

Chapter 19: The Plan for a Human-only City

Once afternoon had come, Kathia got ready to leave the house. She said goodbye to Mrs. Merryweather and went outside the mansion with her spell book. She rode her horse to go meet Jason at the backlot, where they had practiced archery. She couldn't wait to show him what she learned yesterday. After getting there first, the girl tied the reins to a pole and sat on the bench to read her spell book. She was going to study and memorize the spells she used until Jason got here. Any new spells she found, she cast them only once so that she doesn't drain too much of her magic energy before the showoff.

After a little while, Kathia became so deep into her spell book that she jumped a little when a black man's voice startled her. "So ready to blow my mind?" he asked. The girl put the book down as Jason walked up to her and set down his quiver of arrows and bow.

"Yes, I am," the girl replied eagerly to show off her spells.

As the man began to set the targets around the lot, he conveyed, "I made some targets. If you don't mind, I'm gonna to start. Something tells me there won't be much left of these little guys when you're done with them."

"Oh trust me, there won't be," Kathia said, confident that she was going to destroy these targets with her magic spells.

Collecting his bow and quiver again, Jason took a spot in the middle of the lot. He took a calming breath or two and got to it. He drew his first arrow nice and slow, getting a feel for the motion and knocked it to the bow. The man checked to see that Kathia was watching and then with a sharp movement raised the bow drew back and let fly his first shot. It slammed dead center in the first target. He didn't wait or celebrate; Jason turned completely around and let another arrow fly at another target held up off the ground. It landed a little right of center, but he didn't let that get him down. The man moved on through the targets which had been arranged around the lot in a rather random manner. All the arrows found their mark albeit with some a little above, below, left, or right of dead center. Until two targets remained, these two were shaped like rearing miniature dragons. Kathia could picture him killing some real-life dragons. Jason let loose one arrow and before that had found its mark he drew and left fly a second arrow at the second target. One dragon was knocked off its post followed almost immediately back the second each with an arrow embedded in its head.

Finished with his demonstration, Jason exhaled slowly. He went around collecting up the targets and his arrows. "You can set them up however you like," he explained walking over to the girl and setting the targets at her feet. "Not much of a caster myself, but I get that some spells are more about destructive power than accuracy," he said sitting down next to her with a triumphant grin. "So, what'd you think of my display?"

"It was pretty good! I bet you can poke a dragon's eye right in the center," Kathia commented smiling as she pointed at her own brown eye gesturing what she meant. Then she took up the targets and set them side by side. She backed away from the targets until she was a little near Jason for him to get a close look at how she would perform. "Okay, I haven't learned all the spells in the book, but I will show you which ones I know. Let's start with the fireball," she told him. Concentrating and bringing up thermal magic energy, a small ember sitting at the palm of her hand grew bigger and round until it became a fireball. The girl flung it at one of the targets and the spells hit it, creating a small fireplace that would slowly spread its flames around it. Then she tried out her next spell, was her wind ball spell. She created a ball of air in her hands and cast it at the second target and watched it fall down after the impact. On the third target, she cast a lightning bolt at it zapped a space next to the center and left a black burnt mark there as well as chipped a small piece of the board. That all the projectile spells she could think of for now. "Okay, my next spell doesn't shoot like the other spells, but it does hurt anyway. Watch this," Kathia said to Jason. She walked up to the fourth target and blazed her hand with the burning touch spell. Her fiery hand touched the circular board and set it on fire. She looked at the man to see what he thought.

The man applauded the girl's performance. "Very well done! More spells like those and we'll have those damned lizards fleeing for their lives," he said, smiling at her.

The girl replied with enthusiasm, "Yeah! They'll regret setting their foot in this town!"

Jason stood up and went to collect his surviving targets which consisted of the one that was missed. The target hit by the wind spell didn't seem like it could be salvaged. "So what now? Grab something to eat or do we probe around for other people who aren't happy with the way things are?" he asked.

Kathia suggested, "I'd say we eat something first before we look for everyone. Hey, why don't get go to the Dominican restaurant? It's expensive, but they got really good food there. I'll pay for it with my daddy's credit card." She knew there was a carnival in town, but it would be there tomorrow, so it was no harm done not going over there.

Jason said happily, "Dominican eh? Sounds like a plan!" The man packed the surviving targets into bag and slung it on. "Alright, lead the way Lady Kathia! I'm practically starved," he exclaimed with a wide grin.

"Right! Come on, let's go!" said the girl. She and Jason on her horse and they rode all the way to the Dominican restaurant known as King Bistro. The redhead left the horse at the stalls and the two went inside the building. The interior was quite fancy with chandeliers at the ceiling, blue & white striped walls with medieval icons, a small jar with a flower and silky white cloth coverings at each table, and classical music. The hunters went up to a young and handsome host, who grinned and greeted, "Hello and welcome to King Bistro. Is this a party of two?"

"Yes, it is," Kathia nodded and said.

After he grabbed up two menus and beckoned the hunters, "Okay then, I'll get y'all seated. Right this way, guys." Kathia and Jason followed the host to one of the round tables and took their seats there. The host gave them their menus and told them, "Here you go, read and see which foods you want until the waiter gets here."

Jason flashed him a grin and replied, "Alright boy, we got ya!" Then the hunters took their time to look at the drinks section of the menu.

After a few minutes, a curly-haired waitress approached the table with a small notepad and pen in hand. She smiled at the two and said, "Hi, my name is Mary and I will be taking your orders. Now what would you all like to have for drink?"

The girl, having decided on what she wanted, ordered, "I would like a sweet tea."

Mary wrote down Kathia's order on the notepad before turning to Jason and asking, "And what would you like, sir?"

"Uh... just water please," he said, not really looking at the drink menu.

The waitress wrote down his order and said to them, "I'll be right back with your drinks." Then after she left, the man turned his attention to Kathia and asked nervously, "I'm not under dressed, am I?"

The girl laughed answered, "No you're not. I've seen a few people come to this place wearing casual clothes before. So it's no big deal dressing how you look."

Jason smiled in relief and said, "Oh that's a relief for a moment I was worried I might have to go out and by some new cloths before eating here." Then they took up their menus to see what was on it.

The starters had a soup of the day, fresh fruit bowl, shrimp cocktail, and artichokes in Parmesan lemon sauce. The shrimp cocktail had the girl's mouth watering as she knew of its delicious taste. But the baked brie at the appetizer menu was kind of curious since it was usually savory foods and not sweets that were the appetizers. Putting the menu down a bit, Kathia asked, "Hey Jason, want to start off with some appetizers?"

"Sure. Let's see what we have here..." the man said, flipping back through the menu. "The shrimp cocktail sounds nice. Let's have that," he said as he closed the menu with a snap. The sound was quite loud and Jason made a funny face that conveyed a silent "Whoops."

Kathia giggled and said, "Okay, shrimp cocktail it is. That one is very tasty."

Mary returned with the drinks and set them on the table. Taking up her notepad and pen, she

asked, "So, did you all want any appetizers first or do you just want to skip ahead over to lunch?"

The redhead raised a finger and answered, "We'll take the appetizers; we want to have shrimp cocktail." The waitress wrote it down and went to the kitchen. Since it would take some time for Mary to get back with the food, the girl figured that it would be a good time to talk about their plans. "So Jason, about that recruiting people for our cause. Where do you think we should start?" she asked.

Jason thought for a moment and spoke quietly, "Well, the criminal underworld might be a start, but I'd rather not associate with kind of crowd, if at all possible, to be honest." The started speaking quietly about this sensitive topic, so that they wouldn't be overheard by an eavesdropper.

"I agree," Kathia said. Mafias and gangs probably wouldn't be a good idea as people like them tend to be vicious.

Then the man suggested, "Hmm.... maybe the forests. When the dragons broke free our people were scattered in the chaos. Could be that some of the more skeptical people stayed hidden rather than accept the dragon's 'Well meaning' embrace. So we could try there as well."

The girl replied, "That might be a good idea. I think some people at the refugee camp I was at stayed behind because they didn't want to be with those lizards."

Jason nodded a bit and said, "That sounds like it would be the best start. I bet we'll find a lot of people there who want to make a proper future for themselves without having to rely on these dragons."

The girl agreed and said, "Yeah, who needs law-enforcing dragons, when they're better to us as slaves and livestock." Then she smirked, thinking ridiculing thoughts about the dragons. "But of course, they'll probably end up being only food and fashion items, now that we have magic for our convenient uses." She rubbed her thumb, pointer, middle fingers together to ignite a small ember above the digits.

The man smiled and continued, "Could offer to teach people how to survive on our own and how to defend ourselves against this scourge. And when we're strong enough, maybe just maybe we'll save the rest of humanity from the dragons and take back our rightful place."

Nodding with agreement to the plan, Kathia said, "Yeah, and we should set up some trade routes with the other refugee camps to get the best things they have while giving them the best of ours in return. That way, we can all better ourselves against the dragons, form alliances, and build up an army to liberate Windfall and take revenge on those beasts." She almost raised her voice in the excitement built from discussing their plan. Thankfully, she remembered to keep the conversation quiet before it reached anybody's ears.

Mary arrived with the appetizers soon after and she placed the bowl of shrimp cocktail on the center of the table. "I hope you enjoy your appetizers. I'll be right back soon after I give the other party their

lunch," she said. Then she went by to attend to a family of four.

Jason held up his glass of water in a toast and said, "To our future."

Kathia held up her glass as well and said, "Yeah!" They tapped their glasses against each other's before they took their sips.

The rest of the appetizer was passed in relative silence. Jason occasionally commented on the taste of the food. He seemed to enjoy it a great deal mentioning how much better the chef's cooking was than his own. As Kathia picked up one of the shrimps to bite into and chew, the man stated absently, "I really should take lessons on this. Before the spell my wife did all the cooking. Always said I was a useless sod in the kitchen." He seemed to pause in his eating as he reflected on his past.

"Really now. How good was she?" the girl asked after eating up the last shrimp.

"Very good!" the man replied, sounding proud of his wife. Then he added heartily as he looked up at Kathia with a somewhat forced grin, "Heh, well gonna have to cut it on my own now, right?"

"On your own?" the girl asked curiously.

"Yeah. My family is dead," Jason told her. Kathia felt sorry for the man's loss and felt that he was in the same tragic situation as she was. Then the man lightened up and continued, "Although I guess I'm not completely alone. Got you on my side at least. Though I can't exactly expect you to cook for me and stuff," he said with a hearty laugh. "That just wouldn't be fair, would it?" he added leaning that table with one arm.

"Nope, besides I'd rather leave my maid to do that," said Kathia, talking about Mrs. Merryweather. "I mean she's a really good cook and makes most of the meals at home."

The man nodded slightly and said, "Wish I had the money for a maid. That would make life much easier for me."

Soon enough, Mary came back to them and took up the empty bowl to put on the cart of collected plated. "So, have you all decided on what what you want to eat?" she asked.

Jason told the waitress, "I'll have the alfredo fettuccini, please."

Kathia said right after him, "And I'll have the sauteed scallops."

Mary wrote down their orders and said, "Alfredo fettuccini and sauteed scallops coming right up!" Then she went over to the kitchen to give the list to the chefs.

Jason smiled to the girl and asked, "Heh, fan of seafood, eh?"

Kathia replied, "Yes, I guess you could say that, since I like pretty much everything." There probably wasn't any seafood in the world that she didn't like. Although she heard that sashimi was raw, but she had never tried it before.

Jason shook his head and said, "Oh I doubt that, there's gotta be something you're not fond of... other than dragons of course." He rested his fork arm on the table and leaning in a bit again. "So, tell me what don't you like?" the man challenged.

Then the girl admitted, "Well fine, I don't like fast food. They're too greasy and fatty and they taste gross." It was no wonder why fast food was sold at a cheap price.

Jason cocked an eyebrow at Kathia and teased, "Fast food? You must be the only person alive that doesn't like fast food."

The girl retorted, "Yeah well after you've had good quality food your whole life, fast food might not sit well with your taste."

Jason just chuckled and said, "You're probably right about that, eat like a king all the time and suddenly the food of us peasants doesn't cut it."

Mary returned again and placed their meals on the table. "Here's your lunch, guys. Enjoy the meals!" she said cheerfully before leaving again.

After the two ate their lunches, a buzzing noise sounded by Kathia's ear and attracted her attention. A small black insect flew around above the table and the girl got annoyed with its presence. "Oh hell no! It's just one of those few times a fly shows its ugly rear in a beautiful restaurant like this," the girl groaned. She fanned her hand at the fly to scare him away. She told it off, "Go on, get! And stay away from our food!" She didn't like bugs at all, but fortunately for them, they were a little behind dragons on her list of things to hate.

The fly flitted over to Jason's plate and was instantly swiped at and crushed onto the table under the man's hand and napkin. He wiped up the remains and balled the napkin up before setting it aside. "Well, can't really blame them, I guess. Times are tough they'd be hard pressed to keep flies out," He said warmly.

Kathia sighed in dispirit, "It's a sign that our quality of life is going downhill. It may not seem like much now, but I'm afraid to find out what our future is going to be like later." The next thing she can assume will humans losing their jobs as the dragons will replacing doctors with white dragons and dragons replacing construction workers and other labor workers, much like how it happened to the Rittevon Construction Company. Maybe even other jobs will be lost to the dragons, due to their strength and

magic powers. The humans will become obsolete and society will be taken over by dragons with the inferior humans becoming second class citizens. The thought scared the poor teenager.

Finishing his meal Jason set down his fork and cleared his throat. "Then we'd best get a move on. The world isn't going to save itself you know. We've got a lot of work ahead of us and it starts with that settlement just outside of town. So let's get the bill and get going," he said sitting back in his chair and looking around the room. Kathia guessed that he was probably looking for the waitress.

"Right!" the girl replied.

After a few minutes later, Mary returned and took up the empty plates. "So, did you all enjoy your meals?" she asked.

The redhead replied smiling and nodding, "We sure did! That was some pretty delicious stuff."

The waitress smiled back and asked, "I'm glad you appreciate it. So can I pleasure you further with some desserts?"

Kathia declined, "Nah, just give us the bill. We need to be on our way."

"Alright then, I'll be right back with it," said Mary before left and went over to the cashier register. She printed the bill and returned with it in hand. She placed it on the table next to Jason and said, "Here's your bill, sir."

The girl took the bill away from the man and corrected the waitress, "No, no, no, I'm paying. I'm the one with the credit card." She raised the credit card and waved it a little to draw the woman's attention to it.

The surprised waitress put a hand to her chest and said, "Oh I didn't know. Well then, give it to me and I'll ring it up." Kathia gave it to her and the woman went to the cashier machine. She slid the credit card in the slot and printed the receipt. She went back to them one last time and returned the credit card back to the redhead and gave her the receipt as well. "Thanks for eating over at King Bistro. I hope I see you again next time!" Mary said with a happy smile.

Kathia looked forward to it and replied, "Me too!"

After the waitress was gone, Jason said with a nod, "Thanks again for lunch, Kathia."

"You're welcome," replied the girl. Then she got up out of the table and said, "Okay, now to get our followers. I mean friends." She thought it would be inappropriate to label the people "followers" as these fellow humans were people with feelings and she needed to consider them allies. Jason simply chuckled at her correction as they left the restaurant. They got on the white stallion and rode it through the streets, careful to avoid people and dragons alike. Kathia pondered her thoughts on where to go to

reach the refugee camp. "Now where do I need to go?" she asked herself. She tried refreshing her memories for a clue as she thought about the night she escaped her home with her mother. She remembered the TV store as one of the places on her route, but the problem was that she had forgotten the name of the store. It probably might have been called "Mike's TVs". She thought to ask first, "Hey Jason, do we have a Mike's TVs store somewhere in the city?"

"I think so, in the west part of the city I believe," the man said pensively as if he was trying to recall accurately. As the horse made its way to the western section of Windfall, he mused thoughtfully as he held onto Kathia, "Wonder what we should call the settlement we form."

The girl replied, "I don't know, but maybe something in mind will pop up later." For it to happen, she had to start thinking of a name now.

Jason assured her, "Yeah we'll think of something soon enough." The girl didn't respond as she pondered her thoughts on what kind of name to give their envisioned town. Would New Hope be a good name? With a name like that, it would signify a hope that would one day liberate all the humans from the dragons when they had a big enough army. But that name sounded kind of generic. Generic, but good anyway. Kathia tried to think of a second name and it seemed to be having a hard start. Three minutes went by until she thought of gunmen who shoot down dragons. Now she smiled as she had a new name in her mind: Huntington. She added that to her list of ideas and went to think of a third name in mind which soon came by as Slayville. More and more names came to mind as they finally reached a familiar road from a few days before, but with no Mike's TVs in sight. But she didn't need to look for it as they had made it out into the woods on the same path that she had got on to the refugee camp.

The stallion galloped through the woods until they had found the place that they found the place that they were looking for. This time, the camp was in the process of building a few wooden watch towers. But from the looks of it, they weren't complete yet as they were still building the stairs and supports. "Look there it is, Jason. I see it," said Kathia. She rode the horse towards the place.

The man looked at the uncompleted towers and joked, "Looks like they got started without us. Probably won't even need a speech." He looked around and asked, "Best we speak with the de-facto leader round here."

"Yeah," Kathia replied. They went into the camp to search for the man or woman in charge. The redhead thought it would be easier to find him/her if she asked someone around here. She rode up to a woman walking by and asked, "Excuse me. Do you know where we can find the person who's in charge of this place?"

The woman replied, "Oh Roderick? Well, I don't know where he is. But if you want to find him, you can probably wait for him over at the tent." She went on to describe the tent's appearance, "It's big and red; it'll be pretty easy to see since it stands out."

With that info received, Kathia said to her, "Okay, thanks for your help, lady." Jason gave a polite nod and a "thank you" to the lady as well.

"You're welcome," the woman replied.

The stallion walked all the way over to the red tent, where the camp manager was sitting on a chair outside with a clipboard in hand. He was a slightly chubby dark-haired brunette with sunglasses. "Is that him?" asked Kathia.

Jason shrugged and whispered to the girl, "Maybe, but part of me hopes not. I'd rather not ally myself with someone who looks like they've had life fed to them on silver platters." They got off the horse and walked up to the man as he asked, "Excuse us, we're looking for a man named Roderick, do you know where we might find him?"

The man pointed at himself with two thumbs and answered, "Well sir, you're looking at him. That's me!"

Jason inquired, "So Roderick, we see your refugee camp's near Windfall, but strangely nobody here wants to return home. Why is that? I mean the city's been rebuilt and none of the dragons there want to harm anyone." Kathia knew that this wasn't just a question of asking for reasons behind their choice; it was also a build-up towards getting him and these people on their side.

Roderick answered, "The reason why we ain't going anywhere is because the lizards like them have torn apart our lives. Heck, even some of the lizards in living in that damned city are the ones responsible for all that catastrophe back a few nights ago." That part was very much true. Kathia had seen one of her slaves among the dragon citizens and the Aquarians hadn't done anything to apprehend those rebels. And them not attacking humans no more was no excuse to not have them punished. "And to make things worse, the cities' handed half the government to these fiends. Now we're being policed by... what they call themselves?" The camp manager tried to remember the foreign fire dragons.

The girl answered for him, "The Aquarians."

Roderick nodded and said in growing disgruntlement, "The Aquarians, okay. So anyway, we're being watched like a hawk by these scabies and having our lives and culture controlled by them. Now who the hell would want to live in a city like that?"

Kathia agreed and said, "Not me."

Roderick made a finger gun hand gesture as if she got that right and said, "Exactly! Now you see why no one around here is going back. Well some of us did, but they didn't have an ounce of pride and spirit in them." He shook his head at the fact that there were people who would trade their own freedoms for security. He continued speaking, "Now I heard the Aquarians were forcing humans from around this country into the city. We had to lie to them and say that our camp is just a fun activity. Even we had to

put on an act to convince them that. They took it for not, but I have a gut feeling that they might come back here eventually. And when they do, they probably won't believe us next time." The man let out a sigh and said, "I wish we had some way of defending ourselves from the Aquarians."

Jason said pensively, "I hear you. Just defending yourselves isn't good enough though." Then with enthusiasm, he continued, "I believe we can help you. We have been honing our own combative and survival skills. We can turn this camp into a team; into people who work for the betterment of each other. Such a community would never fall to the dragons." He stated with a fire in his voice, "We can teach magic and archery to the people. That along with strong teamwork will turn this camp into fighting force capable of repelling serious draconic threats. And with resource gathering we can turn this camp into a proper town. But, to turn this into a proper home for humans by humans, we'll need your full support and co-operation," he added with finality. "What do you say Roderick, willing to let us work with you?" he asked.

Roderick listened to every word that Jason had spoken. He was impressed with and inspired by his ideas. "That sounds brilliant there, pal!" he exclaimed while pointing at Jason. "It's what we need if we ever hope to keep ourselves from being assimilated by the Aquarians and attacked by wild animals, especially them damn dragon ones," said the camp manager. "You're in, you two. I'm going to tell the whole camp right now about your combat lessons and then we'll get a class in session immediately. By the way, what are your names?" he asked.

The redhead answered friendly, "I'm Kathia."

Her companion stated, "I'm Jason Quellin. And let me say you've got the right idea with the watchtowers but we're way too close to the city, before we start our lessons it'll be better if we move the camp farther away. That way we won't have to worry about Aquarian interference as much." The archer was right; they needed to plan ahead if this was going to work and being literally right next door to a dragon city seemed like a bad idea.

Roderick kind of agreed and said, "Well I suppose you're right about that. It's just that since we don't have any shops or stores of our own, I figured that if we stay this close than people will be able to get the supplies they need from the city and keep on surviving."

Kathia sympathized with his reason said, "Well I guess I can understand. But you can always use these cars to get from one far place to the other, right?" She looked at the vehicles nearby to show before speaking to him again, "And if we do run out of gas, we can always buy these horses inside the city and use them instead until we find a place we can drill oil from."

Roderick nodded and said, "Well I suppose that works. I guess I better call the whole camp and tell them that we'll be moving out." The camp manager went into his tent and came out with a megaphone. He held it in front of his mouth and spoke into it, "Attention all staff members and refugees! Please pack up your stuff, equipment and everything. Our two new friends, well teachers to be exact, have noticed how

too close we are to the city and suggest that we move some place farther away so that we don't have to deal with any dragons coming from Windfall. Pass the message on to everyone; we're moving north right now." The whole camp started to get going with packing up and putting supplies into the trucks and cars.

Jason suggested to both the camp manager and the girl, "We should collapse the watchtowers and take them with us, even if it's just in pieces. Those towers will be essential in securing a safe place to sleep." Then he asked Kathia in particular, "I'll round up some men to get that done. Kathia do you want to help?"

"Sure," the girl said as she was eager to get things down for the sake of the human's town.

Roderick sighed and said, "Well it's a shame to see all that hard work put into these towers turn back into scraps, but we got to do what we got to do."

Jason led the way approaching some of the camp inhabitants and asking for volunteers to take down the towers. the response was surprisingly good. It seemed these people were eager to get away from windfall now that dragons had taken over. Once the people had set to work on the towers, the archer spoke to his friend with a smile, "I really should thank you Kathia. I would never have known about these people if it weren't for you. I was getting ready to settle down as a hermit before we met, not sure what would have happened then but I shudder at some of the things that come to mind. So thanks a lot!"

The redhead smiled back in joy that she helped a fellow human being and said, "You're welcome, Jason! You know, I'm glad I met you, too. Because I don't think anybody would have followed someone young such as myself. I mean I had some good ideas, but people would rather have older people as leaders. And that's where you fit in; you're old enough to be one and you're smart. Heck, you would be an even better leader than me."

"Thanks Kathia," the man said with pride. Then he asked, "Actually, do you mind if I call you Kat? I'm just not used to being formal with much of anyone."

The girl replied contently, "Not at all. I don't mind that kind of nickname." Then they went to take down the lumber and load them onto the truck.