

Chapter 24: Axle the villain?!

The Vulture Horde waited for the baby-killer team to return with expectations of success. Aeolus pictured Zeditha being overpowered by the magis' magic, while the baby gets ripped and torn apart by the other dragons. Things were going to be good; the plan was flawless and this mission will be easy with the dragons he has chosen. A bright flash appeared in the center of the horde and in its place appeared the team; they had returned from the mission and they looked like they had been in a fight, but not with Zeditha apparently. They had claw marks and bite marks bigger than a dragonet would have made, and burns on their bodies. The horde looked at them bewildered and started asking, "What happened to you?" and "Did Zeditha do this to you guys?"

Aeolus looked to the dragon who asked the latter of the two questions and responded, "No, it wasn't! Don't you see how big some of the wounds are? Zeditha couldn't have done this alone." Then he turned to the team and asked them, "Kekul, everyone. What happened back there?"

The magma magi winced in pain before he answered, "We were in some building that Zeditha was at and she was with others; a weird halfling and a dragon. We fought them to get to the infant, but then these dragons calling themselves the Aquarians came and attacked us."

Tavurth became disgruntled and growled sarcastically, "Oh great, more race traitors. Just what this world needs."

Hewey went to help Cirrus heal the group as Kekul continued to tell his story, "We were outmatched, because they had more numbers, a few magis, and wore armor. Our team couldn't stand a chance against them."

Aeolus realized that was the magma magi said had sounded very familiar to a certain place that Atlas had told him about this morning. But just to make sure, he asked, "Tell me, did they ever mention the name of the city you were in?"

Before Kekul could say anything, Enamora answered for him, "It was Windfall."

The horde leader frowned and thought, *'I knew it.'*

The team looked at her in confusion as one of the crimson flares asked, "Wait a minute! How would you know? They never said its name."

The magi dragoness told him, "Because just now, they sent me a warning through telepathy that if the Vulture Horde was ever seen in Windfall again; they would show no mercy. They along with all the other dragons in Windfall will fight us to protect the humans."

Bam was shocked at what he just heard and asked, "They'd fight us for the humans?! Why would they do that?"

Aeolus answered with a growl, "Because these fools trust humans so much that they think rebuilding the city that they just destroyed will help them get on the humans' good side. They obviously don't understand their enemies."

Tavurth growled without sympathy, "If these brainless idiots get themselves killed, then good! I won't feel sorry for anybody who puts humans above our kind."

The horde leader frowned and disagreed with him, "While the dragons there may not be so bright; we still can't let them succumb to their misguided downfall. Because the less dragons we have, the less warriors we have to combat the humans."

Fakoo asked, "So how do we get the dragons of Windfall to see their mistake, if we can't go to Windfall?" Despite Windfall's opposition, she was worried about the innocent lives of dragons there.

Aeolus explained, "Well Fakoo, since the whole of that city will be against us; we'll have to settle for building up an extremely large horde, not counting pygmies. In the meantime, we can only hope that Windfall will realize their mistake by themselves and survive before it's too late. Vulture Horde, let's move out." The horde took to the sky and flew over the rainforest.

The Vulture Horde landed by a huge lake to drink some water. The coolness of the water would help their bodies cool off from the summer heat that was burning their bodies. The dragons brought their heads down to the lake and drank up the water. Bam and a few other fun-loving dragons jumped into the lake to swim and cool off. Big splashes as well as small ones from pygmies were made as the water drops flew over the air and fell down on the other horde members. Some of them, even Aeolus, were annoyed from getting wet. Bam and the others didn't seem to care as they swam around in the lake. "Whoo-hoo! Oh yeah, now that's a great way to cool off!" the navy blue dragon said.

Corona the phoenix dragon growled, "Well that's good for you, Bam! But did you have to get my feathers wet? You know I don't like having water on me."

Bam made a nervous smile and apologized, "Sorry, Corona."

Aeolus told his cousin, "Just be careful next time, Bam. Because she's not the only way upset with getting splashed." He looked to the other annoyed dragons.

"Alright, gotcha!" the navy blue said. The dragons went back to drinking and swimming.

Soon, they heard a distant sound of a car driving on the road. The drinking dragons lifted up their heads and looked over to the direction of the roaring sound of wheels. '*Humans,*' Aeolus thought. Here comes another one to bite the dust. The horde leader headed off towards the road and remained behind the trees on the ascending slope. A lone black car with some luggage tied at the top was approaching his view. Aeolus waited for the vehicle to get closer within range, but not passing him by. When the right time came, the disaster dragon blew out lightning at the car's front compartment. The male mustached driver got taken by great surprise and let out a short scream before the engine blew up and took away his life. The car and the luggage became set on fire from the explosion and glass windows were broken in the destruction. Aeolus turned from the scene and went back over to the lake.

Bam swam underwater like a seal and kept his wings tucked to his body so that they don't slow him down in the water. He approached a small school of fish that fled away upon seeing him. They split up into two groups with one going to the right and the other going left. Bam, having never eaten fish before, decided to try one. He went after the left group and pursued them until they got to the opposite side of the bank. There he managed to clamp his jaws down onto three fish, while the others escaped. The navy blue swam up to the surface to breathe and eat the fish. When he got onto the bank, he saw a cassare dragonet with a deer he had apparently hunted. Bam spat the fish out onto the grass, where they flopped in panic at being unable to breathe out of their home. "Oh, hey there!" he greeted the cassare with a friendly smile.

The cassare grinned back and introduced himself, "Hey. I'm Pyro." His gaze drifted to the dragons on the opposite bank. "So who are you? I've never seen you around here before, and who are they?" he asked, motioning to the large group of dragons.

"I'm Bam and these guys over there are the Vulture horde," the navy blue said before he turned their heads to look at his fellow horde members. He looked back at Pyro and said, "We're a horde that exterminates humans and we're building up our numbers so that we can go destroy the army that's been going around killing dragons. Care to join?"

The cassare's eyes lit up with excitement and he answered with a smile, "Sure, I'll join."

Bam's black eyes lit up with excitement and said, "Great! I'll tell my cousin, Aeolus, we have a new member of the horde." Then he contacted the disaster dragon through telepathy and said, '*Aeolus, guess what?! We have a new member of the horde!*'

The reply he heard was, '*Bring him over to me.*'

'*Okay,*' Bam replied.

Before the navy blue could beckon for Pryo to follow him, three pygmies popped their heads out of the water. One of them, a flower pygmy asked, "Bam, who's that?"

The navy blue looked at her and replied, "Oh that's Pyro. I was just talking with him." Then he looked at the cassare and said, "Come on, let's go meet my cousin, he's the leader of the horde." The two dragons spread their wings and flew across the lake to the other side. Bam found Aeolus sitting between trees and said to him, "Here he is, cousin!" The disaster dragon looked up and watched the two land to the ground before him. Bam looked at Pyro and introduced him to the horde leader, "Pyro, this is Aeolus, our leader." Then he looked to the disaster dragon and said, "Aeolus, this is Pyro. I met him across the lake."

The cassare dipped his head in greeting and stammered, "Greetings. I, guess I would like to join your horde."

Aeolus smiled at him and said, "You're very much welcome into the horde, Pyro. Now could you care to tell me what your abilities are? There's no qualifications for joining the horde, but it is helpful to me to know what you're like so that I can put you in the correct position for tonight's ambush on the human's army." The leader was very much interested and eager to have the cassare in the horde as Pyro would be a very valuable asset. With him, he can disable the halfling mages' magic when he's up close to them and killing off the foot soldiers will be much easier without the help of the halflings. Not only that, but he would also be very useful in the rescuing of Windfall. But of course, one cassare alone won't do it; the horde needed more of his kind.

Pyro nodded and answered, "Well, like all cassare dragons I can weaken the magic around me. Personally, I don't find much use for it except for scaring away mages." He smirked and continued, "They're nothing without their precious magic. I can also fight, but that's about it."

"That's a very useful ability we should have," the disaster dragon complimented. "You see, we're going to destroy an army of the humans' warriors and there are some magic-users among them. A different horde, that a few of my members once belonged to, had been killed by their powerful magic; and I don't want my horde to suffer the same fate as them. So with you on our side, our chances of victory will increase. Of course, some strategic plans will have to be made first, so that your magic-nullifying powers don't accidentally stop our magi dragons from being able to cast spells." He quickly got to work on coming up with tonight's strategy and said, "Like what we could do is have Zylanon the shadow dragon go in first and kill the watch guards. Then the black ghost dragons would go in and search for the halflings while silently killing the other soldiers along the way. Once they're found, you will go to where the black ghosts are and then exterminate the halfling mages inside. The rest of the horde will be split into two groups: those teleported above the camp to rain down aerial attacks, and the other group surrounding the camp on all sides to kill off any fleeing soldiers or destroying the tents and humans to push forward and trap the fiends at the center where they'll easily be destroyed in one shot. That's how our plan works."

Pyro nodded to the plan and asked, "Where do I go after I've killed the halflings? I should probably get out of the way, because even from a distance, my powers can affect other dragons' magic."

Aeolus felt the cassare made a good point. With a solution to his concern in mind, he answered, "Then you and the black ghosts should quietly leave the camp and tell us through telepathy when you're out. That way our magic won't be nullified when we go in to attack."

"Okay, got it," the cassare replied.

"I'm glad you do," the disaster dragon replied. He turned his head to look at the sun that was about to set down to the horizon and said, "We should get some sleep soon. We'll need our energy for tonight's attack."

Bam and Pyro both agreed as they nodded. "Agreed," the cassare said. Aeolus went to tell his horde to eat some dinner before they all go to sleep.

Once Atlas was healed by the hot spring, she turned back into a dragoness and went out to search for fruits to feed Kylie. She came back with an apple and some black cherries, which she gave to the balloon hatchling. The magi had also teleported a hunted bear for Mekarth in case he was hungry and some fruits and nuts for Axle to eat later after he wakes up. Atlas then found out that the assumed diet for Axle was wrong after Mekarth told her that he was a carnivore, which surprised the magi. So, she had to go back out to hunt and return with an elk this time. When Axle had woke up, he ate the elk in his dragon form. Now later, it was night time and Axle still hasn't woken up to eat. Atlas froze the elk in hard ice to preserve it through the night. Then she looked over at her nieces and told them, "Danielle, Kylie, bedtime."

"Okay, Aunt Atwas!" the sisters said as they ran over to their aunt. Atlas curled her tail around the hatchlings and they all went to sleep.

After everything was packed up, the refugees, that Kathia and Jason worked with, drove far away from Windfall and settled near to Trident Mountain. Kathia had called Mrs. Merryweather on her cellphone and told her that she'll be staying with the camp for tonight. The maid told her to stay safe out there and the girl assured her that she can look after herself. By then, it was now night time. The people got out the tents and set them up for people to sleep in tonight before it got too late when everybody would feel too tired to stay up. There would be no time to start building up a town, but tomorrow there will be.

A few hours later until midnight, the horde woke up from their nap that they took to get their energy ready for the raid on the human camp. Eitri and Zylanon arrived via teleportation from Chief Doubloon's

village. Aeolus looked telepathically contacted his whole horde and asked, *'Is everybody up and ready?'*

'Yeah!' replied everyone.

'Good, we shall get strike immediately!' the horde leader said.

A dark leaf pygmy saw through the darkness and caught sight of an approaching red dragon and a gold dragon alongside him. *'Aeolus, wait! We got company here,'* he said.

The disaster dragon raised his tail and brought it back to the ground to gesture the magi dragons to not teleport them yet. *'Who is it?'* he asked.

'Two dragons, sir,' the dark pygmy reported.

Aeolus told his cousin, "Bam, give me some light from your fire."

"Sure thing, cous!" the navy blue replied. He opened his mouth and blew a little bit of fire to hold in and use as a torch.

The two cousins walked together to search for the strangers. *'Where are you?'* Aeolus asked the pygmy.

The dark pygmy spoke out loud so his leader could find him more easily, "Over here! Can you hear me?"

"Loud and clear," the disaster dragon replied, going over to the direction of the pygmy's voice. There they saw the red and gold dragons. The red dragon had yellow wing membranes and underside, unlike the typical red dragons with their black ones. His horns were also red like his scales and there were fin-like spines, one running from the back of his head to his neck and the other from his back to the end of his tail. The gold dragon had a noticeable scar on his eye. "Can I help you?" Aeolus asked the two.

The red dragon answered, "Yes, you can. We are looking for a dragon that may know another dragon by the name of Atlas Firestar." Then he looked at the gold dragon walking back a bit and nodded to him. He continued speaking to Aeolus, "Certainly, she is helping a traitor dragon by the name of Axle Incarus. I would hate it if anything would happen to her or the hatchlings she has with her. That is the reason and the only reason why we are here, so it's a bit urgent."

Aeolus's interest got piqued at the mention of his old friend's name. But more curiously, he was wondering who exactly this traitor dragon known as Axle was like and why the magi dragoness was helping him. Bam's mind shared his curiosity as his cousin. He looked to the disaster dragon and spoke him to telepathically, *'Hey didn't you say you knew someone named Atlas a long time ago?'*

The disaster answered, *'I do, and it sounds just like her. I heard her sister, Flarina, and her mate got killed by hybrids. That's why Atlas is raising her nieces by herself, which is why she couldn't join the horde.'*

Bam felt sorry for the magi and the hatchlings. *'Oh that poor dragoness,'* he said.

Going back to the topic at hand, Aeolus said to the red dragon, "I'm a friend of Atlas. Now can you tell me more about what's going on?"

The red dragon said calmly, "Well let me introduce myself. My name is Dracul Caruism and I'm the current lord for a city named Shadow Wind. With me is Arch Dravinca, a current lord as well. Like I said, Atlas has started to help a traitor from Shadow Wind. He is currently wanted for killing another dragon by the name of Crimsrion Drago, a gold dragon that was after him in the first place, to bring him back to Shadow Wind for another crime of buying slaves, humans, dragons and halflings." The horde members, who heard all that, were shocked at atrocious acts of the Shadow Wind traitor. Normally it would be humans doing those things, but for another dragon to do that was totally a shock. Aeolus growled with disgust and loathing for Axle. He had never heard of a dragon this despicable ever since the ancient story of the first wicked dragon, Evila, whose name gave rise to the word 'evil'. To the horde leader, Axle was nothing more than a race traitor, who would do harm to his fellow dragons. He didn't understand why Atlas, a dragoness who hated crimes against her race would help someone like him. Unless maybe he had tricked her. Dracul looked to the ground, almost looking like he would regret it, and said, "All I simple care for is Atlas's safety and the hatchlings' safety. We currently have a special... human, after Axle, by the name of Spinx. According to one of his reports, she went and fought him, and teleported Axle to an unknown location. If she would to continue her assistance with Axle, she would be considered a threat to Shadow Wind and it would leave me no choice but to kill her for the protection of Shadow Wind. It's my job to protect all that live in Shadow Wind and I will have seen to it."

Aeolus didn't like the idea of a human working for them, considering their treacherous nature, but he kept quiet about it. If Atlas continued protecting him, then she would be killed. This was very serious indeed and Aeolus couldn't let that happen to her. He replied to the lord, "Thank you for telling me this, Dracul. I will see to Atlas and make sure she realizes the truth, so that she won't bother protecting Axle anymore." Then he turned to the horde and told them, "Vulture Horde, the attack on the army camp will have to be put on hold. Right now, we must deal with this Axle dragon and bring him to justice." Then he telepathically told the magma magi, *'Kekul, I need you to place the tracking spell on Atlas, so that you can warp my chosen group over to her. This is what she looks like.'* Using his memory, he sent him an image of the red-tinted magi dragoness and her sparkling purple eyes.

Kekul received the image and said, *'I got it, sir!'* He teleported the tracking spell over to Atlas and told the leader, *'It is done. So which ones do you want me to teleport over to her?'* He figured that was what the leader wanted.

Aeolus answered, *'I want you and your mate to warp me, Dracul, Arch, Pyro, Tavurth, Uvanis, Eitri, Lutarn, Zylanon, Hewey, the flower pygmies, and the crimson flares over to where she's at.'*

'Yes, sir!' the magma magi obliged. Then Kekul gave his mate Atlas's location and the two teleported the

chosen dragons over to the spring cave mountain.

Bam relaxed his hold on the fire inside his mouth until the flame died down. He heard his cousin's voice telling him, *'Bam, you are in charge of this horde until I get back.'*

The navy blue smiled with pride at having being trusted to be temporary leader. *'Don't worry, cous. Everything will be alright.'*

The Firestars were sleeping when suddenly lights were flashing inside the cave. Atlas squeezed his eyes tight in response to the disturbance, before she opened them up and groaned, "Ugh, what the hell?" Draconic smells caught her attention and she realized that there were other dragons in the cave. "Huh? Who's there?" she asked, lifting her head. A flame appeared and gave light to reveal a brute dragon's face. The magi was about to respond, when a fireball flew by fast and zoomed around like a winged insect. Another one appeared flying around as well and then came four more other like them. The lights from these balls showed a shadow dragon, a cassare, and a healer dragon inside the cave. One of the fireballs passed by another one and revealed that the carriers of these balls were crimson flares.

The hatchlings woke up to see all these strange dragons and fireballs in the air. The sisters were mostly mesmerized by the fireballs with tails as Danielle smiled and said, "Ooh, so pretty!"

Lutarn and Uvanis the dark leaf pygmy, who were outside the cave, went down to the white dragon, they thought was Axle, and grabbed him, holding him down. The white dragon snapped awake the wind was knock out of him as Eitri summoned the chains from the ground and wrapped around them around his neck and legs, but that was it before the chains lost their grip on the white dragon as he changed into a human. Eitri, Lutarn and Uvanis were taken by surprise at the sudden transformation as the man slid from under them towards the edge of the ledge, causing his arm to get scraped and bleed. The trio heard Aeolus telling them, "Get him, he must not be allowed to escape!" So the two dragons pursued him with the flower pygmies flying with them, while Eitri sensed magic inside the spring cave and went in to stop Atlas.

Back in the cave, Zylanon went over to the black dragon, thinking he was Axle and bit him at the neck while trying to hold him down. This caused him to roar in pain, as it woke him up from his slumber. The Firestars quickly turned their heads to the direction of Mekarth's pained roar. They saw him slamming the shadow dragon into the wall next to him. Zylanon became dazed as he felt the black dragon slip loose from his fangs. Knowing that they were in danger, Atlas casted a fire aura around herself and got ready to engage in battle. She glared and growled at the enemy dragons as Mekarth stood between her and them. The sisters backed away to the corner and huddled themselves there. They were afraid of these big bad dragons. Standing near the front was a red dragon with a scar down his side. Mekarth glared at him and snarled the name out, "Dracul."

Atlas became alert and shouted, "What? He's here?!" She looked to where the black dragon was looking and saw the red dragon. The magi furrowed her eyes and growled, "So that's Dracul, huh? He's got a lot of nerve showing his face around here!" The dragoness channeled up a lot of her magic energy for to prepare a fire beam made just for him. But before she could cast it at all, Eitri came in and dispelled her aura with his wind magic and Tarvurth tackled her against the wall and held her neck with his jaws, pinning her to the way. The magi struggled to get free of his strong hold as she snarled, "Get off of me!"

The brute refused to let go as he told her telepathically, *'Trust me!'*

'Like hell I will!' Atlas yelled back in Tavorth's mind. She thought of the hot spring in her mind and tried to warp there to escape. But for some reason, her teleportation spell wasn't working. *'What the hell? What's going on? Why can I warp?'* she wondered. No matter how much she tried, the magi could not teleport. So Atlas went for the another solution and that was to burn his mouth with her fire aura. But when she tried that, nothing happened as well. "Son of a bitch!" she yelled. The sisters looked at Pyro, who was staring intently at their aunt.

Back outside, the man yelled to his attackers, "Idiots, you're helping a once banished dragon and a dangerous dragon, Arch. Are you three insane?" They didn't listen to him as they believed it was just a lie to save his own skin. The horde members stopped briefly to let Arch zap the man with a lightning spell. The man screamed in pain before he fell to his knees.

Arch looked down at him and said, "Hmm, odd you did not pass out from that, Axle. That was enough lightning shock to knock out a dragon twice your size. Let's try this again, shall we?" He used another lighting spell, but it never hit the man as two spheres circled him, one pink and one blue. They made almost a barrier around him before they went back into his pocket.

The man pushed himself off the ground as all his wound healed up. His blue eyes were close as he spoke, "My name is Axle Incarus, son of dragon lord Excab Incarus and Lavnta Incarus, and grandchild to dragon lord Brancin Incarus. I will do my sworn duty and live the Incarus code. My mission: return to Shadow Wind and reclaim it back from Dracul Caruissn, and the force that follows the once banished dragon." He was now in a full stand and his eyes snapped open revealing almost cat-like dragon eyes. "And I will never forgive Dracul for what he did or anyone that follow him!" Axle yelled at Arch, which seemed to catch the gold dragon off guard. Axle started to emulate a very deep low growl, as he re-entered his dragon form. Both him and Arch had a stare down, neither moving, and both snarling at each other.

Aeolus started to get skeptical and he looked over to the red dragon lord inside the cave and asked, *'Did I just hear that you were banished, Dracul?'* He wasn't about to deem Dracul the real bad guy or a liar just yet. But hearing the word 'banished' made him think that the current dragon lord did something wrong that removed him from Shadow Wind. It could make him the real villain unless he had redeemed himself or he had been framed. The disaster dragon wanted to make sure that he was helping the right dragon out before he could make any more moves.

Dracul simply looked back and answered, "Yes, I was banished for taking an action in my own hands; I killed a thief that stole an artifact. That ended up getting me banished from town for 100 years, and that was 800 years ago. During that time, Exbac, Axle, Mekarth, and Juna Incarus's father took lordship. He would not let me back in my city and would always keep me out; well, that was until recently." Then he looked back at Mekarth and said, "But you, Mekarth, have nothing yet on your head. So just back down and let us get Axle, and you could live the rest of your life peacefully."

The black dragon just shook his head defiantly in response. "Hold your tongue, snake. You're going to need it when I squeeze the hidden secrets out of you," Mekarth snarled, as he got in to a readying stance, almost as if he was about to spring.

Dracul shook his head in disappointment. "You know what will happen if you attack a lord, so why do it? It's your only and final warning, Mekarth," the dragon lord said as he readied himself.

Mekarth spoke through his snarling, "The attack on a lord is a threat to the lord's life and a threat to Shadow Wind, but I willing to die to uncover the truth." In seconds, he pounced on the lord's back and both him and Dracul went out the mouth of the cave, roaring all the way down until they both hit the forest below.

Axle and Arch both attack each other at the same time, both drawling blood from each other. But Arch infused his bite with lighting and caused Axle to lose his bite on his enemy. The gold dragon took the advantage and shoved the white dragon over the edge. Arch soon followed down after him. Atlas, having watched the fight outside the cave, got scared of what would happen to white and shouted, "Axle!!!"

Aeolus looked to Eitri, Lutarn, Uvanis, and the flower pygmies and said, "Follow after them and make sure Dracul and Arch are okay. Stop and defeat Axle and Mekarth. I will go have word with Atlas." The horde members nodded and descended down into the woods. The disaster dragon went inside the cave and approached Tavurth and Atlas who were shown in the light by the crimson flare's fireballs.

The magi looked surprised to see her old friend here among these dragons. "Aeolus, you're working for that bastard, Dracul?!" she asked in shock and betrayal.

The disaster dragon was unfazed by her emotions and replied calmly, "I am, if it'll keep you from getting killed. Listen Atlas, I don't know how you got into working for Axle. But you're siding with the wrong dragons here. Axle is a wanted criminal who killed another dragon and bought dragon slaves."

Atlas looked in angry disbelief at what she had just heard. She yelled, "What?! That's a damn lie if I ever heard one! The real bad guy here is Dracul! He's a tyrant who killed his own family just for the sake of getting leadership. And ever since then, Shadow Wind went to hell under his rule."

Aeolus looked at the dragoness and begun processing information in his head. Dracul never told him that he was related to Axle. But was probably perhaps because there was no need to. But the murder of Dracul's family was bothering him. It was indeed a terrible act, but how could know for sure if the whole thing or part of it was really the truth or just a lie fed to her by Axle. Either Atlas was the one getting duped or maybe Aeolus himself was. For now, the only thing he could do was press the story on for more information. "And I assume that you heard this story through his words only?" he asked.

The magi yelled, "Are you calling him a liar?! Because he ain't one for sure! His messenger drake came by and told him what happened today!"

The horde leader heard Pyro telling him telepathically, *'Aeolus! I think we're helping the wrong dragon. Killing your own family seems much worse than anything Axle could ever do to become a traitor! And I don't think he's even that.'*

Aeolus replied to the cassare, *'You're probably right, Pyro. But we can't get to the conclusion until we hear the whole story from both sides and see through their lies.'* Then he looked back to Atlas and asked, "So tell me about Axle, Atlas. How much do you know about him?"

Atlas answered, "He's a nice dragon who wants to save his kingdom. He cares for his family's safety, his friends' safety, as well as ours."

"Really now, how so?" asked Aeolus.

The magi told the story, "When his friend and bodyguard died, Axle gave him a proper ceremony for his death. When some of his family died, he cried. Then when I fought a necromancer and his zombies, Axle came rushing over to save me. Axle warned me that traveling with him would be dangerous as the necromancer's goons would be coming after him, but I decided to travel with him anyway."

Aeolus frowned in disapproval and scolded her, "And you would bring your only known family left into harms' way for the sake of someone else." He looked over to where the hatchlings were at and then back at her and continued, "How foolish of you, Atlas!"

The magi defended herself, "Hey, I was pretty confident that I could handle the whole world, okay? I'm a dragon champion, I've fought and won all battles!"

"That doesn't mean that you'll always win and it certainly doesn't mean that you are invincible. You need to think rationally before you make decisions like that!" Aeolus told her. "What if you were killed, who would take care of your nieces? And what if they died, what will you have left of your sister or family for that matter, if all of your ancestors and descendants are dead or non-existent?"

"Alright, alright, sorry! I won't be stupid next time, alright?" Atlas yelled, getting upset over the stress of having to listen to his rant. "Besides, Axle already told me about this before."

Aeolus started to see Axle in a more positive light and said, "Hmm, so he really does care for others. He sounds nicer than what Dracul told to me." Perhaps the red dragon lord may have been the one lying all along. If that's the case, then the horde shouldn't be helping Dracul and Arch at all.

"Aeolus, you're the one being duped here, not me," the magi told him. "If we don't stop Dracul now, he's going to get Axle and Mekarth killed and then there'll be no one left to take Shadow Wind as the new lord."

"Very well, we'll go save your friends and seize Dracul and Arch to hold trial," said Aeolus. He looked to the brute dragon and ordered, "Tavurth, you can let her go now." The brute let go of the dragoness, letting her fall back to her fours, and stepped away from her.

The hatchlings bounded over to their aunt's side, feeling safe now that the apparent danger was over. "Aunt Atwas, are you okay?" asked Danielle.

The magi looked down and smiled at them. "I'm fine, don't you two worry," she answered. "Aeolus is a friend, he won't hurt me."

Meanwhile outside, the group chosen to go after the Shadow Wind dragons had split with Lutarn, Uvanis and two flower pygmies going after Arch and Axle, and Eitri & three flower pygmies going after Dracul and Mekarth. Unavis, with his night vision, aided his group on where to go and how to avoid running into trees. They walked through the woods until they heard a roar and stopped. Uvanis asked, "Is that them?"

'Probably, let's go!' said the storm dragon telepathically. They saw flashes of lightning and it confirmed to them that it was Arch and Axle fighting; they found them. They went on until they got to their ally and his enemy. Axle was covered in blood and Arch had a small gash on his side. It was still evident that the white dragon was alive, but barely though. The two spheres lay next to him, glowing a bright white, as the spheres' content began to disappear.

One of the flower pygmies asked, "Arch! Is everything alright?"

His question went unanswered as Arch said to the white dragon, "Hmm, still alive Axle, impressive. But at what cost?" As Axle changed into his human form, the gold dragon shook his head and said, "You should be dead for your sin, but that is much better." Arch turn away from the dragons and in a full sprint, he left the scene.

Axle, with much struggle, pushed himself to sit against a tree next to him and grabbed the now empty spheres. The man looked at the spheres before he let them drop and roll across the grass. Unavis stared

down at the man's bloodied form and joked, "Heh heh, look at him. All tired and tuckered out like a sleeping hatchling. Come on, Lutarn, let's take him back to 'daddy'." The storm dragon picked up Axle in his jaw and carried him as they went to go look for Arch and Dracul.

Eitri had cast a fire aura to provide light for the flower pygmies to follow him. His group had reached Dracul and Mekarth. The night magi cast his magic chains spell at the attacking black dragon. Mekarth struggled to get out of the chains, but then the flower pygmies went to blow out their pollen breathes at him and made him drowsy. The red dragon went in with a one quick slash across the black's side combined with his darkness magic. This resulted with a piece of flesh torn off of Mekarth's side as the black dragon fell unconscious. Dracul went down to his ear and whispered something that the horde was unable to make out. Shortly, Arch came into the scene and said to his fellow lord, "Time to go, Dracul. Would not want to be late for the entertainment."

Then they warped out of sight without so much a "thank you" to the horde members who aided him. "Uh... you're welcome?" said a female flower pygmy, slightly annoyed.