

Dragon Changes 10: Magical Prelude

By

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Amid the brutal devastated landscape of Zar'Noosh, stood a large craggy bluff. At one time the entire area around the precipice had been a thick lush jungle. Yet now only broken bits of the once majestic trees poked out of the dry and cracked ground. Scattered throughout it all were bleached white animal bones and human skeletons.

Standing atop the cliff, taking in the devastated land below, was a woman. She wore a long black open cloak that exposed her revealing clothes underneath. Each bit showed that the woman was physically fit, strikingly beautiful, and appeared to be in the prime of her life. Her long black hair blew freely about in the dry breeze exposing her stern focused face.

Yet despite her human beauty, there were a few odd bits about her. For example, her focused eyes were not human, but golden lizard eyes. Emerging from her temples were two long smooth black horns. Their sharp tips were coated in gold. Sprouting from her back were two great folded black dragon wings. While poking out of her rear was a long scaled tapered tail. It languidly swung back and forth while she stared. Even her exposed feet were not human, but three toed dragon paws.

If the woman appeared to be mostly human, standing beside her were two male human shaped dragons. They did little to cover their lizard bodies. Each had a dragon shaped head, large bat like wings, long tails, plus fingers and toes that were tipped with sharp black claws.

"My lady, what would you like to do with them," questioned the being to her right.

"Nothing yet Xaldar. I want to see where they go," softly spoke the woman. She flicked a hand causing a small circle to appear before her. Within it appeared a much closer view of the two humans slowly making their way through the devastation.

"They appear to be patrolling," added the other male.

"I can see that Dengal."

"Sorry my lady," bowed the second being.

"How's our troop strength," questioned the woman as she turned to regard Xaldar.

"Decent my Lady Caistine. That last attempt to breach Castle Miire's walls had been costly. General Xor might have made it if it had not been for Ianril."

"Then we will induct those two. Afterword form a soldier raiding party," order the woman.

"Your will shall be done my lady," deeply bowed Xaldar. Suddenly both dragon beings leaped off the cliff, spread their great wings, and flapped away from Caistine. She watched from afar as the two worked their way towards the two humans.

While waiting, Caistine pondered the endless global war she waged against her brother Ianril. She wished, for the countless time, that her assassination attempt against her brother had worked. During that time Caistine murdered her father in what looked like an accident. After that she then poisoned her oldest brother who was next in line. However Ianril seemed too slippery to destroy. Especially as he was an honest white wizard. Not someone like her who was versed in dark draconic magic.

After her oldest brother's death, she ascended the throne, and the traditionalists flocked to her side. Some were loyal to her, yet most were pledged to the throne she sat on. Afterword there was a large segment of the kingdom who was incensed at how she came to power.

At the beginning that group had no leader to rally around until Ianril reappeared. At first Caistine thought she had killed him when she ascended the throne. However he had survived and pledged to revenge their father's death. All those disaffected by her actions flocked to him.

At first the war had been mostly conventional between vast armies of soldiers, nobles, and archers. Each was supported by numerous spell casters. Within a few years, the conflict drew in surrounding countries. Before long a stalemate began to form between the two factions.

After a while Caistine decided she needed more power. At first she made a pact with the wild dragons. These vast lizard beings joined her side and wrecked havoc with Ianril's forces. Before long it looked like her brother was going to be defeated. However during one battle, a few dissatisfied dragons chose to switch sides resulting in a stalemate again.

Caistine chose to cast a powerful spell over all her dragons that forced them to be loyal only to her. Next She

realized she needed access to more power. First it was with talismans and such. Then she learned how to imbibe the dragon's inherent magical pool within her. She began to grow numerous dragon aspects as she gained more power.

Then Caistine focused on her own people. At the beginning she thought they were loyal to her. Yet they began defecting to the other side when they saw how far she was willing to go to defeat her brother.

Like the dragons, Caistine cast a different spell over all her subjects. They would die a horrible death if they tried to defect. At first that seemed enough. Yet that spell did not help their survival rate on the battlefield. That was when she began transforming them into half-dragons like Xaldar and Dengal. Before long there were no more humans loyal to her, just all dragon beings.

With her enhanced troops and dragons, Caistine nearly overwhelmed and decimated many strongholds. Plus those humans that were not killed she transformed into her own troops. It seemed like she had the edge until Ianril countered with his own magic.

Yet her remembrances were interrupted by the return of the two half-dragons. Each held a squirming human captive. Seeing Caistine, both men began screaming in horror.

"Don't worry my dears, it'll be over soon," cooed Caistine as she reached out to caress their cheeks. It had been a long time since she touched another human's skin.

With that she laid her hands on their foreheads. Then she began chanting something causing both limbs to glow blue. Immediately each human started shrieking in pain. However an even larger pink glow came out of their skins. This glow inhibited her spell stopping what she had been doing.

"Dammit Ianril, why'd you have to cast such a powerful protection spell over them," she cursed out. With a gesture from her, both half-dragons twisted their captive's heads killing them. "I thought that last tweak might've done it."

Years ago Ianril had created a vast magical protection spell on all the remaining humans. This ward kept Caistine and her cohorts from transforming his people. Then on top of that he erected magical barriers over his cities which allowed only humans inside. Thus none of her half-dragons, or herself, could

enter. Plus those barriers could withstand everything she threw at them both physical and magical.

Angered that her latest experiment did not work, Caistine turned away from the cliff. Behind her the two half-dragons chucked the corpses over the precipice. Finally with a flick of a wrist, she and her two companions teleported back to her stronghold. Afterward she began searching through her massive library for another way around her brother's protection spells.

Over the next few years Caistine researched Ianril's spells. She grasped that she had to trick them into thinking her minions were still human. Yet each experiment failed.

Before long Caistine shifted to studying his wards up close. She spent many days hidden near a human city pondering its magical barrier. She probed it with magic feelers and pondered it's construction. Then she kidnapped a few humans and studied their magical protections.

Before long a solution came to her, both spells worked on the concept of pure humanity. Because most humans were uncorrupted by her magic, they could enter and leave the cities at will. Thus the solution was to trick Ianril's magic into thinking her people and dragons were pure humans.

One day she and her minions stood out in a vast ruined plane. At one point the land around them had been a massive old growth forest. Yet years of horrendous warfare had reduced it all to an open waste. Not that Caistine really cared what happened to the land, just that she needed a wide open space.

In the middle of the area obediently stood one of her dragons. The being was as large as a stone house. It's blue scales glinted majestically in the bright midday sun.

Beside the dragon were numerous half-dragons moving about preparing for her next experiment. Walking through it all, Caistine made sure everything had been set up the way she wanted it. Then with a gesture, two of her minions came over dragging a heavily beaten human man. He looked to be in his middle years. Casually she glanced over to a cage that held his wife and children.

She motioned for the man to be placed atop a stone alter the half-dragons had erected a short while ago. They lifted and

strapped him down to the alter's surface. Each then backed away to wait for her.

Approaching the man, Caistine went over to study his exposed body for a moment. She silently reached a finger out and touched his forehead. Suddenly he came awake, yet she crossed a finger over his throat to keep him from making any sounds. Though his eyes expressed his horror.

Not that Caistine cared if the man was afraid. Carefully she went back to his chest and began muttering an incantation. While she did that, a half-dragon reverently walked up carrying a ceremonial dagger on a velvet cushion. At one point Caistine picked up the dagger. Then she yelled the last bit before slamming it into the man's heart.

Immediately a soft blue mist escaped from the wound she created. As this mist escaped, the man's body began to deflate. Once the last bit left, Caistine aimed the dagger at the giant dragon. The mist sailed through the air and was absorbed by it. The beast suddenly began roaring out in pain. Finally it calmed down and it's eyes glowed an intense blue. After a moment the glowing subsided as the dragon relaxed.

"Let's see if this worked," spoke Caistine as she spread her great black wings. Then with a powerful flap she jumped up into the air. Behind her followed the blue dragon and a few half-dragons. Each hastily flapped after their mistress.

Caistine's led them across the devastated land. After thirty minutes they came within sight of a human stronghold. With a gesture from her, the blue dragon flew as fast as it could towards the city. Flapping her wings to stay aloft, the mage used a spell to take a closer look.

Caistine saw the human defenders quickly moved towards the walls of their city. Yet by their movements, they expected their magical defenses to repel the dragon's attack. Then something happened that pleased Caistine.

The dragon got close enough and inhaled deeply. With a great scream of a roar, the dragon shot a large gout of fire at the city. In the past, the town's magical defenses would have easily defeated the dragon's flames. Yet with the human soul imbibed into it, the blaze shot through the barrier and set numerous structures on fire.

As a result, the humans quickly began scrambling about realizing the dragon could actually hurt them. The other human

defenders began firing their cannons, spears, and whatever else they could at the dragon. Emboldened, the dragon drove through the shield and began burning everything it could. By the time the dragon left, the human town was fully ablaze.

While on the outside, Caistine appeared calm and collected. On the inside she was cheering as the experiment worked! With that she hurriedly flew back to the altar and called a few more dragons to her side. Then she sacrificed her human captives so their essences could be imbibed into the dragons. Afterward she sent them out to attack more human settlements.

Yet Caistine realized her method of defeating Ianril's protections was rather clumsy. She needed to figure out a way to do it on a massive scale so she could overwhelm the humans. On top of that, she comprehended she did not have enough full sized dragons to defeat the humans in one final stroke.

Shortly after her successful attack Ianril responded by redoing his protection spells. Before long it seemed like she was back to square one. On top of that he found a way to attack her dragons from long distance using magically enhanced spears.

Yet Caistine knew the key still was using human essences to defeat Ianril and his forces. Thus, experimenting on a few more humans, she studied their new protection spells. Over time she came up with a crafty solution. Essentially instead of transferring their essences, she needed to use the humans themselves and the wards protecting them.

Yet the mage would need to channel a lot of magic to achieve it. A staggering amount of magic. Then after a week of non-stop effort she constructed the perfect channeling object. It turned out to be a gigantic blue crystal shard that continuously glowed.

Soon she stood in the same spot as her last major experiment. Before Caistine was a nude human man bound to the same altar. Though this time there were no dragons obediently waiting for her.

Standing before the crystal, Caistine stared intently into it, then she began muttering an involved incantation. Little things like small stones, dirt clods, even small rodents, all

began floating up into the air. Loud bright lightning strikes slammed into the ground.

When she reached the crescendo of her incantation, a giant blue beam lanced out of the crystal towards her captive. It slammed into the human, breaking his bindings, and flung him off the altar. Instead of running away, the man crouched on the ground and began grunting in pain.

Suddenly his body started to expand, his hair fell out, and bright green scales erupted all over his skin. Pushing out of his rear end was a long sinuous tail while his limbs reformed into dragon legs tipped with sharp black claws. Also a large pair of dragon wings erupted out of his back. Finally his head and neck reformed into a dragon's head and neck.

Before her, standing on his four limbs, was a human sized dragon. His lizard eyes pleaded with her for something while slobber dripped from his mouth. A mewling bark escaped his maw begging her for something.

With a gesture, a few half-dragons dragged two reluctant goats on leashes. After staking the ropes to the ground, her servants rushed away. Suddenly the new dragon leapt over and tore into the animals. He dove his head in and gorged deeply.

Caistine then resumed her incantation causing the human's transformation to continue. Before them the human sized dragon began expanding even larger. Soon he was the size of a small hut.

Next the half-dragons dragged out four nude humans on leashes. Each had been the man's family before being captured. There was a brief hesitation in the dragon's eyes. Yet with some magical prodding from Caistine, the transforming dragon slovenly devoured the humans whole.

Afterward the dragon grew even larger. Caistine would have been pleased with what the man had turned into. Yet she felt he still had more to go.

Pumping in further magic, Caistine watched the dragon grow even bigger. Yet beyond his growth, he also started developing things the other dragons did not have. For example, a third eye formed in-between his first two. A second set of forelimbs grew out of his sides. Finally something began forming in his mouth.

Within moments the dragon's transformation was complete as he looked towards Caistine with obedient eyes. Then unexpectedly he opened his mouth. Yet instead of breathing fire

or snapping at her, the dragon lifted his tongue exposing a rounded fleshy pouch under his tongue. He then began pushing something out of this pouch. Peering closer, Caistine saw that it was a saliva covered human torso attached to a tendril. When it was fully extended, the torso came alive and angled upward. She could see that the dragon's newly grown bit looked exactly like his old human body.

The dragon lowered his giant head down to the ground and then bowed his human torso to Caistine. "What is thy bidding my master," the dragon obediently uttered in his old human voice.

Caistine silently crossed over and began examining her unique dragon. She was intrigued by the differences between him and the natural born dragons. While the dragon silently waited, the mage magically examined him. She noted, despite all his changes, that the dragon could not produce magical fire. She chalked that up to his unusual change. Yet this new dragon did exhibit Ianril's magical protection spells and could easily enter any human settlement he wanted. On top of all that, he was utterly obedient to her.

A month later found a huge battle occurring. Ianril's forces had inadvertently given Caistine a chance to use her transformation spell on a much wider scale. Before her hundreds of thousands of humans battled viciously against near equal amounts of her followers. Above them flew a few dragons including some transformed humans. While the true dragons blasted fire with limited effect, the transformed ones swooped in and simply gulped up large amounts of humans. Many times they simply chewed and spit the humans back out.

The entire battle took place along a wide stretch of open flat land between two plateaus. On the human side, up on his own perch, stood Ianril. He wore white robes and stood behind a magical barrier while watching the battle. That was the first time in a long while since she had been close to her brother.

While Caistine still looked like she was in her early thirties, Ianril had really aged over the many long years. His face was lined and his long flowing hair was pure white. He seemed like he needed his staff to stand up. Yet zooming in,

she could see that his eyes were still just as bright and intelligent as ever.

Caistine wondered how Ianril would react when she used her ramped up spell to transform his force into hers. She had been planning for this moment for a long time. It would be the largest amount of magic she had ever channeled in her life. If it worked, she would easily overwhelm Ianril and his forces. Maybe even finish what she started so long ago and kill the mage himself.

Her servants placed before her the same blue glowing crystal she used earlier. After erecting her own magical barriers, Caistine began chanting. Soon she started channeling magic into the crystal. Before long she began pushing in even more power into it than before. So much that little electrical strikes lanced out of her body.

Down below, lightning bolts slammed into the ground killing both humans and half-dragons. Large boulders and other heavy objects began rising above the field. Then out of nowhere, numerous humans fell to the ground screaming. Their bodies began transforming into dragons. It seemed like nearly one out of a hundred were becoming dragons.

Yet Caistine needed more power to complete the spell. Delving deeply into the land's magical pool, she shoved even more into the crystal. When she did that, a bright blue flash lanced out of the crystal in a wide arc. Everyone beside Caistine was flung away from it. Along with that, a powerful earthquake began rocking the land. Yet she still needed more power and delved even deeper.

Down on the battlefield even more humans began transforming. Some became like the first man to undergo the spell. Yet others transformed into different dragon forms. A few were bird like, some had multiple heads, and numerous others had even more strange dragon forms.

Ianril grasped what his sister was trying to do and quickly cast a flight spell on himself. Hurriedly he flew across the distance to try and stop Caistine. Landing near her, the old man began casting a magical disruption spell. Taking aim, Ianril realized the crystal was the focus for everything. Once ready, he fired off a loud pink bolt. It slammed into the crystal smashing it to pieces.

Instead of disrupting Caistine's spell, Ianril had caused it to become highly unstable. A giant gout of blue magic lanced up into the sky where the crystal once stood. Everyone near the magical gout was flung away from it. The lancing magic raced upwards infecting the sky. Meanwhile an even more massive earthquake hit the area. Yet instead of dissipating, it intensified to global proportions.

Out of nowhere, a tare appeared in space where the crystal had been. As it grew wider, a strange vision could be seen inside it. The view appeared to be some sort of far away land that looked like nothing on Zar'Noosh. It had a huge amount of forest surrounding a pristine snow capped mountain. Suddenly Caistine's spell was sucked through that tare and dispersed into that landscape.

Meanwhile, the sudden release of such a staggering amount of power began to tear Zar'Noosh apart. Numerous mountains rapidly became volcanoes. While the land tore apart revealing lava filled rents. Even the sky started to become a huge firestorm.

Sensing what had happened, Caistine realized she could not stay there and live. Regaining her feet she saw the rent and darted towards the tare ignoring the dying land and her followers. Quickly she jumped through it into a completely foreign land. Looking back showed nothing behind her. It seemed as if she had just appeared out of nowhere.

Unlike the dying Zar'Noosh, the land Caistine found herself in seemed lush and teeming with life. The trees surrounding her were tall and welcoming. The bright blue sky with its single yellow-orange sun felt great on her skin. While she had no idea where she was, however it was not her old home. Yet, for some reason she could feel her dragons. Not the older original ones, but the transformed versions. The mage realized that her spell had changed numerous humans within the new land she now stood in. Caistine grasped she had the tools to conquer the land she now stood on.

Back on Zar'Noosh, Ianril realized there was no way he could save his planet. Caistine's spell had done far too much damage. Yet he saw her dive into the tare and grasped she would escape the holocaust. Running as fast as his old legs could take him, Ianril was just able to get through the rudely created

portal before it closed. Behind him Zar'Noosh did not last much longer as it exploded apart.

Within seconds the old man found himself in some sort of dusky desert land that felt nothing like his old planet. It was much more alive and warm. Then it dawned on the old mage that he was nowhere near where his sister was. Ianril astutely guessed that once she got settled, his sister would try to do to this land what she did to Zar'Noosh. He knew he would have to hunt her down and stop her at all costs.