

((Note: Since LordTorch18's characters are related to the NPC gangsters, I'm going to put their POV in the story, so that we can all understand the events better.))

Chapter 13: Arson and Murder

Ronan and Drake roamed the city. Ronan kept looking at all the mercenaries and any criminals he could see. He was looking for one in particular. "Drake, you see any marks?" He asked the grand copper dragon, referring to a unique tattoo marking that the criminal gang he was looking for wore on them.

Drake looked to his left and noticed the gang mark his partner was looking for. "Ronan, there," he said.

Ronan looked at the man, who had noticed them. "I'll tail 'em on foot, cut him off at the other side," he said to the dragon before he jumped off and ran after the thug who had begun to panic and run for his life. Drake took to the sky and followed. He shot ice out of his mouth and froze the ground in front of the man, who ended up slipping and sliding. Drake curved the ice and caused him to slam into a wall. Ronan caught up to him easily from that. He picked up the man and said in an angry tone, "Where's your leader, you murderous scum? I won't ask again." He didn't notice it, but he was making a bit of a scene that a few people had stopped to stare at and see what was going on.

The gang member spit at the man's face and answered defiantly, "Hah, like I'm ever going to answer to a random bum like you!" He noticed the people nearby and thought that maybe if he could be pretend to be a helpless victim being assaulted, then they would take his side and treat Ronan like a criminal. Then he would make his getaway and tell the boss that the man in the gray hooded cloak was still alive.

Ronan gave him a deathly glare. "I can see in your eyes you don't know me... but your people... and your boss... they do. I'm going to let you go... you tell your boss that the family he burned down in the deserts... it's about to come back to haunt him... and kill him," he said with fire in his voice. "If I see you about to kidnap or kill anyone... my sword will taste your blood." He turned and threw the thug. Drake didn't like seeing his partner this fired up. He knew Ronan needed to stop but it wouldn't be as easy as flipping a switch.

The man quickly dashed off away and went into the alleys. He went through the door to the secret base and went to the boss's office. "Boss, remember that family in the deserts that you killed? Well apparently, one of them is alive and... he's got a dragon with him," he said.

The bald-headed boss, whose name was Keith, drummed his fingers on the chair's arm and said, "Ah... so one of the rats from the nest survived, eh? Well, tell me everything about him so that we can go find him and kill him."

The thug described his attacker, "Well he's wearing a gray hooded clothing and I think he had weapons on him." His eyes went off to the side for a bit as he tried to remember what he and the dragon looked

like. "And his dragon... I think he was like a light brown in color," he said.

"Hmph, typical dragon sympathizers; always bringing up the absurd notion that dragons are just like us in every way. I swear they're trying to bring down mankind by equating these beasts with us," Keith said with disapproval. "Very well, we'll kill these two while we wait for our spy to finish infiltrating A.D.R." He pushed the button on the announcer and said, "Listen up, men! One of our members has just discovered a survivor from that family in the desert. He's wearing gray clothes with a hood and is partnered with a dragon. I need you all find him and kill him."

Minerva finished typing the essay and printed out the papers to put into the book. A seemingly normal man was passing by her as he looked around in the workplace. To the others, he was simply an employee in the A.D.R.; but in reality, he was actually a spy who was here to map out the area so that the terrorists can come to destroy this place later. The spy known as Aldric carried a clipboard with a few sheets of paper and drew down everything like rooms, sections, floors and where the stairs and elevators were at.

The gangsters went to look for the man that the other thug described. They kept their eyes sharp on the streets to see if he was among the citizens, peered inside stores to see if he was there, and checked the sky for any sign of them. After crossing the intersection, they spotted someone past a pair of walking women in front of them and noticed he was wearing a gray apparel with a hood. One of the gang members, who had short hair, pointed to that person and murmured to the others, "Look, there he is. I think I see him."

Another gang member, who had curly hair and a mustache, was in doubt as he asked, "Yes, but where's his dragon?"

The short-haired guy shrugged and replied, "I don't know. Probably off boning some dragoness, I think."

The others frowned as they were not amused with that little guess of his. The blonde man asked in sarcasm, "Mm hmm... And I suppose a friend would go and carelessly leave his buddy behind, right?"

"Hey, you never know. Some dragons might be stupider than the others," said the short-haired one. "I still think we should check. You know, just to make sure I'm right."

Even though he was skeptical, the mustached man decided to go along with his subordinate's idea. "Alright fine, we'll go see if this guy's our man," he said. They followed their target and waited for the right time to strike. They needed the ladies to leave, because any witnesses watching them kill would spell trouble for the group. When they got near a women's apparel shop, the female couple went

inside to do some shopping. The gang finally got a clear look at the guy they were stalking. It turned out to be a preteen kid wearing a hoodie and jeans. No one was surprised as they knew it couldn't be the survivor. "See? It's not him, you fool! We wasted a minute following this kid and probably missed the real deal," the mustached guy complained to the short-haired subordinate. "I swear if that really did happen, I'm gonna--" he stopped speaking, when he noticed something colored gray in the alley. It was a hooded person dressed in Southwestern-style clothing. Although the person had his back shown, the mustached man knew exactly that's who Keith wanted dead. A smile formed on his face and he murmured, "Ah ha! There he is." He looked at the others and told them, "Quick, take out your throwing knives." They all did so and hid behind a trash box. The blonde guy peeked over the edge and aimed the knife at Southwesterner. Once he had a clear shot, the goon threw the knife at the man.

Ronan heard the sound of the knife flying in the air. He pushed off the wall, catching the knife in his hand before he spun around and threw it back at the guy, killing him. The goons gasped when they saw the blonde guy get killed like a pro. The Southwestern man stepped out into the open. "You all have five minutes to decide... who runs back to your boss," he informed without an explanation. The clock was running on the five minutes. Who was going to die, and who was going to run?

The gang glared at the hooded man and a fat guy said, "Oh hell no, let's butcher this bozo!" Then they all ran out, armed with weapons to kill. One guy took a swing at Ronan and the other guy went in for a thrust.

The assassin dodged the swing and kicked the hands of both men, making them kill each other. "Drake!" he shouted. Drake jumped off the roof with a loud and thunderous roar and breathed fire down on them. Then he used ice blasts to scatter them and killed some of them with his tail spikes. Ronan cut through them like butter until only one was left standing. He had his sword aimed at the last man's neck and told him, "Run to your boss... tell him what happened here. If he wants me dead, he'll have to do it himself."

The goon stuttered in fear, "Y-y-yes sir!" The assassin let the man go and the goon ran away. Drake took care of the dead bodies; piling them up and using his fire to burn them until they were ash.

After making it all the way back to Keith's secret lair, the goon reported, "Boss, we've failed. The guy and his dragon killed all of us. He only spared me to tell you that if you want him dead, you have to do it yourself."

The boss shifted his fingers against each other and calmly said, "Ah, I see... So the mouse want to play with the big cat, huh? Very well, I agree to his demands, but I won't be playing fair though." His hand started cackling with magic electricity. Then the telephone rang and he picked it up. "Hello?" he said.

The spy on the other end of the line said, "Boss, I've finished mapping out the A.D.R.'s place and got all

their addresses. We should be able to demolish the building and kill off the activists."

"Perfect! Good job, Aldric! Return back to the base immediately and we'll discuss plans," Keith said before he hung up. He looked back to the goon and said, "I'll take care of my special little prey later, for now the A.D.R. comes first."

It was now break time and Minerva left the HQ to do a little shopping before she would return to work. At the square, she came across a blue dragon sleeping in the middle of the place. He must have been a very tired fellow if he decided to take a nap out on the street in the busy morning. Minerva walked up to her and rubbed her hand over his snout. "Excuse me, sir. You really shouldn't sleep out here like that. You might catch a sunburn or get sick from the rain," she said to him.

The dragon woke up suddenly, shifting his fifty foot bulk around to stare directly towards the woman and said, "The rain? It does not bother me." He yawned, exposing the chasm of his mouth lined with white teeth; each tooth as large as a man's spread hand. "And I do not suffer from the ailments of you thin-skinned humans," he continued. He sniffed the human and then his eyes widened slightly. "You smell, different. Like, trust. Something I have not smelled in so long," he said seeming to relax slightly. His wings lowered just an inch or two and the spines on his back flattened. He moved slightly to allow foot traffic to pass by. The dragon sat back down, but kept his head, up and looked at the crowds of slightly nervous people.

Minerva smiled and said, "Well, I suppose it's because you can tell that I'm a dragon rights activist, or dragon sympathizer as everyone calls us." She let out a short hearty laugh.

Ronan and Drake came across the square. The swordsman glanced to the right, seeing the same girl that he nearly ran into and also rescued the other day. *'It seems I keep running into her everywhere in this city,'* he thought to himself. They stayed to listen to the people and dragons talking.

After making it back to Windfall, Kathia walked through the streets, feeling the pain she took from the vine dragon's attacks. She wanted to get home faster, but she had no car as it was destroyed in the attack few days ago. Plus, these vehicles were banned as of now in Windfall as there were too many dragons and people walking the streets. She knew because she just passed a sign in front of where the car dealership store used to be saying why it was closed. Great, just great... It was hard tiring her legs out walking long distances, but the dragons had to make life difficult for all humans with that law as well. The girl let out an irritated groan; it seems like this once-great city was getting more backwards every day.

Aldric and 25 gangsters went to the A.D.R HQ and stood at the doors for a moment, staring at the target they intend to wipe off the face of Windfall. "Alright, let's do this!" the spy said. Then the men rushed into the building with their weapons out for the kill. The A.D.R. members saw the gangsters running up to them and became terrified. They ran and fled for safety as the mafia killed off the activists while the elite gangsters bombarded the walls, desks, rooms, and bathrooms with explosion spells to set fire and destroy. Screams filled the air as the mafia massacred the building one floor at a time.

Ronan and Drake heard explosions and went over to the A.D.R. HQ to check out what was happening. Minerva noticed the familiar duo from the side of her view. Her blue eyes followed them until she saw the building on fire. Turning her attention away from the blue dragon, she looked at the sight with shock and fear for her coworkers and friends inside. "Oh no! What's going on? How did this happen?" she asked. She ran over to the front of the building and waited alongside the crowd for the coworkers to get out.

Ronan went inside the building and saw the mafia attacking people in the building. "Drake, cut them off at the upper floors," the swordsman shouted to his friend outside before he ran further into the building with his sword drawn. He used stealth to quickly behead the gangsters from behind one by one. He wasn't about to let them murder innocent lives. Drake flew up to the higher levels and started killing the murderers before any more activists could be harmed.

Kathia took a seat on the bench and saw the HQ in flames. Making a sneering grin in amusement, the girl thought, *'Hah, serves you right, you dragon-hugging hippies! What did you do? Welcome a dragon inside your home as a guest?'* That was probably what they did, considering how they were for giving civil rights to these beasts. She was glad for them to make a mistake that would cost them dearly like lots of money in property damage for example. The girl would sit and watch the building burn down for a while until she would need to use her magic to put out the fires that would spread to other buildings. She wasn't about to let the Aquarians or other dragons help her fellow humans. She'd rather it be humans helping humans. So in the meantime until then, she read through the water section in her spell book to learn new magic.

Unfortunately for her, Aquarian guards in the surrounding area gathered around the burning building. They looked at each other before making silent telepathic communications. A magi warped in with a few waterhorse dragons and they started to breath out water onto the building like fire hoses. The Aquarians were unable to put out fires on their own without eating them, which was a technique usually only older dragons knew. So the guards settled for asking around the area. "Did anyone see what happened? Are there still people inside?" they asked, seeing people pour from the building.

One of the very few survivors, who all managed to get outside but were dying, said in a hoarse breath, "We were attacked... by... some guys..."

Minerva was both horrified at seeing the devastating burn wounds on the man and shocked that the activists had been attacked. "Attacked? Who would do such a thing?" she asked.

"I... don't... know..." the man said before he collapsed dead on the ground. The crowd gasped in response.

Kathia brought down her book to look at the scene. She wondered, *'So, it turned out to be a bunch of guys. What did you do to rile them up, A.D.R.?' She guessed the A.D.R. were celebrating the dragons taking their revenge on the humans or some other reason that had to lead to their crisis.*

Aldric and two men with him were at the middle floor. After they impaled a secretary and a treasurer, the trio went upstairs and headed for the president's office. They blast down the door and went up to the scared man. The spy grabbed him by the shirt and said in a sadistic tone, "Hello Mr. President."

The president's eyes went wide with shock and betrayed as he said, "Aldric?! You're attacking us? But why?!"

Aldric the spy replied, "Here's the thing, Richard Darien, I was never with this group of idiotic lizard lovers. No, I was sent here as a spy to gather up all the info about you guys, so that we can plan an attack and kill you all! That way, with you guys out of the way, no one will be brainwashed by your propaganda on dragons being people."

The president, despite his own situation at hand, bravely argued, "But they have feelings and sapience just like us! Why should we treat them as our property and monsters?"

Aldric pressed his face up closer and said angrily in a gradually rising tone, "Because one, Richard, those aren't human and two, don't you remember how many lives they took three days ago? They're even killing more now. So don't act like they aren't monsters."

"But they've rebuilt our city and offered us protection from the other dragons," Richard countered.

The spy yelled, "And they're destroying our way of life, too! They've destroyed our guns, turned our modern city into a medieval town, and taken away our cars. We're going backwards, you coot!"

One of the gangsters, getting tired of the conversation, suggested, "Hey Aldric, I'm getting tired of this talk. Let's just kill the guy and get this over with."

Aldric nodded and said, "Right, let's kill this mofo and be done with." As the spy raised his sword, he heard one of the goons get decapitated by Ronan and turned around to block the sword meant for

him. "So you must be that lone survivor from the desert, aren't you?" he asked.

The assassin smirked and said mockingly, "Figured that out yourself, did you?" In one swift movement, his left hand left the grip of the sword handle and a hidden blade slid out from a mechanism on his wrist. He shoved his arm at the man's side and stabbed him through the ribs, earning a pained yell from Aldric. "I am your end, but you will not die yet, only suffer," he said with anger. He retracted his arm as the blade slid back into the mechanism. At the same time, he spun around and sliced the man's hand off. Blood started spraying out the open veins that were once attached to the hand, causing the spy to look at it and scream in both horror and pain. Then Ronan told him, "Call your men off. Tell them either they leave here now or they die by me and my friend whom I assume is roasting your gang alive upstairs. Your boss will fight me in the town square tomorrow at dawn or I will hunt you down and eliminate you all one by one till he stands alone... powerless." He held his sword up aimed at the man.

The water horse dragons worked at the flames, quelling them down slowly. It seemed the fire had been going on a while. "At this rate we'll have to flood the city," a guard murmured. White dragons arrived on the scene, offering healing to the injured.

There was a gust of wind and a black spitfire dragon in bluish-white armor landed in the square. His landing seemed rushed and flustered, and his face would probably show the same had it not been covered by armor. He rushed to the building and drew his head back, opening his jaws. The fire from the building billowed out into a funnel, seeping down into the spitfire's gullet until nothing was left from the flames but the remaining smoke on the building. The spitfire turned, snorting out a puff of smoke. "Who is responsible for this?" he barked at the nearest guard.

"A group of humans it sounds like. But we're not sure who. The building is probably too unstable for dragons to fit through to check," he responded.

The spitfire ordered, "Send in pygmies then to scout. Get some Earth dragons to keep the building stable." A moment later a few pygmies arrived along with two Earth dragons. The armored pygmies flew inside, looking for survivors. The Earth dragons solidified the structure with magic, slowly starting to mend it. It was the main reason the Aquarians made all the buildings primarily from stone. Stone was harder to burn and easy repair for Earth dragons.

"Something's happening on one of the upper floors!" Someone among the crowd yelled while holding binoculars. "There's three people there and two of them are fighting!"

Minerva went up to the young man with the binoculars, who happened to be the same guy from the park she sat next to. She asked, "Excuse, do you mind if I borrow these for a second?" She wanted to make sure that whoever was involved in that scene are okay and not hurt too badly.

The man handed his binoculars to her without any words other than, "Here."

Minerva looked through the binoculars to see two figures fighting each other while the organization president looks on. One of them she spotted first was her hooded rescuer. "Oh my, it's him again!" she said to herself. He must have caught wind of the massacre going on the A.D.R. building and went stop the villain behind this. Then when she looked to his opponent, she was shocked to see Aldric. The woman blinked her eyes bewildered as she said, "Aldric?!" What was going on? Why were he and the other man fighting each other? Did Aldric mistake the hooded man to be one of the bad guys, was the hooded man the murderer, or was Aldric behind the attacks? The battle ended with the assassin disappearing out of there.

Angered at having been incapacitated, Aldric would have chosen to fight Ronan out of defiance, but then he saw the Aquarian guards outside through the window. It wouldn't be wise to make themselves known to the city's new and powerful police force; so, the spy looked back to the assassin and growled, "Hmph, fine. We'll spare your life for now..." With his only hand left, he took out his walkie-talkie and said, "Everyone, we're leaving. The Aquarians are here and we don't want any trouble with them. Let's get out of here before they see us." As the goons left back to the secret hideout, using their smoke warp spell, Aldric told the assassin bitterly, "Here's an advice for you, pal. Don't underestimate our boss! He can handle 20 dragons himself with just his little pinkie finger and I doubt you and your scaly friend can take him on alone." Then the spy warped out of here, too.

Ronan sheathed his sword with a smirk and said to himself, "He's never faced a true warrior."

Richard watched the hooded man leave and said after him, "Thank you, sir." The president was very grateful for having his life saved. Ronan met with Drake outside the building. The two started to walk away from the scene as the man's hood hid his face.

Minerva gave the binoculars back and thanked the young man for letting her borrow them. Having seen the ending of the fight, she came to the conclusion that Aldric was a villain after all. She was so surprised to see that one of her own was part of the criminal group that murdered her fellow activists and bombed the HQ; she had never thought that she would see a day like this. The A.D.R. would have be more careful about who they hire into their organization next time. Then the blonde women saw the hero walking away from the scene with his dragon friend. Wanting to know everything that happened inside the building, she went over to him to them for a talk. But first she had to thank them, so she and said, "Thanks for going to stop Aldric. I never thought one of our own would try to kill us all like that." She wasn't the only one who appreciated what the duo did; Ronan and Drake made their way through the crowd of people who were constantly thanking them. The assassin didn't respond, but he did appreciate the gratitude. They left the area and made their way to the center courtyard of the city to wait for the gang and their boss whom he challenged to a fight.

Keith watched from afar, peeking from the side of a building and observing his prey to memorize their looks and everything. "You fought very well, my friends. But let's see how you'll do later tonight," he murmured.

Beside him, his goon asked, "You mean you aren't going to fight him tomorrow?"

The boss replied, "Of course not. I like to play smart and kill my enemies when they're at their most vulnerable. We'll do this after midnight. Come, we'll return to base and discuss our strategy."

"Y-yes boss," the goon said before he followed the big man in charge back through the alleys.