

Winter's Fall

By Dextor

It was a cool morning, yet a bit warmer than most. Mostly due to the sun's greetings not being arrested by the clouds overhead. Still, the thin snow barely covered the surface grass outside. The frost still branching across each window, practicing it's artwork the same way it did each freezing night.

But those windows were sealed. And the covering of a thick brown curtain halted most of the light from shining directly into the polar bear's eyes. Still, it seemed that the smallest break through the common darkness would alert his mind. Eventually getting him to grumble and shift through the covers.

The large black comforter was a very nice aid against the cold, often insulating the warmth quite well. Along with the silk sheets and pillow cases. Ones with the design of a white tiger, often reminding him of Lyago's 'True Form' from that game. And nearly every thought of that game ached his heart.

With a long heavy sigh, the bear began to stretch. Getting himself out of the comfortable warmth for a bit so he could get up easier. Another night of attempting to sleep because the mates planned something in the morning. He never knew how people could do it; sleep on schedule. Whenever the bear planned anything, it nearly kept him awake until he did it. Last night was no exception.

But he did manage a few hours. It would be enough, even if he got a bit cranky later on, it was almost something to look forward to... *Almost*. It was a day with his husband and wife. To go out and once again study the life human beings tended to make for themselves. Though Arson knew the worlds and societies quite well, it was still different from the ones she's experienced. And Beo'Karah, nearly everything was new to him.

The bear smiled almost brightly, just picturing the dragon's face light up and perk his ears at every little thing. It was almost like a hatchling, now leaving his den for the first time and exploring a small meadow. Examining every blade of green grass with such wonder, as if an entire world existed on it.

The thought made him chuckle while getting dressed. Still not bothering with underwear anymore. It honestly was not cold enough to wear

such annoying things as undergarments. It was just another human expectation or tradition they tended to push on others. One he never really understood. But after years of dealing with the uncomfortable folds, snags, sharp stitches, rashes and sweats, he was done.

The bear did what he could in the darkness, then made his way across the long room. Pulling off the curtain that was being held by a simple rod and two nails above the window, the natural light flooded the wooden room. The walls, floor, and ceiling was all varnished wood with many knots in it. It Wow'd nearly everyone who came up to see it, but he already seen it too much. Granted, nothing about it bothered him. Most people don't like the wood floors due to the cold it tended to bring. However, a slight benefit of an Attic: You tend to get the heat from the rooms below. Granted, only a benefit within the winter. To hell with summer.

But before the thoughts of summer and the sharp light could ruin his mood completely, he turned on his desktop computer. His new one that already had a bad history. Granted, he loved how it started up in twenty seconds and was ready to go. Playing the Supernatural Parody by the Hillywood Show, something that would always put him in a good mood, to the point where he would sing along with it. Though he was not obsessed with the show, it was damn good. And the actors, both on stage and off, were very entertaining.

Putting on some socks and spraying some deoderant before equipping a black shirt, he loaded his pants with the basics; wallet, coin pouch, and spare keys to the car, and of course: a small CD wallet with his most recent music discs that he made. They might almost be outdated now, but it was the type of records he grew up to. The pile of eight CD wallets near his bed said it all. Records of both his life and the many others.

Soon enough, he made his way down the two flights of stairs, seeing both Arson and a smaller formed Beo sitting down in the living room. "About time you got up, Bartan." She said, teasing him. "7am, and we thought you would never get up."

"I can go back to sleep if you want to waste half a day. But I might need some help." The polar bear teased back, getting a couple of smiles back, but the dragon's was slight nervous. "What's wrong, Beo?"

His brass ears dropped a bit, looking at the white fox. "You know we love you, right?" Bartan rolled his eyes.

"Who are you bringing with us?"

"Well... That's the thing." He said, his ears turning slightly purple.

"We're not going anywhere today with you." The bear made a noise in question. "You're getting kidnapped." Arson chuckled at his puzzled expression.

"By who?" He asked, only to get sheathed in a large burlap sack and tripped forward.

"Just bring him back by tonight."

"What The Hell, Guys!?" The bear shouted, getting dragged out the back door and then taken off into the sky.

He recognized the wingbeats of a dragon, but the paws were smaller than Beo's. Even though, the brass dragon was in front of him before the crime, it's still possible he learned a thing or two. For now, all he could do was wait until this dragon landed. And possibly think of who it might be.

A few hours of flight drifted by while the white one eventually fell asleep. Getting woken up by the sudden landing of paws on some grass. Eventually getting dropped onto the ground with a loud grunt, then hearing the sound of rock sculpting around them. "...Haytre?"

"Yes, it's me, bear." He grumbled, setting up a fire while the bear clawed his way out of the sack. "It's about time we talked."

"You abducted me just to talk? Haven't you heard of a phone before?"

"I have, and your world doesn't make phones for dragons. Let alone, you never answer your phone." The black one grumbled, laying down by the warmth of the fire and setting up a few cups with some water. Offering one to the bear.

"Fair point." He accepted it. Drinking it down almost desperately. "...So what's this about? Something about The Wrong Side Of Heaven?"

"Not exactly, but kind of."

"The C. Weight Bartan having too much fun with you?" It got the dragon to awkwardly look away and clear his throat.

"N-no. But we're never going to talk about that again."

"Why? Wasn't it fun?" Bartan teased.

"I meant, starting now." The large one growled. "But it's not about

him."

"Dia? And his fun little sessions?" A loud whimper from Haytre, tinting his ears.

"Don't tell me that Bartan..."

"No, he didn't." An exhale of relief.

"Good-"

"Beo did though." Another whimper, and the dragon covered his face with his paws. "It was quite interesting. You should read it."

"I'm not going to-!" A few breaths to compose himself, and the black one uncovered. Meeting the bear's smirk with a grumble. "Why didn't you post The Funeral?" He asked, a bit thickly. Getting Bartan's face to become cross, and almost sad.

"...You knew about that, did you?"

"Yes. For a long time. Even before The Wrong Side Of Heaven got a third act." Silence within the rocky dome. "You were intending to use that as an ending."

"...I intended alot of things for that series. Not much of it was really in plan." The white one got up and stretched a bit, seeing the dragon become green and make him a plant chair. "...Thanks." He impatiently gestured him to carry on. "You weren't even suppose to find Tia alive when you came back. Your Encounter with a slave and teaching them about life was always there, but you were suppose to end up finding Tia's grave in another village. One that was suppose to be setup as a trap against you by the Force of Death within that universe. Trying to expel you into a realm inhabited by a Terrasque." A deep breath from the bear. "But you were going to fight against it in a harsh battle. Eventually throwing the force into the Terrasque, and causing a large backlash throughout the universe. Something you were suppose to end up fixing."

"That sounds... complicated."

"It really was." Bartan grumbled, rubbing his forehead.

"And a bit hard to follow. Let me guess, I was suppose to take his place. Become the 'Santa Claus' for the year of Christmas." The bear gave him an odd look. "Your human traditions are foolish, and I don't know them! On with it!" Haytre hissed, getting the white one to chuckle.

"From there, another idea came up that instead of meeting with the

Force of Death, you met with Tia's ghost. And were almost haunted by her. Torn between her and Elexus, attempting to make something with a love from the past, one that would never amount to much. Or work on a relationship that actually had a future. One that was quite fresh, but would eventually age and..." Another sigh. "And of course, the third option. Make nothing out of either of them, and stay bitter throughout the entire series."

"And what were you planning for that one exactly?"

"...If I had enough people that followed, perhaps leave it to a vote. But I decided not to go that way. Mostly because, I felt like it was too similar to Zhaiothe's Tale. The loved one coming back as a specter to assist and help one so broken-"

"I. Am Not. Broken." The black one growled, getting a loud chuckle from the bear.

"But you see what I mean. It was too close, and people would probably start thinking I have a thing for ghosts."

"Do you?"

"Not really. I just find them somewhat interesting. It's rare to see them outside of horror stories or those going mentally ill. I wanted to show that maybe there was a way to have relief from the torment of loss, and what it could possibly be like if there was." He sighed.

"Because you lost half your family."

"I did. Though it's nothing compared to what you've lost or been through-"

"You cannot measure Loss, bear. There is no unit of assessment that could possibly state that one outranks another." Bartan nodded slowly. "Go on."

"After that, there was the idea of Atlas finding Tia, and Elexus was an Oracle that has gone rogue. With you and the Feys, you guys took over an entire kingdom. Half ruling it with an iron fist. She sent you out to claim lands and villages, but came across one that Tia was in."

"Breaking me out of the charm."

"Mhmm. And well... There was the journey, not only to reclaim your memories or search for the trail of ruin you left behind. But also the one to find Elexus and... Deal with her. It was actually going to show a more stronger form of Tia, physically, in a more Martial Arts sort of way."

"Like that S-I-N-G thing?"

"Yes." Another breath. "Before that, you guys were suppose to encounter a mercenary that was trying to hunt down the Feys. Eventually, those two bribed him with more wealth, and took out Elexus from afar. Ending up 'Sniping' her out of the mercy of Tia."

"Where the hell was I supposed to be during all this?" The dragon curled his neck, almost insulted.

"Well... You were charmed once, you could've easily been charmed again. You were with them, but you kept getting ordered by both Oracles to do their biddings. So in the end, knowing about your reincarnation abilities, Tia told you to kill yourself. Disabling you for the next three hours." The black one stared at him, unamused. "You can see why I didn't-"

"Yes, yes. But you're avoiding the question." He snorted. "Why didn't you use The Funeral?"

"...It never seemed to fit. I was thinking about putting it at the end of Only Inhuman, but... It felt like there was so much more that needed to be done. That needed to be explained, played through. To drop it from there without going further just didn't feel... It felt like a cliffhanger. And this is before even considering David-"

"Dia'vidd." He grumbled.

"Being even born-"

"Hatched." Another grumble, getting the bear to toss his snout. "You complained that Guild Wars 2 Krait had Bellybuttons. Don't you start tossing at corrections."

"Fair enough." Bartan took a breath. "Even at the end of False Freedom though, it felt like there was just too many questions. What happened to Dia, Tia, Elexus, and the Feys? Was there any new family members brought in? How long were they kept from the outside world, and what did that world think of the dragons/kveldulves? How often did the Feys stick it to Atlas-?"

"No one wondered that."

"Did, at any time, Atlas try showing them some love-?"

"No one is-!" A loud groan.

"What were their four-ways like?"

"Stop."

"What happened when Dia was old enough? Who taught him about-"

"ENOUGH!!" The large one roared, Attoning to air and covering his now purple scales with his wings. Groaning loudly at the bear's laugh. "I don't even know why I even bother with you!"

"Because you want the answers that bad."

"Providing you would actually answer the question once in a while. Instead, you hide behind humor and sexual innuendo to avoid the question!"

"Only because it's your Achellies Heel. For some odd reason."

"Are you questioning my Draconic heritage?"

"Only a little. You seem way too embarrassed about these things, considering how often you encounter them." A loud whimper that was equal parts growling. "But in all seriousness... I do have an answer."

"One that's going to take a long time to explain, I'm sure." The large one grumbled through his wings. Taking a few breaths and withdrawing his wings.

"...Have you ever met Deago?"

"The orange one with the red mane?" The bear nodded. "We've talked a little at the party last year, but not much."

"Too busy being pleased by Ziik?"

"I believe you mean Mauled." The dragon snorted, getting a chuckle from Bartan. "But I know he's your conscience or something."

"Basically that."

"And he clearly holds something over you." The bear made a noise in question. "You're wrapped around his paw. You'll do nearly anything he asks of you, to the point where I wonder if he is like Tia or the other ones."

"You mean an Oracle?" Haytre half grumbled and tossed his snout. "Even after all this time, you can't remember-"

"Shut up." Another chuckle. "That chapter is done, so I need not to remember anything from that time." He snorted.

"Of course you don't." The white one sadly smiled at him. "But you will remember."

"We're not talking about me, bear. We're talking about you and your

love for that dog thing."

"Oh, you want to know about our sessions?" Haytre grunted for a few moments, speechless and eventually a growl while Bartan smiled at him.

"Did you just openly admit that you had... With your conscience!?"

He shrugged. "Honestly, he was more evasive than you were about male-"

"Stop." The bear chuckled. "Just... Enough. Stop avoiding the question with sexual chit-chat and get on with it, you gossip."

"Alright, alright." The white one took a breath. "For as long as I've known Deago, he's always wanted something out of me."

"I can only hope it was not sex-"

"It was not sex." The black one snorted at him regardless. "It's like... He knew that the human species was somehow in danger. As in, the real world that I grew up in. Along with dealing with all the 'Events' that went on through my life, it's like... Deago wanted me to save the species as well."

"Save it how?"

"...I never knew. And he never really said. He just wanted me to, and I think through kindness and selflessness." Bartan took a drink, getting his cup filled up again after he was done. "For so long, I've tried to be that person. For years, I did what I could for people. Always put them first, and me second. Over and over again, it's like I let everyone ahead in line in front of me, to the point where I got so far behind that..."

"You got left behind. Because the human species often tends to abuse and take advantage of kindness. Trust me, I know what you mean." The large one muttered.

"But regardless of what happened to me and my life, I still let it happen for so long. To the point where I didn't really have a life anymore. Not much of one anyway. I kept what I needed to survive, because if I didn't, then I couldn't help people."

"Makes sense."

"After a while... Maybe close to 15 years of doing it, starting from the time when I was 13... I got tired of it. All at once, I hated it. Because of how people seemed to believe in this thing called Karma, and how it effected others. They give away a few things, and they get something great in return. I gave away my possessions, my home, my future, my health, and my

existence... And how does 'Karma' repay me? I lost that home. I lost those who I called friends, I lost my future, and I get struck with the worst of luck time and time again... All as if I did something wrong. As if my life as a whole wasn't worthy enough to be worth anything."

The dragon remained quiet. "It was around this time that I started to become cynical. That my faith in such a thing like Karma started to die out. I started to see the worst in people, in human nature. How they acted, how they treated one another, how they obsessed with something popular, and how others regurgitated so much vile hate towards things. Here I was... Feeling like the only person in the entire world trying to be a decent person, and drowning in that bile."

"So, what did you do?"

"What did I do? I stopped being that person. I told Deago to Fuck Off, and that I was no longer going to be that person anymore. That I couldn't do a damn thing for a species who clearly cannot, and does not willingly want to change. I became misanthropic, the purest definition of loathing towards the species... But even then, I held back. I hated doing it, to be honest, but I didn't want to be brought down to their level. Even if I was lower..."

"And this furry business?"

"...I felt like they were the only ones who understood. They seemed to treat each other with that kindness and love, even if the outside world hated it. They seemed repulsed at the community, as if they were somehow deranged or broken. When really, it was because the human species could not understand it, therefore, they wanted to set it on fire. I honestly thought humans were almost envious of such a society. Unable to get that kind of love for themselves."

Bartan continued. "But in the end, the Furry Fandom is still a Society. Something I could never be a part of. It didn't matter how nice I was, how caring or laid back I was... I was neglected or ignored as I usually was in every other form of community. After a while, as stupid as it is to, you learn to accept it. To stop fighting against truism, because it's pointless."

"Yet, you still attempt every so often." The bear looked at the black one. "Please, we all see your face everytime you finish something. It reads 'Maybe this will be the one' every single time."

"I guess it's just my nature to attempt. Like it or not, what Deago did to me... I cannot completely be rid of. I didn't abandon his teachings or his ways, exactly. But I just stopped trying so much. For those who I feel deserve it, I'll keep that side and show them what I learned from my conscience. But..."

"So, this past summer? What the hell was that all about?" A heavy sigh from Bartan.

"...You know when things get really bad, almost bleak looking, and you do things out of desperation? I felt like that this summer. I put myself out there, almost adopted a few players from Vindictus to take under my wing and help them out. Hoping that Karma would give some damn relief. I'm stupid hopeful like that from time to time."

"There's nothing wrong with a little faith, bear-"

"It is when it never works." He almost snapped. "Once again, it bit my hand. These people never attempted to do anything on their own, even with my guidance. All they wanted was a free ride. To be carried around, as if I didn't have enough weight on my back. Attempt to take and ask for everything you have, all for selfish reasons." A deep breath, almost in defeat. "That's why Light Escapes - Sky wasn't up to bar. I attempted to get things done, but the minute, the fucking second I log into the game to have a little break in order to get my head cleared, I get bombed with messages. Clung to with claws and teeth, and an eight hour workload of things that they could easily do on their own- which they should've done on their OWN. Hell only knows, they needed the damn practice."

"Then why bother-?"

"Because That's What He Does To You! He makes you think that you're some kind of Superhero, and that you NEED to help people! Because you're the only one in the God damn world who can! Who even WILL!" The bear took a breath, wiping away a tear from his eye. "And it's that damn inner instinct that's putting it's foot down. Like it's something that's demanded it must do. Give up everything you have. Anything and everything, if it eases the pain."

"Pain of what?"

"...Loss? Failure? Of both the past and future? Of both myself and the human species? Knowing that I felt helpless. Pathetic. That I could not bring myself to do one thing, make one change to this damn division of beings. All because the fact that I'm cursed."

"With what exactly?" Haytre asked.

"Neglect? I'm ignored or invisible by nearly everything else in existence. I feel like I'm some kind of lost spirit, only seen by those who actually believe in me. Who believe that I actually even exist. Those who took the time to look for, and like the work I've made. The things I've done with in my life, what I could anyway."

"And your complaining about possibly being the best ninja in the entire world?"

"You mean the worst. Perhaps I'm ignored alot, yes. But my bad luck makes Murphy's Law blush." The dragon tossed his snout. "You want to play the RNG [Random Number Generator] game?" Bartan grumbled.

"If it'll move the conversation along, yes. Try me."

"I have failed a 92% chance of success before. I have failed a 98% chance of success before, and these are just one-shots. I have failed a 45% chance of success eight times in a row before. Finally getting it on the ninth. That's slightly off of flipping a coin, and looking for tails, but getting heads eight times."

"Which is all probable."

"Oh, we're just getting started. You want to hear mathmatically impossible? With a 99% chance to hit an enemy, I have failed four times. In a Row. On The First Four Attacks." The black one raised an eyebrow. "Bad luck follows me. It messes with whatever the hell I do. Be it make the worst possible outcomes happen, messing with my controls so they do not input or function. To just doing stupid things that would make no sense. Disobeying the rules of both game and real life, just to mess with me."

"Name something." The bear grumbled. "Yes, I'm setting you up, but do it."

"Fine, most recently. I played a Starcraft 2 game, me vs 7 computer A.I in a Free For All. Things I usually do, everyone against everyone. The map was a large, octogon-like setup; Everyone having their own little space, all close to two people. Within the first fifteen minutes, I get attacked by; Not 1 computer, not 2 computers. Not 3 computers, not 4 computers. Not 5 computers, but SIX. Six DIFFERENT computers, some crossing the entire Map to get to me and attack ME. Out of the two neighbours that they had a choice of, they cross the entire MAP to get to ME."

"So? It's just a game-"

"The game isn't the point. Do you know what it's like knowing that you cannot take a chance at anything? Because you know you will lose? You cannot gamble, in a life that requires you to gamble. And I don't mean poker or slot machines type of gambling."

"You're back to that Karma thing again, aren't you?" The large one grumbled. Flicking an ear in irritation.

"Yes." He sighed. "There's just nothing you can do in this life without taking risks."

"And that's the same for all life. It's the same for everyone."

"Only if you know you can possibly get something out of it! If you knew that you had a 0.000000000000000001% chance of winning anything in life, would you bother risking it?" The black one growled. "I cannot move in this life, because it's just waiting for me to. Every step I take, even if it's to help people, is a trap. Waiting to be set off and happily accept whatever limb I offer as a sacrifice. So I quit. And in quitting, I once again lost something."

"Your faith."

"In humanity, yes."

"What the hell does this have to do with The Funeral?"

"...Do you know what you are, Haytre? To me?" The dragon curled his neck a bit. "You're my driving will to survive. Along with the bitterness that comes with it."

"Glad you're so fond of my attitude." He snorted.

"I'm serious. The only reason why I'm still alive, after losing nearly everything, and seeing the life around me get worse and worse... There's something else Deago did to me, and that was... You."

"He created a dragon that could change colors." Haytre grumbled sarcastically, putting a faint smile on the bear's muzzle. "Your will to survive."

"Yes. I'm not invincible, like you are not, but... He won't let me die. No matter what happens, to the point where I feel immortal. And..." Another deep sigh.

"Along with the Immortality, you know the pain and bitterness it brings."

"Like outliving those who you call friends. Family. Parents, and the ones you raised. It's why I don't want kids either, other than the fact that you cannot raise children in a world like this."

"You forgot that they're a complete pain in the stones."

"That too."

The dragon sighed. "No wonder you had such an easy time writing me. But what does...?" He stopped for a moment. "You don't want me to die."

"...I don't. Much like I can't, I'm tired of seeing people... Those I care about die off. Even if they're not part of this 'Real World.' No one should ever witness their... Offspring, I guess, depart."

"This explains why so many of your characters tend to be Immortal. You seem to have a lot of first-hand experience when it comes to survival." Bartan faintly nodded. "Yet, in return for making them live longer, you also make them suffer more."

"...At times, yes. But tell me, how did your story end up?"

"A lot better if you kept the intended ending-"

"Only for you." The large one went quiet. "I know about suffering, Haytre. And I know what you long for. I long for it as well, the idea of relief. Nirvana, or Elexus in your tongue. But..."

"You can't let me go. Because to do so would extinguish what little faith you have left." No response. "But what the hell do I have to do with your faith in humanity?"

"...I couldn't be that hero for them-"

"Don't you dare say it-!"

"You were supposed to be that Hero instead-"

"Don't- You son of a wormling! You cannot pass that job onto me!"

"I wasn't passing the torch. I was trying to give someone, Anyone a reason to believe that things could change! For them to see that they still could! People listen to you, Haytre! That's What Page Avenue Was About! How often people need that guidance! How often they will listen to something clearly bigger and more majestic, more powerful than they are-!"

"What you made me was a God! Not a-" The large one hissed away, unable to say it himself. "I never saved them. If anything-"

"You gave them a reason not to act out. You showed them that you were a Force of Destruction, doing whatever you could to protect those who actually DESERVED to be protected! Yes, it was through Fear. But even if there was a God in the real world, how many people do you think would be afraid of it?" Haytre growled at him. "People are afraid of power, because they cannot trust another person with it. You are the definition of Power. You have everything, can do anything you can think of. And you cannot be controlled by anyone else than yourself."

"Other than an Oscar-"

"Oracle."

"Shut up." The bear chuckled. "And you think because I earned this power, that makes me..."

"A Hero." He cringed at the word. "I don't like it anymore than you do... We are so similar, Haytre. To the point where we are the same person, but..."

"I'm a dragon, and you're not."

"A little more than that, but sure." A faint chuckle.

"And this is why... That six armed furball..." He looked away, showing his purple ears flat against his head.

"Why he loves you."

"I'd hardly call it love." He snorted.

"Care, I suppose."

"...Perhaps." He sighed through his nostrils. "So, what are you planning to do then?"

"...Have you even read The Funeral?"

"Only a bit. Not the full thing. I didn't think it was done."

"It probably isn't, but..." The bear sighed. "I could, if you wanted me to." The black one studied him. "I just..."

"Don't want to give up. You can't." The white one nodded. "I understand."

"Enough to take me back home?"

The large one snorted at him. "Hardly."

"If you want a stroking before we go back, just say so." Haytre grunted again, both in speechlessness and frustration, ending in a growl. Though his ears turned a bit purple, the rest of his scales turned bronze, and trapped the bear inside a smaller rock dome. "Ha. Ha. Very funny."

"I don't know why I didn't think of this in the first place." The dragon smiled slyly.

The Billion Day Funeral

Haytre found himself daydreaming a bit, looking in the large mirror framed with many lights. It's been a long time since he's really looked at his body through a reflection other than briefly. It seemed that everytime he did, he just seen a different dragon staring back at him.

A knock came at the door of the large room. "It's unlocked. Should be anyway." The black one said, looking around the room once more. It almost seemed like a dressing room, really. One for a very special type of day.

The double doors creaked open, and a bear's face peeped into the room. The dragon tossed his snout at the first sight of a white muzzle. "I see you bailed on the Tuxedo." The white one chuckled. Entering the room and closing the door behind him. He himself, though hexaped, was wearing a black and white tux that seemed to fit him quite well.

As Haytre looked over at a large round bed and seen a suit wrapped up in a black bag. "Yeah... I never really told anyone this, but I don't like my stones being gripped. Not by a person, nor a suit."

Again, the bear just chuckled. "I don't blame you. I actually had to remove mine for this occassion." The dragon just shook his head at him.

"I should've known you were behind all this, Bartan."

"Oh, come on. You've wanted this for a while, haven't you?"

"I feel like it's a bit of an invasion of privacy." He snorted, facing the mirror once again and trying to study the dragon on the other side. "I'm not even sure I wanted this." He took a deep breath, and the counterweight came beside him. Nudging him with a white snout. "I never thought I'd be getting married."

Bartan double taked at him, tilted his head and perked his ears. Seeing the reflection, the dragon did the same. "Haytre...Where do you think you are?" The soft question puzzled the black one, getting a little embarrassed to answer. With a soft smile, the white one gestured him to follow. "Come on. If you don't want to wear the suit, I won't force you. It would just cover up alot of your scars." Once again, the dragon just overlooked his body, almost able to see the many scars within the scales. "Hey." Another gesture, and Haytre followed him.

The hall was massive, with walls and pillars that almost looked like they were made of Ivory, and very well lit up. From the lighting itself, the black one got the feeling it was Night. As the bear lead the way down to a pair of very large doors that were rather fancy looking, and waited for the dragon to approach them. "Are you ready?" He asked him.

"This isn't some kind of trick, is it?" Haytre curled his neck. "What's in there?"

"It's a surprise." Bartan just smiled at him.

"I can't say I'm fond of your surprises. For all I know there could be some tentacle monster in there for your sexual amusement." He snorted at the white one, ears back. "Or is this some kind of orgy that you planned?"

"Nothing like that. Don't worry." As the dragon glared at him, the counterweight lifted his forepaws in the air. "I admit, many of my visits with you tend to be rather...-"

"Seductive?"

"Intimate." A small chuckle at the dragon tossing his snout a bit. "But every one of those always had some reason behind them."

"Of course they did. You were lonely without your dragon."

"And so were you." A sad smile was given, but the dragon snorted at it. "It's your gift. Open it." He gestured towards the door.

"...Are you sure it's-"

"It's not a trap, Haytre." He assured him. Once again the dragon just studied the white one, but gave in. Placing a paw on the middle of the large doors, he waited a moment to listen inside of it. When there was nothing but silence, the black one grunted. Shoving the two doors wide open to a very large room, much like the hallway. As the two doors hit the walls, the sounds of many voices could be heard.

"Surprise!" They all shouted at him. Startling the dragon for a moment

until he began to recognize some of the faces. Though there seemed to be about a thousand people in the room, they were all people he knew. Humans, Dragons, and other species alike filled the room with a ridiculous amount of chairs to accompany them.

Band of Horses - The

Funeral

"W-what is-?"

The counterweight walked up beside him. "Today." He said, taking a breath and looking over the many people from the dragon's past. "Is your one billionth day of being alive. That's about 2.7 million years of being awake. Not counting the hours or years you've spent in a womb, unconscious, or dead. But actually awake and able to act on your own." Haytre looked at him again, then everyone in the room. "Welcome to your Funeral."

"Funeral?" The dragon repeated in a whisper.

"And attending, is everyone who has ever known you. I made a few deals with the Forces to borrow them for a day." A sad smile began to creep over his black muzzle, and a few tears began to leak through his purple eyes. "I thought you'd deserve to see your own Funeral, living so long and helping so many..." As the dragon lowered his head at that, the bear caught it with a paw. Lifting it back up and giving him no more words. Just another smile, and a gesture to walk behind him.

Though the center of the room was a carpet lined with black and purple, leading up to the very front where some kind of large alter awaited them. Behind it were three wall sized windows that showed many stars and galaxies outside of it. Slowly, Haytre took it one paw at a time. Overlooking the many faces and people he seen along the way. Getting many waves, salutes, and cheers from the back. A few roars from dragons afar, as well as many beasts he had associated with. He couldn't help but smile at them.

As the counterweight sat in a patient wait at the stage, Haytre approached him. A few steps away, he held his breath at the sight of a smaller white dragon that was walking towards him. "...Shea'dinn." The black one whispered. "My..."

"Brother." The white dragon smiled, and the two hugged tightly. As Haytre did his best to hold himself together, it was almost too much for him to see this face. "My, how you've grown."

"What... Happened to-?"

"To me?" The younger one asked, puzzled but still smiling. He took a

glance at Bartan who was just double taken at him. The black one then studied the two, as the bear quickly shook his head at the younger brother.

"Does he know?" Haytre asked.

"...Yes. But..." Shea swallowed, having a hard time to look into those purple eyes. "Haytre, you're... Better off just not knowing." It made the older one's heart sink a bit. "But I'm closer than you think." He smiled at him, and hugged him once again. "Happy Funeral Brother."

"Thank you." After a few moments they let go. Giving each other a few friendly licks and the younger one took a step back. Another breath, along with a sniff, Haytre looked at the bear. "So... Bartan. How does one celebrate a Funeral?"

A glance at the west side of the room got the dragon to follow with his eyes. Seeing quite a few large barrels full of sticks. Another returning puzzled look at the counterweight got the white one to chuckle. "We're going to set up a Piring for you. Every person here will take one stick and add it to your pyrebed, after greeting and saying goodbye to you once more. After that, we'll light it. With you resting in the middle."

"So, you're planning to barbeque me? At my own Funeral?" His neck curled.

"I'll make sure you won't feel any pain. But I thought it was rather fitting. Giving you another new start... Or not." He smiled at the black one, who couldn't help but sigh and smile back.

"It better work this time, bear."

"And lose one of my booty calls? Please." The white one nudged him, while everyone got in line around the room. Though it would be hard on him, Haytre would bare with it. It's something he's always wanted, to say goodbye to many of those who've been taken away from him too early.

Many hours passed, and many tears, as well as memories were shared. From the many women he had cared for, or been under their care. From everyone that's ever been considered family to him, including his son and grandson. The line slowly moved along, and the bed was much bigger than any other dragon's was at their piring.

Saving his brother for last, Haytre climbed up the large pile of sticks. Surprisingly supporting his weight, he laid on top of them. Suddenly getting a rather unexpected hug from the bear, the black one groaned. "Really? At my piring? Haven't you tapped me enough?"

"I won't do anything, but thank you for everything Haytre." Smiling at the many grumbles that came from the black one. "I have a bit of a surprise for you." It got the dragon's attention. "Your immortality, it's actually voice activated." Haytre tilted his head. "It toggles on and off if someone mutters a certain phrase."

"And let me guess, you know it?" The dragon nodded. "What is it?"

"Something that you never would've guessed." Another series of grumbles, a toss of his snout, and a gesture to go on. "Antique Meatball Popsicles"

"...*WHAT!*?" Haytre double taked so hard, his neck cracked loudly. Getting him to stop and tend it with a paw. With another chuckle, Bartan just licked the spot a few times, and the pain from it went away. As well as the pain of everything, making the dragon smile.

"With that being said- Everybody!"

"Antique Meatball Popsicles!" The entire room shouted, surprising the dragon again and looking at Bartan for an explanation.

"Now you'll never know if it's on or off." The bear teased, climbing down.

"You suck." The black one whimpered, sighing and looking down at the counterweight, now at the center of the stage. As he took out a torch from one of the pockets in the Tuxedo jacket, blew air on it and the end lit up in flames.

Taking one last look around at many of the people in the room along with the counterweight, the dragon got quite a few waves goodbyes. "To the greatest Dragon that ever lived!" As the people cheered for him, Bartan looked at the black one once more. "You're never alone, Haytre." Tossing the torch on the pile ignited it quickly. With one last breath, Haytre went to sleep...

As the bed left nothing but ash, everyone was returned home. The counterweight stayed behind for a while, looking out the large windows at the universe outside them. With a long sigh, his breath seemed to fog up the window a bit. Hearing the unsettle footsteps of something large walking behind him. As it stood directly behind the bear, wrapped it with two large brass arms, and rested it's head on the white one's, it lightly purred a bit. But it seemed a bit sad. "...He's not... Gone, is he?"

"No. He's out there somewhere. Being once again reborn into a world."

"He's going to hate you when he finds out."

"I know he will. But I honestly cannot fix him. What his brother did..." The bear shrugged sadly, petting the forearm of the brass dragon and trying to lick under his spineful chin. It made the dragon whimper a bit. "What's wrong?"

The brass one sighed, slumping. "You made fun of my meatballs." It caused the two to chuckle.

"To be fair, Beo, it was a bad idea. But our sons seemed to like them." As the dragon brough his head to the bear's side, the two nuzzled a bit.

"...What do you think will happen to him?"

"I'm thinking..." He took a moment. "I'm thinking he will be more at peace. Perhaps maybe live a better life. One without as much regret."

"I hope he does. He deserves it."

"Much like someone I know." The bear gave the dragon a lick, and got a large one in return.

"And someone else I know." The two smiled at each other. As the larger one seemed to study the counterweight's suit, he gave off a slight grumble. Which caused the bear's ears to perk. "...I like you better naked." He whimpered, but it made the bear smile.

"Then you can help me take this off. It's rather tight."

"...Lets just wait a few more minutes." And the two stared out the window. Slightly rocking side to side. "...I wonder." Another stroke under the chin. "I never really found happiness until I found you. Have you ever asked

him to join our family?"

"I'm pretty sure I know his answer, regardless of how I would like it."

"...We'll just have to find him someone immortal then. Perhaps even a counterweight of his own." Beo gave the bear another lick.

"Not all of them are able to feel love."

"...Well, there's always that one or two out there that possibly can. Maybe they don't even know it yet." Bartan gave a nod. "...Can we...?" A soft glance into the dragon's green eyes. "Search for one? For him? Together?"

The bear smiled at him. "Yes. Let's see if we can find him someone to spend his next billion days with."