't get mad?"

"Mad at what?" His ears lowered as he laid on his side of the bed. Pulling up his own HUD and typing in a few things.

"I've been working on something for a while. And well... I guess I was just hopeful when I was starting this."

"Hopeful for?"

"Your... Permission." He said a bit awkwardly, almost expecting her to connect the dots and grab him by the ear. "And after seeing... Porn, and noticing I was lacking in a certain area..." He shrugged before taking a breath. Hitting one last key before grunting in a bit of pain while a cyan Lower Horn covered his groin, fully erect. "Again, it was just something that I was hoping you wouldn't take the wrong way."

"You...?" She started laughing, making his ears lower. "You made yourself a...?" Another bit of laughter.

"Is it too small?" No answer from the flabbergasted woman. "Strange color? Shape? It's just a work in progress!" He whimpered, seeing her shake her head. "I just... Didn't want you to think I was doing it for..."

"Your own experience?" Endzeit nodded.

"It was supposed to be for you. But I still haven't really tested it to see if it even functions."

"Well..." She looked at it closer, it almost looked braided. With every lace bigger than the one above it. Three large bumps per row gave it an almost triangle shape, while the tip seemed to thin out into three small points. A bright Cyan that almost seemed like it could glow in the dark from the tip, slowly fading into a deep purple when it reached the bottom. "There's only one way to test it." She shyly smiled at the design. But noticing a rather deflated look at his stones. Giving him a questioning look at them.

"They're not filled yet. Something I have to do almost manually each time."

"You mean...?" She looked at his window, and alot of the characters she didn't quite understand.

"I don't really know how to program my own... 'DNA' into it. It's a very long process that would get me into alot of creepy territory, so..." He shrugged.

"What's this number here?"

"Capacity." She looked at him for a moment, then down at the lower

area.

"So, how much you... Release?"

"If my coding is correct, it should release over time. But increase the amount the longer it keeps going. Again, it's not tested."

"So, lets dial this up then." She tapped a few keys on the keyboard before he could really stop her. "Four should do it."

"R-really?" She stopped before hitting Enter, looking at his rather embarrassed and surprised expression before he exhaled. "Alright. It's your session." He braced himself, as she hit the button. Hearing him grunt loudly and gradually turn into a hiss as the scaly bag began to inflate. Seeing the part stretch out and almost begin to turn white as it went past twice its normal size. Another loud hiss and the dragon hit the keyboard. "Okay-okay. Stop... Stop. Too much." He tried to look down and study the rather swollen area.

"That's gotta be more than four times normal size."

"It's not really 'times normal size'..." He tried to think to explain it, as the woman studied it with her hands. About the size of a melon, completely filled with a white liquid. "Think of it more as 1x2x3x4, instead of 1x4." She double took at him.

"...Oh." She looked down at it again. "...Ohhh... Oops."

"It's a very strange thing, I know." She chuckled at him, making his ears turn purple faintly.

"And you were willing to make your... Balls twenty four times normal size for me?" Even he chuckled.

"If it's what you wanted. But..." He sighed again. "It's very uncomfortable right now."

"Then let's give it some relief." Sarious lightly touched the blue tower, fingering and trying to follow each strand in the design as he whimpered at it a bit. Especially towards the bottom. "Still painful?"

"Just stimulating there." A few breaths. "I kinda made up the design itself, but also tried to look at some of the more realistic side of dragons." She looked at him a little bit. "There was alot of... Theories, designs. But next to none of them actually looked... I guess 'real'?"

"That's because dragons don't actually exist in my world." It made him stop for a moment. "They're just... Made up. What you probably seen was fan

art."

"Maybe." He mumbled. "Anyway, one of the things that I kept seeing was-" Another gasp as she touched the base end of the tower. "These creases of some sort. Saying they stimulated alot of pleasure and made them release faster."

A faint chuckle from the woman. "And so you put them in your design?"

"I put it in the coding, but never actually in the design just yet. But the areas are still there. Mostly towards the base, inbetween the..."

"Braids?"

"Sure-" Endzeit grunted, but felt a throb from his shaft. Soon enough, a white liquid started to leak out between the three tips at the center.

"Looks like it works to me. But..."

"But what?"

"You said you couldn't get your DNA or something to work. What is this then?"

"It's Milk." He flat out stated, as if it was obvious. "I mean, it doesn't carry any of my Coding, but that's what it is, right?" A very awkward laughter from her. "Many... Things even stated that they were... Milking the males." That time she bursted into giggles. And as embarrassed as he was, he couldn't help but laugh too.

"It's not supposed to be Milk-" She managed to get out. "It's... Something else."

"Something else white? Yogurt? Cottage Cheese? Frosting?" Another set of laughter turned into giggles and she shook her head. "But people eat it, right? So it's gotta be a type of food." He whimpered when she started hiding her face. Looking down at his own work and trying to figure out what went wrong.

"You-" She tried to speak. "You're better off not knowing."

"Fair enough." He shrugged. "But it's only Bo-Bison milk, so feel free to eat it. I might even have a bit myself-What's so funny!?" He almost hissed at her. Tossing his snout and studying his own works as he leaned up and licked his own tip a bit. Purring at the warmth of the milk that started steaming faintly out of it and rubbing it with his free paw.

"Okay, enough of that you. It's creepy." She patted him on the head and he slightly whimpered. "I don't want you in the habit of self-serving yourself." Sarious stroked it a bit herself, almost smiling at its sculptured design. "It's very... Unique."

"You think so? I designed it myself." He smiled a bit shyly through his purrs. Them growing louder the more she focused on the upper half. Though her hands were not very soft, it was still a good feeling. "No offense, but your species... It looks a little plain."

"Y-yeah. I've never actually seen one in person. But... You can't really go on the internet without eventually seeing it." The woman shook her head. "There's this thing about how people love to go online and take pictures of their genitals. It's silly."

"Have you ever done it?" The question turned her red.

"N-no." She hesitated, then sighed. "...I almost did once, but couldn't bring myself to do it."

"Really? Why-Ohhh, right there." He let out a long murr that got her to smile. "Why though?" She looked at him, still a little embarrassed. "You're stroking off a digital dragon right now, there's nothing to be shy about." Another shake of her head.

"I was too self-conscious about the way my body looked." Sarious could feel the golden eyes overlook her body with a warmth, but going too low and touching a ridge gave him a whimper. "I mean, my real life body."

"That word again-" A light squeeze in the sensitive area and the red one yelped. "Not so hard there."

"My Avatar's body is... A bit different. More physically fit. No birthmarks. It never seems to get damaged or worn out. I don't have to bathe it every day, shave off the extra hair constantly. And... Many other things I really don't want to go into right now."

"It doesn't make it not yours though." He said, reaching down and stroking her arm a bit. Slowing her to a bit of a stop. "No one else is going to use your body Sarious. It's yours." Endzeit smiled at her, and she lightly smiled back. "Besides, it's more of your 'Real body' than you think."

"Of course it is." She chuckled, almost looking at her breasts once again. "I had no idea the Visor could do this."

"It's probably a violation of some sort, but..." He shrugged.

"You think we'll get caught doing this?"

"No. There's no recordings or monitoring within the Inn rooms. But it will scan it afterwards. See what's changed, and if anything is damaged..."

"They charge you for it." They shared a chuckle. "Does remind me though... Exactly how much... Milk is this going to... Release?"

His ears lowered and he lightly shrugged. "It's untested, might not work at all."

"And if I keep focusing on the ridges...?" He let out a loud whimper, knowing what was coming. Trying to scamper away, but she kept a firm grip on the lower horn, as well as his tail. Pulling him on the bed a bit more and onto his knees, face down on the mattress, she reached over and started stroking it with both hands. A bit slow at first, seeing him dig his claws into the sheets and let out a loud groan that was almost a roar. As well as bare his fangs out a little bit.

His breaths went drastically deeper and deeper, turning from purrs, to moans, and hisses. All while the braided tower in her hands began to jolt and pulse. Leaking out more of the warm milk onto the bedding. She could even feel the dragon's tail wagging between her legs, the mane of it even tickling her a bit.

All at once, the red one whimpered loudly as his breathing paced quicker and quicker. Rolling the two over onto their backs, Sarius pointed the cyan shaft towards the red one's head. Feeling the horn thicken and spray several white torrent in his face as the pressure within his stones relieved a bit. Though the woman didn't really get sprayed, using the scaled one as a shield, she got to see much of what was happening within a desk mirror. Laughing when he was trying to catch some of it in his mouth. With a few whimpers, she pushed him back to his side, looking at the mess he made. "More than I expected."

He tried to speak, but his breaths were still very deep. However, the smile on his muzzle was very convincing. "That... Was..." He just purred loudly, licking the extra milk off with his tongue.

"This is why people like sex." She chuckled, feeling much better about the subject now. Almost comfortable enough to... "How's your balls?"

"My what?" He looked at her, then realized what she meant. "Better, but still..."

"Bigger than what they're supposed to be?" He nodded. "They didn't drain too much."

"Enough to keep them from exploding." He half grumbled. "Don't tell

me you want to paint the walls."

"Not really. But..." She looked at the tower again, seeing it still leak out a steady stream of white down the braided hills. Completely wet and still fully erect.

"You... Want it?" He asked, his ears a bit low.

"I... Would like to. But we'll need to go slow. I haven't done anything like this before."

"I can't say I have either." He lifted a paw to take her hand as he laid back on his side of the bed. She accepted it, climbing over him.

"You sure I won't get pregnant through a video game?"

"Preg-what?"

"Nevermind." She chuckled, knowing it didn't make sense after she said it. Feeling the shape of the shaft below her already making excited once again. But first, she leaned up to kiss the dragon once again. Sharing another mouth to muzzle moment together before she positioned the tool.

The slight touch of the three tips trying to form as one was already intense enough. Just prodding her lower lips a bit, as if asking to enter. With a deep breath, she slowly gave it permission, easing down and letting the braided spike slowly widen her. Astounding was the feeling as she stretched slightly to fit it inside, thinking that it might hurt a little. Bump after bump was almost too much for her, and on the fourth one, Sarious squeezed it. Getting the dragon to groan a bit, and fire a warm jolt inside her.

The two took a moment to breathe, just remembering why it was so sensitive to begin with. "Can you increase your sensitivity as well?" She asked between breaths.

"Yes. But..." He almost tried to look down the area. "You're going to have to make sure it drains from time to time." He muttered a bit, and she nodded. Giving him another kiss on his red and white muzzle, as he pulled up his HUD to the setting like it was second nature. Putting it on bar with hers, and groaning against the pain it gave. Followed by a huge wave of pleasure. From every little breath she took, the tower inside her throbbed a bit, squirt faintly more and more as she moved it out of her a little bit. Letting it fully exit and squirt upwards a little bit to grease up the horn.

Another slow entrance was overwhelming for him. Releasing a few more jolts as she just emptied and filling her with a nice warmth. Playing around with the upper half a bit before going lower. Reaching another braid

like a milestone rewarded each other with a massive wave. One that caused her to squeeze and release her own, while Endzeit fired another full torrent into her. Feeling the warmth get very deep inside, but begin to drain as soon as she lifted herself up.

The motions were almost too much for them. Trying to get his mind off of releasing too early, he leaned towards the slightly bouncing breasts in front of him. Giving them a few licks, and this time making the young woman whimper. Trying to suck on the nipple once again, he was interrupted by her re-entering the tool. Rubbing the top half a little bit, then going down to the current record of the second ridge. Feeling the same releases and squeezes as before, as well as her increased volume. With a few breaths, she tried to push down to another level, but it was almost too thick.

A few loud whimpers and hisses, as well as some rotating, and the braid slipped in. Feeling the dragon's horn pulse with a greater thickness before spraying torrents inside her. Making her lower region completely full, and start bulging out slightly at first. The pain it slightly caused was completely overwritten with the sheer pleasure of her orgasm, and it only made the red one release more into her. Increasing the bulge further and further. Him placing a worried paw softly on it, and her putting a hand on it as well, but not letting up just yet. A little bit more, and Endzeit released one final torrent. Expanding the woman's belly to its limit and stopping.

The two stayed perfectly still while breathing, as their lower areas fought against the pressure. Finally rising and letting the heavy feeling begin to leak out of her. Slowly at first, but eventually like pouring a bucket of white water over the dragon and bed spread. As Sarious leaned ahead and hugged him tightly, he did the same. Licking her neck and back a little as she completely drained out. "That was amazing." She said, hearing him constantly purring like it was a song. The slight vibrations almost tickling her.

"We should do this every night." He tried to get out through his purrs, and she chuckled a bit. Feeling her let go and attempt to get up once again, she leaned into the tower, still in its default, penetrating position. Giving the two another warm wave for a greeting. As she tried to raise, her leg slipped off the bed and she fell straight on top of the shaft. Instantly taking its full length and leaving the two gasping. Panting heavily at the squeezes, and her almost getting another orgasm thanks to the increased sensitivity, she couldn't concentrate enough to pry it out.

Instead, the two enjoyed it. Though slightly painful, it took no time at all for the rest of the dragon's sack to completely drain. Feeling herself fill up once again with warmth. Endzeit rose up and embraced the woman, trying to slightly bounce her a little to help the release though. Feeling her belly begin

to once again expand and press against his own. Leaning back slightly to give her more room until the two were finally empty. Looking down at the bulge, a bit smaller than the one before, somehow brought a smile to his face. Carefully petting it and chuckling. "And you wanted to try twenty four."

It even made her laugh slightly. Placing a hand on the paw as it felt around the warmth inside. She almost imagined that this is what pregnancy would feel like. Carrying a comfortable warmth that signified love. Even if she were to somehow carry the dragon's child, the thought would be a positive one. One she would be happy with.

As he carefully laid the woman on her back, he pulled out. Letting the two release the pressure as his muzzle rode the bulge down. Getting a few strokes and pets until it was gone. Seeing a slight warning pop up on her HUD, she chuckled. Expecting such a thing as the dragon made a noise in question. "My IV's low. Should probably check it."

"So, logging off?"

"...Yeah. I should do a few things too." He nodded, getting back up beside her and putting away his draconic horn.

"I'll be here when you get back." He purred, and she smiled. Giving him one more kiss before leaving.

Waking up in the darkness of her old room, she seen the picture of the two in a makeshift hammock. So much has happened since then, but it was the night that she really felt something special about him. Taking the relationship to the next level this night felt like the right thing to do. Though her mind was slightly worried about what others would think, if they ever found out. Though that train of thoughts was interrupted when she sat up. Feeling a warmth dampness where she was laying. Finding herself sitting in a small puddle of probably her real world release.

It started to make sense after she remembered what Endzeit told her about fiddling with that sensitivity dial. It honestly made her chuckle a bit as she started stripping off the blankets and sheets to get them washed. Changing her IV and clothes once again, as well as covering everything in new blankets, she found herself staring at a broken mirror. One that she broke herself during one of her... Bad nights.

Hoping those days were finally over, she couldn't help but look at the person reflected in the shards. Not really knowing who it was. The name of the person was Trisha, yes, but what did that even mean? Who was Trisha? She felt like she's been Sarious for so long that it overtook her identity. Because Sarious is who she wanted to be. Sarious is who she enjoyed being. Because Sarious... Was in love with Endzeit.

Shaking her head, she did her tasks for the night. But kept looking at the visor. As well as the computer the long cord was connected to. Wondering... What if...?

Chapter 6

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"What do you mean Our World?" She asked again. "Trish?"

"What do you think it means..." The younger woman sighed. "...I hate it."

"Hate what?"

"Your world... That world." She half gestured the window. "It's never been something I've been a part of. It's never been something I've been accepted to. I was just forced into it, and pushed out constantly. To the point where I just didn't want to bother trying anymore. Is that what you want to hear?" The therapist was quiet. "For years I've struggled with just trying to find that one answer. That one purpose here. And everytime I tried, something or someone pushes me back. So I gave up. Thinking that maybe I could find a way away from this one. Find a different world."

"Which would be a Game World..." The older one muttered.

"But even there, it felt corrupted. Trashed by the sons of jerks that ruined it before. The only difference this time was that I actually stood a chance. I could stand, if stand for nothing at all..." A slight sniff. "It's no wonder I trusted Endzeit. It's no wonder I want to spend the rest of my life with him. We share the same pain, except he's just... Stronger than I am. He can stand, after everything we've been through-"

"He's programed to-"

**"He Is Not Programed To Do Anything! He's A Person! Not An AI!"** Trish roared at the woman, startling her. Taking a few breaths, then scoffing. "I don't know why I even bothered with this." She said after a few moments. Getting up and grabbing her jacket. "Not like you or anyone could understand." The door slammed.

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"That'll be 1,500,000 Credits." The Innkeeper said, bemused as the two whimpered over the harsh fee. Probably getting a few surprised looks from other players checking out. As a small UI popped up, Sarious sighed and accepted the charges. "I'm not sure what drove you to take three jugs of Bo-Bison Milk and spill most of it all over the room, but I hope it was worth it."

The two sighed heavily, bowing their heads. "We're sorry." They apologized at the same time, and the NPC motioned them to the door. As the two walked out, took a deep breath and exhaled loudly, she looked at the dragon on her shoulder with a faintly growing smile. And he started smiling as well, until the two started laughing in the streets.

"Oh, Bo-Bison Milk. If only they actually knew." Endzeit chuckled.

"Shh. Don't give anyone suspicions." The woman tried to be serious, but was trying to control her laughter. Walking down the streets and taking a deep breath. "What should we do today-?"

"Eat." The sudden answer made her chuckle. "We worked up quite an appetite last-" The incoming hand over his head made him playfully whimper as she shushed. Purring a bit and leaning into it. "But it doesn't matter to me really."

"It matters to you."

"Okay, it does matter to me, but can you blame me?" A shake of her head, but she still smiled. More than she used to. "What do you feel like?"

"Well, that fee was kinda harsh, but..." She half sighed, getting a troubled look on her face. "Trying to cook something right now would take too long. And Dalton would probably want us to... Report last night."

"With the Wraiths, yes." The dragon nodded, getting a bit cross himself and looking off into the distance. Probably of the direction of where the battle took place. "It's a strange feeling, isn't it? Being... Vulnerable to them."

The woman swallowed, nodding at him. "Let alone to go out like... That. It was horrifying. The sounds they were making, the movements." Looking around at a few mounts passing by in the streets, she half hesitated to ask him the question. "Do... They...?"

He studied her for a moment, then looked at their surroundings. "...It's more of a Madness that overcomes them. Odds are the Mounts could possibly get it too. First they would probably give into common Vices. Then grow more and more violent. Aggressive, even towards a herd or a pack. Their own family." He muttered. "I've even heard of pets..."

"I can't believe that." She bluntly stated, getting a worried look from the red one. "You actually *wanting* to eat more? That's insanity." It eased up his mood a bit. "Besides... I won't let them."

"And neither will I." He nodded at her, as they entered a restaurant.

"They turned into Wraiths?" Dalton asked, leaning forward in his chair and onto the long meeting table. A large shadow covered his face from the moonlight and distant hall lamps. Barely seeing the knight's head turn to

every person that was in the party last night. "Are you sure?"

"Positive." Regondale answered. A little irked when the leader turned towards Sarious' Companion.

"Endzeit? Did you attempt to scan them at all?"

"...Yeah. They were traces of each for the most part, but the Wraiths were taking over the resistance."

"Still... It's unheard of." Dalton sighed. Looking at the archer. "And he was at one Hp?" She nodded at him.

"Honestly, it almost seemed like they didn't want to kill him. And the... Other ones that came..."

"That herd." The Noble stated.

"They were drawn to it. It was like he was some kind of tracer."

"Perhaps maybe they were searching for a city to take over. Even after two years of this game being out, not many players really know what's in that swamp area, besides the Wraithgate." The knight exhaled. "It's very possible we missed something."

"Without the advantage of flight, or a reliable scout, it's difficult to map anything." Regondale muttered.

"Endzeit can fly, but..."

"He can't be too far away from her. So either she somehow keeps up on the ground..."

"Or I could take her flying with me-"

"No." The woman grumbled, getting a faint nudge from the small one. "I thought about having a Shadow go through. A Rogue specialized in stealth and trickery scouting for us. Those... Things didn't seem to be horribly aware of their surroundings."

"By their description, I can't imagine that they would." Dalton pondered. "Dark is the only Rogue I know enough to really trust well, but he's more of an Assassin than a Shadow."

"We could raid it. All of us together if we can organize a time." The knight slightly nodded at Scharlot's idea. "It can't be any harder than the Wraithgate. Let alone something Open World [On the main map. Not within a dungeon or another instance like the Faction Hall] being this powerful."

"Are we sure it just isn't an event? Something that the Devs are just planning?"

"I suppose that's possible, sir." The noble muttered. "But this..." He exhaled.

"The way they were infected. The way they were acting, almost possessed or irrational. I can't imagine that happening to anyone. Let alone how unfair it would be." Sarius stated.

"The Devs for Skyline have been trying quite hard recently to kill players. It is a F2P [Free to Play (game)] after all." The archer grumbled.

"Meaning, the longer the player stays alive, the more money people will try to throw at the game to keep it alive." Sarius thought to herself, noticing the conversation was over the dragon's head.

"Well, the most we can do right now is start posting warnings to others. Perhaps make sure that they prepare any other players for such things." The knight got up. "I'm just glad you guys all made it out safely." They all nodded. "I need to get to work soon, but I'll post a thread on the forums before I head out."

"I'll do it, Sir. I recorded a video of our gameplay last night. I can upload that as proof and provide a better warning." The Noble said, getting up.

"Do you have the infection recorded too?" He nodded. "Very well. Thank you, Regondale. Anything else we wish to discuss right now?" Everyone shook their heads. "Alright. Be careful out there. Never fight alone, it's too dangerous. Until we get a better understanding of what is going on with these wraiths, be very cautious. Use cheap tactics to get the upper hand, and always have an escape route ready. Even if it's the Faction Hall."

"Okay." Sarius and Endzeit said a bit shyly.

"Alright, I'm off. I'll see you guys tonight." With a faint salute, Dalton disappeared. Then Regondale. As Scharlot got out of her chair, she looked over at the other two.

"You Tasking anywhere?"

"N-no. I'm going to do a few things in lower level areas or in town. We should be fine." She nodded at the woman.

"Eventually, you gotta tell us what happened to the herd." The archer said, a bit thickly. "You fell behind, and we thought we lost you two. Only to find out they were all gone."

"Yeah, I'm not sure what happened." Sarious looked at Endzeit, who was lowering his ears. "I'll get it out of him later."

"Have it ready for tonight." She stated, walking towards the teleporter. The statement made the red one whimper a bit, still feeling the woman's gaze on him.

"We don't have to talk about it now." She said to him, picking up the small dragon and putting him on her shoulder. Taking a good look at the dark castle now that she had the time, and making her way to the teleporter.

Handing in a few old Tasks they skipped out on, the two found themselves back in the grassy fields from before. A location they called Forlorn Skies, the place where Dalton taught the two a fun new tactic that the dragon could just not get enough of. Always excited to play in the fields with the other Wraiths and just pester them in a large group. The silliness of it all just put a smile on the woman's face as she casually walked through the fields and past the excessively long grass.

Sitting down on a flat hill overlooking several bare fields and watching the sun set in the distance, it was still all breathtaking. Somehow a pleasant shame that this place was hardly seen. Pleasant because it was a spot that the two could enjoy together, alone. Away from other eyes or noisy players. Just the two to stop and relax.

Relax. It felt good to relax after the long days of grinding a bit. Just thinking of it almost made her feel tired. Laying back on the grass and almost yelping at the sight of the hovering dragon overhead. "Good god..." She whispered, getting a faint chuckle and a purr from him as he circled her a few times and laid his silly maned head on her belly. "All done?"

"For now. Might do some more later. Did find you a few more blades though." Another purr as he nuzzled against her chest pillows a bit. "...We should buy this place."

"...Yeah. We should." She said with a smile. "It's perfect. Almost exactly what I wanted."

"What's missing?"

"The house for one." The two chuckled. "But I guess that's obvious."

"Yeah."

"...I always wanted a porch swing. One made completely out of wood, that would rock back and forth. Facing the dusk." He nodded.

"I want a kitchen." A bit of laughter and a few taps on his snout. Playfully growling at it and licking the glove a bit. "A big kitchen. One half the size of the house."

"Geez..." Sarios shook her head. "I swear you love food more than anything."

"Maybe. But..." He lightly shrugged, holding onto her hand a bit. "I'm starting to like something else more."

"It better not be sex."

"It is not sex." He bluntly stated. Getting laughter from both. "...So you're okay with this? I don't think anyone has ever..."

"Fallen in love with their Companion?" A faint nod. "...No. I guess most people do not. But, most people... They have pets. I wanted something more." She smiled. "And I got something more."

"And the others? All the others?"

"...The others... They follow the rules. Guidelines that other people have made for them." A pet on his head. "We don't follow those rules anymore, Endzeit. This world, it's freedom. We should do anything... Everything we like in it."

"You mean... Iconoclast?" She made a noise in agreement. "A Destroyer of Religious Symbols. Someone who attacks the lines others are willingly forced to follow." The definition of it all sounded so negative, yet the deeper meaning... "Last Days." The dragon broke her thoughts. "Or sometimes called End Time or Date. The end of days." Sarios stayed quiet. "That's what the name means, doesn't it?"

"...You found out, did you?" She felt the red one nod. "...Did you listen to the song?"

"It hurt my ears." She faintly chuckled.

"It seems so old now... Yet so powerful."

"Is that why...?"

Lacuna Coil - Intoxicated

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The therapist sat at her desk, took a breath and cleared her throat. "It's been a few weeks since I was able to get these back since you've requested them. If you want my professional opinion on Trisha's condition, she's a bit disillusioned when it comes to identifying the real world. Many cases of people jumping back and forth between different worlds with Virtual Reality causes them to have a hard time to make sense with what is real and what is not."

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The woman sighed, holding him a bit tighter. "It's not the only reason..." She almost whispered.

"What's the other?" When she didn't answer, he nudged her a little bit. "Serious?"

"Endzeit..." There was a painful look in her eyes. "You... This was going to be my final attempt at a world."

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A quiet sigh from her. "VR, like many other things, can be addictive. And those who tend to thrive on such things will do whatever they can to get a fix. With all the recent hardships of Trisha's life of late, it's no wonder she drowned herself in such things. A place that no longer houses the pains of the real world."

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"Final attempt?" He looked at her worryingly. "...Last Days." He muttered. "It was me, wasn't it?" She faintly nodded. "Serious... What is this Real World you keep talking about? Where do people go when they... Log Off?"

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"...Make sense what you will out of these recordings, it's all I have of our sessions. And... Mrs. Johnson, I'm sorry for your loss. You didn't deserve to lose your daughter's family. And you didn't deserve to lose Trisha too."

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"It's... Nowhere, Endzeit. Not anymore." He gave a puzzled look at her. "It's nowhere I want to be, and... I left it. Forever." The woman held onto the red one tightly, sadly smiling. "The air I breathe here... It's poison free. I'll never have to go back there again."