

## **Act I Part 4**

### **Earth. November 25, 2018. L3/G242/R1**

Nika walked through the park at the city center. The sun was out and shining, but only for a bit longer. Clouds were starting to move in and the temperature was still quite low. She had snapped up a warmer coat and socks with magic to deal with the weather.

She had thought about just changing the weather to something warmer, but then again, messing with a weather system was very dangerous in the long run. Changes like that would have to be part of a long and thought out process.

Nika walked up to the ticket gate and purchased one of the all access passes to the museum. When she picked up the map that came with the passes, she saw that the museum had expanded over to where the park rides had been up until a few years ago. She was glad to see some improvements going to this place, it use to be much smaller and did not have a section for natural history, besides the dinosaurs that is. According to the map, the new section went all the way up to the birth of the Industrial Era.

Walking through the plaza, she passed under the familiar arches. With all the different architecture that she had seen through the city, it was sort of interesting that these art pieces had stayed the same. Nika made a bee-line towards the new natural history exhibit. She needed to know about this world, and this, with the books she had purchased, would be just what she needed.

The new section was across one of the paths, outside the museum grounds. A sky bridge connected the main building to the annex. It was decorated with different images of animals and dragons cut into the glass. She walked into the the first room and was a bit disappointed.

It was almost like they had moved the dinosaur exhibit from the old hall to this one. The same animatronic dinosaurs from the eighties roared at museum patrons as she walked past. Nika had a spark of inspiration for a bit of practice with some magic. Nothing that would cause any harm, but trying out the manipulation aspect she had recently found out about.

She waved her hand at the old animatronics and they began to shift. Their movements became more fluid and natural, the faded latex skin brightened and took on a more realistic texture. More plastic flora sprouted up all around, trees and ferns matching the time period of the creatures. The humidity rose a bit to give the feeling of the time. All around her, the dinosaur exhibit became more real, almost like this room was really 65 million years in the past.

The dinosaurs remained where they were anchored, they were still normal animatronics after all. Though upgraded to current day technology. However the thought of turning them into real, living dinosaurs crossed her mind more than once. But Nika would rather not deal with a panic; she was here for a reason after all, and she would not be able to see everything with all the patrons freaking out.

With the museum having received a free upgrade to their old dinosaur exhibit, Nika moved on. The visitors seemed completely oblivious to the sudden change but she did hear a few comments on how nice the new dinosaur exhibit was.

The next room was one of the new exhibits; it seemed permanent enough, but that was always difficult to tell. A sign was bolted above the doorway. *The Rise, of Us.*

She passed through the double doors, and was greeted with the snarling face of a quadruped Dragon. It was a marble statue, standing on a slab of older looking stone. There were artifacts all over the room depicting a Quadruped empire. The statue's plaque said that this was the alleged twenty-fourth Emperor of the Dragonic Empire, who ruled around 7920 bce.

Nika was surprised; at that era, Humans had just begun farming, let alone leading empires. Though this exhibit made explicit references was a one off of quadruped Dragons, and she was a bipedal Dragon. *"There must be something that caused this difference, they didn't go extinct, I saw one getting fish earlier..."* She thought.

According to the exhibit, the Dragonic Empire was a highly advanced civilization, for its time, that spanned the entire globe. It encompassed all types of Quads and was the first and last of its kind in ancient history. The Quadrupeds seemed to rarely interacted with the newly budding Human

civilization in the Fertile Crescent and the rest of the world.

Nika's mind stopped processing more of the exhibit, did it just say *Human Civilization*? She read it again, and it diffidently said Humans. Quickly glancing around, she did not find any more references to Humans, just more about the rise of the empire. Near the door to the other room, it mentioned that the collapse of the empire explained later on in the exhibit. The next room was all about the evolution of the Human species. It was not something that she expected to see in a world populated by non-Humans. Curiously, it mentioned that this was a now extinct species.

An entire wall of the evolution exhibit was dedicated to Bipedal Dragon Origins. Nika was not sure why the origin of the Bipeds was in the room about the evolution of an extinct species. Though, then she began to actually read the board. She had to take a step back.

Apparently, bipedal Dragons were created by Quadrupeds copulating with humans. The display even went so far as to say that they actually had no idea how the Quads accomplished that. It was said, that back during the times of the empire, the Quadrupeds had some sort of magical abilities, but they vanished without a trace after the collapse of their empire.

Biped Dragons did not receive that ability from the Quads, in fact, they were only able to reproduce with their own kind. While young Bipeds were widely allowed to live among Humans, once they were of mature age, they were exiled and shunned across all continents and civilizations. They still usually lived within sight of Human settlements.

The Quadruped Empire was very active in fornicating with other species and they became very protective of their Human-Dragon descendants. But because of the mixed biology, it was difficult for biped Dragons to fit into the Quadruped society.

Nika finished reading the last display, there was a lot of information presented to her here. It was like reading a fictional fantasy story, but in this case, it was really fact. She was sort of excited to see what happened next and caused all the Humans to go extinct.

She walked into the third exhibit room, *The First War*. Nika skimmed the displays, this was the largest room as of yet. There were artifacts from every civilization dating back to around 8300bce, from all corners of the world. Artifacts from before that era showed Humans, yet afterwards showed Bipedal Dragons instead. According to ancient Quadruped records; a Human village brutally wiped out a series of Biped settlements located within the Fertile Crescent. They left no survivors and burned everything that remained. The Quadrupeds that resided in that region were horrified and appealed for the emperor to do something about it.

The Dragonic Empire had received many similar requests over the last few years. This massacre was the final straw. With a swift decree, the Dragonic Emperor of the time gave the order to raid all the Human civilizations. They decided that this would be the end of the Humans as they were. Roving bands of Quads destroyed every known Human settlement and raped what females they spared.

The Bipedes that already existed were torn; support their Human mothers, or side with their Dragon fathers. Ultimately, there was quite a lot of mixed reactions. In some parts of the world, Bipedes took up arms against the Quads and went defend the Humans.

Unfortunately, the Quadrupeds had the numbers and the size to overwhelm the resistance. The Humans were quickly wiped out, and replaced with Biped children. Some radical scientists believe that the mystical powers the Quadrupeds were said to possess actually converted Humans into those Bipedes. But there is no evidence to support those allegations.

With the Humans eliminated, Bipedes took over Human settlements, and preserved their culture for future generations.

Nika shook her head, so much information. This world was such a strange place, yet some how it appeared to have landed in a reality where the present was not so different than Nicole's old life. She wandered around, looking at all the different artifacts. There were recreations of ancient swords and bows for the Humans and Biped. The Quads seemed to have relied exclusively on their breath weapons and claws, which made sense.

The final panel of the exhibit made some interesting claims. *It is widely possible that some enclaves of Humans survived the genocide and continued to exist until the Medieval era; as art and writing from throughout that era of history hints at their activity. Usually described as having fallen back to barbaric and simply animalistic tendencies. However some rare stories describe an encounter with some semi-intelligent beings capable of rudimentary speech. There have been many expeditions to secluded parts of the world in recent years, but no evidence of any modern settlements has ever been found. The last reference of the Humans in confirmed historical records was dated back to the seventeenth century.*

The next room was dedicated to the collapse of the Dragonic Empire. It was a very small room. She glanced around at the walls. There were chunks of stone with worn inscriptions in a language Nika had never seen before. Her eyes darted across the displays, and she pushed passed someone's wings that blocked that path.

The Dragonic Empire collapsed the same way most Human empires had in her world. Its government became corrupt, and the many factions within it fought for power. Over the course of seventeen years, the capital shifted to twenty different places, and the object thought to have given the Quads their abilities vanished. As time went on, the Empire splintered, with smaller nations springing up across the world. Though none of them ever lived up to the Empire's legacy. The last line of the exhibit explained quite simply what happened next. *With the Dragonic Empire's collapse, it gave way for the smaller Bipedal civilization to rise and form their own empires, and to continue the cultures they inherited from the Humans. These groups, laboring to preserve their mother species' culture, lead to the world you see today.*

Nika walked out of the exhibit and into the mezzanine area. “Well... that was fascinating...” She looked down at her history books. Most of which will help fill in the other minor differences that this exhibit probably glossed over.

She bought a candy rope at a stall, and spent another hour wandering the various other exhibits in the

museum. The model of the bay was interesting, it showed how different the sound was versus how she had known it. The altered geography of the planet was not drastic. There were some new mountain ranges, and some of the old ones were larger. As far as she could tell, there were not any new bodies of water.

When she walked out of the museum, the sun had already set. Nika looked at her phone, and saw that it was already nearly five in the evening. “Well shit... I don't want to sit through traffic...”

“Do I hear someone saying they hate traffic?” A voice spoke out from behind her. Nika turned and saw Gymeth standing in the crowd. It was obviously her, no other dragon had bright purple hair, or any hair at all. Though, no one seemed to pay any attention to the tuft of fluff on her head. “Tetam covered for you last time so he said it was my turn to give you some pointers.”

Nika nodded. “Well alright. What kind of thing are you going to teach me now?”

“Teleportation, Nika.” Gymeth said. “I think its time, what with you not wanting to deal with traffic and all.”

“Oh, cool. That'll come in handy.” Nika could use that whenever she did not feel like driving anywhere. “Of course it will. That's why I teach it. Now follow me, we need to go somewhere else so we don't draw any unwanted attention to ourselves.” Gymeth waved Nika over to an alleyway and through a doorway. She hopped up onto a set of scaffolding. “So I'll start you off with the basics. Teleportation is not any different than the other things you've learned so far.” A water barrel on one side of the room vanished and then reappeared on the other in an instant.

“All you have to do is concentrate on the object being in another place.” Gymeth said. “But make sure that you are concentrating on it moving, or else you'll end up duplicating it.”

Nika nodded and looked towards the barrel that Gymeth had moved moments before. “Well.. here goes nothing.” She picked a spot, and tried to concentrate on the barrel. But that was just it, nothing happened.

“Hmm... I could sense the command going, but I don't think you held focus very well.” Gymeth shrugged. “Try pointing at the target, and then drawing your hand towards the spot you want it to go. Like all magic commands, the first one is always the hardest to jump start.”

“You could have led with that.” Nika rolled her eyes and held her finger out at the barrel. Once again, she concentrated at the barrel, and then moved her aim towards the other side of the room. The barrel vanished and did not reappear until Nika stopped her finger.

Under Gymeth's guide, she repeated the teleportation of various objects around the storage room. Once she appeared to get a hang of it, Gymeth decided to move on to the next step. In just a moment, she popped from the scaffolding to standing up in the rafters. “As expected, the next part of this is teleporting yourself. This is even easier than other things.” She popped back down to the floor with Nika and waved her on. “You try, it's just imagining yourself elsewhere.”

Nika began to think hard and envision herself somewhere else, like Hawaii, if it still existed. However, like last time, nothing happened. “Oh yeah, like that was-” She blinked, and when she opened her eyes the ocean was before her. “...going to work...”

She recognized the beach. It was a little different, but seven years would do that to sand. Nika had been here on a class trip for marine biology.

“You were saying?” Gymeth appeared beside her, now dressed in clothes more akin to the temperature of the beach.

“Well I guess you're right, that was easy.” Nika spun around and soaked in the warmth. She was dressed for winter in Seattle, not the summer like temperature of Hawaii.

“Yeah, though I was not expecting you to jump so far on your first personal jump.” Gymeth said. “But everything seems to have worked out.”

“You did not specify *how far* you wanted me to teleport.” Nika laughed.

“How is your charge?” Gymeth asked.

Nika looked down at her wrist, the small band stated that she had 25% of her power left. “Not bad, should I go home with what's left?”

“No, might as well wait until you're recharged.” Gymeth made a set of beach chairs appear out of nowhere and took a seat. “Let's just take some time on the beach.”

So Nicole and Gymeth sat on the beach in Hawaii, until the sun had passed below the horizon. Gymeth had summoned some food to eat while they discussed her realm. It was not so different than the one that Nika now inhabited, just that there were other anthropomorphic creatures. It was truly a land of furies, and Gymeth hated it.

“God, I wish I could switch with you, not that I would actually wish that hell upon anyone.” Gymeth shrugged. “But my time here is coming to an end, and I'm sure that you got the hang of teleportation now. I'll check in when I can.” She stood from her seat, gave Nika a wave, and vanished.

With a sigh, Nika envisioned herself sitting in bed, and blinked. While her room did a good job imitating the scents and sounds of the ocean, nothing really beat the real thing. However, she could not have swam when she visited. Swimming in the dark was never safe.

After the event at work, her managers decided to give her more time off. She had spent the last few days just using her new teleportation ability to get around. As far as she knew, her truck was still collecting fares in the parking spot where she left it.

Nika sat on the couch in the living room while her mother cleaned the kitchen. Pretending to be injured was not fun, especially since her mom had decided to take the time off from work to help her get around. She was bored, very bored.

“Oh whatever...” Nika raised her finger and pointed it at her mother. She disappeared, and Nika drug her finger over to another side of the kitchen. Her mother reappeared and continued cleaning as if nothing happened.

Nika sort of recalled Tetam saying something about the magic alters reality be default to prevent issues. She supposed that suddenly being in a different spot counted towards that. The idea in her head was a bit on the strange side, but she had yet to really practice on a living person.

Things might get weird.