

Chapter 27: The Plans for Today

The next morning, the camp was up for breakfast of cooked eggs and sausages. Kathia, Jason, and Roderick all got their foods & drinks and went over to the manager's tent to discuss today's agenda. Sitting at the table, the camp manager said, "You know, if we're ever going to build a city here, we're going to need some materials to construct buildings, wires for electricity, and pipes for water. But they need to be really GOOD materials so that our new home doesn't burn down like Cypress, or Windfall as they call it nowadays, did. Any ideas, folks?" He looked from Jason to Kathia, hoping they would have some useful knowledge to help with this.

"Yeah, I got some," the black man said. "We should go with stones like bricks and concrete, since they never burn down." Kathia, who knew about that from her father's business, nodded in agreement at the camp manager.

But Roderick looked skeptical at this suggestion and questioned, "That may be true, but then how do buildings fall apart when there's a fire?"

Now it was the girl's turn to bring up her idea. She started off by answering his concern, "Oh that can be explained. You see? Most buildings tend to have wooden beams supporting them. As you know, wood as you know tends to be vulnerable to fire. So when a fire happens, they burn down and that's when things like roofs and upper floors start to fall apart."

The camp manager looked surprised with an O-shaped open mouth and said, "Ah, so that's how it happens. I never knew that..." But now he was concerned about that fact as he asked, "But if wood burns easily, then it's obvious we can't use them for beams. Do you know what we can use instead of that?"

"Of course!" Kathia chirped with a brief nod. With her finger slashing across the air, she explained, "We use steel beams. because they're a fire-resistant metal. Well they're not one hundred percent effective, but they sure last a lot longer than wood." After putting her left hand down on the table, she continued, "We can even make them stronger by wrapping insulators around the beams." Then she made a small frown and reasoned, "But unfortunately, these things together are much more expensive than just wood. And if we're going to make all of our buildings to the most fireproof form, we're going to need some funds. I may be rich, but money doesn't grow on trees."

Roderick proposed an idea, "Well if we need money, then I suggest we build up a business in Windfall so that we can get all the cash we need to build Sundown."

Kathia was cool with the idea, but Jason however was quick to oppose it as he argued, "I'm afraid I'll have to disagree with you on that, Roderick. Because any bills you pay to keep your business going will be pouring right into the dragon's economy and we can't be supporting that, if we're going to be an anti-

dragon community."

The camp manager reasoned, "I understand your reasons, Jason. But it's the only risk we're going to have to take right now, because everybody's hoard of money is back at the bank, unless they got cremated, so it's likely all of us don't have enough funds to pay." Then he seemed to have read the black man's mind as he raised up a finger to gesture Jason into silenced. He informed, "Before you suggest we go out there and raid materials from the other cities, let me remind you that you haven't trained anybody yet to combat dragons. And I'm sure two people doing it alone would be way too risky." He was obviously hinting about the archer and mage girl pair.

The girl knew that the fat man was right as she said to her friend, "I agree with him, Jason, because this is the best way to do this now." Then she smiled optimistically and continued, "Plus I get to bring my daddy's company, Rittevon Construction Company, back in business with the profits we get. They'll be the ones building this city with the supplies and manpower they have, with a little help of the magic spells I teach them, of course."

Roderick raised an eyebrow about Kathia's company suspiciously and asked, "Wait, how did your dad's company go out of business?"

The girl didn't need to say a word as Jason beat her first. He explained, "The Aquarians and all them other dragons took over all the city's construction job. That's why all the construction companies are out of the job."

The camp manager got mad and ranted, "Well what a bunch of arrogant assholes." He looked to the girl and said, "Sorry to hear about your company, lady."

Kathia said with her teeth clenched and eyebrows furrowed, "Oh no, it's not you who should be sorry. It's those scabies who should be for disgracing my dad's death like that." Then she composed herself and said, "But anyway, enough of that touchy subject. Now I want to talk about our building priorities. I think we should have the company's newest HQ built here first, so that my daddy's company can be here at home, where they can keep on building without having to run back to Windfall and back here." She planned to have the higher-ups sell the building in Windfall after after this, so that they can have the funds to build more. "Once that's done, we then build a safety shelter so that in case of a dragon attack, we can have a place for our citizens to be safe."

Roderick, who seemed to have gotten an idea of where this was going, added, "And after that, we move on to building homes, hospitals, schools, and everything else to form a city."

The girl grinned at him and chirped, "Yeah, that's how we get this done! And when we have start our own businesses, we won't even need one in Windfall anymore." She looked over to Jason and asked, "So do you understand all that now, Jason?"

The black man had his hand holding his head over the table as he replied, "Yeah, I do. But now I want to talk about my idea." After taking his elbow off the table and holding two hands over the table, he suggested, "When our soldiers are fully trained, we'll be sending them out to fetch money and material from the other cities as well as finding other refugee camp to immigrate people into Sundown. When these people want to start their businesses, we'll bring in supplies for them to sell and start our own economy. If we find a surviving city, we'll trade with them to get more funds we need. And even better, we get to close down shop in Windfall, so that we don't ever feed those scalies again."

Roderick smiled at Jason and pointed at him, "I like the way you think, buddy. Both you and that Kathia girl here! So all this will be how we'll build Sundown, right?"

Jason nodded and answered, "Yes man!"

"Well good, now we can move on to scheduling our training programs," the camp manager said. He took up a clipboard with a few sheets of notebook paper on it off the floor. Holding as he was ready to read what was written on the first page, Roderick asked, "Okay, I've thought about when our folks should learn archery and magic last night and I've got written it down. On mornings, Kathia, you will be teaching magic from eight-thirty to eleven-thirty. Then we will have lunch until twelve-thirty. After that, Jason will start teaching everyone how to shoot until four o' clock." Holding the clipboard down a bit, he asked the two, "Are you two okay with that?"

The archer gave a brief nod and said, "Uh-huh!"

Kathia liked it as well as she answered, "Yes!"

Roderick grinned and said, "Great! I'll go tell the whole camp about this and invite everyone to sign-up for these classes, so that we can get started."

As the camp manager got out of his seat with the pen in hand, Kathia had some plans today that would conflict with the schedule. "Actually Roderick, I got some things that I need to do today like buying new spellbooks," she told him. "So, can Jason and I switch our schedule for today? That way, I'll have a lot of time to decide which spells need to be taught first and get more spells to teach." And also, that way she'll have more time to practice the spells she already knew.

Roderick agreed to do it, "Well I see no harm in doing so. So yes, we can make that exception."

Jason was also happy with the decision. "Great! It looks like I get to start my class early. Can't wait to show everybody a thing or two," he beamed and grinned.

"Oh ho ho ho!" the camp manager laughed heartily. "Someone's eager to teach. Don't worry, Jason. We'll have this school of yours going as soon as eight-thirty comes."

"Got it!" the archer said. Then he looked to Kathia and told her, "Hey Kathia, don't forget to buy us some bows and arrows. I know I can teach people how to make them, but I know it'll save my class some teaching time if we got the ones already made."

The girl figured that he meant people practicing with the purchased supplies would be more efficient than people passing Jason's bow to give each other a chance at shooting. "Sure thing, Jason!" she replied. Then Kathia got off her seat and headed out the tent. She looked back to the camp manager and asked, "Hey Roderick, is there anybody who can drive me to Windfall? I'd like to get there faster than riding on my horse."

Roderick answered, "Sure, I know a nice lady named Megan. Dark brown hair, green eyes, slim, curvy, and that fine nose. She'll be happy to take you over there. Tell her good ol' Roderick sent you, alright?"

"Sure thing," Kathia replied. Then she went to go look for the woman fitting the description the man gave her. She found the woman next to a light brown car. Going up to her, Kathia asked, "Excuse me, are you Megan?"

The woman turned to her and answered, "Yes, I am. Do you need something?"

"Yes, I do," the girl replied. "I need a ride over to Windfall to pick up some spellbooks and bows. Good ol' Roderick sent me over to find you, since he knows you're a nice lady."

Megan chuckled and said, "Oh that Roderick knows me so well. Sure, I can take you over there. But we can't take the car inside Windfall, since they banned vehicles."

Kathia rolled her eyes at the ridiculous law and said, "Yeah, yeah, I know about that stupid law." It's going to suck for her since she also won't have her horse to ride around at that time. Hopefully, there will be horse carriage that she can pay to get around the city there. "So anyway, let's get going," she said. The two got into the car and drove into the woods to get to Windfall. On the way, Kathia took out her cellphone and called her maid, "Hello, Mrs. Merryweather, I'm coming back to the house to get my daddy's address book. I need to call his executives to help build a new city we're going to call Sundown."

Minerva woke up and got changed into her casual clothes. Then she brushed her hair to straighten out her bed head. She went over to her laptop to check her email for anything new; nothing. So she went to a search engine and looked up volunteer jobs in Windfall to see if there was anything Ronan can do and would learn from. She clicked on the first link to a website and clicked on the black words "Find an Opportunity" that was sitting on the blue bar. It took her to a different page that listed all the jobs by different organizations. There was a youth basketball coach job, but she thought that Ronan might not be a sports athlete. There was another one for social media/market intern, which seems like a good choice. The other she felt were likely were fundraising intern, office management intern, court-ordered

community service, foster grandparent mentor, an invasive weed killer job, food pantry team member, and... Something had caught her eye in surprise.

What this? Could it be? There was a literacy education program for dragons and it was by her workplace organization, the ADR. It was quite amazing to see something like this on a volunteer website. Usually, they wouldn't allow something like this to be put on the volunteer list because the populace and government felt that there was no need for dragon rights. But since the Windfall government had given civil rights to dragons, now jobs like the one ADR put would be allowed on the volunteer website. Seeing how this job would allow Ronan to work under the same company as her, Minerva went over to the man's room to see if he was awake so that she could tell him about it.

Interestingly, the room was empty and the window was open. For only a short moment, Minerva thought that he might have opened the window to get some fresh air and then head on downstairs. But then she heard noises outside and Drake sounded like he was training Ronan. The woman went over to the window and looked out to see the man practicing his swordplay with Drake giving him tips. "Mind your footwork Ronan, you keep letting your back heel come up," said the dragon, who was off to the side observing his partner. The man's sword skill was so fluid, it was like it wasn't a separate object; it was part of him. Minerva stood and watched him practice. She would tell him about the opportunity job later after he was done.

Atlas and her nieces woke up when the morning light shined in their eyes. The magi looked down at her nieces with a smile and said, "Good morning, girls!"

"Morning, Aunt Atwas," they both said, smiling back.

The rest of the horde woke up with some dragons going out to get some food. The first thing Aeolus did was contact the horde leader from the cave that the Vulture Horde stayed two days ago. *'Hello again, this is Aeolus of the Vulture Horde and I have some good news to tell you.'*

The cave leader sounded hopeful as he asked, *'Is it about the army? Are they dead?'*

'As a matter-of-fact, they are,' the disaster dragon confirmed. *'My horde destroyed them last night with the help of our new recruits. The dragons in your area are now safe once again.'*

'For real?' the cave leader asked.

'Yes,' Aeolus told him. *'If you were to ask Orion the same question, he'll even confirm it to you.'*

The cave leader beamed, *'Well that's wonderful! I can't wait to tell everyone the good news! I can imagine everyone rejoicing to the news. Thank you so much for saving our community. You will have our*

gratitude!'

'Anytime, sir! The Vulture Horde is always ready to fight for the safety of our race,' said the disaster dragon. Then he went over to Sargoth, the dragon whose powers had helped to ensure that all the dragon slayers were killed. The disaster dragon went in front of the red dragon to tell him about today's next mission. "Sargoth, your powers were very much helpful last night. I would like for you to use them again when we deal with a vicious tyrant named Dracul. Tell me, has my cousin Bam ever told you about him?" he asked.

Sargoth recited carefully, "Only that he is a dragon lord named Dracul. He had tricked you to go after someone named Axle so that he can get rid of him and take over Shadow Wind. He even had a human try to kill your friend and her family."

"So you're caught up. Very good," said Aeolus, who nodded as he was glad that he won't have to explain the whole story. Then he went on to explain the plan, "So anyway, when we go to confront Dracul in the future and capture him, I'm going to need you to use your powers to trap him. Your vines and earth magic would be great for trapping his limbs and encasing them, so that he won't move much when we go to subdue him." Then he brought up another important part of the plan, "But before we go after him, we'll need some kind of prison first and a way to keep his magic from working. Either Dracul or his partner, Arch, has the ability to teleport and we can't have him escaping like that. I would have Pyro the cassare dragonet guard him at all times. But if Dracul were to have an army of his fighting us and many of them are magic-users, then we'll need more of Pyro's kind to suppress them in places he's not in. So now I bring up this question. Do you know any cassares we can recruit?"

Sargoth seemed to be thinking for a moment before he answered, "There's a secluded island North of here. There's a cassare village there. They don't like visitors, but if they see a problem is dangerous, they will send some of their people. Like I said they don't like visitors. I accidentally teleported there once and had to go through three hours of questioning before they deemed me safe."

Aeolus frowned and said, "Sounds like recruiting them for our cause will be difficult. I can't imagine that they would help another city in trouble, after hearing how they're distrusting of outsiders." He started to ponder his thoughts about the cassare village, *'A village that doesn't trust other dragons. I wonder what terrible event happened that would make the cassares close their doors to fellow dragons.'* It was sad to hear how this much mistrust the cassares had on other dragons, when it should have gone to everyone's common enemy, the humans.

Axle brought the deer and pig over to the Firestars for breakfast. "Here Atlas," he said as he placed the prey down next to her. The white dragon had sounded a bit sorry in his tone for some reason.

"Uh thanks," the magi said, feeling something off. Danielle went to eat the pig at its underbelly, but Atlas didn't touch her food as she just watched Axle fly back to his family. *'What's up with him?'* she wondered in concern. As his family ate in silence, the magi turned back to the food and noticed how

Kylie didn't have anything to eat. Axle must have thought that the balloon hatchling was a carnivore by mistake. Getting up, Atlas said to her niece, "Be right back, Kylie. I'll see if there's any fruits around for you." She went over to the woods and found some sweet granadilla trees not too far away from the lake. The herbivorous members of the horde were picking the ripe, round yellow-orange fruits off the trees and eating them. Atlas went around these dragons until she found an empty spot where she could get the fruits. The magi picked off a few fruits and teleported back to her nieces with the sweet granadillas laying between her forelegs. "Here you go, Kylie!" she said.

"Thanks, Aunt Atlas!" the balloon hatchling said happily. She picked up the granadillas and started eating them. Atlas laid down on her underbelly and went on to eat her deer.

As Atlas continued to eat, she noticed movement to the side of her view. She saw Axle and Juna were in their shape-shifted forms, with their skin tone and eyes matching that of their dragon forms, talking to each other at first until it escalated into a fight. Juna seemed to have gotten pissed off at something her brother said. She punched her brother straight in his chest as he staggered back. The hatchling said something harsh that seemed to have angered Axle, because he returned the favor right back. The horde watched the scene with worry as the magi became alert as she pushed her upperbody up with her forelegs. The sisters saw their aunt's reaction before they started looking at what everyone was seeing. The fight was soon over, just minutes after it started. Atlas was shocked to see that both siblings were bloodied from the fight. Her dismay worsened when Juna pinned her brother's arm behind his back and push hard until it broke the bone, producing a loud snap. Axle seemed to have bit back his pained scream before he fell on his knees and wept. Seeing how the man was hurt, the Firestars got scared and as Atlas shouted, "Axle!" She got up and ran over to the wounded man after Juna had flown away. "Axle, what happened? Are you alright?!" she asked. Aeolus had seen the whole thing and sighed in displeasure. He would have called Hewey to heal him, if Axle didn't have the healing ability himself.

Without looking at her, the man answered, "It's nothing, just..." He grabbed his arm and healed it with magic. He flexed his hand as if he was testing to see if the pain was still there before he stood up. He looked off to the side before turning his attention back to the magi and reassured, "Atlas, it truly is nothing. This kind of things happen on a regular basis."

"That's a bit of an understatement," Mekarth said as he sat down next to the dragoness. "Though yes, breaking your arm was a bit over doing it. You did, however, had it coming," he said as Axle shook his head.

The man said, "It would not be the first time she broke a bone in my body, nor the last." Then he changes to his dragon form and took to the air up to Juna, who was circling in the sky.

"What?" Atlas asked bewildered as to how the dragon lord can take it as normal.

Mekarth looked to Atlas and said, "Let them do whatever they will do, Atlas. They are siblings and yes, they may attack one another on a daily basis, much more often than a normal family, but they do care

for each other." He explained what he meant, "Let me put it this way. They both protect one another and want to see that the other can protect themselves, but to do that, they first must see how they fair in a fight. This certain fight though is over a completely different topic. Due to my limitation, I have to hear everything through my ears, so even I do not know what's going on."

Atlas looked to the brother and sister, who both seemed to have calmed down. Now the magi was even more curious about the fight. Since she suspected Axle wouldn't give her an answer about it, perhaps Juna will. The magi telepathically asked the halfling girl, *'Hey Juna, what was all that brawling about?'*

Axle and Juna still chatted a bit, until she stopped for a brief second, which made the white dragon look at her curious at her sudden pause. She told her brother that Atlas just telepathically asked her about the fight, because now Axle was looking up at the magi. He said something and got a reply, then Juna turn around and walked back to Atlas with her brother close behind her, until they got all the way back to the magi. "So, you want to know what that fight was about," the halfling said as she got close to Atlas. "It was about you and your family. Now if you excuse me Miss Firestar, I am going to ask your friend over there, a question," she said as she pointed over to Aeolus. "I will not lie; there was more to the fight than you and your family, but mostly it was about you."

Atlas blinked as she watched the halfling walk around her and head straight for the horde leader. The dragoness knew that Juna was upset about her bringing her nieces into danger, and she probably must have told Axle not to trust her, too. *'Great, I guess Aeolus isn't the only one on her bad side,'* the magi thought bitterly. Given everything she's seen of Juna, it felt like Atlas met a more spiteful version of Yukki.

Mekarth seemed to be shocked at the answer. "That's um, un-expected," he said, a bit puzzled.

Aeolus saw Juna walking past the horde members until she came towards him and stopped at the side. "Next time, clean up your mess. You know exactly what I am talking about, 'Dragon'," she harshly said at the word Dragon, even more in a disrespectful tone.

The horde leader scowled at the halfling and retorted in a calm tone gradually turning into disrespect at the end, "Oh so you know about the horde's mission. Well please do tell me how I can "clean up my mess", halfling!" Aeolus had no tolerance for rudeness towards him; if she wanted to be rude to him, then she should expect no deference from him. "Oh and by way, has Lord Dracul removed you from your dragon lord title as well?" he asked, planning on bringing up his noble status next to inform her of her place.

The halfling did not look at him and replied back, "I care not for this land; only my family and my home. Do what you wish here, but ever let me catch you trying to hurt my homeland or her people, and I will personally ring your neck and make sure you never see the sky again." Then she walked away from him.

Aeolus watched Juna go and thought, *'So she's not going to bother with our affairs in Solomos. I guess I won't have to do anything to her... for now.'*