

Magic and Mishaps

By Dragonien

“So, you're sure this thing isn't going to, like, turn me into a frog or something, right?” Dragonien asked for the third time in ten minutes.

“For the last time, this spell doesn't have any transmogrification properties in it! Even if I screw up half of this circle, the only possible thing that it could do is make more, or less, of something.” Raqsuh replied, clearly irritated at the red dragon's continued skepticism.

“Yeah, but doesn't that mean that you could just, like, make one part of me bigger or something? What if, like, you made my heart so big that it burst out of my chest? Or shrunk my lungs too tiny for me to breathe, or—”

Dragonien cut off mid-sentence when he saw the death glare that the multi-tailed skunk was giving him. Dragonien was pretty sure that Raqsuh couldn't actually shoot lasers from his eyes, but he wasn't exactly an expert in magic, so he decided not to risk it and instead chose to change the subject.

“And you're, like... okay with using magic for something petty like this? There's not, like, some kind of Hippocratic Oath about not misusing magic?”

The skunk paused, still on his hands and knees scrawling arcane symbols on the warehouse floor with a piece of chalk. It was true that using powerful transmutation magic to make someone a few inches taller just to screw with someone else probably fell into the greyer area of ethics. Then again, who was gonna stop him? The magic police?

Raqsuh turned to glance up at the looming dragon standing a few feet away. The skunk's whole demeanor shifted slightly as he met the dragon's eyes. His fur bristled and his

ears flattened against the top of his head; his three unnaturally large tails writhing uncomfortably behind him. He would have been a terrible poker player.

“I, uhm... well... I mean, there's not, or at least I don't have to... I mean, I was just looking for an excuse to practice this kind of ritual magic?” Raqsuh stammered, the last part coming out more as a question than a statement.

The dragon shot Raqsuh a knowing smirk that only further flustered the skunk. Rather than try to make more excuses, he returned his attention back to hastily finishing up the scrawling text on the floor. Less than a minute later the design was done and he leaned back; wiping his forehead with the back of a wrist. His three overly-large tails writhed about behind him for a moment before planting themselves on the ground and lifting him up; his body resting on top of them like each were some overly large, thickly furred spider legs.

“Jeez,” Dragonien muttered with a wince. “It always weirds me out when you do that.”

Raqsuh responded with a deadpan stare. Despite how unnatural his unusually large tails moved, he seemed perfectly comfortable lounging on the apex of the appendages like if he was lounging on some large, fluffy bean bag chair.

“Alright, alright, enough complaining if you want this circle done.” Raqsuh instructed.

After making a show of mulling over whether to complain any further simply to mess with him, the dragon finally acquiesced and walked towards the center of the pattern drawn on the warehouse floor. Dragonien had just started to open his mouth again when Raqsuh cut him off by shouting a word the dragon didn't recognize and made a dramatic flourish with his arms.

The previously mundane lines of chalk drawn across the concrete suddenly lit up with a bright lime-green light! Small particles of light, barely larger than flecks of dust, began to rise from the glowing lines and started moving with increasing speed towards the dragon, as if

they were being vacuumed. Each little fleck of light that touched him seemed to melt into his body, leaving the tiniest tingle behind. Eventually, the few dozen motes of light multiplied into hundreds, thousands, all being pulled into Dragonien and leaving his whole body tingling as it absorbed the energy, forming a glowing green aura around him.

At first, he didn't notice the difference. Looking down at himself, Dragonien felt exactly the same. His clothes still fit just the same as before. He had expected to feel them suddenly tightening and even tearing around him, not that his shirt wasn't already stretched rather tightly around his ample gut and well-built upper body. He only finally saw the difference when the glow began to fade, and he turned to look back at Raqsuh. More specifically, to look down at him.

Dragonien had already been a good deal taller than the magic-casting skunk. There'd been nearly a 2ft difference between them normally. Although when Raqsuh used the apex of his tails as a seat, like he did now, they lifted him up high enough that they were both typically at eye level with each other. Now though, despite the tails still holding Raqsuh up at the same height as always, Dragonien found himself looking down at the skunk by nearly the same margin as if Raqsuh had been standing upright.

"Whoa, it worked!" Dragonien exclaimed excitedly. "You did it, I'm actually taller!"

Raqsuh arched an eyebrow at the enlarged dragon. "What do you mean, 'actually'?" he asked with a tone of mock-indignation in his voice. "I told you I am a professional Arcanist!"

His sarcasm fell on deaf ears, however. The newly-grown dragon was too busy lumbering his way over towards the exit of the warehouse. It didn't escape either of their notices that his footsteps now made an audible thumping sound and made the concrete floor vibrate ever so slightly. Two more feet may not have been that much to someone that was already over eight feet tall, but it still meant he was at least a couple hundred pounds heavier than his already impressive previous weight! Despite his annoyance at being summarily ignored, Raqsuh couldn't help but flush slightly when he saw Dragonien being forced to get down on hands and knees to squeeze through the now-too-small door to exit the building. The overgrown dragon normally had to duck down and squeeze through, but now he had to strain

to fit his prodigious hips and backside through the doorframe. It didn't help the skunk's flustered state that he swore the doorframe looked a bit bent outwards by the time the dragon had made it through. Just as he was about to breath a sigh of relief and finally relax, Dragonien's large head ducked down through the doorframe once more.

"Thanks for this, man, I owe you one!" The dragon called out happily.

Raqsuh was contentedly skimming his way through a leather-bound tome far out of place in this modern era when he felt tremors approaching. The metal roof of the warehouse began to rattle with each vibrating impact in a very clear, rhythmic pattern. Each impact slightly stronger than the last. It wasn't hard to figure out what they were.

Footsteps.

He had barely made it halfway across the room before the entire warehouse shook so violently that his tails lost their balance and he fell back on his ass. An ear-splitting screech of warping metal echoed through the air as the metal roof was ripped off one side of the building and bent upwards like it were little more than the lid on a can of tuna. When Raqsuh's eyes adjusted to the sudden flood of natural light, he looked up to find a very familiar draconic face staring down at him through the new hole in the ceiling. Although the last time he had seen that face, it had not been the size of a small car.

"Hey, man. I-I think there's a bit of a problem with your spell." Dragonien said, his size magnifying his voice into a low rumble.

"What the hell happened?" Raqsuh exclaimed as he pushed himself up to his feet. "That spell was only supposed to make you 20% larger!"

To the dragon's surprise, Raqsuh seem more confused than irritated that his spell clearly wasn't working right; the dragon being big enough to star in his own monster movie. He was about to try to explain what had been happening, when his body decided to give a visual example instead.

Raqsuh's eyes widened as he watched a familiar glow manifest around the already unnaturally large dragon and Dragonien began to grow once again. Fingers resting on the edge of the warehouse swelled and caused the still intact metal sheet to bend downwards under their increasing weight. Meanwhile, his other hand bent the roof further backwards as his arm extended. Though Raqsuh couldn't see it from inside the warehouse, he heard the sharp crack of wood splintering. From the way the dragon glanced down to his side, it wasn't hard for Raqsuh to guess that his expanding mass had probably bumped against one of the small trees outside the warehouse and knocked it over. Just like the first time, the whole effect happened over a span of several seconds and when it was done, there was now over thirty feet of dragon standing over the damaged building.

All at once, it became clear to Raqsuh what the problem was. A quick glance down at the spell circle, still scrawled across the ground, confirmed his suspicions. He had flawlessly written out the spell to increase the dragon's size by a certain percentage and it had done exactly that. The problem was, being unfamiliar with this particular form of spellcraft, he hadn't thought to put an end command into the spell. So, it grew the target larger. And then did it again, and again, and again at a seemingly random interval because nothing was telling it to stop doing so.

"Yeah..." Dragonien rumbled in a noticeably deeper voice. "That. It's done that like 10 times now. What did you do?"

Raqsuh glared up at the giant dragon, showing much more courage than most people would when faced against someone that could probably swallow them whole. Okay, yeah, maybe this was his fault, but that didn't mean the dragon had to actually say it!

"Look, look, it's a simple fix. The spell just didn't have an ending trigger, so it keeps repeating. Just got to put one of those in and it'll stop!" Raqsuh exclaimed confidently.

Dragonien stared at the comparatively small skunk down for several seconds.

“Okay... and is that going to shrink me back down? As much as I enjoy being big, I think this might be a little too much for day-to-day life.” The dragon said.

“Oh...” Raqsuh replied, as if shrinking the dragon back down hadn't occurred to him. “Uhm, yeah, we can do that too. Give me a minute. “

With that Raqsuh stood back up and fished out the several pieces of chalk from his pocket. Like tentacles, his three tails lifted him up and scurried around the spell circle with him in tow; acting like a suspension harness for him to dangle over the circle and adjust it without risking stepping on it. Though he paid the giant dragon no mind, he could see Dragonien shuddering out of the corner of his eye. Luckily, most of the spell was already complete. All Raqsuh had to do was adjust a few variables to change it from enlarging to reducing. Once he was done, he stood back up and planted his hands on his hips with an accomplished grin on his face.

“There. All done! Now just step into... erm...” Raqsuh started to say, only to trail off as he looked back up at the Dragon.

“I think that circle might be a little too small for me to stand in.” Dragonien deadpanned.

Raqsuh frowned and glanced around the warehouse. The dragon didn't need to be standing directly inside of it, but he needed to be over it, and with it being inside of the warehouse, there was only really one option.

“Rip off the roof.” Raqsuh told the dragon.

“Wait, what?” The dragon asked, thinking he misheard the skunk.

“Just rip off the roof! You already damaged it beyond repair anyway. Just tear the roof off and step inside. As long as you're standing over the circle, that should be fine.”

Dragonien gave Raqsuh another skeptical look before shrugging in acceptance. It wasn't his warehouse, so what did he care? Moments later, Raqsuh was forced to cover his ears to defend them from the ear-piercing screech of warping and bending metal. Small chunks of concrete and bits of broken-off steel fell along the warehouse floor as Dragonien did exactly as he was told and further bent back the roof. Within moments, more than half of the warehouse was exposed to the elements and there was a hole large enough that the dragon was able to climb over the front wall and stand inside.

Raqsuh suddenly found himself a little more nervous than he had been moments ago. It was one thing to see the dragon looming over the top of the warehouse. It was another to feel those footsteps so close that he almost stumbled from the impact of them. Not to mention that with the dragon now standing inside of the waist-high warehouse, Raqsuh could finally see him from the waist down. Specifically, he could see the nearly car-sized feet currently cracking the concrete under their weight.

He had to take a moment to collect himself before directing the dragon to stand over the circle. It didn't escape his notice that the dragon had several large branches hooked against the fabric of his shorts on one leg from when it must have knocked over the tree outside. At least that was one thing they could both be happy about: his clothes were growing with him. Although Raqsuh found his cheeks blushing at the thought of the dragon's clothing not growing with him.

Shaking his head to get his thoughts back on track, he turned his attention back towards the circle and the four-story-tall dragon standing over it. His arms raised and once more he began to pour arcane energy into the circle. The light began to build with the same bright green hue as before and Raqsuh was confident everything would go flawlessly. That is, right up until the point that a stray crackle of violet lightning sparked from one side of the circle to the other and Raqsuh realized they had a problem.

A second bolt of unnaturally colored lightning flickered along the edge of the circle before snapping out and lashing against Dragonien's ankle. The impact didn't seem to actually cause any damage, but it did make the oversized dragon yelp in surprise from the unexpected electrical shock. The entire building shook as the dragon tried to hop back out of reflex only to trip and fall flat on his ass with enough force to crater the concrete under his weight!

Raqsuh quickly looked back and forth trying to find what he had done wrong. The runes had been perfect. Everything should have worked just fine! And then he noticed. There were several cracks in the concrete floor that had shifted some of the previously perfectly lined up diagrams. The dragon's footsteps must have cracked it and disrupted the circle. Now, straight arcane energy was lashing out from the misaligned edges like electricity sparking from exposed live wire. Worse still, he could still feel the energy building as the spell continued to try to complete itself despite its malfunction. Raqsuh assumed that the energy would just dissipate without a living something in range to take its effect, so they just had to give it a minute to disperse, and he could fix everything. Or at least that's what he thought until he glanced towards the center of the circle where one of the branches that had been stuck to Dragonien's leg had been shaken free when he stumbled backwards. Specifically, when he saw one of the branches moving... No, not the branch. Oh, good lord, it was a stick bug.

The thought crossed his mind a split second before the energy building within the circle exploded. Raqsuh, and even the oversized dragon, were sent tumbling backwards. Dragonien smashed through the front wall and ended up sprawled outside while Raqsuh impacted against the opposite wall, thankfully cushioned by his oversized autonomous tails. Not that his momentary safety made him feel any better as the skunk watched the released arcane energy being absorbed into the stick bug and causing it to rapidly swell in size. The only thing he could think to do was give a quick flick of his wrist and a muttered word to create a burst of air underneath the stick bug, sending it flying out of range of the circle and, thanks to his panicked overuse of force, out of the warehouse entirely through the open roof.

The energy crackled a few more times, a straight arc of green lightning making its way towards Raqsuh and sending a brief surge of growth through him as well. For a moment he was terrified that he too would end up the same way as Dragonien, but, thankfully, it only had

the last slivers of power in it, so he only gained a couple of inches. Unfortunately for him, it did not extend to his clothing, some feeling a size too small.

Finally, the discharging energy died down and the circle lost its glow. The warehouse felt eerily quiet all of a sudden without the foreign buzz of supernatural energies and crackles of arcane electricity. When Raqsuh pushed himself up to his feet, he stumbled a bit and adjusted to his new slightly elevated perspective. A quick survey around the room confirmed the warehouse was thoroughly trashed, thanks mostly to the oversized dragon falling through one of the walls and his hasty ejection of the magic-tainted bug further ripping part of the roof off. Dusting himself off, Raqsuh began walking his way back towards the center of the room to try and survey the damage to the circle itself.

“Well, that could have gone better. At least the backlash wasn’t that big.” Raqsuh called over to Dragonien.

“Uhm... about that.” Dragonien replied, looking off into the distance towards his right. “I think we have a bigger problem...”

Raqsuh was about to ask what he meant only to be interrupted by a loud, yet distant crashing sound coming from outside that sounded like a few blocks away. Confused, the skunk jogged his way towards the wall and looked out of one of the now broken windows to see what the dragon was looking at.

“...Oh, yeah, that's a problem.” The skunk muttered under his breath.

Off in the distance, a few blocks away, a large cloud of debris was swirling up in the air. At least he knew where the stick bug had landed. And he was able to tell because he could see that stick bug, now easily even taller than the dragon was, standing on top of the crushed remains of a couple of buildings. And as if that wasn't bad enough, as they both stared, they saw a familiar green energy crackle around the stick bug, noticeably less smooth than it had around Dragonien. Then, with more jerky, erratic spurts, the stick bug stretched and swelled nearly a dozen feet more before the aura dissipated.

“What do we do?” Dragonien asked, concern in his voice.

“Uh...” Raqsuh stammered as he looked up at the dragon. “I’m not sure... that spell is unstable. I don't even know if just the regular counter-spell I was going to use on you would stop it. For all I know, it could make it worse.”

“Well, we have to do something!” Dragonien exclaimed.

After a few more moments of silence, Dragonien set his jaw in determination. Rising to his feet, bits of dust and debris falling off him in the process, he took two long steps into the middle of the warehouse. Before Raqsuh realized what was happening, a huge pair of red fingers wrapped around his torso, lifted him up off the ground, and set him on the dragon’s shoulder.

“Whoa! Hey, careful! What are you doing?” Raqsuh exclaimed as he grabbed some of Dragonien’s hair for balance.

“You figure out how to fix this. I'll try to distract it so at least it doesn't wreck the entire town! I mean, that's not really my job, but, hey, I live here. This is where I keep my stuff!” The dragon responded with determination.

Before Raqsuh had a chance to protest, the dragon was already hopping over the waist-high wall and lumbering his way down the street in a light jog. Despite a feeling of concern at the potential damage this whole situation could cause, Dragonien still couldn't help but enjoy the feeling of being so large, so powerful. Every step he took caused the ground to tremble slightly and the street to crack beneath his feet. He could literally be tons of muscle and bone creating even more momentum than a speeding locomotive just from him running. It was exhilarating. Adding to that him running headfirst into his own real-life version of a giant monster movie, and it was no wonder he was grinning like a maniac. Not that the sight of the

dragon's lips pulled back in a wicked grin, revealing teeth the size of swords, did much to alleviate the concern of his passenger.

The suburban street had descended into utter chaos. A spindly insectoid leg the size of a telephone pole smashed down onto a car and paved the roof under its weight. The ground trembled and rumbled with each thumping step those wood-like appendages took. It was like a scene out of some cheesy b-movie from the eighties. A giant insect causing chaos and destruction, not because of malice but by simply moving around. Arm-like appendages swinging around and getting caught on power lines only to rip them from their poles, live wires falling to the street below. Trees that the creature once would have blended in were knocked to the side like little more than blades of grass as it skidded its way over one house where some bit of foliage had caught its attention. The giant bug had no way of knowing, not that it would have cared anyway, that the tree it suddenly was interested in snacking on was home to a treehouse where a pair of kids were hiding. The kids inside were too terrified to run, only able to stare up with wide eyes through the brakes in the branches overhead as the giant creature's mandibles lowered towards them. The two children too distracted to pay attention to a new series of ground shaking impacts right up until a massive red blur slammed into the side of the stick bug and sent it crashing into the neighbor's house!

"Over here, bug boy!" the red dragon's deep voice boomed across the neighborhood.

Standing amongst the waist-high two-story homes, the dragon looked like yet another set-piece from a cheesy movie. His hefty, yet muscular, build and the stretchy nylon shorts and sleeveless shirt he wore brought an extra note of absurdity to his otherwise nonsensical size, evoking images of him just having come from a trip to the local gym despite being bigger than the entire building. Most people still close enough by to get a good look at the dragon barely even registered the much smaller person clinging for dear life to the side of his neck.

Despite the uncertainty of the situation, many of those nearby found themselves with a sense of relief and confidence at seeing something standing up to the monster that had abruptly appeared in their midst. However, someone clearly did not appreciate Dragonien's

sudden entrance. The giant insect scrambled to its feet and then leapt towards the dragon. It swung its forelimbs like scythes only for him to raise his arms and grab both appendages to hold them at bay. The bug may have been a few feet taller than him but at the end of the day, it was still a stick bug. It had no real natural weapons and, comparatively, very little mass. Even with it putting its full weight into trying to push the dragon backwards, all he had to do was brace his feet against the ground to hold his position.

“Okay, just hold it there!” Raqsuh shouted from the dragon’s shoulder. “I’ve just got to discharge the spell and then we can shrink it down!”

“Hey, don't mind me, this is actually pretty fun!” Dragonien replied gleefully.

Dragonien was clearly having more fun being a giant and participating in a real-life kaiju battle than actually being concerned for the damage the bug had been causing. Then again, if it still led to the same outcome, Raqsuh didn't really have a complaint. He closed his eyes and began pulling together his focus to work on dissolving the malfunctioning spell. It wasn’t more than a minute before the dragon’s voice interrupted his concentration again.

“Uh... can you hurry up with that spell thing?”

It was the concern in the dragon's voice more than anything else what broke Raqsuh's concentration. When he opened his eyes again, ready to ask what the problem was, he found the answer plain as day.

The dragon’s arms were now shaking from the strain of holding the stick bug back as it pushed against him. His feet were dragging across the street below, even as his toes clenched and his claws dug deep gouges into the cement. Only moments before, it had taken him little effort to hold the oversized insect in place. Unfortunately for both of them, that now all-too-familiar green aura had once more surrounded the stick bug and those telephone-pole-sized appendages were now swelling past the thickness of an oak tree.

“Oh crap.” Raqsuh muttered.

“Yeah, oh crap! Can you do something about this?” Dragonien demanded.

Before the skunk could reply, he found himself abruptly thrown off his perch as an abrupt, uneven surge of growth shoved hard enough against the dragon that he lost his balance and toppled backwards. He hit the ground with enough force to set off several nearby car alarms, not to mention crater the street beneath him. Thankfully, Raqsuh's tails cushioned his fall and wrapped protectively around him as he rolled to a stop a few dozen yards away. By the time he was back up, the dragon was already rolling to the side to avoid one of the stick bug's legs slamming down where his head had just been. When the dragon got up to his feet, Raqsuh got a good look of just how much trouble they were in. The aura had finally faded from the stick bug once more, but it had quadrupled in size!

“H-heh now. No hard feelings, right?” Dragonien tried nervously to placate the creature.

Unfortunately, it either didn't understand him or was unwilling to listen. A moment after he spoke, one of the bug's forelimbs swung down and Dragonien barely turned it to the side in time to avoid it slamming into him. A quick look around his surroundings told him that he was now at a severe disadvantage. Despite being taller than most of the surrounding buildings, he still wasn't tall enough that he could just walk over most of the houses, making all of them obstacles. When the stick bug had been roughly the same size, it had the same issue. Now, however, it was big enough to easily just walk over them. As much as he had been enjoying having his own giant monster battle, Dragonien was not very interested in being beaten.

So, he turned and ran.

“I'll try to keep it busy, just do something before it gets bigger. I swear to God if I died from a bug stepping on me, I'm going to haunt you forever!” Dragonien yelled over his shoulder.

Even as he shouted, his heavy footsteps softened their impact as he got further and further away. Thankfully for the skunk, the stick bug had not noticed him and chased after the dragon without a moment of hesitation. Raqsuh had no idea what to do. The magic just seemed to be continually feeding back on itself and getting stronger with each event. If Dragonien couldn't hold the thing in one place long enough for him to disrupt that spell, it would just keep going on forever! And at this rate, it was only a matter of minutes before the thing really was big enough to squash even the giant dragon like... well, like a bug.

And then Raqsuh had an idea. A really, really terrible idea.

He couldn't get the bug to stay still long enough and there was no way he could create a big enough spell circle to shrink the thing before it got too big. Which meant there was only one other option: fight fire with fire.

“Well, you wanted to be big man on campus...”

A good portion of the streets had already been evacuated but there were still hundreds of people inside of the various skyscrapers lining the center of town. Whether from their simple lack of interest in the order or any other reason, there were plenty of people perfectly content to simply stay where they were. And most of them immediately began to regret that decision when they saw a seven-story-tall dragon squeezing his way down a narrow street and between buildings trying to escape a gigantic stick bug crawling around the sides, toppling the skyscrapers like they were tree limbs and rocks.

Dragonien had been lucky enough to have one of his own growth spurts in the few minutes that it took him to run from suburbia into the center of town. Unfortunately, this only added a dozen feet or so. Far too little to begin to close the gap between him and the gigantic stick bug. The only reason the thing hadn't caught him already was that the buildings had enough space for him to squeeze between them but not the stick bug. And despite it being

significantly larger, it didn't have quite enough mass or strength to just bulldoze through the buildings, so it was forced to crawl around them to try to get him.

When he dared look over his shoulder to see where the bug was, he let out a yelp and ducked just in time to dodge a swipe from overhead. Dragonien was a big guy, and not just thanks too that spell. He wasn't exactly built for running and, compared to something several times his size, it was a miracle he was keeping ahead of it as good as he was. Sadly, his luck ran out when he looked back in front of him and found himself running into an open empty space near the center of town where a large park was.

Skidding to a stop, completely uncaring about the half-dozen cars either crushed directly under his feet or bulldozed out of the way by them, Dragonien turned to try to dive back in between the buildings. Unfortunately, the stick bug either instinctually or consciously saw what he was doing and jumped down to block his path. Stuck out in the open like this without anything to impede the enlarged insect, there was nowhere for him to run.

“Look, big guy let’s just talk about this...” Dragonien said while again raising his arms in a placating gesture.

Even as he spoke, he began to back up slowly, afraid that a sudden movement would cause the creature to pounce. His foot nearly slid out from under him and sent him sprawling when he stepped on a bus and crushed it like a tin can. In any other situation, he would have greatly enjoyed being able to just casually demolish automobiles as easily as discarded garbage. Unfortunately, when staring down a literal giant monster, even when compared to his own unnatural size, it was hard for him to enjoy the thrill of being huge.

“Here he comes to save the day!” A familiar voice shouted through the air.

Both Dragonien and the stick bug turned their attention towards the source of the voice and saw just about the last thing they expected to see. Flying through the air, like if someone had thrown it like a frisbee, was a large, roughly circular chunk of concrete about a foot thick.

Standing on top of it, like it were an oversized surfboard, was a familiar three-tailed skunk with a mixed terrified and excited expression on his face.

The stick bug quickly lost interest and turned its attention back towards the dragon. Dragonien, on the other hand, kept staring at the small chunk of rock that was heading straight for him! Not that it was going to do any real damage. Compared to the dragon, the thing wasn't even the size of a tea saucer. But the actual danger of something doesn't really affect your reflexive response to something flying at you.

Just as the rock was about to impact against Dragonien's shoulder, Raqsuh slapped his hands down onto the concrete below him. With a quick surge of arcane power, crackling blue electricity coursed across the rock and gathered along its underside before impacting against Dragonien's shoulder, sticking to him instead of simply bouncing off! However, that was secondary to the sudden, brief surge of pain the dragon felt as a burning sensation radiated out from where the concrete impacted. The sensation only lasted a moment before another gesture from Raqsuh caused the concrete to collapse into dust just as he hopped back onto the dragon's shoulder.

"Sorry, sorry, it was the best way I could think of getting it on you in time!" Raqsuh apologized, already raising his arms to gather more energy.

"It was the only way to get what on me? What did you... Wait, is that...?"

On the exposed skin of his shoulder, right where the concrete had impacted, was now an intricate black marking in the shape of a circle. A familiar circle that the dragon had seen on the floor of the warehouse.

"Did you... did you BRAND me?" Dragonien exclaimed.

"Not the time, look out!" Raqsuh yelled back.

Dragonien snapped his head back around just in time to see the stick bug swinging a limb at him again! He ducked down, hearing a whistle over the top of his head, the limb swinging so close he actually felt it scratch against his horns. He was about to try to turn tail and run again only to feel a familiar tingle of energy in the air and see a faint glow of green coming from one side of his peripheral vision. That green light spread from the edge of his view all across his body in an all-too-familiar green aura. Then that gentle, stable green aura began to writhe and pulsate around him less like it had done to him and more like... the bug.

"Oh, wait, that's not supposed to happen," the dragon heard Raqsuh say from his shoulder.

He didn't even have a chance to turn his head, much less ask what the hell Raqsuh had just done, before he was distracted by a sudden, violent explosion of growth.

In the first second the dragon tripled in size, growing so fast that the vertigo made him stumble. This time when he stepped backwards, his significantly larger feet crushed multiple cars beneath them. And then a split second later, that foot doubled in size, then doubled again! Nearby cars, street signs, lampposts, and anything else near them were bulldozed out of the way as his feet greedily devoured the space around them. Before he realized, Dragonien was looking down on the stick bug, down on the nearby skyscrapers. Down on... everything!

His modest 70ft exploded to two hundred, then four, then a thousand feet and only seemed to be increasing in speed. He grew so big, so fast, but he didn't have time to try to get out of the city before just the expanding size of his feet began to destroy nearby buildings down below. The stick bug, suddenly terrified of its growing prey, turned and try to leap over some of the nearby buildings. The motion caught Dragonien's eye, and he reached down to grab the now comparatively much smaller stick bug before it could get away.

"Oh no you don't!"

Almost as if responding to suddenly having a hand bigger than its entire body gripping it, Dragonien saw the stick bug's own green aura flare up as it began to grow as well. Much to his surprise and its dismay, despite its own growth spurt, it still felt like the stick bug was getting smaller in the dragon's grasp. He was growing faster than it was!

A glance downwards showed that the dragon, now nearly an entire mile tall, had already bulldozed a significant portion of downtown just by standing in it. Carefully, he tried to step out of the city, only to lose his balance and topple backwards.

The impact of a literal mountain of chubby dragon was almost as destructive as if he had just sat on the city itself. The earthquake registered on the upper portion of the Richter scale and caused several buildings to collapse just from the shaking. Not to mention the two new craters in the shape of his ass cheeks that were growing steadily deeper as he continued to grow. One mile swelled into two, then five, then ten as his growth only seemed to continue speeding up. For those down below, it was like a literal tidal wave of short-covered ass and thighs were spreading across the landscape like a land-bound tsunami.

Before long, even sitting down he started to notice clouds fluttering around his face only to be blown away when he exhaled from his nostrils. The land down below was starting to look less like hills and cities and more like that mismatching grid space you see from looking out the window of a plane.

And yet still he grew.

Eventually, he was growing so fast that nearby planes, already having turned to try to fly away from him, found themselves overtaken by the sheer speed of his growth. He was literally growing faster than passenger planes could fly! Less than a minute after whatever Raqsuh had done started, he was sitting on a good third of the entire state. Thirty seconds later, he could almost stretch his legs out towards one of the coasts. And when the growth spurt finally slowed to a stop, barely three minutes after it began, the dragon's ass was just beginning to feel the cold dampness of the ocean on the coast while his heels were firmly hanging off the coastline on the opposite side of the country. He was literally bigger than the entire country! Well over 2000 miles tall!

Only when the growth finally stopped did he dare to look down at his hand. He couldn't even see the stick bug anymore. He wouldn't have been surprised if the thing had tripled or even quadrupled in size again. Yet despite that, it was so tiny that he was pretty sure it was lost in one of the wrinkles in his palm. If he squinted hard enough, he swore he could see a little flicker of green somewhere in the center of his hand, but he couldn't be sure. Even if it was growing still, it had a quite a few ways to catch up.

“Well, that backfired.”

The words spoke from inside his head rather than being heard by his ears, yet Dragonien swung his head back and forth a couple of times anyway on sheer reflex.

“Raqsuh? Is that you? Where are you?” Dragonien said aloud, having no idea how to communicate telepathically.

Whether through somehow being able to understand the literal sonic booms of his voice or simply able to read his mind, Raqsuh was able to reply.

“Oh, I'm pretty sure I'm still on your shoulder here somewhere. Hard to be more specific than that considering your shoulder is now bigger than Kansas.” Raqsuh grumbled.

“Yeah, uhm... did you mean to make me a new land mass? I mean, this is kind of cool. Being, like, you know, a living force of nature, but something tells me you didn't mean for this to happen.” Dragonien replied, partially distracted by lifting one of his legs and pressing his heel into the coastline only to accidentally break some of it off.

Whoops, there goes North Carolina.

"Yeah. I was trying to use the overloaded spell just to make you big enough you could hold the bug down. I didn't anticipate it reacting with the spell if you were already under and compounding it. Sorry about the brand by the way, I couldn't think of any other way to get the sign on you. Not like I could sit there for an hour and a half drawing it with buckets of paint." Raqsuh sighed mentally at the cataclysmically large dragon.

"Yes, about that," Dragonien said hesitantly, "If that thing is branded on me like a tattoo now, you're going to have to remove it so you can undo the spell, right? So, uhm... how do we stop me from growing again until then?"

As if on cue, and all-too-familiar unstable green glow began to cover the already impossibly large dragon. Even as he began to expand beyond the edges of North America, the only response he got back from the magically gifted skunk was a single word.

"Crap."

Despite the insanity of the situation, Dragonien couldn't help but grin. Past all the difficulties of the day, he still got to gleefully revel in being the biggest thing on the planet. Hell, at this rate, he'd gonna end up BIGGER than the planet. That thought only made him that much more excited. Despite there being no way he could possibly see the skunk on the endless plane of his shoulder, he still turned his head to grin down at where he guessed the magician was.

"I mean, don't hurt on my account. I'm rather enjoying my late-stage growth spurt!" Dragonien reassured with just a bit too much glee in his voice, leaving Raqsuh feeling more nervous than ever. "Hope you're ready to be the first colonizer of Planet Dragonien, Raqsuh!"