

Act I Part 3

Earth. November 20 2018. L3/G242/R1

That last night had been the worst night's sleep that she had ever experienced. Her wings and tail made it so uncomfortable to sleep on her back, not to mention the thin horns that now adorned her head. She had a kink in her neck and sore wings. Nika rolled over, back onto her side and sat up.

Nicole rubbed her eyelids with her hand and blinked. She saw the blue tones flashing across the ceiling and sighed, she was still there in this reality. Glancing over at the clock, she realized it was only midnight. Nika picked up one of the Orca plushies from her bed. "I guess this is what I get for going to bed at five... at least these are still here." She looked up from the stuffed animal, at the blue waves on her ceiling.

"I guess I have a job to do...." She sighed and got up.

Nika shuffled across the floor and grabbed a green coat out of her closet. When she slipped it on, there was a flash of gold light from her left shoulder. She hurried across the hall, into the bathroom and looked in the mirror. What had been an empty patch on the coat, was now adorned with a gold symbol. Somewhat of a squiggly and a triangle. She had no idea what it meant.

When she removed her coat, she saw the same symbol was tattooed to her arm, coloring the fine, tiny scales. With a clawed finger, she picked at a colored scale. It became loose, but the forming scale beneath it had the same coloration. Nicole wondered how far down it went... or even how tattoos worked in this reality with the way skin was now.

"I wonder..." She mumbled to herself, grabbing one of the mirrors off the wall and went back to her room. Nika retrieved another coat from her closet and tried it on before the mirror. Her shoulder flashed and the symbol appeared again, in the same place as on the other coat.

Nicole tried another, and the same thing happened once more. The symbol appeared over and over, on every piece of clothing that fully covered that part of her shoulder.

"Well, I guess it looks okay... Not so distracting on the green as the red coat." She sighed, and dropped the coats. "Why is this all happening..."

A few days had passed and Nika honestly still did not fully understand why it had happened to her, but she was beginning to get a hold of her new life. Her phone had been ringing every day since she had decided to just stay home, she had been avoiding work, classes, or whatever responsibilities that she had. She didn't even change her clothes.

Just remaining in her room, practicing with the magic that had been given to her. Nicole wasn't even sure that her family knew she was home. All she knew how to do so far; was heal herself, which would come in handy any time, and make stuff appear out of nothing. She had noticed that it took a little less energy from her when she conjured items than it did when she made the fish sticks a few days ago, apparently she was slowly building up her 'reserves'. Changing things that already existed was something that she was struggling with at the moment.

Though, today she finally felt up for seeing the new world she inhabited. In an effort to ease into some sense of normalcy, Nika would be returning to work in the next few hours. She had managed to bring back some of her injuries from crashing her truck, and forged a doctors note to explain away her absence.

After taking a much needed shower, she needed to figure out how to put on actual clothes. The first thing on was a bra. Nicole thought it was strange that this species would even have breasts; but then again, most anthropomorphic species were heavily influenced by humans so it was not much of a far cry. Especially if these realities were created how she was told.

Ultimately however, putting on a bra with wings in the way was much more difficult than it used to be. It was almost like a harness now, going all the way down to her belly, sort of like a longer sports bra. Nika laughed to herself. "There's no way that they wore corsets in the eighteenth century."

She slipped her work shirt on, the flap between the wings buttoned into the sides to create some sort of seal for her back. Same with the pants, an adjustable tail sleeve just like a coat. There were plenty of buttons and zippers to deal with the new appendages.

Nika hobbled over to the stairs and started up. Her leg did not hurt, but she had put a brace on it that limited movement, just to further enforce the ruse. She got into her truck and waved her hand, causing a few large dents to appear as well. Bringing things she had removed with magic back was all she could do to other physical things at the time.

The drive to work held no similarities to her old route, once again the only thing that saved her was her phone's GPS. When she finally pulled into the parking lot, she saw that the building was definitely bigger than before. Nika parked and limped through the front door.

One of the managers looked up from one of the tills; Nicole could only tell by the uniform, no one looked the same anymore. "Nika! Good to see you're alright. You sure you're up to working today?" It was all a ruse. Even if she didn't feel up to it, management would never let her go home early.

That was, unless she had this. "Yeah," She waved the doctors note. "Doc said that I should take it easy for a bit though."

The manager, Nika identified her as Samantha thanks to the name tag, took the piece of paper and scrutinized it. "Okay, well head back to the first window. Dani will get you set up."

Nicole just nodded and made her way around the counter. It was strange seeing all her old coworkers with only their name tags to associate with who they had been before. As she walked back, she also noted how much more room there was around the grill, though she quickly realized that it was all forfeit with the tail and wings to now get in the way.

Dani was the shift manager that Nika always seemed to get along with, and she now appeared to be a green dragon without any wings. "Morning Nika, I've got your drawer ready. Just grab a headset." Dani said.

"Alright... Dani." It was a bit uneasy to call them by their names, she kept picturing them as their Human selves and had difficulty reconciling them together. Nika grabbed a headset off the rack and placed it on her head. The earpiece slipped behind her fin-like ear cover for a snug fit.

The person who she was replacing at the back window saw this and quickly clocked out, grabbed their bag and hurried out of the store. No one like the back window.

Almost immediately, Nika's headset beeped for her lane. She sighed and recited the proper greeting. "Hello, welcome to McKitRick's burgers and shakes, what can I get started for you? '

It felt good to be back into some kind of routine, continuing to take people's orders and money at the window. She had been moved to the second window to pass out food later in the shift, and everything

was going fine until after her lunch break.

There was a new trainee on the back window, and an order for three vanilla shakes appeared on screen. As usual, Nika sat against the counter, watching them from the front, someone else would make the shakes. The trainee seemed to greet the customer at the window and accept the payment. However, the manager stuck her head out of the office, and her eyes went wide.

Samantha leapt out of the small office and waved her hands up at Nika. “Its her! The shake lady, don't hand those drinks out.”

Nicole stepped back from the window. She had never actually been around when 'the shake lady' had been through. Apparently she was a woman that would order shakes at one restaurant, and then go to another and complain that they were made incorrectly, routinely underpay to cashiers that weren't paying attention, and scam free drinks out from the front counter. Not to mention holding up the lane until she got what she wanted. She had been banned more than once.

The car pulled up to the second window, and the woman did not waste any time. “Ex-scuse me. Hello!?” She shouted out from the car.

Nika looked to her manager for any sort of guidance, but she received none, just a hand motion to stall. She inched back over to the window and stuck her head out. “Sorry, ma'am. We're just waiting on someone to... um... grab shake mix from the freezer.”

“Are you serious! I ordered those shakes five minutes ago. I expect them now. “ The woman growled. She was a wingless orange dragon, and there were cigarette butts strewn all over the dashboard. The woman pulled a cigarette out of a box and lit it with a puff from her mouth.

“I'm sorry, but the machine ran out, it will just be a moment, and ma'am you cant smoke in the drive-through.” Nika glanced back at her manager, who was on now the phone.

“I will do, as I very well please.” The shake lady said, blowing a puff of smoke into the window.

Nicole growled back and slid the window shut immediately, “What am I supposed to do?!” she asked Samantha.

“Keep stalling, I'm calling the police, shes not supposed to be here,” Samantha said. “Just give her the shakes, hopefully the cops will get here before she pulls out.”

Another coworker made the shakes and passed them to Nika. She sighed and turned back to the window. The shake lady tapped on the glass with a ring. Nika slid the window open. “I apologize, its taken longer than expected.” She passed them down in a drink holder.

“Well I want a goddamn refund for having to wait.” The shake lady spat.

“We can't do that, unless you give the shakes back.” Nika sighed. Her patience had thinned with this customer, other cars were beginning to honk.

“I want my money.” She said.

“Like I said, I can't do it unless you give them back.” Nika replied.

“And I wont because it took you so long. Where is your manager!”

“She is busy. Will you please pull through and let us serve the others?”

“I'll call the cops!” she threatened.

“Ma'am there's nothing-” Nika was interrupted by the woman throwing one of the shakes through the window.

“I want my money back.”

“Ma'am! What the-” Nika growled and was interrupted again.

“Money, now. I'm not moving.”

“I cannot.-”

“Give me my money back, bitch.” the woman demanded.

“Fuck yo-”

“Money”

“Goddamnit Shut the fuck up and move on ma'am! you are such a broken fucking record!” Nika roared at the woman. Before the woman could respond, there was a flash of blue light from the vehicle. It lasted only a moment, and when it cleared a literal record had replaced the woman in the seat.

It took a moment to register what had just happened. Everyone else had been busy trying to carry on with their tasks and did not notice. However, when it clicked in Nika's mind, she realized what she had done and screamed.

“Nika, what's wrong?” Samantha asked, having just heard her scream.

Nicole did not pay any attention to the others and closed her eyes. In a flurry of panic, she tried to concentrate on restoring the woman. She was a horribly rude customer, but that did not mean that she deserved this. Nika opened her eyes, nothing happened.

She tried again, still nothing. Glancing down at her wrist indicator, the charge ticked up an additional percent. Nika tried it once more, and much to her relief the woman was once again sitting in her car. A bit upside down, but there nonetheless.

Nika sighed and glanced back and prepared to make some kind of explanation, but found that everyone else in the restaurant was moving in slow motion. “...What the fuck?”

She turned back out the window, and spied someone not moving slowly. Leaning against the wall of another building stood a red dragon with a cup of coffee. Tetam. When he caught her gaze, he lifted his coffee cup in acknowledgment and then simply vanished.

Rapidly, things began to speed up again. Nika looked down at her wrist, point seven percent, just enough to give something a slight push. As time returned to normal, Nicole waved her hand at the shake lady's vehicle and it slid out of the drive-through. There was the sound of crunching metal, and Nika stuck her head out of the window to see that she had sent to woman's car right into the arriving police vehicle.

She pulled her head back in and fell back against the drink machine. "Jeezus christ..." Nika sighed.

"What the fuck happened..." Samantha said, coming over and sticking her own head out the window.

"Holy shit... crazy bitch!" she turned to Nika. "Sorry about that, tough first day back, huh?"

"...You have no idea." Nika replied.

"Why don't you head home, this was enough bullshit for one day." Samantha gave her a pat on the back, which caused her to wince, as it was one of the spots Nika had brought injuries back to.

"...Sorry."

"Its... alright. Thanks..." Nika set her headset down and clocked out of the system.

Nicole sat in her truck for a bit after she had gotten out of the building. She could not believe she had done that to someone, let alone that she *could* do that to someone so easily. Thinking back on what happened made her feel strange. She could change someone into something else, she probably could even change someone's mind to agree with her and she would be the only one that knew.

It felt like it was too much, like she had crossed a line, yet she wanted to do it again. It was that primal urge to control, to own. Nicole could not tell if that was a human trait or one of the species she now inhabited. For as long as she had these abilities, Nika feared that the nagging sensation would never go away. "What is a little fun...once in a while..." She mumbled.

"No... don't think about it." Nika said to herself again.

This was the kind of thing that Tetam had warned her about, the corrupting side of her new role. Where was he now that she had found it? Gymeth and Tetam had said they would be there when she unlocked a new ability. She waited another twenty minutes and neither arrived. Nika sighed and began to drive back home. However, when she came to her turn-off she continued straight instead.

Nicole wanted to see the rest of this new world now. Her interest had been piqued. She had survived a day at work, well half a day, surely she could handle Seattle.

She snapped her fingers and her work uniform shifted into her usual casual wear. Once again, the strange symbol appeared on her left shoulder. Nika glanced down at the band on her wrist; two percent,

she was still charging back up.

Pulling onto, hopefully, the right highway; Nika headed north towards the city. The drive was much longer than it used to be and she noted that there were so many more trees. Back in her original world, Washington state was known for its trees, even as far as being nicknamed the Evergreen state, but this was just ridiculous. It was as if whoever created this world had taken what it had been and multiplied it four times. Buildings and homes now poked out from behind tall evergreens, and areas that had once been clear cut, now boasted ancient trees.

When she finally came across the actual city, she saw it had changed as well. Nika recognized some buildings, but just by their shape and size. Like the land around it, trees had saturated Seattle. It was like nature had over taken the region, and society had paid no attention.

She took an off ramp downtown and found somewhere to park. There were so many different kinds of dragon creatures walking about. Such a variety of colors too. Nika was awe struck. Whether her mind was adjusting to the new reality, or she had held a secret on the internet, she found the sight just beautiful.

Nicole had come to the city to see how it had changed in its new imagining, but she stayed for the people, well dragons.

Nika had to hop out of the way as a particularly large man pushed a food cart across the sidewalk. He reminded her of Tetam, red with almost ebony horns. She watched out of curiosity as he rolled his cart to a stop and began to set up his stand. The vendor leaned down and stuck his head against a small doorway, he appeared to simply blow and a jet of flame came from his maw. The flame ignited whatever combustible material he had in his cart. Nicole wondered if she could do that too. But she didn't even know where she would even start.

The city was still so full of life and color now that the species that now walked its streets came in rainbow variety.

It was not all sunshine and rainbows, though. She still spotted homeless camps under the highway overpasses. "This is literally humanity changed into dragons..." she mumbled, still smirking though.

Continuing down the street, past countless other varieties, Nicole stopped when she heard a loud flap

from overhead. A feral dragon flew between the buildings, and came in for a landing in front of a small market. Nika gawked, but then noticed that no one else paid the feral dragon any mind. The quadruped creature nosed its way through the doors and apparently went shopping. A few moments later, the larger dragon walked back out with a bundle of what looked to be fish in its mouth and more sticking out of a satchel strewn across its foreleg.

“I take that back...” Nika mumbled.

She wanted to know more about this new world, Nika did not want to be caught in a situation where she did not understand history. Nicole pulled out her phone and brought up a map. Her finger claws clacked against the screen as she searched for the nearest book store. A marker appeared on her map, a small family book store just down the street. Clicking go, the green map trail led her to a tiny hole in the wall shop.

Books lined the shelves on every wall. She recognized many from her original reality, only with slightly different titles and covers. Some only had one word changed. There were, however, plenty of books she had never seen before.

Nika pulled a book off the shelf and thumbed through the pages. It was some kind of history novel, covering the last eighty or so years. There seemed to be a lack of proxy wars during the Cold War, but World War Two seemed relatively normal. “God... Nazi dragons... what the fuck...” She muttered.

Nicole kept the book with her as she wandered through the aisles. She had a pile of books in her arms when she approached the older looking dragon at the register. They were mostly history, with a few interesting looking fiction books that had caught her eye.

“Doing a bit of research for classes, miss?” The old woman asked, looking over the collection.

“Uh... yes, yes I am. For fun though.” Nika replied.

The woman rang up the books and tapped some buttons on the register. “Good to see some of your generation taking interest in the past.” she nodded. “I hear that there's a history exhibit at the Seattle Center right now. Might be worth checking out.”

Nika nodded and paid for the books with her card. That would be her next stop. “Thank you, I didn't

know about that. I'll go check that out later.”