

Chapter 3: Dream Or Nightmare?

The sound of sirens broke through the black void, followed by flashing red-n-blue lights, then shouting. Stephen stirred and open his eyes slowly. His entire body felt heavy and off in a way he couldn't describe. Just something about his body felt different. Still the fact that he felt his lungs filling with air was a sign he was still alive. His vision was blurry but he could make out the lights of police vehicles and heard more shouting all around him. His vision became more clear as he slowly raised his head and saw several medics surrounding him as well as a few armed officers, standing alert but weapons holstered.

One of the medics carefully approached him. "If you understand us please stay calm. We're here to help you. Can you still speak?"

Stephen's mind started to register what was happening around him, all the shouting and people being moved around in stretchers. He tried to ask what was going on but only an animalistic growl escaped his throat which both confused him and startled the medics examining him as well as a couple of the younger officers. In his confusion he started to notice his head was well above everyone even though he could swear he was still laying down. There was also something on his face partially obstructing his vision. He slowly moved his hand to touch it till he saw what he was lifting wasn't a hand at all but a reptilian paw covered in gold scales and tipped with sharp claws, only 4 digits on each paw. He paused for a moment, looking over the alien appendage, brain trying to comprehend the sight before his very eyes as well as other odd signals his body was sending. He softly rubbed his face with his misshapen appendage and felt that it had pushed out from his face. He was starting to panic at this point and turned his head to look over the rest of his body. His now brilliant green reptilian eyes went wide in shock to see that instead of a human torso and legs his entire body was huge and reptilian, yellowish-gold scales cover his entire body which had become much bigger and longer, a sort of small sail-like fin travelling from a long tail that protruded from his backside to presumably somewhere up his neck as far as he could tell without a mirror. His arms and legs were thick with muscle, more built for quadrupedal motion rather than bipedal. His feet, or rather his hind paws, had met a similar fate to his hands with only three clawed toes per foot and a tiny dew claw on each. Another big addition were a pair of wings coming out of his shoulders that hung limply at his sides.

Putting the pieces together he realized why the officers were so nervous around him. He was a dragon now. In fact, judging by the gold scales and other details he could see without a mirror he

seemed to be HIS inner dragon, Mehlaphuse. But...how? Last he remembered he was burning to death from the inside after he drank that potion. Then it hit him. The potion he drank! It worked! It almost killed him but it worked! It actually worked! If the circumstances were different he would have been celebrating this revelation, but right now he was thinking that witch was lucky she wasn't around. Eris would have been for a surprise to see that her potion actually worked and that he had survived. She would regret causing harm to him and his friends.

His eyes went wide and his heart skipped a beat when he realized he had almost forgot about his friends. They had drank the potion and went through the same pain he did. Panicked, he looked around himself before quickly spotting a large, long, red scaled creature laying right next to him. It sported a feathery mane travelling from its horned head to the tip of its long tail. It was another dragon, though of the more eastern variety. And beyond a few differences, such as only one set of wings instead of six, it looked a lot like Ravtrag's dragon self from his drawings. There was no doubt in his mind that this was Rav but he was still unconscious. No sign of movement either which made the former human very nervous. It wasn't until Stephen heard heavy breathing coming from his friend that Stephen relaxed a little. At least Rav was alive, although certainly in for a shock when he woke up. That still left Dafydd, though. Stephen searched all around himself and Rav but there was no sign of him.

"Lieutenant! I found another one!" a young officer shouted, gaining Stephen's attention. The officer went digging through some clothes which lay by Rav's tail and gently pulled out a small red dragon no bigger than a large parrot. It had black horns and a ridged roundish snout that looked almost like Dafydd's dragon self save for the very small size. Stephen began to worry when she saw no sign of movement coming from him. The officer looked over the unconscious dragon carefully before turning back to another officer, a slightly chubby middle aged man, joining him at the scene.

"He's unconscious but still breathing."

"Take him to the medical tents right away. Have them make sure he is alright. Our professional should be here any moment."

The officer nodded and carefully wrapped Dav up in his own shirt, using it as a makeshift blanket, and gently picked him up. Stephen felt uneasy as the officer took Dav away and tried to get up to follow, but the police surrounding him tightened their perimeter around him causing him to ease back. He looked on as Dav and the officer vanished into the crowd towards the ambulances on scene, an uneasy growl escaping his throat.

"Easy now. Your friend will be fine" said the lieutenant as he walked up to the newly changed dragon. "The medical staff we have on hand will take care of him until the mage we've procured arrives. Hopefully he'll give us a better clue how to sort all this magical nonsense out." The lieutenant was calm but still held a stern demeanour. "Medical personnel will take care of your other friend too. In the meantime I'd like to ask you a few questions. Can you speak?"

Stephen tried to speak but only more growls came out. Resigning to the fact he couldn't speak he simply shook his head.

"Hmmm, I was afraid of that. Very well, I'll just ask you yes and no questions" The lieutenant said, stroking his beard a little. "We've spoken to others around here and they have all told us you were all human before this incident. Is that true?"

Stephen nodded enthusiastically.

"And you all drank potions to change yourselves into what you are now, correct?"

Again, Stephen nodded.

"And you all got these potions from a female mage, correct?"

Stephen nodded and growled lowly at the mention of Eris.

"Calm down, please. One more question. Eyewitnesses reported an explosion of some kind coming from this area and a few witnesses here said it came from this spot. Do you know anything about that?"

That question stumped Stephen. He didn't remember any explosion. All he remembered before falling unconscious was his vision blurring white before everything went dark. There was no signs of an explosion anywhere he looked either. Looking back at the officer before him he simply shook his head.

"Hmm... I see. Well that is all the questions I have for now. Rest assured we will find a way to change you back to normal. As I said earlier we recruited a local mage to help us with our investigation. While I'm rather uncomfortable with having a civilian get involved with our investigation, let alone a mystic, we don't have any access to those government assigned mages yet. Speaking of the devil, that should be him now."

Stephen turned his head towards the road and saw a police vehicle driving towards the area, parking close to where they were. A pair of officers stepped out of the vehicle and one opened up the rear passenger door. Stephen's eyes went wide with surprise and he almost jumped for joy when Jergo stepped out of the vehicle. There was no mistaking it was him despite the Gandalf outfit he had on. Likely was dragged away from a costume party or something, Stephen thought. He could hear the old wizard grumbling to himself as he grabbed a bag out from the back of the police vehicle, waving an officer away who wanted to help.

"Thank you but I don't need any help. I may be old but I'm still very capable." Jergo said to the officer and examined the scene before him, taking note of the two dragons in front of him with one staring at him with its emerald green eyes. "Now can I please get an explanation as to why I'm here and what exactly is going on? You dragged me away from my home just as I was leaving for a social gathering and the only explanation I have been given is that this is an emergency involving magical matters."

The lieutenant stepped forward to greet Jergo. "You must be the mage we sent for. I'm Lieutenant Donaldson. As for why you are here, from the information we gathered from the victims most of those involved drank some sort of potion that turned them into animals and other creatures given to them by a female mage. Some report drinkers going mad and attacking others. There was also eyewitnesses that claim they saw an explosion though there are no signs of one. Many appear to be fine despite some injuries though some have... anomalies such as various body parts are being animalistic in nature while others are completely half-human and half something else. And then there are these dragons." Officer Donaldson pointed in Stephen and Rav's direction.

"Yes, hard not to miss those two. I didn't realize there were any dragons in this region, let alone these young ones."

"Actually they too were human as well. At least, according to the gold one there. There is a third much smaller one as well currently being examined by the doctors we currently have at our disposal. Our ability to communicate with them is limited since he can't speak but at least he understands us."

"First off, that's impossible. No human has survived such a transformation for over a thousand years."

Almost didn't, Stephen thought as he listened in, wishing he could speak and tell Jergo that it was him.

"Second, of course they understand. Dragons aren't dumb beasts. Many are even smarter and far wiser than us. And lastly our friend here is a female. A little thing, maybe, but it's best not to anger a dragon by referring to her by the wrong gender."

Stephen froze up at Jergo's last few words. It hadn't occurred to him to check how much like "Mehl" he had become. He thought he simply resembled his inner draconic self in body but not physical sex. Granted there wasn't really a good moment to look down there and check the plumbing. And his body felt so alien and different that he didn't really realize how different he felt between his legs. He would have dwelled on it longer but Jergo and the lieutenant were walking up to him.

"Fine, 'her' then. Whatever her gender I'm inclined to believe she was human before all this," Donaldson said in a stern tone. "It matches up with what everyone else here has told us. And there were remnants of clothing strewn about around them in a manner that doesn't quite fit with the original owners being torn to shreds and/or eaten alive. We are still searching for wallets or some sort of ID. Possibly still under these two."

Jergo stroked his beard and thought for a moment. "Very well. So these two dragons may be the first in a long time to survive such a change. I'm guessing you want me to try and change them back."

"Yes, and help cure others who have been changed as well."

"Please don't use words such as 'cure'. This isn't a disease. This is magic. Very powerful magic is involved here, not some virus or bacterium. I will do my best but I can guarantee nothing." With that Jergo made his way towards the golden dragoness and politely waved. "Hello, child. My name is Jergo. As you've likely overheard I am mage and I'm going to do my darndest to change you back. Before we begin, though, could you write your name in the dirt? I prefer to know the name of the one I'm helping."

Stephen nodded and carefully started to claw out his name in the dirt. Jergo crouched and watched intently as the dragon dug out an 'S' in the dirt. Then a 'T'. His expression began to turn grim by the 'P' and he quickly placed a hand on Stephen's paw as he was writing out the 'H', the man visibly trembling and looking back up at the boy turned dragoness.

"Stephen, is that really you?"

Stephen nodded and turned his head away a little, looking ashamed.

Jergo sighed and shook his head. "You know, you are extremely lucky you and your friends are still alive. I thought I told you to get a hold of me before you get yourself into a mess like this." Stephen growled lowly, whining in a draconic fashion which brought another sigh from Jergo. "Well, nothing we can do about it now but find how to change you back. But first, I need to know exactly what happened here."

Jergo turned to the other officers around them. "Whatever happens I ask that no one else get involved. I am going to delve into her mind to see what exactly had happened here through her eyes. It requires great concentration so please remain where you are regardless of what either of us do."

Jergo then turned back to Stephen. "Alright, I need you to listen carefully. I am going to delve into your mind to see exactly what happened here. I don't use this technique often so I might be a tad rusty. I'm not going to lie to you and say it will be painless. It's gonna feel like the worst headache imaginable most likely. It will be hard but please try to **not** resist. I will attempt to do this as fast as possible. Understand?" Jergo's expression was stern but full of concern as well.

Stephen nodded quietly. While he didn't like the idea of his mind being probed he did trust Jergo. And if anyone was to help him and his friends right now he was the mage to do it. He lowered his head for Jergo and closed his eyes, bracing himself for whatever pain he was in for.

"Please try to relax, Stephen. It will go much easier if you didn't think about it hurting and just eased your mind," Jergo said, softly stroking Stephen's scaled cheek.

Stephen wanted to say it was easier said than done but knowing he couldn't he just took some deep breaths and tried to calm himself. The stroking to the cheek helped a bit as it felt nice to be rubbed like that. As a human it would have been weird but like this it was oddly comforting. It certainly helped him relax a little. He closed his eyes while Jergo chanted in a tongue he couldn't understand. He tried to remain calm but he was nervous of how painful it was going to feel, hoping Jergo was exaggerating. He didn't have to wait long though as he felt Jergo's hands on the side of his head and soon after pain. It felt like something was being pushed into his head. His claws dug into the dirt and he tried to relax as Jergo instructed but the pain was making it difficult. Then there were the images flashing across his vision in a chaotic mess. Recent memories as well as some old ones were put on display while the mage combed through his mind tried to sort through them, searching for the most recent ones. There was the memory of the neighbourhood meeting to discuss mystics, then trying on one of Jergo's costumes for the first time, an old memory of his first kiss with Rav, a newer one of their arrival to the party, another previous memory of his argument with his step-dad, and then another more recent memory of greeting Eris. It was this memory Jergo held onto, going through it more in-depth, other

memories and visuals being shoved away. It was like watching the whole moment again from the meeting to the painful transformation. And then the connection was broke, both of them gasping as the telepathic probing of Stephen's mind was done.

Stephen shook his head, the pain and memories fading into the background. He glanced back up at Jergo and saw that the old mage was no longer looking at him so sternly. Instead he saw only concern on Jergo's face and perhaps a look of guilt.

"Of all the mages to have crossed paths with it had to be her... " Jergo said softly. "Stephen... I should have warned you better. Of who to look out for."

"And who should have he looked out for?" Officer Donaldson asked as he approached Jergo. "Well, what have you found out?"

Jergo's sternness returned and he looked the lieutenant dead in the eye. "Sir, the mage who did this was a woman named Eris. She's a mage I unfortunately know well and I'd advise you not to seek her out without my help. Assuming she hasn't left the city already. She is a very dangerous individual. These kids have gotten off lucky. She is not a mage to be trifled with."

"I appreciate your concern but it is our jurisdiction. We will handle it, not you," Donaldson said with conviction in his voice.

Jergo frowned. "May I remind you that you are dealing with a mage and not some petty criminal. She isn't just some hedge mage either. I highly doubt the police force here is truly capable of handling such a threat."

"Your concern is noted but not necessary. We have specialists flying in who will be arriving any day now to assist the city with the new residents. From what I have been told they are well equipped to deal with such threats. Rest assured we will handle the situation and she will be arrested."

Jergo wanted to argue some more but knew there was no way he was going to get these officers to budge. "Very well. Just hope you people know what you are getting into."

"Your concern is noted. Now, someone bring some more paramedics over here! The big red one is waking up!"

Stephen looked over his... No, he couldn't call himself a 'he' anymore. Rather 'she' would be more appropriate. Even this veiled body was that of a woman, a body she looked over again out of a faint disbelief that this was real. Jergo had told them before giving her and her friends the veil potions that this wasn't going to turn them back to normal, that for now it was simply to make it easier to communicate and be examined. She drew the blanket the medics gave her closer. Right now she was inside one of the large medical vehicles they had brought in, an MRV if she remembered correctly. They had brought a few in as well as set up medical observation tents in the area. They brought some straight to the hospital for examination but only those showing little to no sign of abnormalities. The reason given was that they didn't want to cause a disturbance bringing in non-humans, an explanation most didn't take well as all were human before this mess. Still, there was nothing they could do but let medical team on site poke and prod at them to check for any health issues as well as treat injuries sustained while Jergo used what tools he had with him as well as his magic to try and see if he could change them back to normal.

Stephen looked over towards her other friends who were seated nearby. If she didn't know her friends were veiled like she was beforehand she wouldn't have recognized them in the slightest. But then the same would be true of her to them. Jergo told them before they drank the bitter tasting potions that veil wouldn't grant them their old appearance but rather an undetermined human shape. Rav's veiled form wasn't remotely the same as his original body. He was shorter by a couple feet and his build wasn't as thick but rather a more average build. His head was also more square rather than round. Dav on the other hand had some similarities to his original self with him still being short and skinny. The differences came with him having a tad more bulk to his figure as well as having a younger more roundish face. It gave him a more youthful appearance. And of course she was the most drastically different of the three of them, mainly due to her change in gender.

This was the second time she found herself staring down at a pair of decent sized breasts on her chest. Only this time she wasn't in a costume. She was at least glad she turned out fairly attractive, though the lack of hair was disconcerting. Another little quirk of human veil apparently. For some reason those who took human form usually ended up bald the first time using it. They were told periodic use would allow the hair to "grow in" after a while. A quirk Jergo said he or some other mage might be able to fix in time. But that wasn't the real issue. The real issue in the end was that she was a girl now and that none of them were human anymore. Sure, they all wished they could have been dragons before and Stephen did desire to be female deep down but now... now none of them were sure if they really wanted what they desired. How would they live now if they couldn't be changed back? What would their parents think? Stephen pulled the blanket tighter around herself as these thoughts and worries ran through her head.

"Mehl? Are you alright? You haven't said anything since we were brought in here." Ravtrag looked over at her with concern.

"Why don't you sit with us, Mehl? Talk to us." Dafydd scooted over, making a space for Stephen.

Stephen looked up at them and for a moment she smiled a little. Knowing that they both felt concern for her offered her some comfort. She slowly got up and sat down between Rav and Dav, leaning a little against Rav. "I am alright, guys. I'm just worried. My folks are going to tear my head off when they find out about this." She sighed softly, looking down at the ground.

"I know, hun. My mom is going to freak too." Rav sighed and leaned against his boyfriend-turned-girlfriend. Dav snuggled up with them too, the three keeping close to each other.

The door to the MRV opened up and all three turned towards the door. Jergo stepped inside and nodded to the three. "Hello again. I trust you all are holding up well despite the circumstances."

"We're doing fine. Have you found out anything more about our situation, Jergo?" Stephen looked up at Jergo, hoping for some good news.

Jergo scratched his beard, looking as if he was pondering how to answer her question. "Well, I do know what caused the changes. Or, at least I have an idea. I've come across victims of Eris's brand of potions before. While the effects of the potion seem to be different from person to person with chaotic side effects there are two things in common. First is that it leave the same faint magical trace. Second, the changes seem to be tied to the drinker's desires."

"Well, that explains why we became dragons and why... why I am a girl." Stephen's face turned red from embarrassment. "By the way, earlier I heard you say you knew Eris. She a rival of yours or something?"

Jergo's expression turned grim. "I rather not speak about it. Tis a personal matter and nothing you need to concern yourselves with. Now back to what I was saying. As I said this "desire potion" grant you the form you desire but are highly unstable and prone to causing side effects. Sometimes it is body disfigurement, other times it is madness. And other times it kills the victim outright. Another reason you all are extremely lucky."

Stephen looked down at the floor again. She wished she never convinced her friends to drink the potion with her. She wished she went to Jergo first instead of assuming things were safe. "Jergo,

I am sorry I didn't come to you. If only I had told you about the party beforehand this wouldn't have happened."

"Stephen, this isn't your fault. You had no idea this would happen and I don't blame you for thinking it was safe with so many others around. No point beating yourself up over it and just be glad things didn't turn out worse," Jergo said as he sat down across from them. "Anyways, that is the gist about the potion you all drank. Now for some good news and some bad news. The good news is I can reverse the effects for most of those who of the party goers here, though there may be lingering side effects. As for the bad..." Jergo trailed off and stared at them for a good three seconds before letting out a sigh. "The bad news is I won't be able to reverse the effects for you three."

"What do you mean you can't reverse the effects on us?" Rav asked, all three of them wondering why he could help everyone else but them.

"How to put into mundane terms... From the purest sense you three are no longer human. All three of you are now dragons down to your very blood. In normal circumstances when one is transformed, such as by veil potions for example, you are still you under the transformed flesh. What you three have experienced is similar to a different type of magic called changling magic. It is a very risky form of magic which essentially causes the user to discard their old form in a sense and replace it with a new one. It is honestly incredible that you three survived."

"Yes, we get it! We're lucky to be alive. You've told us that several times." Stephen sighed in frustration. "So we're dragons permanently then? No way to become human other than through veil?"

"Well, I wouldn't say you can't be your old selves again. But it would take time and resources I currently don't have. Honestly, I am still baffled how this happened. If only I could get my hands on one of those potions so I could examine it and figure out how the formula works. Maybe I could even make a safer, less extreme version of it." Jergo stroked his beard as he pondered on such a potion.

The three friends looked at each other. None of them knew what to say or do at this point. Becoming dragons was the one thing they all desired but at the same time they all knew there was some hefty costs involved. For starters their humanity was gone. They also had to deal with their parents once they arrive. Lastly, how were they going to live? Where were they going to live? Veil was only temporary so they couldn't take it as they slept. Stephen clung to Rav a little tighter and Rav hugged her back just as tight, Dav hugging them both as best he could.

"Hey, don't think of this as a bad thing. Sure things may be rough but I think you three should see this as a blessing. You all have been given a gift that many would die for," Jergo said as he stood back up. "I will help you three as best I can but please do try to see the positive side of things. Could have been a whole lot worse."

Lights flashed through the windows of the MRV. The occupants peaked out the window and saw several vehicles lead by police escort drive into the area. Stephen, Rav, and Dav looked at each other and sighed. They knew this was gonna happen sooner or later and that eventually they would have to face them.

"What's wrong now?" Jergo asked, a bit perplexed.

Stephen looked up at Jergo, expression full of worry and nervousness. "Now we have to deal with what we were dreading most. It's time to face our families."

Stephen tried to keep herself calm as she kept looking over the crowd, watching from the steps of the MRV, draped in a blanket. Things were going about as expected all around with parents shouting at, crying with, or hugging their children who were caught in this mess. She then glanced towards Ravtrag and Dafydd. Dav's parents took things rather well, though they were still concerned for Dav and hugging him tight. Rav's mother, on the other hand, was not taking things so well. Rav was trying to calm her down as she cried and hugged him tight. Overall, things were looking ok for them, at least in comparison to what she was expecting from her family. They hadn't arrived yet which gave her some time to think about what she was going to say to them. Not that it really mattered, or so she believed. They were going to chew her out regardless of what she said.

Jergo stood beside him, the old wizard keeping an eye on her. "Parents still not here, huh? Well, I am sure once they do things will go better than how you think it will go. And judging by your expression your assuming the worst."

"Jergo, I know you are trying to help me feel calmer about this but you don't know my parents. My step-father has a very strong stance against mystics as is and my mom isn't exactly one to side with mystics either. How do you think they are going to react when they find out their oldest son is now a daughter and a dragon on top of that?"

"Well.... errr...." Jergo looked down and stroked his beard. "Well, regardless they are still family. They'll still love you regardless."

Stephen looked at Jergo briefly before looking away." Somehow, Jergo, I don't feel as confident about that as you are."

Headlights flashed in the distance and Stephen looked up. A black minivan was approaching, making her heart sink. It was her parents. She started to tremble as they pulled up to the other vehicles and came to a stop. Both her parents stepped out and looked around the crowd, clearly looking for her. An officer approached them and soon enough they were walking towards her. She looked down as she couldn't bring herself to look her parents in the face. As they approached she could hear their confusion as they neared the MRV.

"I don't see our son anywhere. You sure he is supposed to be here?" Stephen's mother asked the officer with concern in her voice.

"Yes, your son was stationed at this MRV. But as I said he's been-"

"Yes, yes, he's been altered. Heard you the first time! Just show us where he is, damn it!" her dad shouted angrily, looking around furiously for their son, not realizing that "he" was right in front of them.

Stephen clenched her eyes shut and took a deep breath. But before she could bring herself to speak up Jergo stepped up to her parents.

"Greetings! You must be Stephen's parents. I am Jergo. Now I know you both must be worried but-"

"I know you. You're that wizard from that store." Stephen's father stood in front of Jergo in a confrontational manner. He wasn't pleased to see the wizard in the slightest and wanted him to know it. "I should have known you would be involved. What are you doing here and where is our son?"

Jergo wasn't phased by the man's aggression, keeping cool and collected. "First, I am here to try and help these people as right now I am the only one qualified to. I am not the one responsible for what happened here, if that is what you are assuming. As for where your son is, he is right here." Jergo pointed at Stephen, making her wish she could go invisible right now.

The initial reaction didn't come as a surprise to anyone. "Are you stupid or something? I thought you knew my son because she clearly doesn't fit the description."

"Well, you both are aware that your son was transformed, correct?"

"You telling us that our son is now a girl?" Stephen's mother asked, trying to comprehend what she was being told.

Stephen sighed and finally decided to speak up. "Yes, I am a girl and kind of more..." She looked up to see her parents staring at her with wide eyes. "Hi, mom... Hi, dad... It's me." She then braced herself for the inevitable scolding.

Her father was the first to recover from the initial shock. "Fuck... son, I warned you about this magic stuff. And now look at you. You are a fucking girl now. I just.... You should have listened to me and stayed away from all this nonsense."

"I'm sorry... I thought I would be safe with my friends around. And not all magick is bad, dad. Jergo is proof enough to me of that." Stephen tried to look her parents in the eye. "And... it isn't all bad. Far worse could have happened." She decided to omit the almost dying part. Best not to worry them more than they already were.

"Isn't that bad? I don't even recognize you anymore, Steph. You don't even look remotely like yourself. You're not even a boy anymore," said her mother, still trying to accept what she was seeing.

"Yeah, about that... This isn't even what I really look like."

"Damn straight it isn't how you look like," her father retorted.

"Not what I meant. What I mean is this is just a disguise from drinking a potion called veil I took to make it easier to talk to everyone as well as to put the officers at ease. What I've really become is much bigger and less... human."

"What do you mean, hun?" Her mother was growing more concerned.

"What I mean is I am a dragon now. A great big female dragon." Stephen turned her head away, not wanting to look her parents in the face.

Her father put a hand on her shoulder and spoke more calmly. "Son, we'll get through this. You're still in trouble but right now we shall find a way to cure you. We'll get you back to normal so your not a monster anymore."

Stephen opened her eyes and felt her hands clench. Even with wanting the best for her they still were acting disrespectful towards people who were no more monsters than they were. "Dad, first off I haven't become a monster. Second, I am not diseased. This isn't a sickness. Yes, Jergo is looking a way to change me and the others back but don't go treating this like some sort of plague."

His father's face became more stern, his calmness faltering. "Son, you aren't well. I don't know what these mystics put into your head but I'm not putting up with it. Now we're going to get you fixed and then you are to stay away from THEM."

Stephen felt her anger building. She was getting sick of her father treating her like a child. "Dad, I am a fucking adult. I can make decisions for myself and you have no right to tell me who I can and cannot associate with. And you know what, what if I don't want to be 'fixed' as you put it? What if I want to be a dragon and a girl? Did you two ever consider that!"

Both parents stepped back in shock at what they just heard. "You can't be serious, son. Why would you want to live as a.... as..." Stephen's mother stumbled to for words, flabbergasted at what she just heard.

"As a freak? Is that what you were about to say?" Stephen looked down again, not wanting to look her parents in the eye.

Her father was growing furious, his face marred with a scowl. "Now listen here, son! I don't want to hear anymore of this bullshit! You are a human and a man! Time to start acting like one!"

"Don't you get it? I don't want to be a man. Never did. I just never had the courage to say anything cause I knew I'd be rejected for having such thoughts. And now that I have what I want and more you want to take it all away just because it goes against what you believe is normal?"

"Grow up, son! This isn't about what you want. Can't you see how this will affect others? How this will affect us? Your family?"

"So I am supposed to be miserable just so you guys are happy then."

"And why can't you be happy with what you have? Seriously, son, just... You know what? Forget it! If you want to be a monster then fine. But you will have to deal with the consequences. Come on, hun. We're leaving."

Stephen's father turned around and stormed off, motioning for her mother to follow. They both gawked at him in disbelief before glancing at each. Stephen looked at her mother, almost pleading for her to talk some sense into her dad. But instead she sadly looked away and walked away quietly herself. Stephen watched her parents leave without her. She wanted to shout to them but couldn't bring herself to speak. Everything that happened this night was crashing down on her. It was too much for her to take. With emotions overwhelming her she collapsed onto her knees and wept.

Jergo, Ravtrag, and Dafydd all came to her side and tried to comfort her, though all she could think about was the mistakes she made this night and the cost of getting what she wanted.