

Dragon Changes 6: Reunion

By

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She sat in her living room crying again. While she put up a strong face for her friends, quietly every night she wept. Her silent empty house did nothing to alleviate her misery.

Wiping away a few tears from her red eyes, she decided to go upstairs again. Crossing the open hallway she stood just outside the doorway of her son's bedroom. Peering through the open doorway, she had left her son's room exactly the way he left it. Though she had cleaned it up a bit as an excuse for trying to find where her son disappeared too.

Crossing the threshold, she went and sat upon her son's bed to peer about the teen's room. There she pondered for the thousandth time what had happened. What it was like for him before he left.

When she got home from work, Julie had been expecting to find her son sick in bed or at least moping around the house in misery. Instead, she found her kitchen in a disarray, most of her food eaten, and a cryptic note saying he had gone and was not coming back. At first she thought the note was nonsense and that Brad, her son, was playing hooky or something.

However, when she put together the amount of food eaten and some of the claw marks she found on her backyard deck, Julie put it together. Brad had transformed into a dragon. When she alerted the authorities, they regretfully informed her that there wasn't much they could do. That she was in the same situation as hundreds of other families around the country.

At first she consoled herself that at least he was alive and most likely happy. For a while Julie threw herself into her job to get her mind off of what had happened. Even with all that she never really could forget him. She loved her son Brad. He had been the light of her life. The last living reminder of her husband who passed away in an accident.

All she could do was to watch the news for any new information. She wished she could catch a random glimpse of him. At first it was the same thing month after month. That people around the world were transforming into huge dragons. That after they transform, these enormous beasts fly off to whatever major mountain range was nearby. That some of them have even eaten humans.

Though she had hoped Brad was one of the few that had not eaten anyone.

For a short time, Julie entertained the thought of transforming into a dragon herself. That if she could do that she would be able to live with her son. That thought was dashed

by some online research. It seems that no one over the age of thirty had transformed into a dragon. It seems that both the authorities and the dragons figure the age range where a transformation is most likely to occur was between fifteen to thirty years of age.

On top of that, scientists couldn't figure out how or why these people were transforming. The scientists were stumped over not finding any sort of carrier virus, no bacteria, heck even the psychic and magic people couldn't explain it. It seemed as if the transformations were completely random. That it starts like a cold or flu then rapidly changes into the shift into a dragon.

For a while everyone had no idea what happened to these people once they transformed. Some speculated that they lost all reason and simply followed their instincts. While others thought they had retained their intelligence but that it resided in the body of a huge beast.

During that time a daring woman by the name of Regan Smith was able to make contact. She not only found out that these dragons had been humans, but that in a strange sort of way, they still retained their humanity. That they could even converse normally.

It was not long till Regan realized that the dragons themselves were stumped over why they transformed or why they had to hang the mountains. She also found out that most of them meant no harm to humans. That eating humans had been a result of their transformation and their overwhelming need to feed. Yet now that they had finished transforming, every one of them with very few exceptions were able to control their urges. That they did not want to eat any humans anymore.

Through Julie's online research, she learned that these dragons did want to help solve how they transformed. Plus they truly wanted to communicate with their families. That there might be a possibility that Brad would want speak with her too.

After reading that, Julie began to hear of sporadic events where various dragons rescued people. How one family stranded in the middle of a snow storm and under attack from a rogue dragon, had been rescued by another dragon. This dragon was able to stop the other dragon and then rescue the family in time for Christmas.

Hearing all that gave Julie hope. That her son would never eat anyone. Would never become a rogue dragon. That at the very least, he was out there helping people just like that female dragon.

While that idea did lift her heart a bit, it still didn't alleviate the emptiness left over from his disappearance. Julie needed to do something. She needed to fix the hole in her heart

and unlike the death of her husband, this time she could do something to bring her son back.

Julie began to form a plan to see her son again. She wondered if she could contact Regan Smith and ask her if she knew of her son. Maybe she could help Julie get in touch with Brad?

Resolving to do that, Julie got up off her son's bed and went over to his computer. Sitting down in front of the gaming computer, she started it up. After a moment she began to surf the web.

Within a short time, she was able to find Regan's university web page. There it documented everything the woman had been able to find out so far. Next it had a notice saying that due to the amounts of people who are looking for loved ones, that it was best not to call her. That the dragons are still trying to sort the whole mess out themselves.

But Julie would not be dissuaded. She thought about it for a moment. Sure Regan was telling people not contact her by her email due to the volumes of requests. Yet how would she seemed in person? That maybe if Julie traveled west, she might be able to personally persuade either Regan or someone else to help her see Brad.

Julie did have enough vacation time stored up and enough money to afford to travel there. Plus she knew that it was much harder to turn someone away in person then over the internet. With that in mind, she began to make preparations to go there.

A week later found Julie standing in Regan's book cluttered office in the middle of the Montana State University campus. The woman sat in her office chair silently listening to Julie's story. The look on Regan's young face showed that she felt sympathy for Julie.

"I am so sorry to hear that," Regan earnestly apologized. "From talking with the dragons, they've mentioned that they never meant to leave their loved ones. That whatever had transformed them had also forced them to leave."

"Did you get to meet my son," Julie asked hopefully.

Regan shook her head, "no, only a handful."

"But you've tried to help others, or at least that's what I guessed by your web page."

"I and my small staff have been overwhelmed by requests from people who lost loved ones. That as soon as the world heard of my contact with the dragons, everyone wanted to talk to us." Regan paused to sum up her thoughts, "my colleagues and I wanted to get to know the dragons better. To show the world they meant no harm. Yet, the result was both positive but overwhelming at the same time. Each of us have been inundated by requests to find specific dragons."

"So you can't help me," Julie guessed with a little dejection in her voice.

Regan thought it over for a moment before replying, "well I was planning on leading another expedition out to the meeting spot. It would be over a day's hike and even then I can't promise you may even see your son. But if you want to come along, you can. At the very least, you could speak to another dragon who might know of your son."

Upon hearing that she had a chance, Julie's heart leapt. "Oh thank you so very much," she exclaimed nearly leaping out of her seat to hug Regan gratefully.

"No problem, but be in the parking lot in front of this building tomorrow morning at five o'clock am and be ready to do some major hiking." Regan bid Julie as she led the woman out of her office with a warm smile.

Julie had a lot of things to do tonight. It had been many years since she last hiked, but she knew what she needed and hurried to buy it all.

The next morning found Julie hiking towards what looked like a demolished homestead with four other people. One was an older man by the name of Bill who was a guide of sorts. The second was his younger partner, Michael. The third introduced himself as Edward who is one of Regan's colloques and an anthropologist.

As they worked their way towards the spot, Regan explained how she, Bill, and Michael had originally hid out in that now demolished homestead. How a dragon had seen them, but instead of eating the three, it wanted to gossip. After that she met a few more dragons who also told them that they didn't want to hurt anyone.

Edward explained how he had joined them on the next trip. That what Regan and Edward wanted to do was to try and set up some sort of communication line between the dragons and the world at large. He mentioned how the dragons truly wanted to reconnect with their old lives.

Julie asked why Regan hadn't brought more people out here like they were doing with her. Regan explained how many just wanted her to do all the work. Then she went on to say that now that the world knows that the Dragon's used to be humans, there have been some backlash against them from various groups. Regan did not want to make it easy for those groups to harm the dragons.

The largest group who are against the dragons are of the families of those who were eaten. That they wanted some kind of retribution or vengeance on the dragons. So far these people only protested and urged the government to do something against the dragons. Yet Regan wasn't so sure someone might try

something worse. With that in mind, Regan has tried to protect those she spoke too. At least for now until she could be assured that things wouldn't escalate as some around the country were calling for.

Julie could understand how some people would be rather vindictive. Seeing or hearing that their loved ones had been eaten by huge supposedly mindless beasts had been heart rending. That she understood that they might feel the need for some sort of retribution.

The big question would be what could they do? The dragons seem to have nearly impervious hides. That their huge size make it hard for anyone to punish them.

Then Julie remembered how one of them was her son. Not that she could forget. Then she quietly asked herself the one question she didn't really want to know: had her son eaten people? Realistically the answer might be yes.

While she was heartbroken that Brad had unexpectedly transformed into a dragon. She still was his mother and she would try to protect and defend him. Julie would always love her son, no matter what he did or how he looks. That he might have been one of the dragons who had not eaten anyone while he was transforming.

After a couple more hours of hiking found the group sitting amid a huge clearing. It stood just off to the side of the old farm stead that by now was merely a pile of rotting timber. Julie wasn't sure if the ruins had been caused by natural means or by some bored dragon.

In front of them stood a large roaring fire. Regan explained that all they could do was wait. That most likely the dragons had seen them by now, but would only come when they feel like talking.

Michael and Bill chose to busy themselves by poking around the ruins. Michael mentioned how he wanted to see if he could find anything remaining within the ruins. Bill chose to accompany him out of an attempt to find something to do. That left Julie with Regan and Edwards.

First the conversation between the three was of Michael and how his views have been slowly changing. How during and after their first contact with the dragons, Michael was angry. That he completely agreed with those who were unhappy that the dragons ate people. Yet over time as he met more of them, he began to see them more as unfortunate people. Those who had no choice in changing. That during their transformation they were overwhelmed by instincts and a deep hunger.

Regan pulled out a spiral note pad she kept. Within the pad were all sorts of names of the dragons she had met. It

included not only their names, but where they had lived and what they used to be before transforming into dragons.

Julie borrowed the note book and began to perusing the spiral book while Edward and Regan launched into a deep conversation. The two academics began discussing what might have caused the dragon's appearance. For a short bit she half heartedly listened to the two. Yet, they were discussing stuff so deeply academic that it seemed to go right over her head.

Instead, she chose to pursue the book. There she saw all sorts of entries from students to engineers. What she also noticed was that everyone who had transformed did it between the ages of fifteen to thirty. That each mentioned how they all felt a cold before the transformation came on. Also she saw that these people came from all around America. That there was no one specific spot within America that a good portion came from. Nor did Regan's notes show any specific race or gender who predominantly transformed. In the end, it all looked rather random.

By this point Regan's notebook only showed she had spoken to around thirty different dragons. Yet by the dates of each entry, it seemed as if she met a new one on every trip. That gave Julie hope that there might be a possibility of seeing her son.

"Could it have been some kind of magic you think," Edwards spoken idea interrupted Julie's thoughts. She decided to give back the book and listen in to the conversation.

"Magic," Regan incredulously responded.

"I know, but how else can we explain their transformation other than by supernatural means?"

"But that isn't something we could truly prove. Plus no one has been able to study the transformation processes at all. I don't think we could conclude anything until we are able to examine a variety of people during their transformation process," Regan earnestly concluded.

"But you cannot discount the possibility that some sort of outside force is involved," Edward asserted to Regan. Neither noticed Julie listening in.

"While I like to keep an open mind, I need to see more before I could conclude that magic is involved." Regan replied to Edward's spoken opinion while she contemplatively cradled a cup of coffee.

Julie decided to speak up, "what about the reports that nothing seems to hurt them. That their scales appeared to be impervious to any sort of weapon?"

Edward and Regan contemplated that for a moment before Regan responded, "yes that could be another example of Edward's magic theory, but it could just be from really thick scales."

For a couple moments no one spoke. They were all within their thoughts and also enjoying the open breezy scenery around them. Then Regan spoke up, "has anyone heard of any other supernatural things these dragons might have done?"

"Not that I've heard of," Julie spoke out.

"Nope, not me either," Edward replied.

Before they could discuss the idea of magic any further, above them came an announcing roar. All three looked up to see a huge dragon flying over them. Yet this dragon looked different from the other types the group had seen so far. For before them the dragon looked sort of like a huge dark blue and silver snake. The dragon had a set of huge wings and two sets of large dragon arms, but no hind legs. Its head was on a highly flexible neck that seemed to be a cross between a dragon and a snake.

At first the dragon just flew circles over the trio. Its sinuous body curving with each arc. Then it carefully came to hover over a spot and then lightly landed. Just like a snake, it began slithering over to the waiting humans due to its lack of legs. Coming closer, Julie could see that its body was extremely lengthy. That it was longer than a city block and nearly wide as a street.

As it got closer, Julie began to get the feeling it meant them no harm. That the dragon's body language suggested that it was trying to be as unassuming as it could.

Once close enough, it laid its body down along the ground so that the dragon's head was just in front of them sitting on the ground. It peered at the tiny humans with its huge open expressive orange eyes. Its breath coming out of the dragon's huge nostrils. Each large gust nearly blew out their fire. Then before Julie's eyes the dragon slowly opened up its mouth. She could see that something was moving under its vast draconic tongue. Within moments a slim young female was disgorged from the dragon's mouth. Yet Julie could see that the human female was still connected to the dragon by a thick tendril like connection.

Once out of the dragon's mouth the female torso came alive. Bending upwards while the dragon mouth carefully closed around its connection, Julie guessed that the woman had to be in her early twenties.

Briefly the woman looked around at the three humans for a second. A pleasant smile graced her freckled face under her nearly dark red shoulder length hair. "Which one of you is Regan," the dragon asked them with a happy inquiring voice.

"Um, me."

Upon seeing who was Regan, the dragon moved her torso over a bit so she could shake Regan's hand. "I was talking with Oni

and she mentioned if I ever wanted to speak with someone about getting in contact with my parents that it would be you," the dragon addressed Regan specifically. Her voice had a bit of an Irish accent to it

"Yep, I've been the one to contact. But let me introduce the other two. This is Edward and Julie." Regan replied gesturing to the other two humans who were around the fire. Bill and Michael had not come back yet.

Remembering her manners, "oh sorry, I'm Bridget!"

"Nice to meet you Bridget," Edwards happily replied. He had all sorts of questions he would like to ask her, but instead chose not to bombard the dragon just yet.

"So you wanted to get in contact with someone," Regan asked taking the lead.

"Um, yea. I wanted to send a message to my parents over in Ireland. That I'm fine and that I really would like to see them," Bridget relayed to Regan. Julie's heart leapt at hearing the dragon say that she wanted to talk with her parents. That gave Julie hope that Brad would want to too.

"Sure I can do that," Regan easily replied. "But can we ask you a couple questions in return?"

"Why not, it's been bloody ages since I last talked with a regular human," Bridget replied with an easy relaxed smile

With that the group began gossiping with Bridget. They learned how she had been enrolled in MIT for a degree in advanced mathematics. Soon they learned that some of the other dragons with scientific backgrounds were asking the same questions Edward had been. What was the reason and power behind their transformations. Though, with her scientific thought process, Bridget wasn't fully behind the magic theory like Edward. Yet going through the processes herself had opened her and the other's minds just a bit.

For a while Julie just stayed quiet and listened to the dragon girl. She was fascinated by how this really huge beast that could easily eat them all in one bite, was having a pleasant academic conversation with them. That the dragon's human torso was acting just like any other human, albeit in the nude.

Finally once the academic conversation had died down for moment, Julie decided to ask the one question she came here for: "Um, Bridget. My son had transformed a short bit ago. I assumed he flew here to be with the other dragons. Could I speak to him?"

Bridget didn't reply right away, "well you got to understand miss that we range all the way along this mountain range. So he could be anywhere from deep within Candida all the

way to Mexico. But if you tell me his name, I could pass it along to the others. Do you know what he looks like now?"

"I never got to see him after he transformed, but his name is Brad Rodgers."

Bridget shrugged her shoulder apologetically, "like I said, I can pass your message along, but there is a lot of us in there."

"I would be so grateful for whatever you can do to help," Julie thanked Bridget while shaking her warm human hand.

After that, Bridget wrote down her message to her parents in Regan's notebook. Then after assuring Julie she would pass on the name and message, Bridge withdrew her human torso back into her mouth. After that she slithered back out into the field before flapping her huge wings and leaping back up into the air to fly away. The group stood there watching the blue and silver dragon disappear back towards the mountain.

"Well we've got a couple days here. Hopefully your message gets to your son in time," Regan bid Julie before she began to discuss with Edward what they had learned from Bridget.

Over the next few days the group met different dragons. As she listened to each of them Julie realized something, that she was actually beginning to enjoy this. Meeting them and seeing that they were feeling the same things she was.

That gave her hope and what she learned was that most of these didn't dragons really want to transform. That while they do now enjoy their new forms and the freedom it brought, they did not want to abruptly leave their past lives. Each wished they could still gossip with friends and family. One dragon said that he missed his family's Christmas party, a time he always loved. That he wished he could go back to celebrating it with them again, yet his new mammoth draconic body made that impossible.

Others wished they could have access to the internet and phones. How they wanted to catch up with what was going on in the outside world. To send messages to unchanged people, to make phone calls, to simply say they are alright.

Listening to all that touched Julie's heart. It gave her hope that her son was thinking the same thing. She prayed that her message had gotten to Brad before their party had to hike back home.

On the final morning everyone was just beginning to stir. Even Bill, who normally wakes up at the break of dawn, was just beginning to come awake. Slowly people emerged from their respective tents and began to reignite their camp's fire.

Before the growing fire each huddled around the bright orange flame for warmth. Each silently waited while the coffee brewed just above the flames. Julie looked around to peer at

the sun slowly rising along the east. How its rays painted the mountain peaks to the west. It made the huge open land they camped in seem almost mystical.

Before they knew it, a dragon was passing high above them. In their still sleepy state they hadn't noticed that it had been softly gliding in circles above. However once it saw people stirring below, the dragon made itself known before descending towards the camp.

As it slowly flew towards the ground, Julie got a good look at the huge beast. Its body was made up of all sorts of shades of blue ranging from dark blue on its back to an almost white blue on its underside. Like many other dragons she had seen on this trip, this one had four legs, a tail, and a pair of wings. Still unlike the other dragons Julie had seen up to now, this one had three heads. Once it softly landed on the ground near the camp and slowly made its way towards them, Julie could even see that all three heads of its heads two mouths, one on top the other.

For a brief moment, the dragon silently peered at them with its three heads. It seemed as if it was looking at everyone in the camp all at once. After a brief moment Julie thought it began to peer intently at her. To be focusing all three gazes specifically at her. It felt as if two people who had been apart for a long time, were finally seeing each other.

Forgetting her coffee and coming fully alert, Julie stood up and walked away from the fire towards the dragon. The others stood back a bit guessing who this dragon might be.

The dragon didn't move other than to follow her with all of its eyes. Soon Julie was standing only feet from its center head. She was so dwarfed by the blue dragon's snout that it had to angle its head down a bit to keep peering at her.

"Brad," Julie hesitantly addressed the monstrously sized dragon in front of her.

At first the dragon didn't do anything or confirm her suspicions. Then abruptly its lower mouth opened up slightly to allow its long tongue to escape. Almost suddenly, but very lovingly, Brad used the tip of his long tongue to lick his mother's face in a sort of kiss.

With that, she quickly rushed in to embrace Brad's huge snout. Her hands barely reaching either side of his lower jaw. For a moment he allowed her to hug him. He could hear her sobs of joy.

Carefully he pulled his center head away from the embrace long enough to close his lower jaw then open his upper mouth. From there emerged Brad's human torso. As it slid out of his mouth, Julie remarked to herself that his human half looked

exactly as he did just before he transformed. Right down to the same boyish haircut.

"Mom," Brad exclaimed with hesitant joy once his human torso came alive.

Both rush in, or more likely Julie rushed in, to embrace each other in a deep warm hug. "I missed you so much," she whispered to him.

"Me too," he tenderly replied looking into her tear puffed face. Julie could see a few tears running down his cheeks.

After a moment the two broke apart as Julie appraised her son, "so this is what you transformed into." She took a moment to glance at his other two heads that he had laid against the ground next to them almost absentmindedly.

"Yes mom, so what do you think?"

"You're so big and all those mouths and heads!"

Brad's human face grinned for a moment, "I know, it took me a while to get used to all of it." Brad paused for a moment as if he was trying to figure out what to say, "look mom, I'm sorry for having just left that note and not contacting you sooner."

"I know son, I know. All that matters now is seeing you again and knowing you're safe," she forgave her son with a motherly tone. This was all that mattered to her right then.

Julie was about to ask her son what he had been up to for the past year. Yet she remembered her manners and introduced him to the others in the camp. All four humans had been quietly watching the tender scene before them. Each was touched to see the mother and son reunion.

Brad carefully, almost minutely, moved his dragon body a bit closer to the fire so he could act like he was sitting next to his mother around the fire. There the two launched into a discussion over what each other had been doing. None of the others wanted to interrupt this. Quietly Edward and Regan both began taking notes on the scene before them. What they were seeing was exactly the stuff they both had been looking for.

Julie explained what had been going on at home, how her job was doing, and the loss of Brad. Brad explained how once he flew all the way out here, he begun hanging out with a myriad of other dragons. That they even had a sort of sport going on between each other. It was a kind of cross between touch football and ultimate Frisbee that was played both on the ground and up in the air. The way Brad explained it, at first it started as something to do between other teenage transformed dragons. Then the other dragons picked it up. Now it was as popular among the dragons as football was to most Americans.

Julie listened intently to her son ramble on. It was great to see him again, to hear his voice, and know that he was safe.

Untold hours later on, Brad explained that it was time to go. That he was getting a bit hungry and that he wanted to hunt some bison he saw earlier. The two hugged again with Julie whispering to him that she was going to come back and if he ever wanted to talk to her, she would be here. Brad soon withdrew his torso back into his mouth, waved with one of his huge dragon hands before leaping up into the air.

For a couple moments, Julie silently watched her son fly off. She was content to know he was alright and safe. Even better, she saw that he was happy. That alone made up for his abrupt departure and silence for the past year.

Turning back to the group, Julie realized she enjoyed this. Not just reuniting with her son, but meeting the other dragons. Learning more about them, she saw a need here that someone with her background could fill.

As the group broke camp to hike back home, Julie explained how she wanted to come and help out more. She explained how she could set things up like computer satellite networks, satellite phones, all sorts of things to help the dragons get back in touch with their families.

Regan and Edward like the idea. That it could help them interact with the dragons more. While Bill and Michael didn't think it was a bad idea, they were thinking more about the logistics of carting all that stuff out into the wilderness for these dragons. That they would need more than their backs to move it all.

As the discussion moved on, Julie realized that this was the place she needed to be. That her life back at her old home was done. This was going to be her new mission in life, to help the dragons get in touch with the outside world. To help them get in touch with their families and vice-versa.